

# The Life and Adventures of Elmer Ruschman

Edited by 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Class of 2011



Photo Taken By: Patrick Reddy – Kentucky Enquire – March 2011

Written 1981

THE FAMILY OF PETER N. RUSCHMAN AND ELIZABETH CAROLINE HOL TERS

PETE BORN JUNE 2, 1891 IN COLD SPRING, KY DIED JANUARY 1, 1981  
ELIZABETH BORN FEBRUARY 5, 1889 IN LONINGEN, GERMANY  
DIED DECEMBER 8, 1927

They met while both worked at the Avenel Hotel, which was located on Avenel Place in Ft. Thomas, KY. It was built on the right side of the street a few hundred feet from Ft. Thomas Avenue.

Married in St Joseph Church, Cold Spring, KY on June 17, 1913.

1<sup>st</sup> The first home they had was on the Messmer farm located on the top of Uhl Road, and at that time belonged to Pete's mother, who was Louise Messmer before she married Frank Ruschman, (our grandparents).

The children born at this home were:

EDWARD MAY? 1914 AT HOME  
AMOS NOVEMBER, 22, 1915 AT HOME  
ALFRIEDA DECEMBER 1, 1916 AT HOME  
LOUIS MAY 29, 1918 BORN AT HOME, DIED AUGUST 20, 1918.



Louis was born with a hare-lip and cleft pallet. Pop took him to a specialist in Louisville, KY at Children's Hospital. They could do nothing for him, although they tried as best as they could. Pop mentioned that he had suffered a lot before he died.

2<sup>nd</sup> Home

In 1919 our family moved to Silver Grove, Ky after Pop left the farm to work on the C & O Railroad. Other farmers had also given up their places and made more money on the railroad. I know that mom also wanted to be closer to schools and wanted things better for her family, although Pop would rather have stayed on the farm.

The children born in Silver Grove, KY were:

HAROLD AUGUST 25, 1919 BORN AT HOME. DIED JANUARY 26, 1920  
(Harold died suddenly from convulsions.)  
ELMER JANUARY 31, 1921, BORN AT SPEER'S HOSPITAL IN  
DAYTON, KY.  
VIOLA SEPTEMBER 28, 1922 BORN AT HOME

Up to this time all children were born at home, except Elmer. It was mentioned in later years that after mom and Pop lost two boys at an early age that it might be best to have the next one born in

a hospital. The rest of the family always called him, "The city slicker" and said that he was spoiled by his parents (I don't believe that.)

3<sup>rd</sup> home

In 1923 our family moved to Melbourne, KY in the YUNG house, which is still located on the north side of what is now Mary Ingles Highway, and across from St. Anne's Convent.

The children born here were as follows:

ELIZABETH	APRIL 10,] 924 AT HOME
MARY JANE	MAY 17, 1925 AT HOME

## 1924

It was at this home that memories of my early life began. The only road in front of the house was being leveled off and being readied for concrete, as I watched from the seat of a rocking horse, which was under a cherry tree in the front yard. Amos owned a very nice hobby horse, which was supported by a sturdy wooden base, the horse suspended by four metal braces and would rock back and forth. The horse's black mane and tail made it seem as though it was real and it stayed in our family for many years.

A wooded washing machine had a place on the back porch and was operated by turning a wheel by hand. (It would be valuable in later years.) A barn was located on the west side of the house and was about 15 feet from the road, and we played there many times. Pop owned a cow and we also had some chickens. The railroad ran commuter trains in those days and it would stop at C.S. cabin, only a short distance away. It has been said that one day as mom was walking to get on the train, that another train almost hit her. A farm road, located a short distance from the house on the east side, furnished us a nice path to go towards the train tracks. About halfway down, a nice open field, where we kept a cow fenced in, was used sometimes for a family picnic. On the east end of this field, Pop had dammed a small stream of water and it stayed about two feet deep or more, so the cow could drink and we didn't have to carry it to her. This area had many beech trees at the end of the property, and one time we took an old-fashioned hand cranked ice cream freezer loaded in a wagon, and ate it at our picnic.

A low spot, not far from the house, allowed a shallow stretch of water to stand at all times. In the springtime many young frogs would begin their chant saying the only word they knew, "PEET, PEET, PEET", at a steady rhythm. It was told to me that mom used to tease Pop about it, saying, "They are calling you, Pete. You'd better go down to see them." Ed told me that Pop would go down and throw rocks at them trying to quiet them down, but they'd start up again after Pop left. I suppose that he was angry many nights, because I can remember hearing them saying, "PEET" many times as I grew up. I was too young to remember that Amos had to have one toe amputated, because of an infection. Pop said that the doctors charged him \$80.00 for the operation.

A large red brick house was directly across the road from us and it was owned by Mr. & Mrs.

Joe Roth. The upper floor was rented Mr. & Mrs. George Howley and both families were friends of ours for many years. I was at Mr. Howley's when our youngest sister, Mary Jane was born and remembers Mrs. Howley telling me that the doctor brought her in his little black satchel that he carried. That explanation was good enough for me at my early age.

At Easter time of that year, Mrs. Howley gave me a brand new sailor suit that she had made from her own bathing suit and I was so proud to wear it. (If a woman made a sailor suit out of her bathing suit in these 1980's there wouldn't be enough material to put a sleeve on the shirt.)

Our grandparents made visits to our home and stayed for days, and we were supposed to be on our best behavior at these times, and that was hard to do. Grandpa seemed to be strict and I suppose we were afraid to misbehave too much.

At butcher truck made weekly visits to our area and it was owned by Wilfred Butts. On his arrival he would stop on the side of the road and blow loudly on the bugle or trumpet and the ladies would go down and purchase the fresh meat from his truck. One day a car came along and hit his truck, but no one was hurt. It was the first accident that I witnessed and it was exciting. After that, the butcher pulled his red truck a little farther off of the road.

Ten days after Mary Jane was born, our mom's health began to fail as she suffered a stroke that paralyzed her left side. Her arm hung limp after that and she could shuffle her left leg only enough to get around. Frieda remembers that mom sat in a rocking chair by the kitchen window. She would be found crying, because she could no longer do her usual work. She tried to wash dishes by steadying the dish with her left hand as she washed with her right hand. Mom was very religious and when Frieda returned from Mass, she would ask her what gospel was said for that day. Then mom would get out her red German bible and read from it. Pop always said that she attended Mass every chance she could when she was well and even mentioned that a day might come when she could not get to church any longer.

In 1926 or 1927, we moved from the Yung house, as mom and Pop bought a home just east of the St. Anne's property and on the south side of the road. I remember as we walked up to our new home that an open touring car passed us on the road and it was loaded with people and their belongings. I think it was Mrs. Howley or Mrs. Roth that told us to be cautious as these people were gypsies and might harm us and steal from us. This home of ours was much larger than any other that we had lived in and the yard was very big with plenty of room to play. Behind the house was a shed built above a cellar, a small building for our cow, a chicken yard, and outside toilet, and a garage was located in the side yard towards the east. Trees were plentiful and although we didn't keep it very neat in the early years, it became a showplace in the late 1930's when we were capable of caring for our home, which all of us grew to love and will remember as long as we live.

Our life was before us now as we waited to grow up and enjoy ourselves. But our joy was short-

lived as our mother's health began to fail more and more

Our new home had a front porch that extended the width of the house. The living room was large with four windows, an open fireplace that had a mantle, (shelf) above it where mom kept religious articles and family pictures. Two clothes closets were on the west side. Pictures hung on most of the walls and the furniture was not the latest fashion, but was plenty good for us.

The dining room was seldom used as such, but in the winter months after supper, it was used as a living room where all of us gathered. A coal or wood heating stove sat in front of the shelf where an old grandfather clock sat, which ticked off the time as it chimed on the hour and half hour. It was a treasure that was left to our grandmother when her father died, who was a Messmer.

A "sideboard" sat on the east side where mom had her best dishes and tablecloths stored. Our kitchen was on the south side and was the most "used" room in the house. The ceiling was low and our old time range stove done its' best to keep us warm. The stove was one that had a warming closet on top, a good oven and a water tank on the end where water was heated as long as the fire was kept up. A cupboard behind the stove served as a place to store food. A kitchen cabinet held our everyday dishes and had bins to store mom's flour and sugar. A large table and enough chairs and benches were on the south side of the room. A special place for each of us waited when meals were served and it must have been quite a sight to see all of us around the table.

A back door was on the east side that opened onto a back porch which had a wooden floor built over the top of our cistern that had an old time pump, used for our water supply. The water had to be pumped into buckets and carried in the kitchen. (Years later Pop and Uncle Frank built a new system, a hand pump located on the sink which made it a lot handier).

A bedroom was located on the west side and was entered from the dining room. It was used by mom and Pop. It was a small room and enough room only for a bed and a dresser. A closet was located under the steps on the north end and steps began there to allow one to go upstairs.



At the top of the stairs, a door on the right entered into the "girls" room, straight ahead and past the chimney, a door on the right entered into the "boys" room. A low storage room was between this room and the entrance to the "front" room. This large room was mostly used for storage of extra furniture and I remember mom's steamer trunk which she brought with her when

she came from Loninggen, Germany when she was a young lady. The words " Bremen, Germany "lingers in my mind as the place from where she set sail towards her new, but short life in America. This trunk contained some of her clothing that she brought with her, including a fur piece of some sort, and a package contained strands of long hair that she had cut off of her head and saved. She must have treasured these very much as she remembered her younger days in her native country.

Frieda said that the fur piece mentioned above was a fur coat. Before mom was paralyzed, she walked to church and took Frieda along and would put Frieda's little hand in the fur pocket to keep it warm during the long, cold walk.

An older man named, John Roehm, had boarded with us in Silver Grove some years before and a room was being readied for him by Pop. A new side entrance was cut on the west side of the house so he could have privacy as far as his entrance was concerned. This boarder also made it easier for our parents to make their payments on the house. A new outside door was purchased and Pop paid cash for it and kept the receipt in his overall pockets. In the process of washing his clothes, the receipt was damaged and could no longer be read, and Pop had to pay again for the door. He was not too happy about it and he remembered that incident for many years.

John Roehm used the room at the top of the stairs, which later became the girl's room. Radios became popular at this time and were operated by large batteries which had to be recharged frequently. Mr., Roehm owned one of these and could listen to broadcasts of programs privately on his set of headphones. Months later he acquired a large speaker that he hung at the top of the stairs and we were all about to hear it now if we left the bedroom door open, and we were grateful to him for this good deed. I remember that he was not easy to get along with and many times that he ran a neighbor of ours, named Howard Carnes, off a grindstone that Pop owned. It could be operated by peddling your feet on a platform that made the large round stone revolve while a knife or other household tools were held against it for sharpening. In later years, one realizes that John Roehm was also looking out for our own good. He didn't stay at our home for very long and later moved to a small house on the Vogel farm in Silver Grove, where he lived by himself.

Ed, Amos and I used to ask mom if we could go fishing in 4 mile creek. She used to say, "Alright, but be home before your father gets home from work." A railroad whistle would blow at 3 P.M., signaling his time to quit work and it blew again at 3:20 pm telling us that he could leave. We always walked up through the Sister's property and ran home so that we would beat Pop home. We very seldom caught any fish and if so, there were never enough to go around, but it was fun and a good thing to remember.

We three boys slept upstairs on the east side, all in one bed. I slept in the middle and I had a problem of wetting the bed almost every night, but I couldn't help it. I had to sleep on my back because neither one of them wanted me to lie on my side, due to the after effects. In later years, the 1970's and 1980's waterbeds became popular, but I beat this fad many years before.

Frieda, Vi and Lil slept in the room where John Roehm had lived and Mary Jane slept downstairs with mom and Pop.

After kissing our parents "goodnight" and going upstairs for a night's rest, quite a bit of talking would be going on and Pop would holler at us, telling us to go to sleep. Many nights he would come up the stairs with kerosene light to check on us and make sure that we were covered up, as it was as cold in these bedrooms as it was outside. He also used to tell mom, "I think I'll go outside behind a tree and sit. It's just as warm out there as it is in here."

Electricity was being introduced in our area during 1921, and I can remember when the man began to wire our house. He was busy making holes and pulling wires all through the house. It was time to put away our "Aladdin" lamp, which was used as our main source of light when it's two mantels were lit and the tank filled and pumped up.

Mom loved to listen to music and had many old time recordings, which she used to play on an old Victorola, which sat on top of a table in the living room. The Victorola had to be cranked up for each record and needles had to be changed from time to time for its best operation. It seemed that she bought sad records instead of happy songs. One record was called, "The Fate of Mary Phagan," "The Letter Edged in Black," "The Prisoner's Song," "The Three Black Crows," "The Wreck of the Old 97," a sad railroad song. But she also had "Lucky, Lucky, Lindy," "Bye, Bye Black Bird," "Humoresque" played by a violinist. She might have had some records sung by the well-known Caruso, who was popular in those days.

A Cousin of Pop's, named Jake Neltner, who lived in Newport, KY, ran a fruit and vegetable peddling business in our area before my school days. He was good enough to take me along with him as he made his rounds through Melbourne in his truck, mostly stopping at his brother's and sister's homes. Mom used to get me dressed up for this visit and told me to be on my best behavior. It gave her a few hours when she didn't have to put up with me, if nothing else, and I enjoyed it very much, as everyone treated me to candy and cookies. Our stops included Mike and Mary Roth, then next door to Charlie Neltner's family, back out onto the highway to John Gries' place, and then our final stop was at Felix Gries' place. Other stops were made I'm sure, but these are the ones that stayed in my memory.

One summer day a car belonging to a constable named Tressler, the only lawman that I knew of at that time, went up to a house next to ours. The car was an open touring car and it had quite a few officers in it. It seems that prohibition was on at that time and people could not sell beer to others, but were allowed to make it for themselves. This home was rented by a man named, Johnny Carr, from Covington and he had parties and no doubt, sold beer. The officers broke all of the beer bottles that they found and we could hear them bit on the brick pavement outside of the house. Mom was scared that they would come to our house and find Pop's supply of beer, which must have been a small supply, because I even helped put the bottles in a bucket. A rope was tied to the bucket as it was lowered into the cistern under the back porch, the other end tied

to the handle of the cistern pump and the top put back on, so nothing looked suspicious. All of this worry and work for nothing, because Pop didn't sell his beer anyway, but it was a time to remember.

Not too long after that our home was equipped with electric. Ed purchased a new Majestic radio in 1932 or 1933, probably one of the best one's built in those days. The old wooden washing machine was replaced with an electric, BIG 3 washer, which we stored in the closet of mom and Pop's bedroom. Mom's days were made easier with this new washer and she enjoyed listening to the radio.

The year 1927 was now approaching. This was mom's last year to spend with us in the house she loved so much. Her health grew worse as time went on and doctors didn't seem to know what her trouble was. One would say that her teeth should be pulled. Ed said that a dentist came to the



house, put her in a chair in the living room and pulled all of her teeth out. Just think of how that must have hurt, and it was all for nothing. Some of her hair began to fall out. A chiropractor from town came out on a bus and would give her treatments. His name was Dr. Reikow. But this did not help her condition.

An older lady named, Mrs. Speers stayed with us and

kept house and also did the cooking. A young woman from St. Joseph Orphan's Home also helped around the house. We liked her better than we liked Mrs. Speers. Her name was Annie Musk, and a brother of her's worked for our Uncle Bill from Cold Spring, KY.

One night, December 7, 1927, Dr. Ragan and his son, who was also a doctor, drove into our yard in their auto and from a window upstairs, we saw the doctors and Pop put mom into the car. They were taking her to the hospital in Dayton, KY. When we saw that she was leaving, we opened our window and said, "Goodbye" to her for the last time. The girls all came into our room to wave their last farewell and she was on her way, never to come back. Mary Jane was not present at this time, as she was being taken care of by Mr. and Mrs. Joe Roth, due to all of the problems in the family, and being smaller she needed more care. This was a situation that was to remain permanent in later years, as Pop was forced to let them adopt her.

After mom had been taken to Speer's hospital that night, she died on December 8, 1927. It had to

be the saddest moment of Pop's life to return to face all of us huddled in the kitchen and waiting news of her condition. There was much crying and sadness, everyone feeling sorry for everyone else and wondering what would happen to us. How could Pop take care of all of us now? Ed was only 13 years old and Mary Jane 2 years old. Pop was 36 years old and left with 7 children to support.

Mom was laid out at home, dressed in a blue dress, her favorite color, and was placed in the Living room. Pop always said that she prayed that she would die on the Feast of the Blessed Virgin and she was granted this last wish, dying on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception.

Many friends and relatives remained at our house paying their last respects to us in our house of grief. Some gave money for Masses and extra cash to Pop to help defray the heavy burden, which was now on his shoulders. Ed told me that a neighbor, Mrs. Carnes, had made enough donuts for our family, the day of mom's death, and also enough to give to all of the people who visited us. Many, many people were so good to us that I don't suppose that we could ever begin to repay them, or remember all of these people. It was such a time of sadness.

Life went on after mom's funeral, but not as before. Mary Jane stayed at Roth's house and visited us at times. Viola and Elizabeth spent many days in the home of the Howley's.

The men that Pop worked with at the railroad took up collections of money and food for us. One evening they delivered enough food to more than half fill our kitchen. Frank Kramer was one of the truck drivers, (also my godfather). Another driver was George Fessler and their might have been more, (Bill Zacharias, Ray Tonnebeck, Pete Morscher and Matt Ruef).

Christmas time was coming soon, but it didn't seem to mean much to our family. Men from the St. Vincent de Paul Society came to see Pop one day and after talking with them, Pop allowed some of us to go to Newport with these men, who furnished us with a pair of new shoes. People brought toys for us, also many oranges and other fruits and fruitcakes and candy were plentiful. Mrs. George Neltner, who lived next to us, brought us a fruitcake. With all of the others who brought them to us, I don't know why her gift is remembered by me, but it will always be with me. How can we ever repay all of the kindness that was shown to us, not only at this time, but in all of the years we've lived? Surely each donor that gave us gifts during these days deprived their own family of something that they probably needed themselves. We are grateful to each and every one of them for their thoughtfulness and generosity.

The year 1928 was a year of many tiresome days of labor and worry for Pop. Vi and Lil were still at Howleys during the days, while Pop worked and the rest of us were at school. After he had finished his 8 hours of work, rushed home on his bicycle along with other fellow workers, such as John Amberger, Mike and Joe Roth, George Howley, Felix and Frank Gries and others who always rode their bikes. He would build a fire in the kitchen stove, begin to fix supper for us, and put water in pots to heat for washing our clothes. After supper he would be washing clothes and hanging them on a line outside. Some of us would try to help with the dishes and

cleaning up, but most of the work was done by Pop alone and it was late at night before he would lay down to rest. The next night he had to go through the same thing as it was time to iron and sew for us. He must have loved us very much and I'm sure that we could have helped him more than we did. A lot of this work was put on Ed and Frieda's shoulders in later months and Amos was also doing a fair share of helping around the house. Pop was a good cook. Although he didn't have money to buy things that he would have like to cook, everything he prepared for us was tasty.

I don't remember which year that our old wooden walkways were replaced by concrete, but it was probably before mom died. Again, Pop's friends and neighbors helped us do this job. We now had nice sidewalks that extended from the back porch up as far as the outside toilet and from the porch on the east side along the side of the house and all the way out front nearly to the road. When the front part was newly cemented, our neighbor, Mr. Carnes warned us to stay off of it. We played nearby, jumping over the top of it and didn't notice that one of us had stepped on the wet cement. A few days later the men took the forms away and Mr. Carnes saw a footprint. Every one of us denied being the guilty one and upon looking closer noticed that the print had only 4 toes on it. So we all knew of Amos' toe that had to be taken off years ago. The telltale print gave him away and is probably still visible at the old home place in the front part of the walk.

Most of our groceries were purchased at a store located in Silver Grove at the northwest corner of Second Street and Four Mile Pike. It was operated by the Enzweilers, who were friends of ours. Pop used to send Frieda and I to the store and we used our little red wagon to bring the groceries home. We were both scared to do this chore, as we were not well-known in that area and would meet boys and girls in groups, who would make fun of us. More than once, after leaving the store with a wagon full of groceries, we were stopped by some of these boys, who would beat us up and throw all of our groceries in the yard nearby. We would be crying and feeling sorry for ourselves as we picked up our things and started for home again, hoping that we would not meet another group, such as we had already met. We were scared to tell Pop about our incident, and in a week or so he would send us again to get a load of groceries. The Klu-Klux Klan was active in these days and Catholics were not liked by them. The same group of boys that treated us so badly when we were small, later worked with me and we became good friends.

At Christmas time in 1928 Ed and Pop made a rare visit to town. On their return later that night Ed told me that they bought toys for us and that they were hidden in the cow stable. There weren't a lot of toys, but enough to go around, and again the friends and neighbors made sure that we had something.

In 1930, Pop was laid off at the railroad, but getting a few days work at times. The bosses would have given him more work, but older men, who worked before Pop was hired, were entitled to this and there just was not any work available. Things looked very bad for us and thoughts of us

being better off in an orphan's home were probably in Pop's mind. We were not by ourselves as far as being poor, as most people had lost their jobs also, and anyone who remained on their job was mighty lucky. A steady income at these times would allow a family to live very well, as prices on everything went down, making one's money even more valuable.

Mr. Howley worked steady during the Depression and always gave Vi and Lil clothing and shoes and fed us many a day. If one of us became ill, it was Mrs. Howley who would bring soup, tapioca, or something good to eat, besides staying at our home with us whenever she was needed.

During the summer months, we might awake in the morning and find 2 or 3 cars sitting in our yard. We had no idea who they belonged to, but in time the owners would come down off of the hill behind us with buckets full of berries that they had picked in the Sister's woods on Anderson's place. We picked many of the blackberries ourselves and Pop would can them for our future use. He would make potato noodles sometimes for supper and served these berries with them. He sure could make a good meal out of nothing, such as a breakfast cereal that he called "PAP". It was made of flour and water, brought to a boil and would sprinkle it with cinnamon, add a little sugar and it was great. He served cornmeal mush, which I enjoyed very much. At times he would bake cinnamon cakes for our breakfast and his baking was as good as his cooking. Pancakes and apple fritters were also enjoyed. Amos liked shredded wheat and puffed rice, but cereals such as these were rarely seen in our home until later years. *All* cereals were moistened with condensed milk and water.

Andy Futscher, from Silver Grove, drove a baker truck in town and he used to bring sacks of stale rolls and cakes to us. They were still the same as fresh for us, as Pop would put them in the old stove oven to heat up, and they came out as good as new. He could have left these goodies at the bakery, but he was good enough to deliver them to a family that needed the food and was so glad to receive them.

Pete and Jake Morscher would go hunting rabbits in the fall of the year and bring 15-20 of them to us. We boys were big enough to clean them and Pop would prepare them.

Mrs. Helen Taylor, who knew both mom and Pop from working at the Avenel Hotel were so good to us, almost like a mother that we didn't have anymore. Her husband, Bert, had a steady job and they had 5 girls in their family. But they surely did more than their share to help take care of us. They brought toys and candy for the young ones and Mrs. Taylor prepared many hot meals for us. I remember her good hot fresh buns and baked beans among other things. These people always owned a car and had a different driver every time they came, as no one in the family could drive. They took us many places and the car was always crowded, even extra benches were put in the back seat.

During these days of the Great Depression, many men from all over the United States were out

of jobs and traveled around hoping to find a job of any sort to keep themselves in food and clothing. They would have been glad to work, but there was no hiring going on in any kind of business. The only clothing they had were on their bodies and the shoes they wore were worn out by the many miles that they had walked and chances looked slim for them to better themselves in any way. They traveled many days without food and the necessary things of life; we thought that we had troubles. But we were lucky to be together with a roof over our heads and enough food to eat, even if it wasn't the best.

These men went for weeks without shaving, and along with their tattered clothes that were seldom washed, did not give you the impression that you have them come into your home. They were called "BUMS" or "HOBOS" and they lived in camps along the road. One of these camps was located near the railroad tracks down Morscher's road, (close to Landmark as referred to in these 1980's). This place was handy for them as the railroad freight trains were their main source of transportation. There were times that we would walk right past their camps and would see their open fire, trying to cook a pot of soup or a can of beans or turnips, which they had taken from a nearby farmer's field. Their sleeping was done under a tree near the fire and some would come up to the road and sleep in Yung's barn, or in the area west of Morscher's Road, where they also made camps, as there were no houses in that location at that time. Many times after dark it was necessary to pass Yung's barn on the way to Silver Grove and you could hear them moving around or talking as you passed and these noises would give you quite a scare. We were already scared and still had to pass the lonely spot below Morscher's Road, and then the return trip made it worse, because you knew someone was going to scare you as you passed. All of this fright was unnecessary, as I never heard of anyone being hurt at any time by these people, who could have overpowered us at any time they wanted to do so. People were different in those days and it seemed that they did not rob and steal from their fellowman. Our doors were never locked at home, whether we were all at home or not, as there was no need to lock the doors. Many of these bums would stop at homes and ask for food of any kind and were fed fairly well by some families. But we had little to give them and it wasn't worth the stop.

One of these fellows knocked on our back door when I was very young and all by myself I was scared and he asked me for food and I lied to him and said that we had none ourselves. He thanked me and turned to leave and get back to the road again. I watched him from a window, still scared to death, as he made his way out of the yard. I ran to the kitchen and got two pieces of bread and put some molasses on them, then ran out to the road and gave him the sandwich, which he devoured almost instantly. If he is still living, he would probably remember where he got the worst handout of food in his days as a bum.

Many of these men walked up to the convent before they came to our place and I'm sure that everyone was given something to eat from the nuns at St. Anne's. In the early days, a very large barn was located just west of the Quick Shop at the corner of Anderson Lane; we called it Bregal's Road in those days. This barn also housed bums at night, but I think it was torn down in

the late 1920's. But I remember us boys playing in it, and it sat very close to the road. One of the cisterns that were built for storage of water for the cows and horses still stands on this land, about 25 feet from Anderson Road. It is said that the highway runs over the cistern's apex, as it is very wide. I looked in this cistern in the late 1970's when Opel's garage caught fire and I checked for more water if needed by the fire department. Water was still visible, but it wasn't very deep.

The year of 1930 Pop became sickly and had to be operated on for appendicitis. His stay at Speer's Hospital should have been a short time, but he developed an infection and very nearly died. He was getting along real well, but wanted to do things himself instead of asking the nurse's to open and close windows, adjust his bed or other small favors. His stay at the hospital became more than two weeks and then he had to spend more weeks at his sister's home in Newport at our Aunt Mary and Uncle Florent's. All during these days, Ed, Amos and I ran the house: Ed was now working at Doc Edwards's restaurant in Silver Grove and making his own money, which helped our family along. Amos and I were alone at home, most of the time or running around wherever we pleased, leaving the house work go to heck. Aunt Mary notified us that Pop was ready to come home so we got busy and cleaned the house as best we could, or Pop would have given us heck and we also wanted it to be clean for him.. The day that he was supposed to come home, Aunt Mary called back and said he wouldn't be home for a few more days. In the meantime, the house got dirty again and we had to do the housecleaning again. It was good to have Pop return to our old house, as we missed him while he was gone.

The home got an annual cleanup from top to bottom on every Good Friday. Each of us were assigned a job of some sort cleaning wallpaper, furniture, ceilings, stairs, stoves, all of the rooms, including the beds and bed clothing and nothing was to be missed. It seemed as though the good Lord was angry with us for working on this day, because it rained hard with loud thunder and lightning and it stormed the whole afternoon. Each Saturday the old place got a cleaning of floors, dusting and general cleanup. Ed was in charge and told us what to do. All of us would have an hour of time out to listen to a play on the radio, which lasted for an hour. It was called "Let's Pretend", a story of various fairy tales and interesting young people had to play out their parts. It would just hold you spellbound all during the hour relating stories about Cinderella, Treasure Island and many other stories and they were conducted by Nila Mack. It made us work harder before this show, so that we could enjoy it more, and when it was over we returned to finish our jobs.

Ed was a lover of opera music and favors could be received from him if one listened to them with him and acted like you enjoyed them also, which we didn't

During these school days, the Sunday Masses at St. Philip were held at 8 AM and a High Mass at 10AM. A Mass at 6 AM was also held on Christmas morning and there were times that it snowed during the night and what a pleasant surprise to see everything so beautifully white, as we were dressed and began to make our way up the road in the early morning. No cars had passed since it

snowed and we had to make our own path until a few cars passed us. Then we would get to walk on the path that the tires made in the snow.

We always looked forward to a good snow, and it seemed to stay on the ground longer in those days than it does now. Places for us to sled ride were plentiful; a field just west of our house, another ride through trees, another was St Anne's main road. We usually got chased off of their road, because we made it too slick and their own vehicles could not travel on it. Many children from the neighborhood would gather for these rides; all of us: Schoensteins, Showalters, Reinerts and Schneiders. The older boys made a bobsled, which is a small sled in front, which attached to a long board, followed by a larger sled, big enough for 4 or 5 of us. This was great fun even if you did have to help pull the sled back up for another ride. Regardless of how fast or far we would be able to travel, it seemed that Amos' Flexible Flyer would go farther than any of the other sleds.

The hill where Leonard Kopp now lives was the best place to sleigh ride. We would ride for a while during the daytime and start to gather wood for our night riding. Many young people and some parents would enjoy themselves as we rode on the fresh snow and warmed ourselves by the open fire at night, and stayed until the fire was going out. We went home in our damp clothing. A ditch along the road kept us from going across the road after coming down this hill. But at times we put an old door across the ditch, packed snow on the door and now could travel past the spot where the Quik Shop is now located. We also had to have a guard on duty to warn you if a car happened to be coming on the road. One day I guess we were a little lax with the guard duty and someone came across the road in front of Baker Young's truck. The driver acted quickly and headed his truck into a field and almost upset and we took off for home. I don't remember who was on the sled. The driver of the truck was named; Charlie Fink and he lived many years, dying in late 1985. I never mentioned it to him that I was one of the boys in the crowd when he wrecked the old truck.

The hill across from the old Melbourne School House was another good place for sled riding but a guard at the bottom was needed, because of the speed of the sled and not having a place to avoid going across the road. This hill was used by Jimmy Stephans and me for our early skiing skills. We would use old barrel stoves, put a piece of leather across to hold our shoes, and we did pretty well for ourselves and had a lot of fun. A jump for our ski run was also built, probably only a few feet in height, but it served its purpose.

In these early 1930's, Pop would get a few days working for farmers in the area and they could not afford to pay much money. He also was hired to do housecleaning or other work for friends and relatives and was able to scrape up a few dollars. Uncle Frank had regular customers in Newport and Ft. Thomas, where he worked putting in tons of coal or general housecleaning jobs and home repairs. When he was busy, he would hire Pop to help him finish these hard labor jobs. Ed was very helpful by still being at Doc Edward's in Silver Grove. Amos worked at some of the farms also, but none of them paid much money in those days. Then Frieda got out of

school; she got a job with someone in Newport, who owned Monmouth Jewelry Company. She couldn't have been more than 14 years old. I always felt that mom's death was harder on her than any of the rest of us, as she had no home life to amount to anything.

It was also in these days that Mr. & Mrs. Roth wanted to adopt Mary Jane. They had taken good care of her since before mom's death. She knew that we were her brothers and sisters and that Pop was her father. But I wonder how many times that we treated her badly when she would come to our house for an occasional visit, and if she really felt as though she was part of the family. I felt as though she was lucky to be living with the Roth's, but very unlucky to not having lived her childhood as one of us. It was truly a sad spot to be in. Pop did not want to give her up to the Roth's and we did not want her to be adopted away from us. Mrs. Roth would stop Pop many times as he passed their house and beg him to sign the necessary papers. Fr. Diemer was very much in favor of the adoption also. He made many visits to our home and pleaded with Pop, stating the various advantages that this girl would have over the rest of us, both financially and socially, and that we had no other way to repay the Roth's for all of the benefits they had already given to her. After many days of harassment and worrying, he came home one day and was very sad, saying that Fr. Diemer stopped him at the Roth's house. A lawyer was present and the papers were signed. He was very dejected and it hurt him all the rest of his life, mentioning it many, many times in his later years.

After Mary Jane's adoption on my way to Silver Grove, I would see her and stop to talk and when I'd leave I would think how lucky she was. She got to ride in a car, had a nice new home, good clothes and shoes, and seemed to have anything she wanted. She didn't have to hide holes in her stockings and pull the sock down and fold it under, so the hole wouldn't show. The shoes she owned didn't have holes in the soles that showed when she received Communion at the altar rail. Pop used to tell us that if one sole was good, put it over the top of the other. I had a habit of standing on one foot and putting the other foot on top of it. Pop would say, "Just look at him. He's not satisfied wearing them out on the bottom, but wears them out on the tops too."

Earlier in my writing, I mentioned about Andy Futscher giving us stale bread and other goodies from the bakery where he worked. We were not on his route, but a driver did go past our house with bakery goods. He would honk his horn when he came near our area and we seldom bought from him until later years. His name was Eddie Miller. If we did happen to buy from him, he would usually come to the rear of his truck, open his doors and let you feast your eyes on all of the products that were yours for the buying. The aroma that filled the air is one that a young boy is not likely to forget. Everything was in shallow trays that he could pull out, tilled with pies, rolls of all kinds, donuts, cakes, cookies, cinnamon cakes, cream puffs and about everything you could think of. If he had told me to eat whatever I wanted, the bill would have been enormous. He finally got to the article that we could buy, and he would drive away with all of these good things to eat as I

walked back to the house with a loaf of bread. In later years, when Amos got a job, we were treated very often from the bakery truck and he paid for all of it. His favorite was cherry cake and also cinnamon cake, which he would cut to suit him and take the best piece, which he was entitled to it. We were just glad that he didn't eat it all.

In the days before electric refrigerators, most families owned on ice box, which would keep leftover foods and fresh meat for a few days as long as you didn't run out of ice. The inside was equipped with shelves and racks and similar to the refrigerators of today with a few exceptions. A large, separate section at the top was for a block of ice, and a section at the bottom behind a flap door was a place to put a large pan, which caught the drippings of the ice as it melted. The two sections were connected by a pipe, so the inside was not damp or wet in any way. The real problem was to keep buying ice and forgetting to empty the pan at the bottom, causing it to overflow on the floor. Ice was delivered by a special built truck and driven by a man named Charly Keifer. He would give his customers a large cardboard sign to display in your window, so that he could see how much ice you needed before he left the truck. The sign showed 4 sizes of blocks that he carried and it was shown as such:

	25
100	50
	75

The size wanted was shown at the top, so all you had to do was to put that number up and he *would* bring it in and put it in your ice box. Probable prices were: .15 cents for 25lbs. .25 cents for 50 lbs. etc. Needless to say, he very seldom had to stop at our place until later years. Once in a great while, a birthday, or special occasion, we would get ice to make homemade ice cream on the old hand-cranked freezer. The job of preparing the ingredients was done by Pop, Vi, and Lit in the kitchen and while they were busy at that job, the boys would put the ice into a burly sack and break it into small pieces with the side of an axe. When the mixing was ready, the can had to be placed properly into the wooden bucket, then filled partially with ice, then a layer of coarse salt, then ice all the way up to the top and start turning by hand. Most of us wanted to turn early in the process, because it was much easier. Later, as it began to freeze, it was hard to turn. When it was ready to eat, you could bet your life that we had company. Johnny Schoenstein had been watching us make trips to the old cellar all the time and he knew when it was ready. He was the youngest of 3 boys, and they lost their mother just three years after our mom died. He was practically one of the families and lived in the convent house next to ours.

I'll never forget another type of truck that made trips past our house in the summer months. He would drive very slowly and look towards the house and call out loudly, "Any old rags, old iron." He was called a "Junk Man," and would buy anything made from iron that was worn out or any kind of metal and old rags. Again, it was seldom that we sold him anything, because we needed all the junk we had, and we wore all the rags we had, so his stop would have been a waste of time.

There were men in trucks, who would try to sell us watermelons also during the summer months.

It was rare that we bought one. The price was too high, probably about a quarter and they'd plug them for you at that cost.

## **THE OLD TIN ROOF**

One of the better features of the old house where our family grew up in was the tin metal roof that sheltered us from the weather. In the days of the 1920's and 1930's, even up to the 1940's, the many freight and passenger trains were being pulled by the heavy steam engines. The engineers had to blow their whistles at each road crossing as they traveled along the rails. So we became familiar with the sounds of these Chesapeake and Ohio whistles. The Louisville and Nashville railroad yards were located about 16 or 18 miles away from us. But it seemed much further away in those days. Their train whistles were a different sound altogether than our C& O's and on some evening you might hear their whistles as the train traveled close to the Licking River near where Pop's family grew up on Murnan Road. As these lonesome whistle sounds traveled to our ears, Pop would usually say, " Well, children, we might be in for a rain before long. As the darkness began to fall, clouds would gather in the western sky, and you could feel as though Pop knew what he was talking about As we listened to our radio programs in the later evening, the programs would be interrupted by static in the air as the storm clouds would gather.

When it was time to go to bed for the night, you could hear the distant thunder and flashes of lightning could be seen flickering, letting us know in advance that a rain was almost certain. We always said our night prayers together. Then each of us would give our father a good night kiss and we climbed up the stairs to our bedrooms. On the warm summer night with the windows open, you could feel the cooler breeze begin to blow and lower the temperature for a good night to sleep. We could hear the sounds of the tree frogs, crickets, katy-dids and other noises of the night that came to our ears from the country air that surrounded us. One could feel the tension of the coming storm as the thunder became louder and the lightning flashed across the darkened sky. A sudden, unexpected noise, such as our old dog, Blacky, chasing a wailing cat would make your heart beat faster. You would hear the first few raindrops at they hit, gathering more momentum now and soon the steady pitter-patter as the rain hit on the steep, slanting metal roof. After Pop thought the roof was washed off enough, he would get out of bed and go outside to turn the clean rain water into a 50 gallon wooden barrel that stood outside of the back porch on the southeast side of the house. Pop would return to his bed and in a little while the troubles of the day would soon be forgotten, as the sound of the rain hitting on the old tin roof would lull you to sleep in a short time. We all felt secure under our shelter and I don't remember of it ever having a leak in it during all of the years we lived there. It served us well.

The back porch used to be open and wasn't of much use other than a place to store our ice box and the washing machine during the summer months. In the 1930's Pop put a new floor down and screened it in. Now, we could eat our meals out here in the cool shaded porch instead of eating in the hot kitchen. The cooking for the family was done on the kitchen range. So, a fire had to be used even in the summertime. Someone must have donated a kerosene stove to us, so we could now cook on it and did not have to heat up the kitchen with the coal stove. One door on the back porch was on the east side and another opened to the south side leading us under the grape harbor to the cellar and then to the shed, cow stable and the outside toilet. Our cistern was under the back porch and we had an old fashioned hand pump to crank the water up and into the waiting bucket. The kitchen was the most used of all of our rooms. It was large and plenty of room for all Uncle Frank and Pop installed a nice hand pump on a homemade cabinet and a



kitchen sink that drained under the house into a little ditch on the west side. This was especially nice in the winter months. Now, we didn't have to go out in the cold to fill the water bucket.

Thinking of the kitchen sink brings me back to the days of Lil and I having to do the dishes together. If it was my turn to wash the dishes, Lil had to dry them. She would keep up with

me for awhile and then would slow down when she knew that there was enough room for the remaining dishes on the rack. Instead of drying these, she would let them dry and then put them away. This used to irritate me to no end, knowing that she was getting out of work that she should have done. This went on for some time, but I got the idea to keep them wet by wringing the wet dish cloth over the top of them. She got angry about this and the first thing you knew, we were in an argument and Pop would step in, and he usually took Lil's side of it. She was the youngest. Like the Smother Brothers on TV in the 1970's would say, "Pop always liked her best."

During the winter months, we used the kitchen range both for heating and cooking. It seemed as though Pop was always cold and fired it up pretty well. He would open the oven door and sit in front, placing his tired feet inside on some small pieces of wood, so he didn't burn them on the metal of the stove. I was seldom an early riser in the mornings. But at times I got up while it was still dark and everyone else was still in bed. I'd turn the radio on low, so as not to awaken the others I would sit in the dark in a rocking chair and watch the flickering fire from the stove from one of the raised up lids. Of course, Pop had built the fire and had already gone to work and the

kitchen was nice and cozy and quiet.

I think that the kitchen range was made in Kalamazoo, Michigan, if my memory serves me correct. There were four of these lids that I spoke of above and on very cold winter nights Pop would wrap these warm lids in newspapers and we used them to keep our feet warm until we fell asleep. Our dad had to collect these lids sometimes later, so that he would be warm when we had to get up and go to school. Gee, the poor fellow worked so hard for us to try to make us comfortable. Our beds were made up of a few blankets. But on very cold nights, we would throw old overcoats on top of us or anything else to help keep us warm, and we survived and few complained. It wouldn't have done any good anyway.

I'll bet all of you remember the old "cigar" tree on the east side of the house. The limbs on the side toward the hill were used to hang the hogs on when we butchered in the winter months. This job was a tough one and took about four or five days of very hard work. But it was fun, because of all the help who came to assist us on this job. Of course, the butchering took place after we were pretty well grown up.

The limb of this same tree that faced the road was used for a rope swing when we were small. We sure had a lot of fun taking turns to see how high we could go. When the rope was new and dry, it was easy to get into the seat. But if it got wet, the rope would be twisted and shrunk up, too high in the air for us to get into it. As busy as Pop was, he would take time to sit us on the seat and untwist the rope for us. He was always there when you needed him and we had so much fun in those days.

Another catalba tree was located about 30 feet north of the rope swing. It was in the front yard to the east of the front porch. It was in this tree that I used to climb up into when I was a small boy and from an overhanging limb would watch the big boys play baseball. I was too small to play, so I lay on this branch to watch the games. Pop gave me the nickname of "Possum" and he called me by this name for many years. A few years later, I remember that Ed and Amos let me bat and they told me that if I hit the ball over the road I could have the ball. Boy, I really tried, but just couldn't do it. It was at one of these games that our dog, Blacky, got killed by a passing car. That was a sad day for all of us.

## **THE LITTLE CELLAR UDNER THE SHED**

This cellar was the only place we had to store our canned goods and fresh vegetables for the winter months. It was located at the end of the grape arbor and to enter it you had to open the two sloping doors, then walk three or four stairs, open another swinging door and don't stand up or you'd hit your head on the top. It wasn't very high, but shelves were built along the east side, storage bins to hold potatoes, carrots, sweet potatoes and other vegetables were stored there. Pop always had a large crock of sour kraut, which was always tasty. To get to the kraut, you had to take a lid off of the top, lift a large rock off, which held a rounded board to press the kraut down into the juice, which kept it moist. During the spring rains, water would back up in the cellar and

got as high as a foot deep. After a few days, we had to clean it out. These rains would also allow water to stand in the front yard close to the road and if weather permitted, we would play in our bare feet. I used to try to make a boat from a small piece of wood put a paddle on one end and by using a heavy rubber band or a strip from an old inner tube, which would turn the paddle and propel the board across the water. We'd be wet from head to toe, but we enjoyed it.

The shed was built above the cellar and was used by Pop to keep his tools in also using it for a workshop, I always wanted to build something, but the nails would bend or the wood would split. It seemed that I just couldn't do any good at it. I did find that if Pop had a pretty good supply of nails, I could use his hammer and pound them into the ground and none of them would bend. I also found out that Pop didn't want me to use his nails like that, because when he wanted to use them, they were missing. Here I thought I was helping him.

An old tool was housed in the shed. It was made of rough lumber, had four wooden legs fitted in the main section. The user would sit on one end and he faced a hand hewn crooked root from a tree. At the bottom of the root was a place to put your feet on. The user would place a piece of wood under the root at the top, push his feet on the bottom and the harder he pushed with his feet, the better the piece of wood was held. The user then carved the piece of wood with a draw knife. It worked the same as a vice. This tool was called a Schnitzel-Bank. It was given to him by Grandpa and at one time, it belonged to our Grandfather Messmer. It would be of value these days. But I think we threw it out after the 1937 flood.

The roof of this building was almost flat, but had a gentle slope toward the hill side, and it had a tar-paper cover. Sometimes Pop would slice apples, put them on clean newspaper and cover them with a piece of cheesecloth to keep the flies off. The warm sun and the heat from the roof would dry out the slices and they were good to keep for a long time.

One day, as I played on this roof, Vi told me to watch out for a large wasp nest located near the front. I asked, "Where is it?" She said, "Just under the roof where you are standing." I laid flat on the roof and put my head down to look for it and found it. Or should I say, they found me. I was stung many times, but I found their nest.

Now that you've read about this man's upbringing, take a look into his journey to find his heritage.

## **The Ruschman Trip to Germany**

Sunday, Aug. 1, 1982

This day began as many others, but it was one that I looked forward to for many, many years. In my earlier years I always thought that someday I would visit our mother's hometown in Germany. During W.W.2 I flew above it in an airplane loaded with bombs, and hoped that we didn't have to drop these on her little village. When my tour of plying these bomber raids from England was over, I told my army buddies that someday I would like to return to see the old airfield, remembering the days of our



youth, the many friends that I had made and the ones who were so young to have their life taken so soon. Today is the start of our trip which would bring me closer to my two seasons for returning to Europe.

Mary and I had made plans ahead of time and everything seemed to have been taken care of properly. We had our plane tickets, Euro rail and Britrail passes, passports, MasterCard, some American money and enough German money for the first few days after arrival. We had 2,500 dollars worth of traveler's checks and our credit card was good up to 1,500 dollars, so we had little to worry about as far as our spending was concerned. We also made

plans with our bank that would send more cash, if needed.

Our son, Tom, took us to the airport, where we met our daughter, Beth, her husband, John, and our grand daughter, Sarah. Our T.W.A. Flight # 424 was being prepared to take us to New York. We said our 'Good-Byes' and at 1:05 P.M. we lifted smoothly from the runway and before long, our plane was but a tiny speck in the sky, to our loved ones on the ground.

When we arrived in New York, we were met by one of Mary's nieces, Kay Ambrose, who was working there at that time. We had a nice visit with Kay for a few hours and it was time to board the plane towards Europe. Our plane T.W.A. Flight #740 left New York at 6:35 P.M. and we made ourselves as comfortable as we could for the long flight over the Atlantic Ocean, sleeping as best we could.

Monday

Aug. 2, 1982

I awoke to find us over land and I assume it must be France, but I didn't know for sure. We touched down at Frankfurt, Germany at 8:05 A.M. During early 1944, our bombers flew about 5 raids against this city and this one we were greeted much better than the days of the war.

The train station is located at the airport and we boarded the train heading toward Mainz, Germany where we would change trains toward Mom's hometown in northern Germany. These Euro Rails passes on the trains are a great way to travel. You can get on any train and travel to any city, 1<sup>st</sup> class at all times and trains were on time, and well used by these people in Europe. They ride very smoothly; have compartments where you can actually lay down if you wish. The windows pull down which is great for taking pictures and there are no telephone or electric poles in the way, all you see is the beautiful real life scenery.

Shortly after leaving Mainz, we came in sight of the Rhine river, near Roblenz, heading now along the side of the river, one of the busiest in the world, with many boats and barges painted in various

colors. The steep hills are full of grape vines planted in perfect straight rows. You wonder how anyone could work on these steep grades, but they are taken care of properly and the hills are as clean as they can be the whole country side is free of weeds or other rubbish, just plain clean and beautiful and well kept.

Shortly after leaving the Koblenz area we saw the Ramagen Bridge across the Rhine. The U.S. soldiers crossed the Rhine. The U.S. soldiers crossed the Rhine here after a heavy battle. Not only were we seeing some of the finest scenery in the world, we were also traveling through many historical places.

As we raced along side of the Rhine the sight of old castles which were build centuries ago appeared. It makes you wonder how they could have built them in those early days. They still stand as sentinels after these many years have passed and survived many wars. They are truly a sight to behold.

Our train now headed toward Cologne. The Cologne Cathedral is the next building from the train station. This Cathedral was the only building standing for blocks around in all directions after this city was bombed during W.W.2. It survived with minor dismay. Construction began during the year 1284 and was finished in 1880, a total of 596 years. The twin spires are 525 feet high, truly a work of art in construction. We were to return in a few weeks to attend a mass in this famous Cathedral.

Our train now sped on it's way to Duisseldorf, and Essen, the heart of the Rhur Valley. During WW2, these two cities seemed to send up more anti aircraft shells at us than all the rest of the German cities. It was feared by all of us but we had a job to do and we had no way out. It is much more peaceful just riding a train than it was to fly over in 1943 and 1944. When our train arrived at Dortmund, we got off and changed trains to Osnabruck. The ride from Osnabruck took us on the way to mom's hometown, the main reason for making our trip.

While I still worked at the railroad, one of our engineers, named Art Burris, loaned me a book which was about flying combat over Germany in 1944. This book was written by a German fighter pilot, named Wille Heilman, and was called "I Fought You from the Skies". Art thought that we might have had a battle against each other, but as I scanned through it, I found that he began his combat days about the same time I had finished mine. As I began to read the book, I took such an interest that I didn't want to put it down. I began to have the feeling that this man was plying out of fields near mom's hometown at



that time I had no maps of Germany that listed small towns, such as hers. In one of his chapters he mentioned that he was flying north from Osnabruck was now below him, the town of Linger was in his view far off to the left. He continued on saying, "Below me now is the little Hasse Brook flowing as it wind it's way to the Ems". He told it so well.

Shortly after our train pulled out of Osnabruck we crossed over the Mitteland Canal and my feelings were justified. The town of

Bromsche was next, and I knew for sure that I was right, something inside told me as I read his book. The little "Hasse Brook" flows very close to the church and school where our mother grew up. It is hard to keep a dry eye when things such as this happen. Our train ride ended in a small town called Essen-Oldenburg and our final ride was on a bus to Loninggen. Trains used to service Loninggen's passengers but were done away with in later years. Freight service is still available there. The bus station uses the old train station and we had no idea if there were any hotels in the little village. I spotted one within view, across the tracks and we carried our luggage to the old hotel which didn't look too good, but we were tired and checked in for one night.

After freshening up and relaxing a bit we took a walk toward the main part of town hoping to find a good meal. These eating places are not like ours in our country, as they close and open at various times of the day, and we found them closed. We returned to the hotel and the woman said that she would prepare our meal for us. We were served in a small room just off of the barroom and the meal was good, but I had a problem with a cat, who roamed wherever it pleased, including above my shoulders one minute and purred around my feet the next and I just wasn't too happy with the situation.

After our meal we walked around town, towards the church tower which housed a clock, visible in all directions and chimes that rang every 15 minutes on the half hour and on the hour. These clear notes can be heard all through the little German village for everyone to enjoy. It seems that we were walking into a beautiful little fairy tale book, but everything was real. This tower is only a short distance from the St. Vitus church which was built in 1810. The old church still stands as it was, the tower fell down in the late 1940's and was rebuilt in 1954. The base of this tower is probably 60 feet square, built of stone until 35 feet, then topped off with a green slate roof. Almost all of the buildings in the town have red slate roofs which give added color to the town.

St. Vitus church is the one where mom was baptized, Confirmed, attended church as a young girl, and attended the school which is next door, just as ours is here in Melbourne, Ky. The church is much larger than I expected it to be, not very pretty on the outside, but well kept with shrubs and flowers all around. The front doors are tall and wide, made of wood, the pews are large and comfortable. Many stained glass windows are on each side adorned with large statues of saints. The altar is beautiful and has a pulpit that is a thing of beauty. The walls of the church must be two feet thick, probably made of rock, later the outside appears to be similar to a stucco finish.

There is no way for me to explain the feeling that was within me as I entered this church. In our town here in Kentucky, a son or daughter usually attends the same church as their parents and it means nothing for them to say, "I walked into my mom's church". But in a case such as ours where none of us even knew where her hometown was located, thousands of miles away and in a foreign county across the oceans, and now here I was at her church, and was overcome with emotion. We checked for the time of the morning Mass and returned to our hotel. It had been a very busy and exciting day for us.

Tuesday

Aug. 3, 1982

We are awakened after a good night's rest and were on our way to attend the morning Mass at St. Vitus. As we were leaving the hotel, the manager said that we should return and a breakfast would be

available for us. We thanked him but I knew that I wasn't ready to eat my meals with the cat, and we decided to eat in town after Mass. On our way to the church we met people walking, many riding bicycles and everyone seemed real busy. Little shops and stores were beginning to open for the days business. Some of the streets are blocked off to auto traffic so the walking people do not have to worry about getting hit, flowers abound from the window boxes and store fronts, the streets are paved with cobble stones and brick, giving it added color.

The Mass was attended by quite a few people, but room for many more. All of the prayers were said in German but we could follow in our own language for the Mass, but the sermon didn't come through too well, as we had no idea of what the priest was talking about. After Mass we went across the street from the church to a busy little coffee shop filled with fresh German goodies. They served coffee, rolls, tea rings, donuts and all of the things that are served in this country. While viewing all of this inviting bakery goods, a thought came to my mind from years ago while flying over this country.

I always had the idea that if I were ever shot down in one of these raids, I might have a good chance to escape because of a fair knowledge of the German language. Beside that fact, my rosary's crucifix had "MADE IN GERMANY" stenciled on it, and I always took it with me. Now, here I stand in front of all these good things to eat and I had a hard time asking for a cup of coffee and a few donuts, of course a few years have passed since I used any German, and I seemed to have forgotten everything.

We walked back to the church and took quite a few pictures, lit a candle at the Sorrowful Mother's statue, and wondered if Mom had knelt in the same spot, years ago. The stairs to the choir were spiral and made of granite, the railing trimmed by shiny copper, a fancy piece of artwork. The priest's home is next to the church and is well kept, the outside material looks the same as the church and has a steep slate roof. This was our next stop and it is here that I had written to Mr. Benken over the past few months. He is the town historian and he had told me that he would be available to show us around mom's town. When we rang the door bell it was answered by a pleasant, well dressed woman who was the secretary. We had a problem of me not knowing her language, and she didn't understand me. The priest at the morning Mass was older, but a young priest was there and he spoke in words that we understand. He said that Benken was on holiday (vacation), to us, and that he would be home in a few days. He also left a note saying that, "if Ruschman shows up, call Albers". The family of Albers is the parents of the two young girls who came to Melbourne to visit Leo Christen and they were his relatives. Leo was very helpful to us before we came on this trip with information, made many pictures for us from mom's old photos and would tell us all of the news of Loninggen after the girls returned to their home. All of our family should always be grateful to Leo for all of these girls visited Leo in 1980, I took them to see Pop when he lived in the little house behind Ed's, and he was so excited and happy to see and to talk to someone from Mom's hometown. Their names were Christa and Hiltrude, very young and attractive, and they spoke our language pretty well. It was a pleasure to meet them.

The secretary called the Alber's home and the priest told us that another sister to Christa and Hiltrude would be at the house in a half hour or less. As we waited in the parish house I noticed a tan, thin piece of leather and the numbers in black from 1 to 31. It was a calendar and another piece of leather had to be moved each day to frame that particular date. It really caught my eye and I sure did want one. The bottom of this strip was sewed on with the printed words of "ELECTRO ABELN 4573 LONINGEN", an electric company or at least, sold electric goods. The secretary called this store on the

request of the priest, and a young boy showed up with a calendar for me and I sure was glad to get it. I gave the little fellow, a Kennedy silver dollar and he was a happy boy as he rode away on his bicycle. These things were not for sale but the store used them as advertisements. I have never seen a calendar like this one in our country.

In a short time the Abbers daughters arrived and after the introductions she asked us where we were staying. When we told her, she said that she knew a much nicer place, drove us to the old hotel, we paid our bill and she took us to "The Duetsches Haus". Here we had a much nicer room with our own bath, higher in price and worth every penny of it. This hotel was run by a young couple named Neihaus, the man quite handsome, and the lady very attractive. Later that evening I had a little misunderstanding with her.

After our things were put in the room, Christa's sister said that she would take us to her house in the country to meet her mother and other family members. Both, Christa and Hiltrude were working in Osnabruck, about 30 miles away. As we approached their farm we could see a combine working and it seemed that everyone was putting in a hard day's labor. After meeting Mrs. Abbers and other people who were there, I wanted to take some pictures of the men who were working in the fields but Christa's sister said that we were to return again tomorrow when we'd have more time. Their farm home was very new, made of brick, well decorated and the other buildings were painted and kept in good order. Mr. Abbers was in the hospital recovering from a heart attack. We spent a few hours there, with a promise of return tomorrow morning and were driven back to Loning so we could shop for souvenirs.

This little town does not carry a large supply of souvenirs, because there are few tourists who visit here. We wanted the town's name on anything we bought for keepsakes and a variety was out of the question, so we had to settle for what we could find. These things were needed by for our own use, our brothers and sisters also and for Tom.

As we looked in various shops for these souvenirs, we ran across a lady's dress shop by the name of VOGEL's, a name well known back home, and very much to my surprise was another hometown name above a photography shop by the name of KRAMER. Some of Mom's old pictures were taken in this shop and all of these years I thought of writing to them for information about Mom but I figured that they were probably out of business by now. I talked to the owner and he is a descendant of the original family who started the business in the late 1800's. I was so happy to run across this little shop and to know for sure that Mom had walked through the same door many years ago as a young girl.

When we finished our shopping tour we carried the purchases back to our hotel, time remained for another visit to the church to find directions to the St. Vitus Cemetery. We checked with the young priest, who told us that at the time when the church was built, the cemetery was just outside of the church. As the town grew around the area of the church, all of the graves were moved to a site about ¼ of a mile away, this was done in the year 1857, long before our grandparents died.

As one enters a cemetery in Germany it is almost hard for a person to feel sad. They are a thing of beauty, with flowers planted everywhere and the tender care and love that they put into their work for their loved ones, shines for everyone to see. The attendant in charge took us to the grave of our Grandpa Holters who died on Feb. 14, 1891, and our Grandma Holters who died June 29, 1900, now side by side for these many long years. As I stood above their graves I wondered what they looked like, as we have

no photos of them and I know that no other close relatives had stood near them since Mom left Longingen in late 1909. Now, many years later, a grandson returned to pray over their graves, 73 years later. Their graves bore no monuments with names and there were many graves unmarked in the cemetery. After their death Mom usually could not afford a stone for them as she was left an orphan at an early age. Although the graves had no markers and there were no living relatives to pay for the cost of keeping their graves clean, theirs looked just as good as the rest of them, showing again that they take care of the dead. It was a good feeling to be standing here, so close to them. In our days at school, other children would talk about their two grandmothers or their two grandfathers and we had no idea that we were supposed to have two of each. We were lucky to have at least one set of grandparents on the Ruschman side, but it wasn't often that we had a chance to spend much time with them as they did not live close-by.

We returned to our hotel, as it was getting late in the evening and time for our supper. The hotel served us a very tasty meal and it was a pleasure not to have to eat with the cat on my shoulder, as it happened at the other hotel. Mary and I rested for awhile, returned downstairs to find a nice beer garden outside of our hotel. A large table was occupied by 4 or 5 men and I suppose they were talking over their day's work or business, all spoke in German. We took a smaller table nearby and drank a good German beer, enjoying every drop of it. As we drank, a middle aged man sat at a table next to us and I paid no attention to him as he entered. He sat alone and was reading a German newspaper. I had my camera with me and as we ordered another beer, I decided to take a picture of Mary as she drank her beer. This man said nothing as he seen the camera's flash. I remembered that there is a TIMER on the camera so I set it up on a table that was not in use, pushed the button and hurried to Mary's side before the flash came on. After the flash went off, this man put his paper down and said in perfect English, "Why didn't you ask me to take your picture? I would have done it gladly". He introduced himself as a salesman from Hanover, Germany, and he visits Lonings about once a month. He said that the town is that is not very active and he added, "It is just a quiet, sleepy little town". This man looked almost like Pat Kramer from Silver Grove. Pat died some years ago and I'm sorry that I didn't take a picture of him to show it to his wife and children here in America. He was so nice to talk to and seemed easy going as Pat was, and we had a pleasant visit with this man from Hanover.

Before we retired for the night, we went downstairs for one more beer at the bar inside the hotel. My camera was in the room but I wished I had taken it along. The hotel owner's wife was tending the bar and I mentioned before she was an attractive women. As we drank our beer I asked her if I could take a picture of her. She did not understand so I sort of acted it out in this manner. I smiled at her as though I was having my picture taken. Then I closed one eye and acted like I was looking through the camera and snapped my fingers as though I was tripping the camera lens. All of this time I had one eye closed and she must have thought I was winking at her. She came out from behind the bar and went to get her husband. He came out and asked me what I meant and I told him. He understood and I was sure was happy and I never asked for her picture again.

In the morning we attended Mass and were surprised to see quite a few young boys and girls. School was to begin the next day and arrangements of some sort had to be made before they began their school year. The priest said that no word had come from Benken as yet and time was running out for us, as our plans called for leaving the next day. The trip seemed incomplete if we didn't have the opportunity of meeting Mr. Benken. We returned to the hotel for our breakfast as it is included with the price of the room. After our meal we talked with Mr. Heihaus and he told us that he thinks he can find Mr. Benken

for us. We also told him that we would not be far from the hotel because the Albers and she were out of breath. She had hitch-hiked all of the way from Osnabruck to let us know that her sister had an auto accident the previous day and they could not take us out to the farm. No one was hurt but the car was badly damaged. Can you imagine someone hitch-hiking 30 miles just to tell a stranger that they couldn't keep their word about taking us back to their home? That sure was nice of her and they did not owe us such a courtesy. Hiltrude stayed with us most of the morning and even helped us pack our souvenirs from yesterday and aided us greatly in preparing the post office slips that are necessary to fill out before mailing. I don't know how we could have done without her. As we walked past a large bank on one of the main streets she told me that the property at one time belonged to the Holters family. I took some pictures of it so I could show it to my brothers and sisters that it's now my bank, that they searched for years to find any relatives were told that the lone heir (mom) had gone to America as a young woman. I also added, that in the will, it mentions that the bank would belong to the first one of her people to visit the town Loninggen, and that is me, so it's my bank. It didn't turn out that way though, as there are other people by the name of Holters who live in this town, but they are no relations to us at all according to the records of the church.

Hiltrude anxious to visit with her father who was in the local hospital and asked us to go along with her. Mr. Albers is a well built man with a large frame and spoke softly and seemed like a very easy going person. He spoke some English, easy for me to understand, and he said that he learned it while being a prisoner of war during ww2, and living in a camp in the state of Virginia. Somehow I could never imagine him as being an enemy of ours, but that is the way things are while being in wars on the other side. In all of the days that I have spent in Germany, I never once mentioned that I used to fly in a bomber over the cities and I don't think it would have gone over too well with the people. Lunch time was approaching and after awhile we left Mr. Abbers and Hiltrude at the Hospital and we returned to ask about Benken at the church.

After lunch, we walked toward the open field on the west side of the church. The road took us over the top of the little "Hasse Brook," a Stream about the size of 4 mile creek. It ran between a pasture land and we walked from the bridge down to the side of it and wondered if mom had played here as a young girl. The water seemed fairly clear, but it also showed signs of pollution, but in her days I'm sure the water was in perfect condition.

Wednesday

Aug. 4, 1982

Later in the afternoon, our walk took us to part of the town that we had not been in as yet. We took a turn to the left as we came out of the hotel and stayed on this street, viewing the clean, neat looking yards and homes, the pretty displays of flowers in the window boxes and enjoying the nice warm summer day. After a little while I spotted an ice cream store. Mary didn't want one, so I ordered only one, came out of the store and seen some large, inviting trees across the street. I did not notice the condition of the building that stood there, only the fact that the trees looked so inviting and that I wanted to stand under their shade. I said to Mary, "Let's go across the street and I'll eat my ice cream in the cool shade of these trees." We faced the building from a view of its side and I did not recognize what I had found. When we came under the shade, and now looking at the end of the structure, I knew that I was seeing the home that

was on an old picture that was sent to mom in 1912. I was as happy as I could be, filled with emotion, as I said to Mary, "Mary, I'm home. This was Mom's house."

The old photo showed this wooden structure with these same trees (much smaller then), a team of horses hitched to an old mowing machine with a man on the seat. Along the side were three women and an old man with a beard and he stood alongside of an old wagon. This was a typical 1900 farm picture. On the back of the photo that was dated August 27, 1912, was handwriting in German and for many years we wondered what these words meant. Now, almost to the date, I stand on the same spot from the source of this picture. It was a great feeling and I was so pleased to have found it.

The building had been damaged by WWII and rebuilt on the outside, now brick instead of the old wooden frame, but I would have known it anywhere. The building was really an old barn where the animals lived on one end and the people on the other. This was the case in many of the old European countries. While all of the buildings in this town were neat and well kept, this one was in need of many repairs, and we didn't think that anyone lived here anymore. I was elated to have found it and took many pictures of it to show to our family back home. It seems as though mom must have been near us this day. As I came out of the ice cream store she probably said, "Go across the street Elmer. Here is what you can see." Later it seems rather odd that we didn't show to old picture to anyone in town as they could have told us where it still stood, but it was much better to have found it on our own.

Thursday

Aug. 5, 1980

Again, we attended Mass, this time the church yard filled with bicycles and many children returning to school and a number of adults also present. Before we left the hotel Mr. Neihous said that he was going to call Benken, if no answer he would drive to his home and find him for us. After Mass, the last one that we would attend in Mom's church, we again went to the priest's home and came out with no word of Benken. We thanked them for trying so hard to contact him and bid them farewell as we would leave in the early afternoon. While eating our breakfast, Mr. Neihous said that he got in contact with Mr. Benken and that he would meet us here at 10:30 a.m. Since most of our luggage was already packed, we took our last walk to part of the town and returned to find Mr. Benken had already arrived on his bicycle. He was much younger than I expected and is a very nice looking gentleman. After our introductions he said, "Come on, I'll show you where your mother lived." I told him that we think we found it yesterday. He took us to the old house and said that a man and his wife still live there, much to our surprise. As we came to the entrance of one of the doors an older man was on his way inside and Benken called to him. The man stopped, Benken told him who we were, that I was one of the children of Elizabeth's son", as though it couldn't be true. Tears of emotion showed in his eyes and mine were far from dry. He spoke broken English but had no trouble in conveying his words to us. He was a man probably in his upper 70's better than 6 feet tall with a large frame and a gentle smile. We made our way through the barn section then to a door on the other end to the living quarters. His wife is smaller, and could not walk well. She also seemed like a very gentle and quiet person. She could not understand our language, but Benken and her husband would relate to her. The man's name is Otto Keenken, he is a son of the person who sat on the mowing machine in the old picture. We stood in the kitchen section, it was neat and clean, as we talked Otto made his way to a nearby cabinet and opened one of its doors. He brought out a little bottle and said to us, "Ve drink a schnapps". I told him that I didn't care for one at this time of the day. He

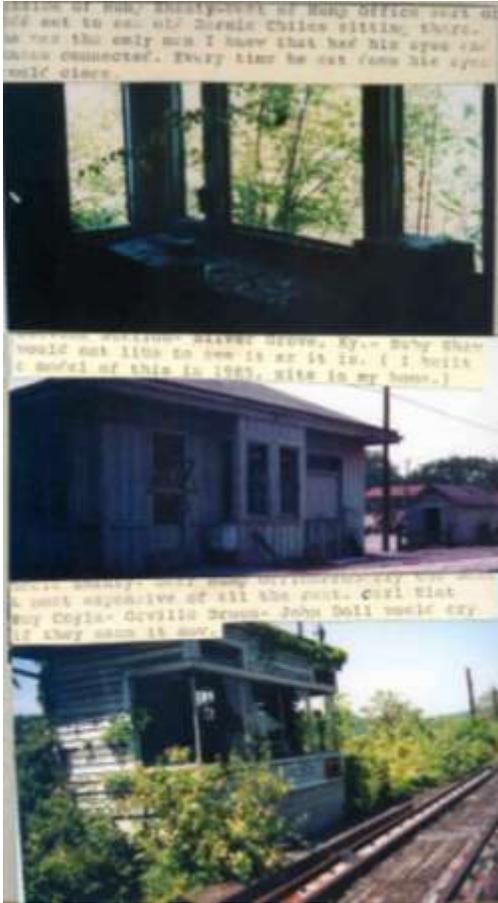
replied, "I say, Ve drink a schnapps", and so we did, as we clinked our glasses together and wished each other good luck. The one drink was tasty but one was enough. Mrs. Kunken showed us around the living quarters which she kept neat and clean, everything was old fashioned but it was all that they had, and still looked very nice. Otto opened a door to the basement and said to be very careful on the steps. These steps were narrow and spiral as we made our way to the basement. Otto said that our Mom used to come down here for her supply of canned fruit and fresh vegetables. He said that the same temperature remains all through the various seasons and everything keeps long and stays fresh. Benken took a picture of canned goods, standing on the same shelves from the long previous years, when Mom was a girl. This day sort of gave me the idea that I was the main actor in a movie of my life. I felt as though Ralph Edwards would appear soon and say, "Yes, Elmer Ruschman, this is your life. We take you back through the years to the place where your mother grew up", as he used to say on his television show back in the 1960's. when we went upstairs, we returned to the outside section where the old photo had been taken years ago. I had a few extra copies of the picture with me and I showed it to Otto. He pointed to the man seated on the mowing machine saying, "Mine fadder and muder," naming others as his one aunt and his grandmother and grandfather. He was so pleased to see this picture and replied, "This is the first picture that I have seen of my parents for many years. We have no pictures of any of our relatives at all, since World War II." I told him to keep this copy and he was so pleased to get to keep it. I asked him what happened to all of their old pictures. He replied in a low voice. "They burned all of them here in the yard after the war." I felt so sad and I did not want to ask whose soldiers had done such a mean thing, not only to Otto, but everyone in town. If an officer gives the order, it has to be carried out but such a thing seemed absolutely "mean" to me, and made no sense at all

As we were spending our last moments at the Hunken's home, Mr. Benken took a picture of us as we stood on the spot where 70 years previous, the older generation stood for a family picture. When we returned to Melbourne and had these pictures developed they all show Otto smiling down at me as though he was so proud that one of Elizabeth's sons had returned to the old home. How could such a nice man be on the other side, as an enemy during WWII? He told me he fought in the German army and was taken a prisoner of war, and made a trip to America and spent time in a prison camp. He might have been with Mr. Albers list but I didn't ask. I did ask him if he was treated fairly well and his only reply was in a low voice, "It was a lot of work," and we left it go at that, so it probably wasn't good.

As we posed for the last photo, Otto pointed to a spot above the doorway where the figure #1 appears. When the town of Loninggen was given house numbers, it began with this one and Benken told us that Otto is very proud of his #1 house numbers.

The past hour or so had been so interesting and exciting that the time passed so suddenly it was hard to believe that it was time to depart and I really didn't want to leave, but we had many more things to see. The Kunkens asked us to return again before leaving for America and we told him that it would be our final farewell. We thanked them for being so gracious and caring to us, for really worthwhile and we walked away towards the hotel with along with Mr. Benken. I looked back for one last look at the old home and Otto still stood there and waved goodbye, the last time that I will see him, I'm sure. The trip was well worth the money, because we had met Mr. Benker, walked the streets where Mom lived, attended Masses at the church, seen her school, the stores that she visited, her mother and father's graves and had just left her old home place. Benken told us that the town council will force Otto to either clean up around his place or they will have it torn down in the very near future, but Otto had not been told this

of yet. Benken that Otto is a poor fellow and is too old to do his own repair work and it will only be a matter of time until these things are done. These things were said for us to hear but it is understandable and I hope there is some other way out for Otto.



As I walked along with Benken and Mary, I wondered if our son Tom, or our daughter , Beth would ever make a trip as we were enjoying and I thanked God that during the days of the war, that we didn't have to bomb the "Sleepy quiet little village," as the salesman from Hanover had described the town.

We were told by Mr. Benken that Mom's parents owned a farm in a village about 3 miles away from this town. It is called AUGUSTAFELD and it was here that Mom was born and lived until her father died. They also owned a home in Loningen at that time. After her father's death, her mother remarried into the OSTERFEL family and this family owned the old building where the picture was taken. Mom lived here with these people from the time of her mother's death until she came to America. He said that the farm house in augustafeld burned down in the 1920's.

Pop had said years ago, that mom mentioned many times that she left valuable things that she would have liked to have brought along with her but couldn't do so. It makes you wonder what happened to the farm land after all of these years and we had no time to check it out and weren't really interested in such things

When we arrived at the hotel we had a few pictures taken with Mr. Benken and we thanked him greatly for all of the information that he gave us and for making our visit with the Kunhen's so moving. We said 'Goodbye' to him as he rode away on his bicycle and we went inside to finish packing our few remaining things. It was now time to leave the town where our Mom grew up and I left with many treasured memories for the rest of my days. I'm sure that Mom guided our steps through the village as both she and Pop smiled down at us.

Elmer F. Ruchman & Mary

Written with love for all of our relatives, wishing that all of you could have seen what Mary and I enjoyed.