

# The Bukovina Society of the Americas

## NEWSLETTER

P.O. Box 81, Ellis, KS 67637 USA

Vol. 15 No. 2 September 2005

### Board of Directors

Oren Windholz, President  
Raymond Haneke, Vice President  
Martha McLelland, Secretary  
Bernie Zervas, Treasurer  
Ralph Burns  
Irmgard Ellingson  
Joe Erbert  
Art Honas  
Juliet Honas  
Ralph Honas

Norma Lang  
Werner Zoglauer

### International Board

Michael Augustin  
Ayrton Gonçalves Celestino, Ph. D.  
Aura Lee Furgason  
Rebecca Hageman  
Laura Hanowski  
Larry Jensen  
Ortfried Kotzian, Ph. D.

Edward Al Lang  
Paul Massier  
Van Massirer  
Steve Parke  
Doug Reckmann  
Kurt Rein, Ph. D.  
Wilfred Uhren  
Sophie A. Welisch, Ph. D.

Editor: Dr. Sophie A. Welisch  
sawelisch@juno.com

Web Site: [www.bukovinasociety.org](http://www.bukovinasociety.org)



## BUKOVINA SOCIETY ANNUAL MEETING

The annual meeting of the Bukovina Society of the Americas, a Kansas not for profit corporation based in Ellis, KS was held on Thursday, July 28th, 2005. After reports from the treasurer and secretary, elections were held to replace out-going Board members. Martha McClelland and Ralph Burns were reelected while Juliet Burns and Art Honas will replace Dennis Massier and Betty Younger for three-year terms. Becky Hageman estimated that 75 per cent of Society members have email and inquired if the *Newsletter* could be sent via email to save costs. It was determined this could be a subject for an opinion poll in a future issue of the *Newsletter*.

Steve Parke presented the results of the membership survey, which had been mailed to the Board in advance. It generated much discussion on the needs and future of the Society and the roles of the Corporate Board and the advisory International Board. Numerous members attended the FEEFHS convention held in St. Paul, MN between August 19-21, at which time they discussed the Parke report. Their recommendations are pending.

Any members wishing to receive future copies of the *Newsletter* via e-mail should contact Becky Hageman at [info@bukovinasociety.org](mailto:info@bukovinasociety.org).

## BUKOVINA PEOPLE AND EVENTS

- Over 150 members of the Armbrister Family celebrated their 100 years in America with a reunion on July 30-31 north of Ellis, KS. Saturday was spent at the Verlin and Carol Armbrister farm and Sunday at the St. John's Lutheran Church, the very church founded by the Swabian Lutherans from Illischestie, Bukovina. Johann and Anna Haas Armbruster came to Ellis in 1905 with their nine children. William Armbrister, Wichita, KS, promoted the events and asked for a presentation on Bukovina family heritage. President Oren Windholz and Executive Secretary Joe Erbert represented the Society.
- A family reunion for the descendants of John and Anna Flaman *née* Knoblauch was held on August 6-7-8 in Edenwold, Saskatchewan and at the Flaman Cottage at Pasqua Lake near Fort Quappelle. This was the first family gathering since 1958, when

John and Anna celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary. On Sunday, many of the descendants of John and Anna's siblings also joined, bringing the total number of relatives at the gathering to about 100. A truly enjoyable time was had by all.

- On May 14-15 the *Landsmannschaft der Buchenlanddeutschen* (Regional Association of the Bukovina Germans) held its 55th annual convention, this time in Untereichingen. This year also marks the 50th anniversary of the sponsorship of the *Landsmannschaft* by the Bavarian District of Swabia. Saturday's program focused on cultural programs and historical presentations. Among the guests were dignitaries from the old homeland including Professor Mykola Tkatsch, Rector of the University of Czernowitz, and Gavril Mirza, President of the District Council of Suceava. Otto Exner of Suceava reported on the status and activities of the German Forum, which has been active in Bukovina for the past fifteen years while other speakers addressed topics such as the Schiller Theater in Czernowitz, and developments during the past decades of Bukovinian dance and choral groups. A memorial service in honor of the departed opened Sunday's session led by Ewald Zachman, the *Landsmannschaft's* president. Festivities continued with a musical interlude by the Salzgitter-Lebenstedt choral group and dances in national costume by a group from Bünsau. The noon meal afforded the guests an opportunity to socialize while enjoying the music provided by Helmut Jaschusch. At 5:00 p.m. the 55th annual convention of the *Landsmannschaft der Buchenlanddeutschen* drew to a close.
- Richard Wolff, a member from Los Angeles, CA recently emailed the Society, "I was very pleased to be able to pay a brief visit to Ellis July 23rd while on a long cross country bus trip, see our society headquarters and museum, and meet with three of our very knowledgeable society members, Oren Windholz, Joe Erbert, and Ray Haneke. My paternal grandmother was Pauline Rankel of Lichtenberg, Bukovina, one of a great many Bukovina Rankels, I've come to realize. When I first began with family research in 2000 I knew of no such place as Bukovina; my grandmother always said, merely, that she came from Austria. Now, thanks to the LDS library system, the resources of the Bukovina Society, and a fortunate online acquaintance with my newest documented second cousin, Gertrud Siewi of Tiefenbach, Germany (born Rankel, first

contacted through the society's online guestbook), I know of more Rankels than I could ever have imagined. *Vielen Dank*, Gertrud, your work has been a real goldmine to me! I'm very grateful to all the hard working people who make our Bukovina Society function, and in particular to Oren, Joe and Ray who gave me their time, shared their information and helped me back and forth between Hays and Ellis. My best to everyone.

- Lawrence Weigel, Hays KS, a prominent Volga German historian, author and musician, died June 19th, 2005 in Hays. Lawrence always had a keen interest in the history of his Bukovina German neighbors in Kansas. He was a presenter at the Bukovina Heritage Festival, in Ellis, KS July 19-22, 1989, the first of the Society's Bukovinafests. After researching Bukovina popular songs, he translated their lyrics and performed them, much to the delight of all assembled.
- Jacque S. Sramek-Lucero, Garden City, KS died Tuesday, June 7, 2005. Jacque was a life member and supporter of the Bukovina Society. She was one of the members of the English speaking tour of Bukovina in 1996 organized by the Landsmannschaft der Buchenlanddeutschen, Augsburg, Germany and a person whose company delighted the entire group.
- On May 13 Oren Windholz and Ray Haneke hosted five people from Brazil at the Bukovina Society headquarters who were in Ellis on the group study exchange program sponsored by Rotary International. Their occupations included: police officer, product designer, teacher, mechanical engineer, and musician. During his talk to them on our history, Oren mentioned the Bukovinians in Rio Negro/Mafra Brazil and one their leaders, Ayrton Celestino Gonçalves only to discover that he was a good friend of one of the visitors.

Kennst Du den Wald, beim Dorfe Glitt  
 Darin ich oft und gerne schritt  
 Auch oft ich ging durch sein Revier  
 Ich fühlte mich wohl, in sein'm Gemirr  
 Ich hielt oft Rast auf weichem Moos  
 Wo's Bächlein leis und flüsternd floss  
 Der Wald der gab mir viel Genuss  
 Drum aus der Fern, schick' ihm den Gruss.

Know you the forest near town Glitt  
 Through which I oft and gladly paced,  
 Where as I wandered through its turf,  
 I felt secure in its embrace?  
 On its soft moss I then reclined  
 As shadows their enchantments wove.  
 Its woodland gave me such delight,  
 So send it greetings with my love.

Er spricht zu mir in meinem Traum  
 Komm' heim in meinen kühlen Raum  
 Beschreit die Wege und den Steig  
 Der windet sich durch Baumgezweig  
 Und schreite bis zur Lichtung hin  
 Die dir noch immer schwebt im Sinn.  
 Dann wenn du stehst am Rand beim Wald  
 Aus mir dein Gruss dir widerhallt.

So oft I hear in dreams so sweet,  
 Come home, come home to my retreat.  
 Bestride the paths and mountain tracks  
 Which wind through glens and forest brush.  
 And when you then the clearing see  
 Which to this day you still recall,  
 Then you the forest's edge have reached  
 From which your greetings I'll return.

Kennst du das Kirchlein im Dorf Glitt  
 Das lebt und schafft in mein'm Gemüt  
 Steht mir zu Seit, im fremden Land  
 Hält stets verknüpft das Heimatsband  
 Es gab mir aus der Heimat mit  
 Ein Pflänzchen das im Fremden blüht  
 Es wächst und blüht in einem fort  
 Ihr schickt den Gruss aus diesem Ort.  
 Er spricht zu mir in meinem Traum  
 Komm heim, betritt nochmals mein Raum.  
 Keh' ein und sei mein lieber Gast  
 Und halt bei mir ein Weilchen Rast  
 Kannst lauschen dann dem Chorgesang  
 Und auch dem trauten Glockenklang  
 Wenn du am Rand vor dem Altar  
 Mir kniend bringst dein Danke dar.

Know you the church in my town Glitt,  
 Whose teachings penetrate my soul,  
 Which stands with me in foreign land  
 And always holds me to the goal?  
 It gave to me a homeland gift:  
 A seedling that in strange lands blooms  
 Which flourishes amidst the din  
 And sends you greetings from afar.  
 To me it oft repeats in dreams:  
 Come home, bestride again my place.  
 Return and be my welcomed guest  
 And rest a while in hallowed space.  
 The choir hymns you shall then hear  
 As well the faithful peal of bells  
 When you the altar rail approach  
 To bring me thanks on bended knee.

\*Reprinted from pp. 113-114 of Gisela M. Geisler's *Lebensspiegelungen: Neue Lieder, Gedichte und eine Erzählung von Gisela M. Geisler mit dem Bildnis der Dichterin* (Detroit: Kramer Printing Company, 1937). English translation by Sophie A. Welisch. Gisela Maria Geisler was born in Glitt on November 15, 1888; after she married Josef Kainz, the couple immigrated to the United States in 1921, settling in Detroit, MI.

**MEIN DORF IN BUKOWINALAND\***  
 von Gisela M. Geisler

**MY TOWN IN BUKOVINALAND**  
 by Gisela M. Geisler

Kennst du mein Dorf, das heisset Glitt  
 Das ich lange nicht beschrift  
 Den Bach der emsig, fröhlich fließt  
 Der mich hier in der Fremde grüsst  
 Er winket mir so freundlich zu  
 Und fragt mich, - wann kommst heim mal du  
 Du siehst mich immer nur im Traum  
 In deinem fremden Weltenraum.

Know you my town? Its name is Glitt  
 Which for a long time I've not seen.  
 The stream which there so gayly flows  
 And greets me here on foreign shores  
 Smiles down at me in friendly ways  
 And asks me when I shall return.  
 You see me only in your dreams,  
 In your strange world, or so it seems.

Kommst du mal heim, in dein Dorf Glitt  
 Ich werde murmeln ganz vergnügt;  
 Wenn du am Rande mich belauscht.  
 Ich hab noch nicht mein Kleid vertauscht.  
 Ich murmle, murmle durch das Dorf

Should you again to Glitt return,  
 I'll whisper to you happily.  
 And when you hear me at the shore,  
 You'll see I haven't changed at all.  
 I murmur, murmur through the town

Und schlängle nah' an manchen Hof,  
 Du sollst dich freuen dann mit mir  
 Wenn an mein'm Rand wirst stehen hier.

And flow along through many farms.  
 You should of course with me delight  
 To once again my shores bestride."

Kennst du den Berg, in mein'm Dorf Glitt  
 Auf ihn ich lief mit leichten Tritt;  
 Hoch oben froh - ich oftmals stand  
 Und schaut in's Bukowinerland.  
 Er ist mein lieber Berg Poscheer  
 Dem aus der Fremd ich schick die Ehr'.

Know you the hill in my town Glitt  
 Up which with easy gait I ran?  
 High up and glad I often stood  
 And gazed at Bukovinaland.  
 It is to my hill Poscheer  
 Where from afar these thoughts I send.

Es spricht zu mir in meinem Traum  
 Komm' heim in deinen Heimatsraum  
 Und schau dir an dein liebes Glitt  
 Kannst seh'n wie alles grünt und blüht  
 Wenn du auf meinem Rücken stehst  
 Und auch den Rand entlang du gehst  
 Wirst sehen dann, wie's Dorf ist schön  
 Von meinem grünen, stolzen Höhn'n.

You speak to me in dreams so oft:  
 Come back again to your hometown  
 And look once more at lovely Glitt.  
 You'll find it all in verdant gown.  
 When you once more my crest ascend  
 And wander calmly on my slopes,  
 Then you will see so fine a town  
 From these resplendent heights transcend.



Grand March

**FIFTEENTH ANNUAL  
 BUKOVINAFEST IN BRAZIL**

by Ayrton Gonçalves Celestino (Curitiba, Paraná, Brazil)

On the two consecutive weekends of July 8-10 and 15-17 the Bukovinians of Rio Negro and Mafra held their annual Bukovina Fest. Friday, July 8, opened with musical programs by local adult choral groups at St. Joseph's Church in Mafra followed the next day by presentations by sixteen folkloric and dance groups. The first weekend ended with

Sunday mass in honor of our forebears and a luncheon in the dining hall of the church.

The second weekend began with a program of musical renditions by children and young adult choral groups in Rio Negro. Not to be excluded was the great parade on the following day of trucks and other vehicles. Identified by family names, i.e., Fuchs, Hones, Maidl, Schafaschek, Schelbauer, and others, the trucks proceeded through the cities of Rio Negro and Mafra and were greeted along the way by fireworks and the music of on-lookers and well-wishers. After the parade the group met in the halls of the *Sociedade Agricultura União* in Rio Negro where they enjoyed the local beer (*chopp*) and socialized with friends and acquaintances. The day (July 16) concluded with a banquet at the same location. Highlights of the evening included the election of Joice Fuchs as the reigning Bukovina Queen for 2005-2006 and the music provided by the *Edelweiss Trio* from São Bento do Sul under the direction of Márcio Brosowski.

At holy mass on Sunday the congregation gave thanks for the many blessings of the past year followed in the afternoon by fun and games for young and old alike. Márcio Brosowski again delighted the group with his ensemble while in another area of the hall *Truco Dourado*, a favorite card game of the Bukovinians, brought forth a champion winner.

Anyone interested in attending next year's Bukovina Fest in Rio Negro/Mafra may contact the author at [ayrgcelestino@ig.com.br](mailto:ayrgcelestino@ig.com.br) or at his home address: Rua Waldemar Kost, 1505 - B. Hauer Curitiba, Parana 81630 180



Hon. Celestino with 2005 Queen

## NEMECHEK-ROURKE REUNION

The annual Nemechek-Rourke reunion and campout was held at the Hansen Boy Scout Camp near Kirwin Reservoir near Stockton, KS, on the last weekend of July. As noted in a similar Newsletter article last year, this is a gathering of descendents of the Stephen F. Nemechek and John J. Rourke and primarily, the gathering of those families in which there were four Rourke and Nemechek inter-marriages from 1945-1952. Eighty-six attended this year, one short of last year's record attendance. Looks like we slacked off!

Three members of the first generation of elders who started bringing this group together in the 1950's were present: Eileen Nemechek, Lucille Nemechek, and Margaret Rourke, siblings from the John J. Rourke family. Sixteen cousins of the next generation ranging in age from the mid 40's to mid 50's. Thirty-eight members of the following generation were present, some with families of their own and others just tiny tots! In fact several generations seem to be overlapping in the raising of small children. One observer commented this year's gathering looked more like a day care than a reunion! There were about nine children, age two or younger.

Several genealogy and family history activities took place this year. Sr. Margaret presented a Rourke Family photo album that had been reconstructed from older albums dating from about 1916 to the early 1970's. Penny Nemechek displayed her Steve W. Nemechek- Eileen Rourke photo album with historical marriage and family group pictures. And most notably, a number of the cousins (Mary Lou, Regina, Greg, Robert, and Travis) put together a DVD, Power Point program consisting of photos and video clips from prior reunions, dating 1980 to 2000. Needless to say, the DVD recollections were touching, humorous, and/or embarrassing at various points but certainly enjoyed by all. Hopefully the CD distribution will be limited!

Both indoor and outdoor game activities continued as usual. About ninety combined runs were scored in just two morning softball games in which defensive play was suspect. That ball just seems to move faster than it did yesteryear. Afternoon swimming continued despite 100-degree temperatures. And the older generation's lazy days of horseshoe pitching has evolved into the younger generation's quick games of washers, another "toss the object at the target" contest.

Late night table games are many with the younger generations playing spoons and Bunco and other games unrecognizable to this author. The older generation played several rounds of pitch and poker. Five-card draw has evolved into seven-card stud and Henri learned that pitch is more winnable when an opposing partner mistakenly gives her all of his point cards.

As for living conditions, we had campground cooking, dining, and sleeping accommodations. The oldest and the youngest get the air-conditioned cabins but many sleep in "tent city". About a dozen tents arose this year in what can sometimes be a risky setting due to late night water balloons or somebody's snoring. Fortunately the night's sleeping temperatures were moderate.

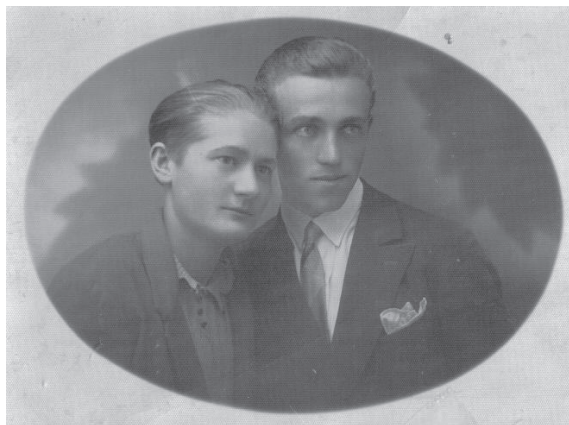
During the weekend a local, custom hay harvesting crew was nearby, doing their work in the surrounding, rolling hills. This gave some of the family farmers and other assorted contemplatives the opportunity not only to watch the grass grow; we watched it get cut! There were plenty unsolicited comments on how to cut and bale hay but I suspect that the field crew had as much fun watching us as we did, watching them!

---

## REFLECTIONS OF A NONAGENARIAN

by Bertha Hartl, née Schindelar (Valley Cottage, NY)

The last of the four children of Josef Schindelar (1866 - 1948) and Marie Vollmuth (1877 - 1935), I saw the light of day on September 9, 1912 in Gurahumora in southern Bukovina. At that time Gurahumora was a multi-ethnic town of about 5,000 people including of Romanians, Ukrainians, Slovaks, Jews, Gypsies and yes, also Germans. We had our own farm, attended the local Catholic Church, and otherwise lived a pastoral and idyllic existence in Bukovina. In his book, *Aus Halb-Asien: Kulturbilder aus Galizien, der Bukowina, Südrussland und Rumänien* (1876) the author, Karl Emil Franzos, included Bukovina in a region he termed "Half-Asia." But it was our home, and we were contented. In 1935 I married Alfred Hartl (1911-1982), son of Heinrich Hartl (1884 - ?) and Marie Diakon (1888 - ?), and in 1936 I gave birth to my son, Walter. Due to misdiagnosis and the lack of proper medical facilities, Walter died two years later of acute appendicitis. With the birth of our second son, born in 1939, we again chose the name "Walter." The practice of naming a child after his/her deceased sibling was not unusual in Bukovina, as a perusal of the church records indicates.



Alfred Hartl and his wife Bertha née Schnidelar  
(Photo: Gurahumora: 1935)

My life as I had known it changed dramatically in the fall of 1940. Through an agreement between Germany and Romania, the German population was evacuated, albeit willingly, from southern Bukovina and transferred to Germany. My intent here is not to debate the pros and cons of this resettlement but to focus on how it affected my life and that of my family. Representatives of the joint German-Romanian commission in charge of the resettlement assessed our property at 100,000 lei and turned over the information to the *Treuhand Gesellschaft*, which assumed responsibility for compensating the transferees in Germany at a later date.

Evacuation of the German population had begun in the early fall of 1940. December 8 was to be the last day I spent in my beloved Gurahumora. While many looked forward to the transfer in eager anticipation, I departed my homeland with heavy heart. What we could take with us was reasonably unrestricted, but could not include furniture or animals. Not having found a home for our dog, Bönsey, I hoped that some compassionate neighbor would adopt him after our departure.

First stop: the transition camp in Wagna near Linz in Styria, Austria (called *Ostmark* after Austria's annexation to Germany). Camp life was a culture shock, especially for the older generation. I saw tears streaming down my father's cheeks as he stood in line at dinnertime, holding out his plate for a portion of food. While the younger generation easily adapted to bunk beds and cafeteria-style meals, the seniors found these experiences demeaning. The camp was locked down in the evening, and egress was possible only with a pass.

After several weeks, a commission arrived at which time we were nationalized, had our blood type tattooed on our left forearms, and prepared for the next phase, i.e., permanent resettlement. Based on racial background, this would be

either in the east in racially-mixed territories annexed by Germany in 1940 or in the “old Reich,” i.e., in lands which had been German-speaking for centuries. With the luck of the draw my immediate family was settled in Jaworna, near Kattowitz in Upper Silesia; my sister, Hilda Rangosch (1910 - 1997), however, remained in the camp with her family until it was finally closed in the mid-1950s.

While many Bukovina Germans were dissatisfied with their new properties in the east, our experience, at least in this regard, proved more favorable. My husband, a barber, got his own barbershop, which employed seventeen men (all Poles). After he was inducted into the *Wehrmacht*, I ran the shop, which catered to both men’s and women’s hair styling. My relations with the Polish workers always remained positive, and I helped them on a personal level to the extent that I could. The Poles were naturally resentful at being displaced and treated as second-class citizens in what they considered their homeland.

But the resettlement in the east proved an illusion. With the rollback of the German armed forces after the Battle of Stalingrad in February 1943 and the continued westward advance of the Soviet troops, the new German settlements became untenable. Both the indigenous Germans and those recently settled now had to see to their escape from the Soviet steamroller, which was rapidly descending upon them.

The German government aided in the evacuation of the civilian population as best it could. In December 1944 we were taken by sled to the Kattowitz railroad station, but alas no train. The rails had been blown up during an air raid. With my six-year old son and my three-year old daughter, Rita, who, incidentally had scarlet fever, I walked for the next thirteen days along with seventeen other refugees. We slept in ditches, soldiers gave us potatoes, and we drank water from puddles. My destination: Austria, where my sister and father were still in the camp.

Somewhere along the line I found a wagon into which I put my children and pulled it, getting as far as the Elbe River. Our only possessions were the clothes on our backs. By this time the Soviets had already occupied the territory. Carrying Rita and holding Walter by the hand, I began wading across a shallow part of the Elbe, when I suddenly heard, “stoi” (stop). With raised rifle a Russian soldier motioned for us to return. My only hope was to try to pass myself off as a Romanian. Since Romania was now allied with the Soviet Union, the Russian might view me as a friend rather than a foe. Before reaching the soldier, I cautioned Walter not to say a word, since he knew only German. The ploy

worked. I was able to communicate with the soldier, who empathized with my situation and in fact directed me to an area where the Elbe crossing would be less dangerous. He even suggested the best time to do it, namely at the changing of the guard. Once across the Elbe we would be in American-occupied territory.

With no transportation of any kind, much of the distance had to be traversed by foot. The German Red Cross posted names and destinations in public places so people could find each other and was helpful in other ways as well. Relief stations for refugees sometimes provided us with temporary shelters, and when these were not available, we slept in abandoned houses, monasteries, gymnasia, and sometimes outdoors on cots. Food was always a problem, but people shared the little they had. You cannot imagine how good a piece of bread tastes when you are hungry!

Somewhere along the Czechoslovak border I managed to board a train with my children. No one collected fares for the ride. At one point the train stopped, Czech armed guards got on board and proceeded physically to push the Germans out the door. Clutching Rita in my arms, I deliberately twisted my body as I was hurled out of the train in order to avoid falling on her when landing on the gravel bedding. The injury I then sustained to my knee caused me distress for quite some time. While on Czechoslovak territory we, along with other German civilians, were forced to watch as Czech partisans burned a captured German soldier alive. Recurrent nightmares of this incident plagued me for many years to come.

By December 1945, one year after my departure from Jaworna, we reached Wagna, where we were reunited with my sister and father. Two years later my husband was released from a Soviet POW camp. In his case, too, knowledge of the Romanian language had come to his assistance and may even have saved his life. Upon surrendering to mixed Romanian-Soviet troops in Berlin in 1945, a Soviet soldier drew his weapon and was about to fire when Alfred called out in Romanian, “What we were looking for we got!” The Romanian, perceiving a compatriot, put his hand on the Russian’s weapon and calmly pushed it out of range.

We lived in the camp until 1951, when my brother, Stefan Schindelar (1892 - 1955), sponsored our immigration to the United States. While life in the States has been good for me and my children, I often reflect with nostalgia on “Half-Asia,” where I spent the first twenty-eight years of my life.

## A PRAYER BOOK'S ODYSSEY

by Michael Augustin (Leonberg, Germany)

My friend Werner Zoglauer of Naperville, IL has frequently alerted me to interesting items from Bukovina open to bidding on Ebay. He is always looking for books and art objects from Bukovina and the Bohemian Forest. This time it involves an old Catholic hymnal and prayer book. Since it was offered in Germany, I undertook the bidding.

The prayer book originated in Fürstenthal and according to the last page, had belonged to Paul (in) a Woppowa. My databank indicates she was born on September 24, 1909, the daughter of Wenzel Woppowa and Aloisia Müller, as the seventh of nine children. Family lore has it that her mother was devoured by wolves. Pauline married Franz Augustin, likewise from Fürstenthal, and with him had—as far as is known—two children: Ludwig and Rosa Maria. As the majority of Bukovina's German population, they were resettled to Germany in the fall of 1940. Franz was inducted into the German army and only returned from a Soviet prisoner of war camp in 1949. He died in Brandenburg in 1984; in 1994 his wife Paul(in)a died in Cologne. As far as can be reconstructed, the booklet accompanied its owner from Fürstenthal to Bavaria, from there to the Warta District in today's Poland, then via Berlin finally to Cologne.

Published in 1925 by Johann Reitmajer, a Roman Catholic priest in Czernowitz, *Katholisches Lieder- und Gebetbuch zum Gebrauche der Katholiken in der Bukowina* (Catholic Hymnal and Prayer Book for Use by the Catholics of Bukovina), measures 3" x 4.5" and encompasses 336 pages. Its purpose as described in the foreword was "to provide the Catholic population of Bukovina with an inexpensive yet accurate text of those hymns, devotions and prayers, which are most commonly used here." It was therefore published in German with a few pages in Latin, the latter of which are in considerably good condition. The edges of the black cover are thoroughly worn with its back missing, yet the binding still holds the booklet together. There are no missing pages and none are loose. In the foreword one can also read: "Unfortunately the hymns cannot be fully appreciated without musical annotation; however the latter would have made the booklet much too expensive, and for its practical purposes this is not absolutely necessary."

After I had bid on the book, I became aware that I knew the seller from various e-mail contacts. He is Karl Heinz Willms, the son-in-law of its former owner, who in researching the history of the family for his children after the death

of his first wife Rosa Marie in 1997, turned to me on several occasions. Because of its poor condition, Paulina's grandchildren have no interest in the book.

---

## JOHANN REITMAJER: PARISH PRIEST, PUBLISHER, HUMANITARIAN

by Sophie A. Welisch (Congers, NY)

Aside from the publication of the prayer book and hymnal discussed above, the Reverend Johann Reitmajer was known and respected for his clerical and humanitarian deeds well beyond the borders of his native Bukovina. One of the twelve children of Josef Reitmajer and Franziska Lang, Reverend Reitmajer was born on May 16, 1886 in Pojana Mikuli (also called "Buchenhain") in southern Bukovina, studied theology at the University of Lemberg (Lvov), Galicia, and was ordained to the priesthood on July 9, 1913. He ministered to several parishes in Bukovina, including Kimpolung, before his transfer to Czernowitz in 1920. In Bukovina's capital Reverend Reitmajer remained closely affiliated with the *Josefinum* (St. Joseph's Orphanage), in particular with fund raising which led to its opening in 1930. He was also involved with the spiritual life of Catholics in the suburbs of Czernowitz, particularly Rosch (Roş), where he purchased land from his own resources for the construction of a church. Recognized by the Papacy for his spiritual, social and charitable work, Reverend Reitmajer was elevated to Monsignore on March 30, 1939 and as Vicar General became was the highest Catholic dignitary in Bukovina.

The fatal year 1940 saw him, along with some 96,000 other Bukovina Germans, transferred to Germany. During the Second World War Reverend Reitmajer came to the assistance of all who needed his aid, regardless of their creed or ethnicity. After the invasion of Carlsberg, Upper Silesia by the Red Army in 1945, he successfully defended with his own body the entrance to the nun's cloister in order to protect the sisters inside from rape. His last days were spent in a monastery in Pokoji, Poland, where he died on November 26, 1952.

For further information not only of the life and works of Johann Reitmajer but also of his father Josef (1855-1935) and his two brothers, Rudolf and Franz, the reader may wish to consult Josef Neuburger's village monograph, *Buchenhain: Die Heimat unserer Deutschböhmen*, pp.178-186.