

THE STORY OF MY GRANDFATHER AND HIS FAMILY KINDSVATER

I, myself, experienced this story. Everthing that I'm writing, I've experienced with my parents, grandmother, most of it from my our grandparents oldest grandson, who lived to be 80 and he, himself, shared all of this in his life. And this person's name was George of the Philip Kindsvater line.

Grandfather Philip Kindsvater died in 1921 shortly before I was born (my birth). He was 77 at the time of his death. He was born in the house in the village of Huck on November 1, 1844.

When I was born in 1921, I was the 24th person in the house. Shortly after that the family was split into two parts because the money wasn't enough to construct 4 households.

Grandmother Maria -Elizabeth (Marilis) Kindsvater whose maiden name was Hempel was born in Huck in 1855. She died at the age of 83 in 1933 in our house. The grandparents had 9 children, two of them died as infants.

While I list them here according to their births, these statistics are not accurate.

1. Anne-Mari (Amekriet) Frick born Kindsvater ----- born
1878
2. Philip ----- born
1880 d.1922
3. John-George (Hanjerch) ----- born
1882
4. Elizabeth Hempel nee Kindsvater ----- born
1884 ? (1891)?
5. Adam----- born
1889 d.1944
6. Jacob----- born
1891?
7. Barbara (Berwel) Hixt nee Kindsvater ----- born
1893

Grandfather did not concern himself with small-scale farming. He worked for another Kindsvater who made dumbbells and he brought him the materials making him a traveler in his younger days. since the land was divided among the males, the land had to be worked. The farming was done by the oldest son Philip and Adam, my father. John-George (Hanjerch) was allowed to study tailoring in Astrachan. The youngest, Jacob learned tailoring from his older brother. So then the two brothers kept busy with tailoring the year round and the other two did the farming. When there was nothing to do in the household in the winter time, the two brothers busied themselves braiding baskets, tying brooms, repairing the harnesses for the horses, braided horse whips and

<https://www.volgagerman.net/huck-videos-letters>

checked all other inventories for the farm and house like the wooden straw forks and rakes.

When the war broke out in 1914, grandfather with his 4 sons had made their household and farm one of the strongest in the village.

Shortly before the outbreak of the war, Adam, my father had his 4-year army hitch behind him. He came home, got married and had to return to army duty where he served as cook for the commanders and officers so that he could put in his time out of the line of fire and consequently returned home in 1917 in good health. He wasn't the only son to serve in the military. They all had to take turns. Right after Adam, was Jacob's turn even though he hadn't served any time yet. Since he had worked as a tailor with his brother, he mentioned the fact that he was a tailor so he didn't have to go to the front lines in hopes of returning as luck would have it in good health. After Jacob, the oldest Philip was called. His lot was much harder than the other two's combined. He landed on the Turkish front. Because of the dry hot climate he returned in poor health, a sickly man who only lived four more years.

After Philip, the call came for John-George (Hanjerch) to be conscripted. The 4th and last. He engaged in craftiness and fasted in order to avoid the military - the result - poor health later. As a tailor he had a large following, knew nearly everyone in the village. Whoever wanted tailoring done went to him. In that way, he also was well acquainted with the doctor in the village at that time. He consulted the doctor for a document to excuse him from military service on account of his health. He took this document to the draft board. Well, he did become deadly ill and received another classification, and from that time on his body became a broken-down specimen until he died. He preceded his father in death.

That is the destiny (fate) of the four sons of my grandfather. After World War I the entire family was reunited. Now we come to the destiny of the family after that.

The oldest daughter hadn't lived at home for some time now. The second daughter, Elizabeth married a Jacob Hempel; since he was anxious to travel to America, the wedding in the church was quickly accomplished, no time to celebrate before leaving. If they had any celebration after reaching America is still questionable.

At the beginning of the war, the family had 6 draft horses and 8 work oxen. Now that the sons had all left home, the grandparents had a house filled with children. The one son who had returned earned more as a tailor than he could earn working the land, and the grandparents were too old to farm. So the farming was neglected. All work rested on the shoulders of the youngest daughter Barbara and the oldest son of their son, John-George (Hanjerch) who was barely 12 years of age. When the war was over only about half of the acreage was still being worked (cultivated) As said earlier the war had ended in 1917. The sons were all at home again. Right after the conflict, the Revolution began which brought the people more harm or loss than the war. In the civil war there were two opponents, the Whites and the Reds. The Whites constituted the Tsar's army, the Reds were the fathers of today's communism, those who have built up today's Soviet Union.

These two enemies fought against each other and often changed the tide in the village. Today the Whites ran the village, tomorrow the Reds uprooted the village. And so for a time everything was shifted back and forth. After each

group left the village, they took whatever suited them. Especially was the village relieved of its horses and the young men to become soldiers. They always selected the best horses leaving their worn-out ones.

Next, I'll tell how the hunt for the men continued. First, the men had to hide who didn't wish to be dragged along. That's what grandfather's sons were obliged to do. Mother told us that more and more lay low during that bedeviled time. Papa never had time to tell stories of his life. During the disastrous famine, we could never be free because father was continuously out of the house.

The first event was as follows: The four brothers dug a hole under the floor of the horse barn, big enough so they had enough room to sit. The entrance to this hole was in the horse barn. Two foot wide boards were pushed aside and after they were in the hole, the women put the boards in place. Any person who came there or asked about them or even looked for them, never found them under the boards but the men were able to hear everything that was said. The women had to bring them their food and give them the signal when a stranger entered the village. It was always announced ahead of time when soldiers were to appear. So the hole under the barn was their salvation. Not one of grandfather's sons became involved in the Revolution.

The second event: This has nothing to do with grandfather's four sons. The search was on again for young men. It is said of one fellow who fled across the bridge, thru the apple orchard and ran farther into the harvest field. Now I must first explain what the word harvest area means. A certain farmer had a piece of acreage on the outskirts of the village where he threshed grain. Here was the threshing floor (floor of a barn) where the screen and the cleaning machine were stored to clean the corn and other grains; at the time two women had set the machine in motion for cleaning grain since it was harvest time when this young man approached them so he quickly grabbed a dress, put it on and tied a scarf around his head and took over the duties of one of the women pretending to be very busy giving one of the women a short rest. As the pursuer arrived and asked where the fellow walked they pointed to the imposter but it was a woman as far as the pursuer could see, so the young man was saved.

One could tell many more of this type of story. So I'll acquaint you with a third event. A young man was followed in another area of the village. This young man had been hiding in the house but was discovered by the authorities, so he dashed from the courtyard into the barn, up into the hay loft since he saw no other escape route but a pursuer followed. The young man poked a hole through the straw roof in hopes of climbing out on the roof but alas and alack, there were two men after him. As he came unto the roof, the fellow who was standing on the read lifted a gun and the escapee was killed. What a pity for a young person!

Another time, it seemed like the last time, the Reds came and stayed forever, because they were the conquerors. They surrounded all the men in the courtyard. What no one knew was the fact that they were all to be punished because they had helped the White army.

I shall write the story what happened to grandfather's three sons. The fourth happened to be in the field sowing grain. And that one was Adam, my father. Since they had the three in tow and ignored the one in the field, each one was led down

the entrance (driveway) of the courtyard to receive five whiplashes on his back. As John-George (Hanjerch) was about to receive his lashes (he had thought it was going to be a joke) near the two meter-high wall which led to the street, he swung himself over it. For him it was nothing because his height was about that much. But he still received a blow on his seater. What grandfather didn't know was the reason for the men being called together. It was a great concern to him because Adam could not be there. Impatiently he stood on the road waiting for Adam to come from the field so he could send Adam there quickly. When Adam finally arrived, grandfather scolded him for not coming sooner and where was he for so long a time. All the boys of the village had been called he told Adam and you must hurry and report immediately but Adam answered like this: "Father, I was gone for 7 years, isn't that enough? The other boys can do something, too, I don't need to be there and everywhere all the time." Just at this moment Hanjerch showed up and told them what had happened. Then, said Adam, should I go there, too and get horsewhipped? Thank God, one doesn't know at times like this just what is the right thing to do.

The new government which got rid of the Russian Tsar assumed the responsibility in a sad way. The four-year war and the now establishment of the Revolution has made the region so poor that there was no more bread. That's what they have taken away from the bigwigs and the farmer.

From that time on Grandfather could not relax. Again and again they came to ask for grain to be hauled to town because his family was one of the largest grain growers. They pretended there was no end to the source, that one could keep taking indefinitely. During these bad years Grandfather died and so did Hanjerch. They still kept coming and coming but there was no more grain to be had so in desperation all the work animals, horses and oxen were taken away plus the inventory. In addition to that, accusing the farmers as the ones being the wrong doers, which wasn't the case. They didn't have any strange helpers at their house. After the family filed a complaint everything had to be returned.

Since the grandfather was gone, son Philip managed the household. The three remaining brothers and the grandmother decided to divide the large farm into two parts That would make things easier and there was to be no more dividing. Some equipment needed to be sold in order to purchase a new courtyard.

As everything was being planned they needed to choose which sons with their families would or could work together. It was agreed that Phillip and Adam would go together. Since Hanjerch and Jacob's wives were sisters one didn't want to separate them from each other, having looked ahead or decided in advance that grandmother would remain at the old courtyard. They took two straws, one longer than the other. One of them held the straws tightly in his hand while the other pulled one of them out. It was agreed earlier that the one holding the longest straw would remain at the old farmyard. Phillip and Adam had to leave the old farmyard. They had two horses and 4 oxen at each farmyard. And that all happened in 1921. The years 1921-1922 were bad harvest years. The bread was in such small pieces that one could barely exist. For the animals there was no feed so that the straw was taken from the roofs for the animals to eat. It is said many of the villagers starved to death. Both of our families luckily survived. After that the farmers were on their own and not bothered until 1928-1929. At this time Stalin replaced Lenin. During these years, the farmers had prospered. There was food again. But we were headed for worse conditions. This time it wasn't the fault of no crops but the mishandling of the crops.

<https://www.volgagerman.net/huck-videos-letters>

A year after the change in households in 1922 Phillip died. So then Adam took care of two families at the new courtyard. Jacob had to take care of two families. Phillip deserves credit for here I have to say that he is the Uncle who wrote this story. Phillip had purchased immediately after the separation a house in the new farmyard in the village. The money for that came from his wife whose parents had left it for her after their deaths. Since Phillip died so soon after the purchase, the house was vacant for many years as it needed to be remodeled and there was no money to do it.

So my father, Adam managed the affairs for the two families until 1928-29 when he had saved enough money. He then had the necessary construction done, which I myself can still remember. This was again divided like the first time drawing straws. Whoever drew the longest straw was allowed to remain. This time my father could stay. His brother's children were already grown and went to the new place. I myself remember that on our place two horses remained. About the other animals I can't recall anything.

On the first old place where grandmother lived there was no more dividing. From now on everything would be ruined (destroyed).

The new domestic economy system began in 1929-30. It began like this: They tried to consolidate all the farms (collectivize) and have one big operation working with tractors but it didn't turn out that way. Who wanted to produce anything if one did not know for whom or what work they were supposed to do. No one knew what path to follow. In the fall of 1928 as the farmers had things in order after the struggling years of the war and the Revolution, they dispossessed all the well-to-do farmers and made Cossacks (?Kulaks?) out of some and exiled them to Siberia. Their houses and barns constructed of lumber were destroyed. Larger barns were built for the domestic animals. Then they also took all the work animals from the other farmers leaving one cow and some small animals for those who joined the collectives.

In the spring of 1929 as the farm work needed to begin, many things did not work.

Many farmers retrieved their work animals, oxen and horses to do their own sowing.

In the fall of 1929, everyone was forced to participate in the collectivism. Now here was no more turning back. Many farmers disagreed with this system and fled into the Russian villages. This was initially done in the German territories. The authorities didn't feel they could do that to the Russian people. The Germans were left to work out their own problems as the authorities saw things.

The farmers who had done their own sowing were pestered until the very last corn kernel had been taken from the town. Whoever had been honest was given bread to eat during the year. That was meant to show life was better in the collective. It was never made clear whose bread they were eating because the farmers harvest and the collective farmers harvest was stored in the same warehouse. Only the collective farmer had the right to receive bread from that stock but the other farmers weren't allowed any and had to go hungry.

In the spring of 1930 the catastrophe was more intense. A private farmer was out of business. During the bad farming in the collective and the poor harvests in earlier years, many work animals died and the sowing plans had been so bad that one did not even dare think about it to want to relive it all.

Despondence reigned more than ever for the people causing many more to flee. Many were unlucky in fleeing and lost their lives. One of those was Uncle Jacob who lived on the old place.

He left Grandmother, his brother's family (a sister-in-law and children) for whom he had the responsibility to provide. He was so unlucky, all his children lived in misery losing their lives during the flight except one. The left behind sister-in-law with children all starved except for one boy who somehow survived one way or another, studied and practiced as a veterinary surgeon. My father brought Grandmother to our house. She shared our table in eating Rivel soup and in the summertime sour grass soup until 1933 when she was released from misery and went at the age of 82. There was no bread in the house from 1929 to 1934. They lived on potatoes, cabbage and beets. In the spring when all the food was gone, they lived on grass (sourhampel) With such food and misery our parents pulled us through. Everything was gone at the old farm, nothing was left. Uncle Jacob with his wife and their one son who managed to live never returned to the village again. The surviving son of Uncle George, the veterinarian wanted to sell the house. My father refused to allow that since he was not the sole owner.

Since the young man was required to work in another village, my father decided to sell the house and farmyard to Hanjerch because at the time he wanted to divide the property between himself and his brother. The house and farmyard must not fall into strange hands. For the farmyard and everything that was left on it, he gave the young man the authority so if Uncle Jacob did return again he was to reclaim the farmyard. He feared if Uncle Jacob heard it had been sold to strangers (other than family) his feelings would be hurt so badly that he never would have wanted to return without knowing the reason.

Now I have told the story of Grandfather and his children, especially of his sons.

In continuation I'd like to write how many children that each of the grandparents' children produced. The age group that I have given already and those that I give now are not exactly accurate. I have figured my father's birth date forwards and backwards and assigned the years to the children. I know for sure my father's birthday.

There are quite a few years between my father's birthday and his sister born before him. That there must have been one or two children in between them who died while babies is unknown by me. I'll begin with the oldest daughter of my grandparents.

Anne-Mari (Amekriet) Frick nee Kindsvater. Born in 1878 - died 1960. She married a Frick who was part owner of a dry-kiln. His brother was my mother's father. The two and a third brother were the owners of the fire mill in the village of Huck.

All three were classed as Cossacks (?Kulaks?) and driven out of the village. This Aunt and her family I never got to know. This Aunt had three children as far as I know. Two girls and one boy. And that boy and I crossed paths in 1974 while I was in the Caucasus for treatment. At this time he was already an 80 year old man. He died shortly after that.

1. Son without a name -----born 1900 --died 1900
2. Anna- Mari (Ami)-----born 1901 --died 1970
3. Phillip, -----born 1903 --died 1905
4. John-George (Hanjerch)-----born 1905 --died 1984
5. 5. Phillip, the second-----born 1912 --died 1914
6. 6. Alexander -----born 1914 --died 1914
7. John -----born 1916 --died 1955
8. Elizabeth Weisgerber nee Kindsvater -----born 1909
9. Emilie -----born 1918 --died 192
10. a daughter without a name -----born 1920 --died 1920

These half-sisters (cousins ?) I knew all because we lived together in one house.

Hanjerch is the man who helped me with all of this that I have written. Elizabeth is still alive today and John was a German prisoner of war in the last war. He luckily returned to his family but while he was in a drunken stupor was killed by a bull who picked John up with its horns and that's how John lost his life.

I'll begin with the family of Uncle Hanjerch. I do not know how many children he had. I only know that the boy whose name was Philip and during the famine was considered Uncle Hanjerch's son. During the greatest hunger period when the mother had starved already as I have mentioned earlier, my father brought Grandmother and at that time a still-alive girl named Katharine to our house but she was so weak already that she couldn't recover.

The young Phillip took Hanjerch (Uncle Philip's son, who at this time was already responsible for himself (mature)). So the old farmyard was empty and stood vacant from 1931 to 1936 until the young man sold it.

Now we'll turn to the next person, Elizabeth (Hempel). Hanjerch declared she was born in 1884. As previously mentioned she married a Hempel in 1912 and went to America. From the beginning letters were exchanged. One letter included a picture which Grandmother brought to our house. On this photo were two boys, the taller wore glasses. Grandmother always said those are your half brothers in America. (cousins ?) The exchange of letters discontinued because someone who received the letters had been imprisoned.

According to the family picture presented by our grandparents the way it was given to the family, it is now Adam, my father listed next.

His family is listed and one encounters the following persons:

1. Philip -----born 1-3-1915 - died 8-10-1984
2. Maria Weisenberg nee Kindsvater---born 1-10-1918 - died 6-1-1982
3. John George (Hanjerch) -----born-1920 - died - 1920
4. Adam -----born 3-21-1921 - died ?
5. Jacob -----born 8-15-1922
6. Emilie Dechand nee Kindsvater-----born 12-23-1925
7. Alexander-----born 10-18-1928
8. without a name -----born 1930 - died 1930

So far one can see our parents brought us alive through all the danger and misery. All the huge troubles our family overcame lasted from 1930 to the 2nd World War during my childhood. the years from 1928 until 1936 especially 1930 to 1933 were terrible. I as a child did not realize how awful things really were. I have compassion for my dear parents for their strong determination they were inclined to exhibit in keeping us alive.

I will tell you about the son of great Uncle Jacob. As I have already told you, the one son that was saved was not friendly in growing up among his relatives. He refused to give me the number of children his parents had. There had to be more and all were killed as they fled. This poor one lives with a Catholic wife (they had no children) in Karaganda in Russia.

The last child of our grandparents - Barbara (Berwek). Already you know her husband was a Hixt. It is said that a very sad story is connected to her. When she was pregnant with her first child, her husband coaxed her to ride with him into the field. It is not known today whether it was hay cutting time or harvest. On the way she began to give birth. The roads were not like they are today. Shortly and good (immediately) her husband turned around and as quickly as he could drove to the house. The child was healthy but the mother could not be saved. She bled to death. In 1930 he took his son and left the village. He wanted to save his life as well as his son's life. He died in a strange place and the child became an orphan. The youth learned the Russian language and made his living as a beggar. In 1934 he stood at our door. Nothing much more except that my father and mother took him into our family.

Up to now I have written the story of my grandparents and their children. The bitter famine of 1928 until 1934-36 I will write about (I was a child then) These years were much worse than the hunger years of 1921-22. These years covered my 17th and 16th years. From the time of my sixteenth year until the war there was a short breathing spell, then the same misery began all over again.

Just one short remark. It could be that the oldest daughter of our grandparents was not named Amkriet but Ami.

(Written by Helen nee Hempel Smith, sister of George Hempel. Given to Ray Peterson by George Hempel April 16, 1988)

<https://www.volgagerman.net/huck-videos-letters>