



The Bukovina Society of the Americas NEWSLETTER

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The Board of Directors extends its best wishes for a merry Christmas and a happy New Year to all members of the Bukovina Society. We thank you for your support during the past year and look forward to continued mutual efforts in bringing Bukovinian traditions, history and culture to our readership.

BUKOVINA PEOPLE AND EVENTS

- Author Tracy Seeley, an Associate Professor of English at the University of San Francisco, visited the Society's museum on July 28th to conduct interviews for her book *Coming to Kansas*, which traces her childhood homes in Colorado and Kansas. In Ellis she talked to Joe Erbert, Ray Haneke and O. M. Windholz and in Hays to Richard and Betty Younger and was particularly interested in those who had traveled to Bukovina. Ms. Seeley has numerous literary publications and screenplays to her credit and has won several awards. The book should be finished in about a year and we expect to receive notice, but persons interested can watch for it on Amazon.com.
- Wayne Neuberger notified the Bukovina Society of his plan to visit the museum. Ray Haneke, Joe Erbert and Oren Windholz gave him a tour and Wayne showed them family-related memorabilia. His brother Ken and his wife Jeanette plus Wayne's wife Mary visited Ellis County where the Neuberger family had lived until 1953. Wayne now lives in Keizer, OR and Ken in Portland, OR. The visit included a reunion with their Aunt Eleanor (Neuberger) Speiss. This was the first return to Ellis for Wayne since 1971 and it had been fifty-three years for Ken. Their great grandparents were Joseph and Albertine (Erbert) Neuberger. Some of Joseph's children relocated from Ellis to Minnesota and one to California. Wayne noted, "the people we met in Ellis, many of them relatives, were very friendly and it was easy to start up a conversation with anyone you might meet."
- Reinhold Czarny (Germany) has informed us of the availability of two DVDs on Czernowitz (now Chernovtsy in Ukraine), which he produced in 2005 in collaboration with

Oksana Nakonechna, a Czernowitz resident. Once called "Little Vienna" and the most populous city in Bukovina, Czernowitz was Bukovina's capital in the Austrian era. These DVDs, available in either English or German, will enable the viewer to take a virtual tour through this city, now under Ukrainian sovereignty. The first: FILM-DVD, presents a comprehensive stroll through Czernowitz with emphasis on its historic and cultural sites and is available for 28 Euros including postage. The second DVD contains over 1000 photographs of Czernowitz, among them panoramic scenic views, the former Bishop's Residence, numerous churches of various denominations, the railroad station, and many other landmarks. The DVDs are compatible with NTSC and can be viewed on the normal American computer and TV. Price: 18 Euros including postage. Preferred method of payment: prepayment or transfer through Western Union Bank.

For further information or placing orders you may contact Reinhold Czarny at one of the following addresses: Reinhold.Czarny@t-online.de OR his cell phone number: 0049-(0)172-2318764, OR www.czernowitz.de OR, at his home address at Volksgartenstrasse 198, 41065 Mönchengladbach, Germany.

A CHILD'S BLOUSE FROM BUKOVINA

by Cheryl Runyan (Wichita, KS)



Juanita Augustine and Shirley Kroeger admire the child's blouse donated to the Society museum.

Gertrude (Hubich) Lechner of Reutlingen, Germany grew up in Tereblestie, a village in northern Bukovina. She has contributed a hand-embroidered blouse dating from her childhood to our collection of artifacts and memorabilia on display in our museum.

Gertrude is the great-great-niece of Samuel Glass who immigrated to the United States from Bukovina with his wife, Mary, and seven children (Kate, John, Caroline, Samuel, George,

Bertha, and Mollie). After stopping in New York in May, 1887, the family docked at Galveston, Texas, traveled by rail to Kansas and on July 2, 1887 arrived in Ellis, Kansas. Three additional children (Lydia, Bill, and Minnie) were born in Trego County Kansas over the next nine years. Samuel's oldest daughter Barbara and her husband, Leon Wagg, and children (Leontina, John, and Ferdinand) arrived in Kansas in 1900, having come through Ellis Island. A daughter, Carolina, was born the following year.

Samuel's brother Johann Glass and family remained in Tereblestie. Johann and his wife Margarethe had a son named Ludwig. Ludwig Glass and his wife also remained in Tereblestie, parenting eight children (Christine, Melanie, Johanna, Gisela, Adam, Hildegard, Reinhold, and Irma).

Ludwig's children and their families met American relatives in 1972, when Delbert (son of Lydia Glass Wagg) and Hazel Wagg, while in Germany for the Olympics, searched for the Glass family members there. The American-German connection has been maintained over the years by Don and Joyce Schroeder (Marie Wagg-Schroeder's son and wife) and Gertrude Lechner (daughter of Gisela Glass Hubich). In 2001 Gertrude and her husband Edi visited their Kansas cousins and had the opportunity to tour the Bukovina Society's museum in Ellis. In 2005 Don and Joyce Schroeder and Cheryl Runyan visited Gertrude and Edi Lechner, and Edith and Erich Schreiber (Gertrude's sister and husband) in Reutlingen, Germany.

Gertrude talked about growing up in Bukovina. After visiting the Bukovina Society's museum in Ellis, she felt it was the most appropriate home for the blouse she had worn as a small child in Bukovina. "What a delight for me to be able to present the blouse during the Bukovinafest 06," she exclaimed.

Bukovinafest/Midwest Deutsche Oktoberfest

by Irmgard Hein Ellingson (Grafton, IA)

On September 15 the Bukovina Society of the Americas hosted a one-day conference in its Ellis, Kansas headquarters attended by forty-five guests. Early arrivals gathered the preceding evening for a social and dinner at the Lb Brewing Company in downtown Hays. It was a delightful opportunity to renew acquaintances with friends from across town and around the world.

The first of four presenters, Steve Parke (Pueblo, CO), discussed late nineteenth century Czech pioneers in the Trego County, Kansas area who, as neighbors of the Bukovina immigrants in Kansas, shared the challenge of developing the area with them. A descendant of Bukovina German, Czech, and Irish settlers, Steve placed their arrival in the context of regional history beginning with buffalo hunters, Indian battles, stage lines and railroads, and continuing with cattle drives and rowdy cowboys. He reviewed more than thirty-three family surnames and their migrations across the USA to western Kansas where they formed a Bohemian settlement along what is now called the Voda Road.

Primarily through the use of multiple local newspapers available during this boom period in Trego County, Steve noted various cultural trends as "typically Czech" and foundational for future trends for this group locally known as "the Bohemians." He noted the role of neighborhood organizations and events for seasonal celebrations and dances and then traced local Bohemian politics, cultural clashes, and intra-cultural tensions. Finally he addressed the complicated story of Czech-American religion and the local religious story as an outgrowth of religious history in the Czech lands of Europe.

Irmgard Hein Ellingson discussed the Holy Roman Empire ruled by the Catholic Habsburgs as the major political entity in the heart of Europe between 1500 and 1806. To the north and northwest were the Protestant Hohenzollern lands that were eventually brought together in Prussia and then joined in a united Germany in 1871. To the north, northeast, and east was Great Mother Russia, the land of the Orthodox Romanov tsars. The Habsburg Empire was defined by a common high culture and a common aristocratic ruling class with common state institutions in a single economic space. But its many different nationalities, languages, and religions were definitive for its people, especially for those of Bukovina, the easternmost crown land of the Empire.



Society board member Norma Lang assisted special guest Ayrton Celestino at registration.

Professor Ayrton Gonçalves Celestino (Curitiba/Paraná, Brazil) described his summer 2006 trip to Bavaria, Bohemia, Bukovina, and the United States. A previous speaker at conferences in Ellis and Regina, Saskatchewan, Ayrton proved to be a most delightful guest. He has been our contact

person with the *Associação Alemã-Bucovina de Cultura* (Cultural Association of Bukovina Germans), founded in 1992 by descendants of Bukovina Germans who immigrated to Rio Negro/Mafra, Brazil in 1887-1888.

Following the Friday evening banquet, Karen Hobbs (Colorado Springs, CO) of the German-Bohemian Heritage Society gave an illustrated presentation about German folk dress or *Trachen* in Bohemia and Egerland. Immigrants from these regions in the present-day Czech Republic were among the early nineteenth-century woodcutters, glassmakers, and artisans in Bukovina. Her descriptions of the design, material, and symbolism were drawn from with her extensive historical knowledge and research experience. She fielded questions regarding the Family History Library in Salt Lake City, Utah and research regarding military records.

The Midwest Deutsche Oktoberfest, which drew about 2500 people, began its activities on Saturday, September 16 in the neighboring town of Hays. Honored guests at the opening ceremonies, Karl and Tina Honas (Lichtenstein, Germany) and Professor Ayrton



Julia and Ralph Honas review the festival activities with their guests Karl and Tina Honas.

Gonçalves Celestino, tapped the ceremonial keg of beer. In keeping with five years of tradition, the Bukovina Society's Board of Directors led the audience in singing traditional German songs. More about the Oktoberfest's presentations, entertainment, and activities may be found at www.bukovinasociety.org/fest-2006.html.

A standing-room only crowd was treated to a hammer dulcimer demonstration by Bukovina Society executive secretary Joe Erbert (Ellis, KS) on Sunday afternoon. Joe, a self-taught musician, has also built a number of dulcimers. He and accordionist Wes Windholz (Hays, KS) charmed the audience with their music and truly left them "wanting more"! The dulcimer is

currently returning to popularity in folk art circles so we are all the more proud of Joe.

Also on Sunday, local and regional history and culture were translated into folk songs written and sung by Steve Parke to his own accompaniment on an acoustic guitar. Some songs were pure history while others interpreted local events and culture. This contemporary effort carried on the musical and folk traditions of Steve's ancestors.

Throughout the Oktoberfest the bands took turns playing toe-tapping polkas, waltzes, and two-steps as generous amounts of food and beverages were served. Men and women, boys and girls, retirees and senior citizens happily danced for hours to the spirited sounds of the High Plains bands.

I would like to extend my thanks and appreciation to the local Board of Directors for its leadership and hospitality at the Bukovinafest. We invite you to watch the *Newsletter* and the Bukovina Society's website for information about its future projects and activities.

2006 Annual Nemechek-Rourke Reunion

by Steve Parke (West Pueblo, CO)

Once again on the last weekend of July 2006 descendants of the Steve F. Nemechek and John J. Rourke families gathered at the Dane Hansen Scout Camp at Kirwin Reservoir in North Central Kansas. It was a brutally hot weekend with temperatures in the low 100's and high humidity and dew point readings for the area. We hoped and prayed for rain but none was seen for these two days in an area already in drought conditions with brown grass and much depleted lake water levels. A southerly Kansas wind was both cooling and dehydrating so we kept the Kool-Aid, tea, and water barrels well supplied.

About eighty-five people attended but the exact number was lost amidst the bobbing and weaving of so many small children. The little people far outnumbered the big people as we are in the midst of a twenty-five year cycle of a new generation. As evidenced by the activity level in the swimming pool, the energy level of the little ones was boundless, even in the heat.

Not to be outdone, the young adults and the aging 50-year-plus aunts and uncles gathered for a morning softball game. As usual we were short on defense and the marathon two-hour game ended by lunchtime with the score 30-26. Despite the heat, the opportunity to stop the game was more important than winning.

Jennie Nemechek-Mills shared her recent work on family history and genealogy. She has gathered background information from the Bukovina Society's web site as well as on the Bukovina family trees of Nemechek, Schuster, Ashenbrenner, Reitmayer, and Baumgartner. As immigrants from the village of Fürstenthal these families all settled in or near Ellis, KS around 1900.

Jennie's energy and thoroughness is impressive and the stories are captivating as the triumphs and old shadows of the past are revealed for better or worse, and she hopes to do some publishing for the family. We hope to do more family interviews, research, and recording in the coming year. For instance we recently hired a Czech researcher to find the origins of Mathias Nemechek, an early Fürstenthal glassmaker. We are beginning the search in the villages of Sommersdorf and Stockern in southern Czech Republic with hopes of finding an immigration or baptism record for Mathias. Hopefully we will have news on this for next year's reunion.

An interesting tribal dynamic is developing in which matriarchal family powers are arising. Earlier in the year some of the

aunts, sisters, cousins and female spouses gathered for "Sisters" weekend where they engaged in some *Ya Ya Sisterhood* dynamics from a similarly named movie. All-in-all this social dynamic is an assertive story telling, sometimes theatrical, feminine dynamic to which the men have responded by stepping back in amusement and wonder. No masculine response has yet been formulated other than speculations about a fishing trip.

Elders Lucille Nemechek, Eileen Nemechek, and Sr. Margaret Rourke were honored for their presence at yet another weekend gathering. Another remaining elder from this generation, Barbara Parke, will be heavily lobbied for her presence next year. No excuses this time, mom!

The Saturday evening prayer service was held outdoors and included songs, prayers, reflections, scripture readings, and an extended sign of peace. Those who passed away within the last year, Ronnie Nemechek and Ferdinand Nemechek, were remembered.

Family groups with 50% or more family unit representation at the outing included the families of Helen Rourke and John Rourke. The Lucille Nemechek family units were 75% present. As for the rest of us, well, more of us will be there next year.

With the exception of a few missed years due to weddings and funerals, this is about the twenty-ninth year of summer camp reunions. This does not include the many weekend farm and lakeside gatherings that preceded the campground outings. With the passage of time, new roles and responsibilities have evolved. For instance we now have individuals in charge of Overall Coordination (Regina McFall), Reservations and Finances (Vern Harding), Worship (Mary Lou Harding), Genealogy and Publicity (Steve Parke), Swimming (Henri Glatter), and Address List Updates (Kathleen Kazmaier). Other roles are evolving at this very time. For instance Ann Griffin and Laurita Burbach are putting together a family cookbook that will have even more than recipes. Wait and see!

For many years Sr. Margaret Rourke assumed most if not all of these roles and responsibilities and to her we are indebted. Hopefully our new group of task leaders will be able to carry on for another thirty years as Margaret has faithfully served a similar time.

DIFFERENT TIMES IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES

by Brigitte Haas (Durlach/Allgäu, Germany)

On a trip to the United States in October 2004 the author visited the headquarters of the Bukovina Society in Ellis, KS, where she delivered the following speech, describing historic events in the lives and destinies of the villagers of Fürstenthal, a village in southern Bukovina. (Ed.)

My relationship to Fürstenthal is not a direct one as I was not born there, nor have I ever visited this village, which was the homeland of my grandparents and my aunt. And still, I grew up with Fürstenthal. I know the stories, I know the way of life, and I am also familiar with the foods that were consumed there. All these things I learned before I started school. I remember many of the people who came to visit my grandmother, and when I was allowed to open the door, I was greeted by a person who would say that he/she knew me since I was a baby, and that he/she was my "aunt, uncle, or cousin." Many times when the grownups would talk, I would sit and listen to their tales.

Unfortunately my grandmother died very early and my grandfather did not want to have anything to do with Fürstenthal. For the time being, my connection with Fürstenthal was interrupted. There were still weddings and funerals, but few contacts other than those.

When my grandfather passed away, I found the ancestry chart and some of the notes my grandmother had taken in order to record the vital statistics of the siblings, parents, grandparents, and children. It was then that I actively began to research Fürstenthal. Another reason for this interest was the many people at my grandfather's funeral and their stories as well as my inability to understand how I was related to them. And so it was that I began my journey in search of information about Fürstenthal, which today I will attempt to put into words.

The small village of Fürstenthal (Voevodeasa) is due west of Marginea at the upper part of the Sucevi+a River and was renowned as the community with the most children per family in all of Bukovina. The village was founded in 1803 as a small settlement for the glassworkers and loggers from Bohemia to support the new glass manufacturing industry. When the land was first settled, each family had a house and about 3.5 hectares of farmland. The workers came mostly from Rehberg and included the families of Aschenbrenner, Augustin, Baumgartner, Blaschi, Dombrowski, Feldigel, Gaschler, Geschwendtner, Gnad, Haas, Hoffmann, Klostermann, Kohlruss, Kuffner, Schlehuber, Schnell, Schuster, Stadler, Straub, and Weber. Families with these names remained in Fürstenthal until the 1940 resettlement in Germany.

Everyone who does any sort of genealogical research on the village of Fürstenthal will notice that the families averaged eight to ten children. The fact that many of the offspring decided to remain in the village of their birth posed a twofold problem. First, the village was becoming increasingly crowded. Secondly, the constant intermarriages caused a very close interrelationship between the families. It can often be observed that an uncle married his grandniece and that a group of siblings married another group of siblings. This complicates any genealogical research. Sometimes the bride would not change her last name, and because the selection of first names was not particularly extensive either, difficulties arise in separating the married couples and in assigning the children to the proper parents. The families in Fürstenthal did this by giving each family member a nickname.

A lot of Fürstenthal's farmland was later converted to residential land. After the glass manufacturing installation closed down, jobs became scarce and the young women began working in the surrounding communities, like Radautz, until they married. Many worked as domestic servants but returned to Fürstenthal to get married.

The men were often gone for periods of up to four weeks at a time, working elsewhere under conditions, which had not changed much. Because many of them were loggers, they were usually in one of the large forests in the vicinity of the town. An older gentleman from Fürstenthal, whose forebears were loggers, said that they lived in simple makeshift huts. Life in the village was not much better. There was no electricity, no running water. The entire life support system in the village was based on self-sufficiency. The goats grazed on the *Hutwiese*, which was a meadow for common use.

Of course there were richer families and poorer families in Fürstenthal, which was usually contingent upon the number of children and the occupation of the head of the household. Many of the children got their first leather shoes after their transfer to Germany in 1940. Before then, they wore wooden shoes. During

the winter, the loggers would wrap their feet in rags, since this provided more warmth than the wooden shoes and protected the few socks they had. Those who attended the 26th annual Fürstenthal gathering in Oy/Allgäu on August 2, 2002 still recall the way of life in their Bukovinian village, confirming it as meager and poverty stricken. Much would have had to change in order to build a lasting and strong future.

What I always came across in stories was the close relationship among the people of Fürstenthal. Everyone assisted everyone else, shared the chores, watched the goats, and harvested the crops. When parents died, the relatives would raise the children, and everyone was more or less related to everyone else. When doing genealogical research, one cannot help but notice that some families intermarried more than others, and this relationship remained firm even after people had left Bukovina. In 1940 the Germans of Bukovina were offered the opportunity of transferring to Germany, which the overwhelming majority accepted. Between the summer of 1940 and the spring of 1941 six transports left our area for Bavaria. Initially the people were housed in camps in Hohenschwangau, Blaichach, Immenstadt, Oberstaufen, Babenhausen, and Sonthofen. For some Fürstenthalers these towns represented a new beginning as they found work in the factories and managed to eke out a living for themselves as well as to provide a stable financial future. The relocation, however, caused disappointment for some of the transferees from Fürstenthal, who regretted the loss of their property in their homeland.

The spring of 1941 witnessed further population movements. The call went out to "go to Poland. Help the Führer and you will get land and farm animals." This was another journey to yet another "home." Although they would not remain there for long, only three or four years, the first transports left for Warthegau in German-occupied Poland in the summer of that year.

From their encampment in Lodz, Galicia, they began to settle in the surrounding communities. The transfer of property from the Poles to the Germans was an absolutely barbaric act. The police would march into the town and evict the landowners and their families, and the new settlers would move in. In some cases the lunch was still on the table when the new "owners" arrived. It was easy to predict the atmosphere of fear and hate that this would generate. The previous farm owners would work as day wage laborers on what had been their own farms in order to provide food for their families or were sent to labor in the factories of Germany. Of course there were some families, which achieved a harmonious relationship between themselves and the Poles, but this was not usually the case.

My grandmother told me that she never wanted to relocate but that her husband, i.e., my grandfather, was obsessed by the idea of owning a farm again and having his beloved horses. The key to her assent was the tacit understanding that the new settlers would not be drafted into the military, as her two brothers had been; moreover, she was pregnant. Of course the inevitable happened and my grandfather was immediately drafted. My grandmother remained alone on the farm with two children in a region where she did not understand the language and whose inhabitants were not particularly friendly. On "her" farm the previous owner now worked as a laborer. Still, my grandmother managed to maintain a good relationship with her workers, secretly giving them more groceries than allowed and otherwise treating them well. This could have led to her imprisonment if brought to the attention of the authorities. My father and my aunt used to play with the other Polish children and my grandmother

helped assuage relationships wherever she could. Since Fürstenthal villagers had also settled on the surrounding farms and in local communities, the family continued its contacts with them as well.

My grandmother's brothers, who were in the army, came to visit her when they were on leave. On one visit they warned her to flee because Warthegau would soon be overrun by the enemy. She then proceeded to send small packages to the couple in Immenstadt with whom they had lived, as she did not want to be left with nothing after two relocations. In secret she also packed the wagon, hoping not to arouse the suspicion of the authorities.

In the winter of 1944-45 the Russian army invaded Poland, and the Fürstenthalers had to flee. Now the relationship between the Poles and the new settlers came to bear fruit. Families who had bad dealings with the Poles were now under siege, had their escape frustrated, or were robbed and murdered. On the other hand the Poles assisted families with whom they had had good relations, as was the case with my grandmother. The previous farm owner drove their horse-drawn wagon from their farm in Seestädten far into western territory.

My grandmother had to wait until the week of January 18, 1945 before she could flee. Her sister had given birth on December 6, 1944 and five weeks later they were en route. Two women, a nine-year-old girl, a three-year-old boy, and a newborn baby set off in the midst of a bitterly cold winter.

Until they crossed the Oder River, there was a constant danger of being overrun by the Red Army. Once across the Oder, a new problem arose. Allied fighter planes would attack ground units. In addition, most of the escapees became trapped in the crossfire of the German and Soviet armies. Traveling off the road was not an option since the countryside was littered with tank traps and mine fields, and progress would have been slowed down. This was a time when the women, who were almost exclusively traveling without an adult male, had to deal with fear, hunger, rape, death and enormous psychological and physical hardships on their own.

My grandmother lived in permanent dread of losing her child, especially my father, who was three years old and spoke only Polish. She knew that if he ever left her sight she would never see him again, since he would not have been able to identify himself. There was also a continued need for food, especially for the newborn. When the Russians overran the area into which my grandmother and her family members were crossing, they hid in the forests. Since my grandmother had sent a portion of her belongings to Immenstadt, their eventual goal was Bavaria. The escape to the West brought many Fürstenthalers to northern Germany. Only a few would return to Bavaria after the war, where the entire interlude in Poland had begun. To move back to the south would have required filling out many forms and multiple visits to the authorities as the Allied forces had divided Germany into occupation zones after the war and no zone wanted to admit people. My grandmother was persistent enough and finally allowed to travel with her sister and the children. First they went to Immenstadt and then to Bodelsberg in the vicinity of Kempten, where they worked on a farm. My father, who was four or five years old at the time, got a job as a goat herder. This was the only way to provide food and shelter for a family without an adult male.

Some families had to wait until the 1950s for their fathers and sons to return from the POW camps. Social assistance ended with the arrival of the husband in Germany, which posed a financial problem for those families whose men had been crippled from injury or were sick. Now the people of Fürstenthal, like so many refugees, had to build a new future out of the ashes. They helped

construct a new Germany from the shattered remains of the Third Reich. Many of them found refuge in small villages in southern Germany. The people from those villages were often prejudiced towards strangers, so that in addition to financial woes, the Fürstenthalers had to fight for their cultural individuality while trying to integrate into their new environment.

Since many of the Fürstenthalers were farmers or loggers, many only got entry-level jobs and had to work their way up the ladder through hard work and skill. The financial compensation for the loss of their previous home and property was usually not even enough for a small house. As sad as it was to have lost their homes in the relocation of 1940/41, it was a stroke of luck for some of the younger Fürstenthalers that they got new perspectives on life and that many new opportunities arose. The new life in Germany was one of initial poverty and hardship, but many eventually achieved a state of financial comfort.

The Fürstenthalers were not reconstituted as a new community in Germany, as were the people of the village of Gablonz in Bohemia, who were all settled in the same location in West Germany called "Neugablonz" near Kaufbeuren. The connection among Fürstenthalers remained very strong and went beyond their initial life in Fürstenthal. Even today, they still meet on an annual basis in Oy/Allgäu. Yet every year the attendance becomes smaller, as slowly but surely death and illness decrease the numbers; nonetheless, the people still come, undertaking long and arduous journeys to be present. It is a day of togetherness, with a mass and dancing. The dancing is important, because there is no festival without dancing. Sometimes the people at the festival can no longer walk very well, but still they dance like world champions. Some of the Fürstenthalers remain in Oy for the entire week and visit relatives and friends.

The prewar generation is slowly dwindling in number, and along with the people, the knowledge about Fürstenthal is disappearing as well. If nothing is done, Fürstenthal will soon disappear from our consciousness. The life stories and experiences of the Fürstenthalers are difficult to preserve. The most common answer to the request for written documentation is that "I have experienced nothing special. There must be someone else who is a lot more interesting." I have gotten a similar response from members of my own family. The only person who told me stories was my grandmother, and when she died, I was too young to understand the importance of what she had related to me. My father was definitely too young to remember anything, and my aunt does not recall much either, nor does she want to discuss it. My grandfather, bitter about the loss of his transport business through the relocation, never spoke about this period either. It is to the memories of my mother, who is not from Fürstenthal, that I owe the entire content of this presentation.

MY TRIP TO CZERNOWITZ (CHERNOVTSY), UKRAINE

by Reinhold Czarny (Mönchengladbach, Germany)

Below is a short synopsis of my vacation in Czernowitz, once the capital of the Austrian crown land of Bukovina. Actually "vacation" in the pleasurable sense of the term is a misnomer, since I walked around the whole day with twelve pounds of baggage on my shoulders (video camera, photo camera and tripod).

While today's Czernowitzer is usually sad as he/she reflects on former good times in Bukovina's erstwhile capital city, I set out

with mixed feelings. What did I expect to find in this city now incorporated into Ukraine? My recollections were stories related by my mother and her siblings. Everyone had good feelings about Czernowitz!

My trip began on June 13, 2005, when I set off from Dusseldorf to Amsterdam (with a Fokker 50 – a propeller aircraft). From there I flew with a Boeing 737 to Kiev, where I stayed for two nights. It is now possible to fly directly from Dusseldorf to Kiev with Austrian Airlines or Lufthansa (Germany).

Kiev, at least what I saw of it, is a lovely place, especially its churches with their gilded domes. I stayed at a place on a little hill near the Church of St. Andrew, which is comparable to Montmartre in Paris because of its artists who sell their works on the open streets. In addition, the well-dressed women made a fine impression.

On June 15 I departed Kiev on a small and noisy propeller airplane (an Anotow 24) on a one and one-half hour's flight to Czernowitz. Landing at the Czernowitz airport that afternoon was one of the nicest presents I could possibly have received on the day that also happened to be my birthday. During the landing I was able to identify the railway station and the white city hall at the *Ringplatz*.

To aid me in touring the city, I had engaged the services of a guide, Ljudmila, from the Bukovina Center, who met me at the airport. Although only twenty-two years of age, she is already an instructor at the University of Czernowitz, where she teaches Germanic philology. (This would be inconceivable in Germany, given the long duration of study). We spent the good part of every day visiting the city's historic sites.

During my twelve-day stay, I not only viewed all the city's important attractions but also had an opportunity to videotape it from on high, i.e., from the towers of the city hall, the university (the former Bishop's Residence) as well as from the hill of the Jewish cemetery and from the upper floor of a discotheque.

Unfortunately, the trees in some areas are so high that it was not possible to videotape the railway station from this vantage point. Nonetheless, through the intercession of a young Ukrainian lady named Oksana Nakonechna, who spoke with the owner of the discotheque, I was able to get excellent pictures of the theater.

Oksana is twenty-years old, speaks German and English fluently, knows a lot about the history of Czernowitz including its former street names, and pointed out reasons why I should photograph particular places. She recognized signs on houses or roads and identified a manhole cover from the Austrian and Romanian eras. Example: the inscription, "Leon Schrenzel" on *Franzengasse* referred to a company established in 1887, which manufactured building materials. Anyone looking for such historic markers will surely find them.

At Oksana's grandparents' home – an attractive large blue-green house on *Schulgasse*, I photographed an old stove dating from the early twentieth century. Such a stove is very rarely seen nowadays, since people have converted to gas heat.

In my discussions with Ukrainian students at the university, I was impressed by the fact that in their eagerness to learn they were involved in projects over and beyond their regular studies, such as theater, writing stories in German, and organizing photo exhibits. These projects are sponsored by the *Bosch-Stiftung* (Bosch Foundation), under the direction of two German women: Kathrin Hartman and Stefanie Stegmann.

But it was the preparation of a DVD that provided a central emphasis for my trip to Czernowitz. Some of the prominent urban sites I was able to film include the Jewish National House –

including the Stars of David along the stairway which had been sawed off by the Russians but later restored, a small synagogue near *Arbeitergasse* and *Wolfgangasse*, the inside of the *Stadttheater* (city theatre), and the memorial to the Ukrainian author Olga Kobilanska.

After a considerable search I found and photographed the three houses once belonging to my grandparents, located on *Pfarrer-Kunz Gasse*, on *Arbeitergasse* and on *Dr. Roth Gasse*. To my delight I was invited into the house on the latter street and asked by the Russian homeowner if my surname per chance happened to be Wimmer (the surname of my grandparents). Perhaps the man remembered my aunt's visit in 1985.

My host then showed me his piano, which had once belonged to my grandmother and on which my mother had played. This affected me greatly. At the entrance of the house he pointed to a sign indicating that a Soviet hero had lived here in 1940. In any event, I showed the man some pictures of my grandparents and gave him one taken at their wedding. This seemed to please him as he then proceeded to put it on the piano.

I also visited the Jewish and the Christian cemeteries. The former has not been tended in many years. The Christian cemetery does not look much better. Since the weeds and underbrush make many gravestones virtually invisible, it took me one and one-half hours to find my grandfather's grave.

The city's archives, housed in the former Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, proved another interesting stop where I spent several hours researching old newspapers and records pertaining to Czernowitz. The newspaper, *Czernowitzer Deutsche Tagespost* for which my father worked as a freelance reporter after 1934, proved to be of particular interest to me. I also perused the directories of 1895 and 1914. In the latter I found an entry about my grandfather, Emil Wimmer, who served as a government official, as well as an interesting comment about the *Arbeitergasse*. Although the *Arbeitergasse* had been renamed *Zalozieckigasse* in 1914, people for decades later continued to call it by its former name. I also found an advertisement for the drugstore *Schmidt & Fontin*, where my mother had once been employed.

On two occasions I had lengthy discussions with the last German man living in Czernowitz: Mr. Schlamp, now ninety years old and still very active. A big fan of the singer Joseph Schmidt, he has almost all his songs on CDs and even sings them to tourists in the *Café Vienna*. The year 1940 to him proved disastrous. As a Communist, he chose not to accept resettlement to the Reich when this opportunity was offered to the Bukovina Germans. But his supposed friends, the Russians, imprisoned him and sent him to Siberia where he labored for nineteen years. Only in 1959 was he able to return to Czernowitz. Of course, I took photos of him and even filmed him singing.

In conclusion I must state that Czernowitz impressed me greatly. There has been much rebuilding in the *Herrengasse* with four new shops opening in the short time I was there. Following an afternoon stroll, many guests stop for coffee at the *Café Vienna*; while its owner speaks a little German, the waiters do not. On *Herrengasse* we also find the Polish House and the German House. In the latter, German films are shown every Thursday evening.

I found the people friendly and polite. Although lacking the conviviality of its Austrian days, the city indeed makes a positive impression on its tourists. I can truly say that I have fallen in love with Czernowitz and hope one day to return.