

# The Bukovina Society of the Americas NEWSLETTER

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Membership Dues:  
Lifetime \$150.00  
Annual \$25.00

## SOCIETY NEWS & EVENTS

- The BSA Annual Meeting will be a Zoom meeting on September 14th at 1:30 Central Time. All interested members can email us via “[info@bukovinasociety.org](mailto:info@bukovinasociety.org)” to receive a Zoom invitation. If you care to take part in the meeting, please make sure that Zoom is installed on your computer or cell phone. If it is already installed, please make sure that it is the most current “FREE” version, and that the speakers and webcam are still working properly.
- Welcome to our newest Life Members:
  - #317 Vashti Waldschmidt
  - #318 Steve Jensen
  - #319 Jeffrey Schoenthaler
- Anni and Klaus Häusler were honored visitors to Ellis County where she has relatives with similar roots in Bukovina. As pilots, they rented a plane to fly over places of interest. Anni wrote a memorial to her uncle Alfred Reitmajer in the July 2024 issue of Der Südostdeutsche who died at the age of 97. Klaus had a photo credit in the same newspaper. At age 17, Alfred was drafted into the Second World War and taken prisoner. After service, he located in Styria, met up with Markus Hartinger and his wife to be Margarete. After Anni’s family relocated from Gura Humorului, her uncle joined them in Munich where they all made their home.

## BUKOVINA DESCENDANTS MEET IN KIRCHDORF AM INN

The 35th family reunion of the German-Bohemian descendants from Pojana Mikuli and Dumbrava was held on May 18, 2024 in Kirchdorf am Inn. The May devotion in front of the Maria Wald Chapel in Julbach was well attended. Heinrich Hartinger who died in 2022 at the age of 93 was remembered as instrumental in the construction of the Chapel. His daughter

Irmtraut and son-in-law Adolf Schaper have taken over the organization of the family reunions in recent years.

Activity continued with around 80 participants in the Inntalhof in Kirchdorf am Inn, who travelled from Switzerland, Austria and various German states. This time, the youth were given a chance to welcome the guests. The Schaper couple’s six grandchildren agreed to take on this task.

The afternoon event was accompanied musically by Gudrun Wachter, née Neuburger, and her daughters Sophia and Patricia. Mrs. Wachter also accompanied Herbert Riess from Austria during his song recital. It was not only the homeland songs that brought back memories of their youth for some of the guests. Helmut Jaschusch also provided entertainment with his accordion. Adolf Schaper had again prepared an exhibition this year, which aroused a great deal of interest among those present and brought back many memories

On the evening before the meeting, the mayor of Kirchdorf, Johann Springer, visited the exhibition and learned about the history of the Buchenhain and Dumbrav people in his community. On an overview board, the guests were also able to determine the degree to which they are related to each other. Questions about family research also attracted interest, as did a travel report to Bukovina by Lucyna Chmielnicka (Straub) from Berlin.

As in previous years, the afternoon was used for lively conversations and the exchange of memories. It was particularly pleasing to see the participation of several interested guests who were coming to the Buchenhain meeting for the first time. The very harmonious and at times emotional meeting ended late in the evening with a cozy get-together of the participants who were staying in the hotel. There was a lot of satisfied feedback.

# A BRAVE YOUNG MOTHER SURVIVES THE HORRORS OF WORLD WAR II. A PERSISTENT FATHER FINALLY LOCATES HIS FAMILY IN THE AFTERMATH.

By Werner Zoglauer – May 5, 2024  
Bukovina Society Newsletter Part 2 of 2

*Continued from Part 1 of this story in the June 2024 Newsletter.*

**Part 1 summary:** *As a result the pact between Hitler and Stalin, the Bukovina Germans were expelled from Bukovina, Romania in 1940. Oskar and Olimpia met for the first time in Dresden, Germany, where both families were sent to be processed for German citizenship. Oskar and Olimpia were married in 1942. Shortly thereafter, Oskar was required to join the German army, leaving his mother Katharine, his wife Olimpia and son Werner alone on the farm in Bendsburg-Grodzic, about 250 miles northeast of Dresden. In early February 1945, as the Russian army advanced towards Germany, Katharine, Olimpia, Werner and Dieter fled Dresden, where they survived the February 13, 1945 Firestorm Bombing of Dresden, but many relatives perished. Oskar was in a Dresden hospital, away from the city center and also survived. Neither Olimpia nor Oskar knew if the other had survived the bombing. The war in Germany ended on May 8, 1945. While searching for his family, Oskar roamed the decimated cities and villages near Dresden. Towards the end of August 1945, at a train station in the city of Gera, 60 miles southeast of Oschatz, a woman on a slowly moving train yelled out loud: “Oskar, Oskar, your family is in Limbach near Oschatz”.*

Story continues below:

Elated and energized by this unexpected clue, Oskar learned that a train would leave early the next morning for Mügeln, a village near Limbach. Oskar decided to sleep at the train station. His only clothes were his army uniform which he had turned inside out to minimize his military connection. At that time, the war had been over for a few months and there had been no active hostilities. However, he was still subject to constant questioning. While at the station, a Russian patrol spotted him and decided to take him into custody. He offered no resistance and the encounter was friendly. As an interpreter he had learned Russian and was able to converse with his captors, who had planned to hold him only until the morning and then turn him over to a military prisoner roundup truck that was still in operation. As the night wore on, the soldiers, who had shared several drinks with Oskar, fell asleep. He had feigned swallowing the drinks and was therefore able to remain alert. Close to the time his train was to depart, he managed to slip away from the Russians and hide out in the coal car of the train.

It was only a 60-mile trip, but the condition of the tracks and problems with the train slowed the train down significantly – finally arriving in the village of Mügeln at 11 PM in the evening. From there it was another 4 km (2.5 miles) walk to Limbach.

When he arrived at the village of no more than 10 houses, past midnight. The first house was a four-apartment building and Oskar thought he could see a light in the lower apartment. That encouraged him to take a chance and ask if the Zoglauer family was known in the village. He was hoping that a positive answer would finally end his desperate search and also prevent him from having to sleep in the farm fields. Unfortunately, there was no reply to his persistent knocks. Stepping back in disappointment, his eyes scanned the upper apartment, where he thought he also spotted a very dim light. He climbed the stairs and knocked several times on that door. Then he heard movement in the apartment. As the door opened, he was in shock. There, looking right at him and equally shocked were Oskar’s wife Olimpia and his mother Katharine.

The years following the family reunion were still a big struggle, but getting easier as time passed. Food was initially rationed, but became more available in time. Oskar obtained a job as administrator for a Dairy co-op and was thus able to obtain some extra food options for our family. Shortly after Oskar’s return, our family moved to a larger apartment in Limbach over the pig stalls in a local farm yard. There, in 1946, Werner had an accident which left him blind in his right eye when he accidentally poked his eye with an awl. The nearest doctor was in Riesa, about 12 miles away. There was no public transportation, so Oskar rode his bike, with 3 yr. old Werner on the handlebars. Unfortunately, while riding downhill, Werner got his foot caught in the front spokes, sending both father and son tumbling to the ground. Years, later we both laughed about that incident, but at the time it was not a pleasant experience. In 1947, our family was able to move into a larger house across the street. I also remember when local farmers allowed my mother and grandmother to glean the fields for crops left over after the harvest. One time, my brother Dieter and I were tied to a stake in the ground near green pea plants to keep us from wandering away while our mother and grandmother filled their baskets with the gleanings. Later that day, both of us kids became sick from eating too many green peas.

As the political scene developed, it became clear to Oskar that life under the newly Russian imposed communism would not be a pleasant experience. Again, his survival instincts prompted him to start a plan to move his family to the West and away from communism. Because of her age and thus of less value to the communist state, Katharine was allowed to leave East Germany. With the help of an international Catholic Charity, Oskar made arrangements to fly his mother Katharine to the United States, where Katharine’s daughter (Oskar’s sister) Rose had lived since 1924. And so it was that Katharine flew from Berlin to the USA, arriving in Naperville, Illinois in 1949, to be with her daughter Rose and husband, both formerly from Radautz who then immigrated to Naperville in 1924. This permission to leave East Germany was not granted to the younger Oskar, Olimpia, Werner and Dieter and they therefore would have to find a different way to escape.



**The Zoglauer family in 1949 before Katharine's departure for America.**

**Back: Olimpia, Oskar.**

**Front left to right: Dieter, Katharine, Werner**

A few months later, in the middle of a chilly fall night in 1949, a surprise loud knock on the door awakened Oskar and Olimpia. Olimpia reached the front door first, while Oskar struggled to pick up the broken handle of the chamber pot which Oskar broke as he jumped out in response to the loud knocks on the door. I was just short of six years old then and was also awakened by the loud pounding at the door and the noise from the breaking chamber pot, I clearly remember hearing the startled shout of my mother: "Oskar, Oskar, Raimund is here – Raimund is here." Raimund was Oskar's oldest brother and was presumed to have died in the war on the Russian front. Needless to say, this reunion was very emotional, noisy, tearful and memorable. Raimund told the story about his experiences in the war, his capture and his imprisonment in Siberia, a 6-year ordeal which very few German prisoners survived. Through an agreement with the Western Allies, the Russians released many of the German prisoners who were given a choice to live in East or West Germany. Sadly, about that time, Oskar and Raimund learned that their brother Friedrich (born 1913) had died in Italy. Friedrich's wife Martha and children died February 13, 1945 in the bombing of Dresden.

Oskar told Raimund of his plans to escape to West Germany. In the spring of 1950, after staying for several weeks with Oskar and Olimpia, Raimund then chose to go live in West Germany as allowed with his release from Russian prison. Oskar also informed Raimund that his wife Hertha and children were supposed to leave the Bendsburg area when Olimpia, Katharine and Werner had escaped to Dresden, but they never arrived in Dresden. Oskar had been working with the International Red Cross since 1947 and learned that Hertha and children Arthur

(10), Arnold (3) and Horst (1), were stopped on their way to Dresden and their train was forcibly sent back to Radautz. Sadly, we later learned that Hertha and Raimund's 1 year old son Horst died on the train, somewhere between Bendsburg and Radautz. During a brief train refueling stop, 10-year-old Arthur had to jump off the train and bury his young brother Horst in a pile of rocks near the stopped train, while his mother Hertha and his other younger brother, 2-year-old Arnold watched in horror and tears.

For Oskar and Olimpia, the next 6 months living in Limbach, East Germany in 1950, were difficult and dangerous. The Communists pressured Oskar to join the Communist party. Oskar's refusal to join brought him under suspicion. As a 6-year-old boy, I still remember the black "Secret Service Police" cars parked in front of the village mayor's house across the street from our house. The mayor had also refused to join the Communist Party and escaped just before his imminent arrest. Oskar did not want arrest to be his fate. In order to save as much of their family possessions as possible, Oskar and Olimpia began mailing frequent packages of their personal belongings to Raimund who was now in Büsnau, a small village near Stuttgart, Germany which had become a destination for many newly displaced Bukovina Germans. It must have been a miracle that these very frequent mailings did not attract the attention of the communist police, who fortunately at that time, had not yet developed their efficiency. But the "move by mailed packages" was a success and family pictures, clothes, pots and pans even the bulky featherbeds they originally brought from Bukovina all made it safely across the border to West Germany in 1950. At that time, the wall had not yet been erected and east-west traffic was not that well controlled. My memorable event during that time period was the frequent slaughter of chickens for Sunday meals. We needed the chickens for their eggs but why would we slaughter them? Usually that was only a special holiday event. I did not know at the time that we were about to attempt an escape to West Germany.

In mid June 1950, Oskar and Olimpia told everyone that they were going to the 2nd wedding of Olimpia's brother and Maria's father, Rudolf who lived in Dresden. I remember that this took place in the partially bombed apartment building where Rudolf lived at the time. Many of the streets were still impassable because of the rubble from the bombed and fallen houses everywhere – and all of that more than five years after the Dresden firestorm bombing of 1945.

After a joyous wedding celebration and happy visit with Olimpia's brother Rudolf and father Ferdinand, it was time for a very tearful and emotional good bye. Olimpia's brother Rudolf and her father Ferdinand had decided to stay in East Germany. If Oskar and Olimpia were to succeed in the escape attempt to West-Germany, they most likely would never be able to see Olimpia's family again. If they did not succeed, they could end up dead or in prison. This could be the final blow to Olimpia's strong parental family ties. Before the war, Olimpia had a large family – a few years later, only one

<sup>1</sup>For those not familiar with chamber pots: Before the days of indoor plumbing, these pots were used at night time to avoid uncomfortable trips to the outhouse. The pots were emptied in the morning.

brother and her father were left and Olimpia was spending a few final, but precious moments with them. Brothers Josef and Konstantin died in the war at the Russian front, her sister Anna and children died during the Dresden bombing and her mother died in 1948 from her suffering during the war and its aftereffects. Dead also were many nieces, nephews and cousins. For her, that war was worse than hell.

Oskar and the family then left Dresden and “officially” were going to Heiligenstadt, a city near the West German Border, to visit Eduard Hillinger, a longtime friend of the family. In reality, Oskar had made arrangements through Eduard to hire a local woman who would guide Oskar and family in our escape attempt across the border. I remember that the escape occurred early in July 1950, when I was 6 and ½ years old. The long border was still not as well guarded as it would be after 1955, but it was still very dangerous to do so. The long summer days and short nights made timing a critical part of the night time escape plan. Oskar, Olimpia, Dieter (then 5 ½ yrs old) and I met the woman guide at sunset to start the long, stealthy walk towards the border. Our guide also explained that at this time of the year, night darkness lasts for less than 7 hours and we therefore need to hurry to minimize our visibility as we approach and crossed the border on foot. I clearly remember the frequent admonition by both parents to Dieter and me that we must both be totally silent. Although tired and wet from the long walk through the wet fields, we made progress and finally reached the open border area of farm fields. Trees were cleared at the actual border line so that escapees could not hide and be better spotted by the Russian/East German army patrols with their dogs. I can still see today, how my father bent over in the field, while my mother reached into the back of my father’s neck and retrieved 50 East German Marks, then the equivalent of 75 US cents. Oskar took the money and handed it to the grateful woman who had risked her life to guide our family to the guarded border between East and West Germany.

After more directions from our woman guide on how to navigate the final stretch and the timing of the patrol guards, Oskar, Olimpia, Werner and Dieter started to cross the open and patrolled, wide stretch of land – fortunately protected by a slight fog. This was the most dangerous and most critical part of the escape route. Half way across this field, Dieter was startled by a nearby animal noise and Olimpia had to quickly cover Dieter’s mouth to avoid detection by border guards who were patrolling the area. Fortunately, the rest of the way was uneventful, but as we neared the safety of the West German side, the sun was starting to rise and the fog was starting to lift. When we were about 200 yards into the West-German side, I remember hearing the sound of barking dogs and men shouting. Oskar and Olimpia immediately pulled us children down and we all crouched behind some bales of hay. Shortly

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<sup>2</sup>At that time, Oskar thought that Eduard Hillinger was merely a family friend. In 1996, through my genealogy work, I learned that Eduard was really Oskar’s 2nd cousin.

thereafter, several soldiers and their leashed dogs could be seen walking along the border, which our escaping family had just crossed a few minutes earlier.

After the threat of the soldiers passed, we quickly walked for another hour before resting. Next, I remember Dieter and I being awakened from a short nap in the fields and then we all continued our trek. Shortly thereafter, our weary and tired family reached a road, where other escapees had also gathered. The occasional trucks that passed often stopped to pick up hitchhikers. Eventually it was our family’s turn to hitch a ride in the back of an empty covered cargo truck, which we shared with a mother and her two daughters who had also just escaped. Later we hitched another ride towards our Stuttgart destination. I remember being in the front cab with my parents and Dieter asleep in the bed area behind the truck driver.

After hitching a few more truck rides and much wait time in between, we arrived in Stuttgart-Büsnau on July 10, 1950 for a big reunion celebration with Raimund. It was an additional thrill to learn that all of Oskar and Olimpia’s mailed belongings were waiting for us. The only available housing at the time was in former US Army barracks, in which Raimund had secured a single room, about 8ft. x 20 ft. It had one window in the front, one window in the back and one electric outlet and a small wood/coal stove. Water and outhouse facilities were outside in the common yard area shared by the approximate 40 families in the barracks. Oskar established a store in the front 8 x 4 feet of the barracks apartment, selling beer, soda, cigarettes and candy. Only a curtain separated the store part from our living area. I remember the many nights I fell asleep in my upper bunk bed to the sound of my father and 1 or 2 Bukovina German men discussing their Bukovina and War experiences on the other side of the curtain.

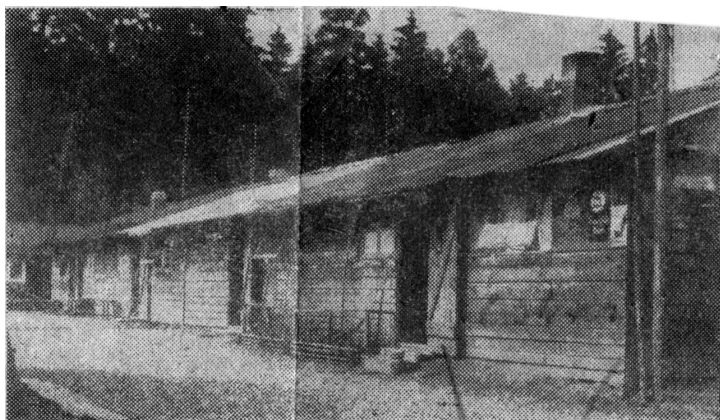
In 1951, a local brewery built a temporary building for Oskar’s restaurant where he served daily meals to about 60+ construction workers who were employed to build “Block” housing apartments for the many Bukovina refugees who lived in the Büsnau barracks. During each summer from 1951 to 1955, Oskar’s restaurant, which was located less than 50 feet from the famous Solitude Racing ring, also served the hundreds of racing fans who gathered in Büsnau to watch the car and motorcycle races. Videos of those races can be found on YouTube.

Raimund shared that single room with Oskar and family from July 1950 to September 1950 when Oskar’s work with the Red Cross resulted in Hertha, Arthur and Arnold being allowed to leave Radautz and join Raimund in Büsnau. Raimund and

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<sup>3</sup>In early 1965 Werner’s wife Waltraut, befriended a woman, whose family also tried to escape from East Germany with a large group of people. Her mother was shot and killed during their escape attempt about one month after the successful escape by Oskar, Olimpia and sons.

family were then able to obtain another similar barracks room for his family. For the first time in almost 10 years, both families learned to enjoy freedom again. That single room was our home until February 1955 when one of the new “Block” apartments became available for our family. Today, aerial maps show the huge “Block” buildings in Büsnau, along “Magstadter” street also known there as the Solitude Racing ring.



Zoglauer apartment in old US Army barracks. Each external door leads to 3 apartments, each about 8 x 20 ft. Beer sign at front right.

In November 1955 our family, including newly born son/ brother Helmuth, finally received permission to immigrate to the United States to join Oskar’s sister Rose and his mother Katharine. Raimund and his family joined us in Naperville, Illinois in February 1956.

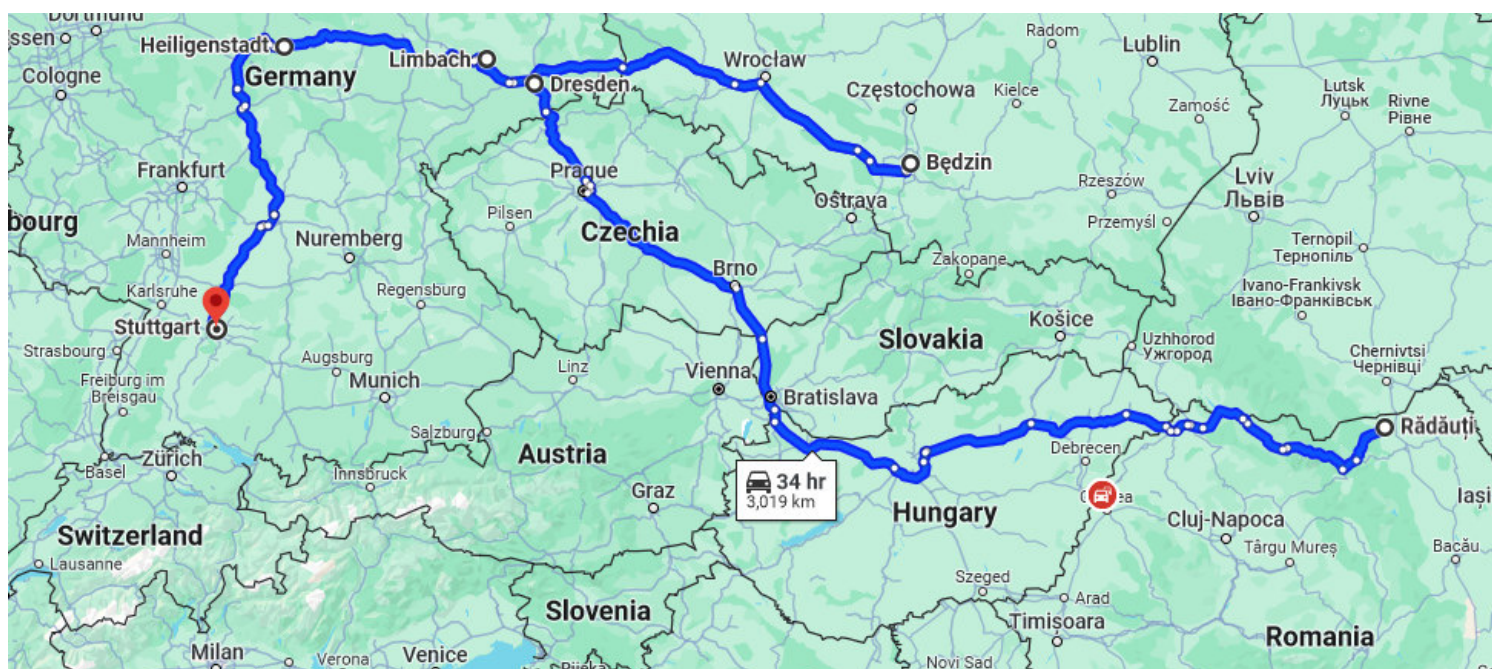
In 1960, Oskar and Olimpia welcomed a 4th son named Erich to our family. Oskar, Olimpia and Katharine worked hard and succeeded in making a comfortable life for their family of 7 in their newly built house in Naperville. Olimpia was able to survive the ravages of World War II, but died in 1974 when Oskar and Olimpia’s car was hit by a drunk driver 4 blocks

from their home. Katharine died at age 87 in 1976 and Oskar died at age 80 in 2000.

Readers may be interested in seeing related stories and pictures by searching for “Dresden bombing 1945” with your internet browser.

Zoglauer Family Migration – 1940 to 1955 on today’s Google Map

- November 1940 – Expulsion from Radauti, Bukovina, Romania to Dresden, Germany
- September 1941 – Dresden, Germany to Bedzin-Grodziec, Poland
- February 1945 – Bedzin-Grodziec back to Dresden, Germany
- March 1945 – Relocation to Oschatz-Limbach, East Germany after February 13, 1945 bombing of Dresden.
- July 1950 – Heiligenstadt, East Germany – Escape crossing to West Germany
- July 10, 1950 – Arrival in Stuttgart-Büsnau, a Bukovina-German Resettlement village in West Germany
- November 1955 – Arrival in Naperville, Illinois, USA



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