



THE MARRIAGE OF OUR PARENTS

In the fall of 1905, after the summer work on the 80-acre stump ranch seven miles north of Kalispell Dad and his brother, Uncle Fritz, had bought was done, Dad went back to Poland to visit his parents and homeland and to get himself a wife.

Mother, being a cousin of our Dad, was at the big family gathering to celebrate the return of the "Sohn Von Amerika" (No one had expected ever to see him again) and Mom often told of the festive occasion and of Dad's greeting to our Mother - everyone got kissed but to Mom he said, "You'll get all your kisses later." And that was the beginning of the romance of our parents! Dad must not have wasted much time in proposing. (He wanted to be back on the farm for the spring work and it was important to come home with a wife. Besides, it had been agreed that when Dad got back Uncle Fritz would take his turn to visit the aging parents and to also get a bride from the "Old Country". Somehow, the American girls had not made a hit with these two young men who had been raised in the German tradition that the husband's word is law in the home. Or, maybe, it was the young brothers that didn't make a hit with the eligible ladies who possibly were not willing to accept European standards for setting up housekeeping.) The courtship was brief and actually not very romantic because they didn't see much of each other - both were busy getting ready for the wedding and making preparations for travel (move) to the new home in a strange land. Their families lived about 10-15 miles apart - in days when pleasure trips by horse and coach were made only on Sundays, holidays or special occasions. Anyway, in those days it wasn't considered important for young people to get really acquainted before marriage. As was the

custom, Mother got her wedding band ring the day they celebrated their engagement which was a large family affair. She wore it on her left ring finger until the day she was married when it was placed on her right-hand ring finger. It wasn't until many years later that Mother adopted the American custom of wearing her wedding band on her left hand.

Mother at 26 was well prepared for marriage. She was trained in the art of housekeeping - cooking, sewing, knitting (socks, stockings, caps, hoods, scarves, petticoats. etc.), and management of home and fields. Like every young woman of her time she had started her dowry about the time she was confirmed. Each monogrammed piece was carefully folded and packed into wicker hampers (the size of a large trunk), made on the farm by the men servants during the long winter evenings (no television then!). Mother's "hope chest" consisted of two dozen each of large pillow cases edged with hand crocheted lace, sheets, three sizes of towels with hand hemstitched edges, table cloths, napkins all hand fringed. Everything was made of linen from flax raised on Grandmother Flath's farm. All but the table linens were processed, spun and woven at home. The table linens were spun and woven in factories in Pabianice and/or Lodz, but the flax for them had also been raised and processed on the farm. The table linens were of a high quality damask. (Surplus bolts of linen were also a source of income.) Then there were featherbeds made of down from geese raised at home. (We slept under those featherbeds until we left the farm in 1926.) The pillows were made of "spliced" feathers - the feathery part pulled from the quill. Splicing feathers was one of many tasks saved for evening fun and entertainment. The children - from the smallest who was able to hold a feather in the "eager" little hand (or hold a stitch on the knitting needle) (Grandpa Edward Siegel made bobbin (also known as pin) lace at age five) to the oldest participated - busying

themselves around the huge brick and tile stove, oven and "central" heating unit. We have nothing in our country to compare with this type of heating system. There would be one or several of these stoves built into a home, each one of a different design and decoration depending on the location and function of each. The stove in the family room had a variety of uses - heating the room, baking, cooking, drying produce, clothes and even kids who had fallen in the pond and maybe a servant or two had a bed pallet on top or behind the great stove. Mother remembered when all the evening activities were done by candlelight, replaced by a "lamp" - a wick in an open dish of oil extracted from raps (rape) seed and later replaced with kerosene lamps, much as we know them today. An atmosphere of relaxation and fun made play out of work - with someone leading the singing, storytelling, scripture reading, memory recitations, school lessons, gossiping, discussion of the activities of the day and making plans for the morrow and nonsense games. Preparing feathers was only one of many tedious but necessary tasks that had to be done to keep a large family and its many servants in food and clothing - there was carding, spinning and weaving to be done. Knitting, crocheting, basket weaving, in fact, everything needed for the home was made in the home, any surplusses were sold. We read about these activities in our history books and associate them with days of long, long ago - it was only one generation ago - our own parents lived from candles to electricity, hand harvesting to combines.

Mother's trousseau was ready too - cotton petticoats, linen petticoats and wool petticoats, chimeses, pants (under), nightgowns - a dozen or more of each. In spite of all the years of preparation to have an attractive dowry and trousseau, for men then considered them almost more important than love, the next three months were bustling with activity to get the wedding dresses and coat sewn. Mother had learned

dressmaking (a three or four year apprenticeship) from her oldest sister, Tante Marie Fritz who had a dressmaking shop. So Mother sewed all her own clothes but she did not sew her own wedding dress that she wore for the religious ceremony. It was considered bad luck for a bride to sew her own wedding dress. This was beige wool broadcloth - with veil. Time was short so Mother did help with the sewing on the dress she wore for the civil ceremony performed before the Magistrate in Pabianice. Traditionally, a dark dress was worn for this occasion. Mother's was black. Mother, who grew up with many superstitions and also a great faith, did mention occasionally, when she had overwhelming problems, that her bad luck came from sewing on that dress - the one she is wearing in the wedding picture. Mother had to leave much of her dowry behind which she deeply regretted. You know how men are - Dad would say, "You can get that in America." But when they got settled in their new home, miles from a small frontier town, Mother missed her cherished belongings that somehow could NOT be replaced - either they were not available or there was not enough money or both.

Dad's background in Europe was much the same as Mother's - both came from large families (about the middle child in each case), both grew up on large farms and their families were classed as well-to-do peasants because they were land owners. There were two kinds of landowners in most of Europe at that time - huge estates (about 2/3 of the land) was owned by counts, dukes and other members of royalty. Pans in Poland. The remaining third was owned by peasant families. The forests, meadows and fishing grounds belonged to the Pans. A peasant, landowning or not, did not dare take a dip in the pond without the master's permission. As landowners, our folks' families enjoyed certain privileges - special seating in church, rights on roads (the underprivileged peasant walked or rode his horse or pulled his cart along in the ditches, only when no one was looking could he sneak a few yards or

miles of more comfortable travel on the rough cobblestone roads and get away from ruts, mud and water of the roadside ditches), education rights, including schooling beyond the eighth grade. The children of landowning peasants attended school spasmodically till about the time they were to be confirmed. Then they would be apprenticed out for from four to ten years, depending on the trade. (Dad learned to become a miller in about six years, I think.) The non-landowners' children did well to pick up a total of a year's education; most of them were at the mercy of their masters. A kind master may personally provide some education for the peasants working for him by letting the younger children (those not capable of helping in the fields or household) attend the basic education classes - no formal music - but all learned and loved to sing - or such other frills - being taught his children by tutors. Or he may even let them attend the local school for a month or two. Dad and Mother each had a total of about four years formal education. Compulsory education was an off again on again affair during the turbulent years of Russian rule of Poland. The schools were Polish with Catholic religious instruction (any Lutheran students could sit outside, if they preferred, during the religious classes and there was more than a fair share of religious persecution from the Catholic students and teachers), and much intervention by the domineering Russians. The school year was short and vacations set so children could help in the fields. Catholic children received their confirmation instruction in school. The Lutheran children had to go to special classes at the local Lutheran Church. Both Dad's and Mother's families were progressive farmers - Dad's parents bought additional land from time to time, with hard work increased the productivity of the land and rebuilt the mill (See The Early History of the KRAUSE Family, Para. 7. See also picture of the new mill p.), grinding all their own grain and the grain for the neighbors in the area. Mother's father passed away when Mother was ten years old but Grandmother Flaht continued on

the farm and hers was considered the best kept farm in the area. Both families had a great deal of help - faithful servants, families who lived with the landowner, some had their separate dwellings in the large farmyard, some had sleeping quarters in the house and/or barn. (Remember, the barn and house were attached to each other. Animals were as important as people. Also, this, "all under one roof", discouraged stealing.) A great deal of the success of a landowner depended on his relationship with his servants and servant families. Disgruntled servants could steal a landowner blind. From all the stories told by our parents and other relatives a happy relationship existed between our Grandparents and their servants and that that was the big secret of their success. As our Grandparents and all the rest of the family worked evenings with the servants six days a week, so all the families worked side by side in the fields - men, women and children. It was the only way - to get the work done.

The great day arrived! One wonders what thoughts and feelings Mother must have had! Getting married was important. Leaving home was heartbreaking. To be an "Old Maid" was not only a disgrace but a failure. There must be something terribly wrong with a young woman if she couldn't get a husband. Mother had had an earlier romance but turned down the young man because she didn't want to hurt her sister, Tante Ottillie, who was two years older than Mother, and who wasn't married yet. Tante Ottillie was small, frail, and dainty. Mother was tall, strong, robust and the "guardian" of her favorite sister. They were always together with their mother. An unusual bond existed between our Mother and Grandmother Flaht. Unusual because in those days, Mother used to say, parents kept themselves aloof from their children. Tante Ottillie married, our Dad came along, proposed and the wedding date was set for January 16, 1906. It was a German-style church wedding in a Lutheran Church in Pabianice, I would imagine about three days

after the Civil Ceremony before the Magistrate, a brief, simple but impressive service. After the church ceremony, all the relatives of the two large families (Krause - 12 children and Flaht - 9 children) and close neighbors and friends stayed for the three-day celebration at Grandmother Flaht's home. They ate, drank, danced and slept in shifts. The bride and groom didn't get to see much of each other until they left the evening of the third day for a few days' stay with Dad's parents. Within the week Mother returned to her own home to start packing for the long journey. What to take and what to leave behind? One can't begin to imagine the heart ache and pain of preparing for a move into the unknown, with a man whom you hardly knew even if he was your cousin into a future without your loved ones, knowing you will probably never see them again.

I don't know when the folks left for America. It was sometime after the 14th of February because on that date Dad was sponsor at the baptism of his niece, Otllie Krause who had been born February 1 to his brother Gustav and Mother's sister, Tante Martha. The immigration officials in New York were going to send Mother back because of an eye damage she had sustained a number of years earlier. When walking behind someone in the woods, a small branch flipped into her eye. This left permanent scar tissue that grew across part of the pupil of Mother's right eye impairing the vision of that eye. They (the officials) insisted that it was glaucoma, which at that time, was considered possibly a transmittable disease. Dad knew enough English to make himself understood and was aware of his rights as an American citizen that through marriage Mother was automatically (this is no longer the case) also a citizen of the United States and therefore could not be detained or sent back.

It was a long, hard journey for a bride of five or six weeks to

make to an unknown land. For Dad it was nothing new, he had been quite a few places between Illinois and Montana in the thirteen years he had spent as hired hand here and there, often riding the rails when he was out of money. It was still winter in Western Montana when our parents arrived on the ranch seven miles north of Kalispell - on what is now the Old Whitefish Road. It was a big change for Mother to have to adjust to a new country, a new language and ranch life away from relatives and friends. Mother's honeymoon was short-lived - besides keeping house for Dad and Uncle Fritz, she had to cook for a logging crew that logged the timber off of our place and the surrounding ranches.



Mother with Hanna and Bruno, taken just east of the house on the farm, beside the crab apple trees Dad had planted there shortly after he had finished building the house. When we were little, we used to hang out of the attic window, look right down into the robins' nests and watch them feed their babies. The picket fence separated the yard from the garden. Some branches of the big pines on the south side of the house are visible. Mother had sewn all the clothes, including her own. Notice the cart Bruno is sitting in - it was a fold-up type and could also be made into a buggy. If I remember correctly, it was the only buggy our family had for all six of us. Mother was already wearing glasses. She was about 29, Hanna 2 and Bruno 1.



Bruno and Hanna

This picture was taken probably in 1910. Of special interest are the clothes we wore. My dress is made out of Mama's wedding dress. I used to know what Bruno's little top was made of. It was a coat style "suit" similar to what Harry is wearing in the picture on the next page.