

GROW Newsletter

Germans From Russia of Oregon and SW Washington

Area Chapter of the Germans from Russia Heritage Society (GRHS)

Volume 1 Issue 1

October/November/December 2001

Newsletter Line-Up

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| Lead Editor | Dr. Velma Jesser |
| Assistant Editor | Gayla Gray |
| Subscriptions | Margaret Rehwalt |

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Come GROW With Us

A new GRHS chapter named Germans from Russia of Oregon and SW Washington (GROW) was granted at the 2001 Convention in Pierre, South Dakota. The mission of this chapter is to collect, publish, and preserve our heritage as Germans from Russia.

The very first GROW meeting was held August 18th, 2001, at 2 pm at the Solid Rock Baptist Church in Portland, Oregon. The meeting was called to order by Oscar Geiszler, the presiding Chairman, who then led us in prayer and a song. The first order of business was the election of the Board of Director's for GROW. Nine Directors were elected as follows:
Margaret Schwahn-Rehwalt, Douglas Henne, and Walter Aman (one year term until June 30, 2002); Dr. Cecil Reinke, Leonard Kopp, and Gayla Gray (two year term until June 30, 2003); and Oscar Geiszler, Roger Haas, and Clifford Haberman (three year term until June 30, 2004). Bios for the new directors are on pages 2 and 3.

The Directors chose the GROW officers who would serve until June 30, 2002 and the following members volunteered to support the new chapter in the following categories:

| | |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| Lorraine Geiszler —Calling | Agnes Herrle —Sunshine |
| Jan Haberman —Hospitality/Greeting | Cliff Haberman —Membership |
| Kathryn Stegemeyer —Refreshments | Lola Weber —Programs |
| Sharon Voeller and Gayla Gray —Newsletter and Public Relations | |
| Margaret Rehwalt, Doris Seibert and Jim Helfenstein —Library/ Collection/Research and Genealogical Assistance to Members | |
| Sharon Voeller —Special Interests such as Obit Extractions | |

President's Message

By Oscar W. Geiszler

As the new President of Grow, I would like to invite all members and friends of the Germans from Russia of Oregon and SW Washington to join this new exciting local chapter. The benefits of joining GROW are to:

- **Meet** local residents also interested in the collection, publication, and preservation of our heritage as Germans from Russia.
- **Share** folklore, songs, literature, objects of art, genealogies, photos, documents, and recipes with local genealogists.
- **Learn** more about the Germans from Russia by attending chapter meetings where educational programs will be presented.

I'll serve this Chapter to the best of my ability.

With everyone's support we can GROW this chapter to the biggest, best, and most enthusiastic chapter in the GRHS.

Grocery Dollars Can Help Fund GROW

Albertson's stores provide an innovative method for raising funds for non-profit organizations, such as GROW, with their Albertson's Community Partners Card. It's **easy** and there's **no out-of-pocket expense** to you. Everyone has to purchase groceries so why not purchase them at Albertson's where the greater our purchases are, the larger the profits for our GROW organization!

GROW has ordered 100 cards which will be handed out at our October chapter meeting. Simply present your card to the cashier before your groceries are

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Who Are the New Directors of GROW?

Walter C. Aman

Walter's parents came to Eureka, South Dakota in 1889. He moved to Hillsboro, Oregon in 1967 and continues to live there. Walter has been a GRHS member for 11 yrs and for a longer time with AHSGR. He is a retired supervisor with the State Vocational Rehabilitation. Walter visited his ancestral village of Landau near Odessa in 1998. He has a daughter Pam living in Portland, a son Alan living in Seattle, and another son John living in Ft Lauderdale, Florida.

Oscar Geiszler

Oscar's parents came to the Dakota Territory in 1884 from the Beresan District Odessa area. He and his parents were born near Ashley, North Dakota. Oscar moved to Oregon City in 1963 where he has worked the last 18 years for the Oregon City Public Works Dept. He retired in 1991 and is jack-of-all-trades. Oscar has been a GRHS member for 2 years and has been an associate member of the Oregon Chapter of AHSGR (OCAHSGR) for the past 2 years.

Gayla Gray

Gayla has been a GRHS member for two years and she is the lead editor of the Beresan District Odessa (BDO) Newsletter and has agreed to be the lead editor for the new Grossliebental District Odessa (GDO) Newsletter. She is a Marketing Communications Manager, currently on a sabbatical leave, while attending the University of Phoenix in Hillsboro to complete her BS in Business Management. She has a grown son in the

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Portland area. Her ancestral villages are Freudental, Neu Freudental, Alexanderhlf, Hoffnungstal, and Hutterthal in the Taurien Province.

Roger Haas

Roger, son of an immigrant, was born in Zeeland, North Dakota and moved to Portland, Oregon in 1953. He has been an AHSGR member since 1971, a Board Member of the OR Chapter for four years, and the last two as President. He is also a life member of GRHS, a major donor for the new GRHS headquarters, on the GRHS Foundation Board, and honored with the 2001 the GRHS Joseph Height Literary Award. Roger's ancestral villages are Neudorf and Kassel.

Clifford Haberman

Clifford was Vice President of OCAHSGR 1982-83 and President in 1984-85. He subsequently became the Membership Chairman for about 10 years and assisted in Genealogical Family Research for 6 years. His ancestral villages are Balzer in the Volga and Rohrbach near Odessa. He retired after 30 years as a Finishing Manager in the Oregon Steel Foundry.

Douglas Henne

Douglas traces his ancestral villages to Gluckstal, Neudorf, Bergdorf, and Kassel. His grandparents came to the Long Lake area of South Dakota. During the depression his family came to the Yakima, Washington area. Following WWII, they moved to Hood River, Oregon and subsequently, came to the Portland area where he works as a CPA. Douglas has a wife and daughter and is a current member of both AHSGR and GRHS.

Leonard Kopp

Leonard's father came from Krasna, (now in Ukraine) in 1894 and his mother from Landau in 1892 to Strasburg, North Dakota. They relocated to Harvey, North Dakota in 1897 then to Richardton, North Dakota in 1899. Leonard came West after being in the Navy and settled in Tigard, Oregon where he served as auditor for GMC and later became a CPA. He has been a past member of AHSGR for about 12 years and has been a continuing member of GRHS for the past 8 yrs. Leonard has traveled twice to Russia.

Margaret Rehwalt

Margaret has been a GRHS member for 3 years and a past member of AHSGR. She is a volunteer for the Tualatin Mormon Genealogical Library. She has two daughters and two granddaughters. Her great-grandparents came from Strasburg, Kutschurgan District and Speyer/Sulz in the Beresan District. They came to America in 1907 and 1909 settling in North Dakota. In 1936 her grandparents moved their family to Oregon City, Oregon. She is interested in assisting others with their research.

Dr. Cecil Reinke

Cecil traces his ancestors from Paris, Bessarbia who came to McIntosh County, Dakota Territory on November 7, 1885. In 1926, they relocated to Oklahoma and later came West. He has been a GRHS member for 7 years. Cecil is a retired attorney and received his doctorate degree in Philosophy about 10 years ago from PSU. His wife is deceased and he has two daughters Ellison in LA and Chris in Portland. Cecil enjoys writing.

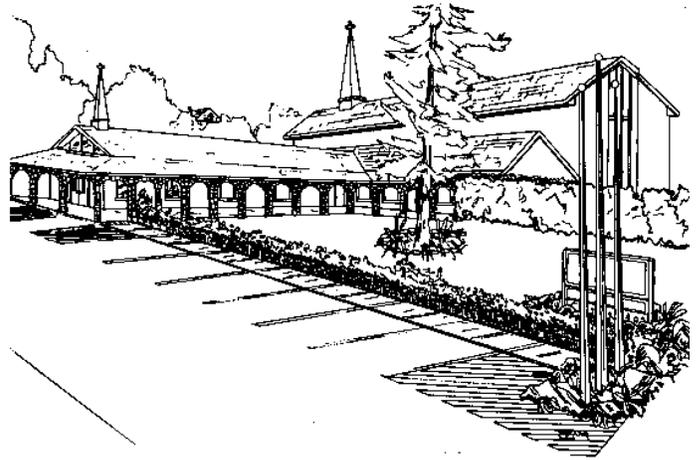
Upcoming GROW Chapter Meetings

GROW chapter meetings are open to all GRHS members and their guests. Meetings will be held at the Solid Rock Baptist Church located at 8510 SE Battin Road in Portland, Oregon. Meetings will commence at 2:00 p.m. on the following dates:

September 23, 2001—Informal get-together to become acquainted and share ancestral backgrounds, experiences, family research, food specialties, etc. Bring your family history book or family tree to share with others.

October 28, 2001—Demonstrations, maybe even sampling, of German Russian ethnic foods. Plan to bring finger foods and your own table service. Juice and drink will be provided.

December 9, 2001—Dr. Tim Janzen will present a presentation on Mennonite History and Research.



Solid Rock Baptist Church

Directions to Solid Rock Baptist Church:

From **I-205 South** take the Johnson Creek Blvd. exit (#16). Turn **Right** onto Johnson Creek Blvd. Turn left onto SE Fuller Rd. and then left onto SE Battin Rd.

From **I-205 North** take the Johnson Creek Blvd. exit (#16) and stay straight to go onto ramp. Turn **Left** onto Johnson Creek Blvd. Turn left onto SE Fuller Rd. and then left onto SE Battin Rd.

Mark Your Calendar

2002 Chapter Meeting Dates

More details on the 2002 meetings will be included in January/February/March 2002 newsletter.

January 27, 2002

February 24, 2002

March 24, 2002

April 28, 2002

June 23, 2002

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tallied. The amount of purchase is automatically recorded and credited to GROW.

At the end of each quarter, Albertson's calculates the percentage that will be awarded and sends a check to GROW. The amount of contribution is calculated on a sliding scale, up to a maximum of \$1,800 per quarter. It starts with 2% and ends up with 5% for each dollar purchased in groceries. What a great way to help us GROW!

Be ready to ask for your card and maybe an extra card for a family member or friend at our October meeting.

Pohl's Dark Side of Victory *By Gayla Gray*

I recently attended a presentation by J. Otto Pohl called **The Dark Side of Victory: Soviet Genocide Against the Germans from Russia during World War**

II. I have to admit that I was only aware of the Nazi Holocaust against the Jews. I now know that the Soviet genocide against Germans from Russia was as horrific as the Nazi Holocaust.

According to the presentation by J. Otto Pohl, the Stalin regime systematically deported the entire population of nine small nationalities to special settlements in areas it knew would be lethal. These nationalities were the Finns, Germans, Karachays, Kalmyks, Chechens, Ingush, Balkars, Crimean Tatars, and Meshetian Turks. In total these nationalities had more than two million people. As a direct result of the Stalin regime's imposition of deadly living conditions upon these people more than 400,000 died premature deaths.

The Germans from Russia constituted the single largest of these deported nationalities. They formed over 40% of the population of the special settlements and almost 50% of the deaths resulting from the deportations. During World War II, the Soviet regime confirmed more than 1.2 million Germans from Russia to special settlements in Kazakhstan, Siberia, Central Asia, and other areas east of the Urals. It then mobilized over 300,000 ethnic Germans into forced labor brigades known as the *trudarmia* (labor army). As a direct result of the poor material conditions and mistreatment in the special settlements and labor army between 200,000 and 300,000 (14%-21% of the population) Germans from Russia per-

ished during World War II. Stalin's deportation and subsequent treatment of the Germans from Russia was a crime against humanity in the same category as the Holocaust and the Armenian genocide. Stalin's genocide against the Germans from Russia and eight other nationalities constitutes part of the dark side of Allied victory during World War II.

There is no doubt in my mind that the acts committed by the Stalin regime against the Germans from Russia constituted genocide. First, the Stalin regime systematically deported the Germans from Russia region by region. The first deportations began on August 15, 1941 where they rapidly removed the German population of the Crimea (approximately 50,000) to Ordzhonikidze Kray and Rostov Oblast in the north Caucasus for a few weeks then to Kazakhstan. This forced removal took place under chaotic conditions and most were unable to take any possessions what so ever with them before being loaded on to cattle cars.

Between September 3 and September 20, the NKVD along with members of the Peoples Militis (ordinary police) and Red Army rounded up and exiled almost the entire ethnic German population (more than half a million) of the Volga region. They systematically went from house to house and forced the inhabitants at gunpoint into trucks and then cattle cars bound for Siberia and Kazakhstan. These cattle cars were totally unfit for the transportation of humans. Their only toilet facilities consisted of a hole in the bottom of the carriage or a bucket unshielded from the view of other exiles. The crowded and unhygienic conditions of these rail cars facilitated the incubation and spread of infectious diseases such a typhus and tuberculosis. This

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mass deportation permanently destroyed over 150 years of continuous German settlement on the Volga.

In rapid succession, the Stalin regime cleansed the entire European portion of the USSR of Germans. Only the ethnic Germans in the western Ukraine temporarily avoided deportation in large numbers. A total of 344 train echelons deported some 800,000 ethnic Germans to the Urals, Siberia, Kazakhstan, and Central Asia during the fall and winter of 1941. The NKVD successfully cleared much of the USSR of its German minorities by 1942. Clearly, the Stalin regime knew that by deporting the Germans from Russia to these settlements that a large percentage of them would die of exposure, malnutrition, and disease.

The settlements lacked sufficient housing, food, clothing, and medical care to sustain the entire exiled population. NKVD watchtowers, roadblocks, check points, and barbed wire greatly restricted the movement of the exiles. They could not venture beyond three kilometers outside their assigned settlements without special permission from the NKVD and had to register with this organization every month. Failure to carry out work assignments carried an eight-year sentence in a labor camp and attempting to escape carried a 20-year sentence.

The Stalin regime formed the labor army at the same time it deported the Volga Germans. On January 10, 1942, Stalin made all German men between 17 and 50 in Kazakhstan, Novosibirsk, Omsk oblasts, Krasnoyarsk, and Altai krais subject to service in the labor army. Under this initial decree the Soviet government inducted 120,000 ethnic Germans into the labor Army. They were assigned to fell timber (45,000), construct industrial complexes (35,000) and lay rail lines (40,000). The following month

Stalin expanded the category to include all men aged 17 to 50. Finally, on October 7, 1942, the Stalin regime decreed that all German men with Soviet citizenship from 15 to 55 and women from 16 to 45 had to serve in the labor army. Only invalids, pregnant women and women with children under three were exempt from service in the labor army. The women were sent to work in the oil industry and men to mine coal in Chelyabinsk (Urals) and Karaganda (Kazakhstan). Altogether a total of 316,600 Russian-Germans toiled in the labor army before its official liquidation in January 1946.

The material conditions in the labor army often proved fatal. Exhaustion, exposure, and disease took a high toll on the mobilized Germans who only received 300 to 800 grams of bread a day depending on how well they fulfilled the labor quotas set by the NKVD. They often had to work 14 hours a day at physically demanding and dangerous tasks in temperatures as low as -40C without winter clothing. The massive mortality in the labor army claimed the lives of uncounted tens of thousands of Russian-Germans during World War II.

In addition to these deaths, mortality in the labor army caused tens of thousands of children to be orphaned. They became wards of local kolholzes where they were thrust into the care of strangers, many openly hostile to ethnic Germans, so many of these children often suffered from neglect.

The exact number of Russian-Germans to die as a result of the deportations, conditions in the special settlements and the labor army can never be known. The estimates of the excess mortality, according to Samuel Sinner, lies somewhere between 200,000 and 300,000

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with the larger portion of these deaths occurring in the labor army.

During World War II, the Stalin regime subjected the Russian-Germans to deportation, internal exile and forced labor. The immediate result of these policies was the death of hundreds of thousands of people. The long-term result of these policies has been the cultural dissolution of the German minorities in the former USSR. Merely by virtue of being born German they found themselves expelled from their homes to the lethal wastelands of Siberia and Kazakhstan. These victims are part of the dark side of the Allied victory and deserve recognition of their suffering, full rehabilitation, and compensation for their losses.

Finally, the Russian (USSR) government has admitted that the deportations of the Germans and other nationalities were acts of genocide. More distressing is the official admission that the government's justification for the deportations was spurious: totally unjustified as most were innocent of any wrong doing.

The genocide of the Germans and other nationalities needs to be broadcast all over the world, just like the Jews' sufferings and their intended annihilation by Hitler and the Third Reich has been chronicled and broadcast all over the world. Additionally, the Russian government has not shown any remorse, or offered to give any consideration to the Germans in Russia for their losses including their homes, material possessions, families, and friends.

Many thanks to Otto Pohl, Sam Sinner, and Ron Vossler for enlightening us so that we can help spread the word!

GRHS and GROW Membership Drive

January 1, 2002 is just around the corner and that means it's time to renew your GRHS and GROW membership for another year. We've included the application on page 8. To save on postage, bring the filled out application and your application fees to the September 23rd meeting.

Talk to your family and friends and share with them the benefits of becoming a member of GRHS and GROW. Direct them to the GRHS web site:

<http://www.grhs.com/>

where they can obtain more information about the organization and locate a local chapter in their area.

If you recently filled out an application for GROW but need to renew your membership to GRHS, the \$5.00 newsletter/operation donation is optional. The donation would be appreciated as we build our new chapter.

Programs

By Lola Weber

As we begin this new and exciting time of GROW, I would like to ask each of you to be thinking about areas that you would like to see programs cover. Do you have old stories from your parents, grandparents, etc.? Do you have pictures or stories you want to show and tell about a recent journey back to your homeland?

If you have contacts for a specific subject, or if you are willing to share your stories and experiences, please contact me at **hunter1@kalama.com** with your ideas and suggestions.

The purpose of the programs are to **LEARN** and **SHARE** our knowledge. It's our organization so let's make it fun too!

GROW MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION
GERMANS from RUSSIA of OREGON and SW WASHINGTON (GROW)

PLEASE STATE WHICH YEAR(S) _____

(Check appropriately): NEW _____ RENEW _____

NAME (Print) _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

PHONE NO.() _____ E-Mail Address _____

Membership Class _____ GROW _____

(Chapter Preferences, if any)

Name of Ancestral Villages _____

Names of adults in household desiring cards: _____

Enclosed is my remittance of \$ _____

Table with 2 columns: Membership Category and Amount. Rows include GROW NEWSLETTER/OPERATION DONATION minimum \$ 5.00, Membership \$ 30.00, Educational (library, etc.) \$ 30.00, Silver (\$100 beyond annual dues) \$ 130.00, Gold (\$250 beyond annual dues) \$ 280.00, LIFE (\$100 per year) \$ 500.00.

Membership fees are due annually on January 1.

LIFE membership fees may be paid in annual installments of not less than \$100.00.

_____ I'm interested in receiving the GROW Newsletter electronically (Email) to save publication & postage costs.

MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO GRHS - US Currency:

Mail to: Margaret Rehwalt, Treasurer, 19990 SW Edy Rd, Sherwood, OR 97140

GROW Chapter Officers & Directors

President (Term expires June 2002)

Oscar W. Geiszler
803 5th Ave.
Oregon City, OR 97045-3323
503-656-1802

Vice President (Term expires June 2002)

Leonard G. Kopp
12245 SW 128th Ave.
Tigard, OR 97223-1864
503-590-3886 or legend@hevanet.com

Secretary (Term expires June 2002)

Gayla D. Gray
1829 NE 23rd Ct.
Hillsboro, OR 97124-5901
503-547-2938 or gaylagray@msn.com

Treasurer (Term expires June 2002)

Margaret J. Schwahn Rehwalt
19990 SW Edy Rd.
Sherwood, OR 97140
503-625-7055 or mjrehwalt@aol.com

National Board Liaison (Term expires June 2002)

Roger Haas
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Portland, OR 97222-5522
503-659-8248 or rahaas@uswest.net

Director (Term expires June 2002)

Walter C. Aman
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503-648-7322 or wcaman@aol.com

Director (Term expires June 2002)

Douglas R. Henne
9 Cellini Ct.
Lake Oswego, OR 97035
502-635-2348 or dhenne@telport.com

Director (Term expires June 2003)

Dr. Cecil Eugene Reinke
7805 SW Terwilliger
Portland, OR 97219
503-245-0115 or cecilreinke@juno.com

Director (Term expires June 2004)

Clifford Haberman
8110 SE Madison St.
Portland, OR 97215-3025
503-252-5480

GROW Board Meetings Dates and Locations

All board meetings of the GRHS GROW Chapter are open to general membership and the welcome mat is out to all. Please notify the host/hostess before the meeting that you would like to attend so he/she can accommodate the number that will be in attendance. All meetings commence at 7:00 p.m. Thank you for your interest.

October 12, 2001 - Geiszler home, 803 5th Ave.
Oregon City, OR 97045-3323

November 16, 2001 - Gray home, 1829 NE 23rd Ct.
Hillsboro, OR 97124-5901

January 18, 2002 - Rehwalt home, 19990 SW Edy Rd.
Sherwood, OR 97140

February 15, 2002 - Haberman home, 8110 SE Madison St., Portland, OR 97215-3025

March 15, 2002 - Kopp home, 12245 SW 128th Ave.
Tigard, OR 97223-1864

April 19, 2002 - Aman home, 4178 SE Cedar St.
Hillsboro, OR 97123-7466

June 14, 2002 - Henne home, 9 Cellini Ct.
Lake Oswego, OR 97035

GROW Newsletter

This newsletter is currently being mailed to two hundred and thirty local GRHS members. Moreover, a few others who are in Oregon and SW Washington who have ancestral roots or ties to the following settlements or districts in Russia: Beresan, Bessarabia, Caucasus (North/South), Crimea, Dobrudscha, Glückstal, Grossliebental, Jekaterinoslaw, Kutschurgan, and Odessa, etc.

If you are interested in researching or meeting local connections with similar interests and villages, then please subscribe to this newsletter and become an active participant in the GROW Chapter (application is on page 8). The cost to receive additional communiqués from this German Russian GROW Chapter is a minimum donation of \$5.00 per year to defray the newsletter publishing and mailing costs. The GROW newsletter is a quarterly publication. Receiving your

GROW newsletter and other communications electronically as an Adobe pdf file will save GROW printing and mailing costs and **YOU** receive the newsletters immediately. Adobe Acrobat reader is available as a free download at:

<http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html>

You can also forward the electronic newsletter to friends and family as a way of inviting them to join GRHS and GROW. E-mail gaylagray@msn.com if you would like to receive the GROW newsletter in the future electronically.

All submitted materials should include a statement that gives permission for use in the newsletter. Pictures are welcome as we have a scanner to digitize images and all output is done on a laser printer. Please provide a SASE for materials that need to be returned.

Ideas and suggestions for improvements to this newsletter should be addressed to the Lead Editor.

GRHS GROW Chapter

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