Easter brings cherished memories, and traditions still celebrated today

By Terri Lang

It is Easter time, and children have already participated in Easter Egg Hunts in their local towns. Hunting for eggs at Easter is a long-standing tradition in many countries around the world. Russia had many traditions and customs which are still celebrated today, even in the same fashion as they were in the olden days.

The preparations, activities and celebrations surrounding Easter were very important to people. For the Germans from Russia, Lent was observed in the strictest fashion. The last day before Lent, many asked their families to have a dance, a day to “let their hair down.” Thus, was founded Shrove Tuesday (Fastnacht in German).

On Fastnacht, a popular food preparation—Fasnacht Kneadle (special doughnuts) served with prunes. It was often eaten as a bread served until Easter.

Especially among the Catholics, bread was very common as a many meal. Meals usually had Lent. Most non-Catholics abstained from meat only on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. Some families traditionally ate fish and prunes on Good Friday. Also on Good Friday, some families ate fish and prunes until sunset and then ate a special meal consisting of eggs and potatoes, which were usually served to the children in Russia, on the earth at that day.

What was common on Good Friday was coloring Easter eggs with homemade egg dyes. These dyes contained natural ingredients such as onion skins, coffee or tea. A boiled egg in a glass of this mixture would turn a different shade of color. Children would then put the eggs in a bowl of cold water and watch as the colors “bleached out” the eggs.

On Easter morning, the children were usually awake before the adults. They would climb out of bed and start their day with a song. The children would then carry the eggs to church in a basket or woven in a basket, along with other items. The eggs would be collected in a large basket and taken to church. After church, the eggs would be eaten, along with other items.

A popular tradition in Russia was the practice of “Sparrow Eggs.” These were eggs that were believed to bring good luck and prosperity to those who ate them.

At the Strasbourg Care Center (SCC), the ladies remembered childhood Easters.

“Easter was a time of worship and a time for family gatherings,” said Alice Riedel, a resident of the care center. “We would bring in our children to church during Lent. We were brought up to go to church, to learn about as much as possible about our Catholic faith. We were brought up to go to church on Easter morning.”

Easter morning was a special time for the women and children of the center. They would dress up in their best clothes and go to church with their families.

“Easter was a time of love and service for our families,” said Alice. “We would make sure that everyone had a good time on Easter morning.”

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The traditions of Easter varied from family to family, and even from one church to another. However, the general theme of Easter remained the same: a symbol of the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the hope for new life. The decorations, songs, and customs all contributed to the joyful celebration of Easter. The special meals and traditions were a reminder of the importance of family, faith, and community during this holy season.