

Christmas and Easter Memories

George Shaw, e-mail message to Michael Miller, April 2010

I have been reading the memories you sent, and had one to add if it is not too late. The following is an excerpt from a much too short life history that Elizabeth Ann Fischer wrote about herself. She was born in the Strassburg colony in Russia, emigrating with her parents in 1909.

At Easter time, we made little holes in the ground outside of the house and covered them with little sticks of food and lined the holes with fresh grass, so the Easter Bunny could put in the colored eggs. On Easter Sunday morning we would find one or two colored eggs in the nest. Beside, the Easter Bunny usually dropped eggs in various places around the house, and us kids would all run and pick up as many as we could find. The one that had the most colored eggs would be called the Best Girl or Boy for being good. My dad was the biggest teaser in the world; all the Fischers were teasers.

Remembering one Christmas, all us grandchildren were taught to greet our grandparents, we would first say "Gelopt Sei Jesus Christus." Meaning "Blessed be Jesus Christ." Then we would say "Merry Christmas," or "Happy New Year," or "Happy Names Day" or whatever holiday or occasion it would be. Also at mealtimes and at bedtimes we usually had to stand in a row and recite our prayers out loud, as taught to us by our parents. Don't recall that we received any special blessing from our parents or grandparents. One night my parents went out visiting and a neighbor girl was our babysitter, so we all went to bed without saying our prayers and during the night I woke up and went to my parents' bedroom and told my mother I wanted to say my prayers. Well she shoed me off the bed as she was tired and asleep. I called her a second time and was told to go to bed. Well that night I did not say my prayers.

Whenever there was a Names Day, say like St. Elizabeth, then all the women in the village named Elizabeth would gather at someone's home, usually on a Sunday afternoon. They would visit and all eating Russian peanuts or sunflower seeds and the hulls they would drop on the bare ground floor. Dancing would be in the kitchen and always someone had an accordion or concertina for music. In the evening they would all have Pot Luck lunch, usually fresh scrambled eggs, they made a lot of that.

For Christmas we had a Santa Claus, but we called her a Christ-kindel (Christ Girl). Who came all dressed up in white and she brought the presents we received an orange which was special and some candy and the little girls under 8 years old usually received a doll. If you were over 8 years old, you were considered too old to be getting a doll and would be a disgrace to be getting one. Young ladies don't play with dolls anymore. I had an old doll one time and it seems sometime before Christmas it disappeared. Well all the grandchildren used to take their baskets of fruit, candy and gifts over to the grandparents and they had a long table in the kitchen. Each one of us kids dumped out our baskets to see who received the most and when I dumped my basket out fell my doll.

I was so embarrassed, as my dad put the doll in the bottom of the basket and the rest of the things on top. I was too old to be getting a doll and mother had fixed it up and looked like new. I hardly recognized it. I remember I went into the bedroom and under the bed and I cried, as I was ashamed. I was too big to be getting a doll. I had

my second doll and had forgotten about the first doll. The baskets were made by mother with fancy ribbons; don't remember what the baskets were made of or whether they were bought in Odessa.