

## Mother's Day

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### Electronic mail message from Beverley Gutenberg, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

Got this tale from Puis Welk who may be known to some of you. It concerns the maternal family of Lawrence Welk. This may have been written in one of Joseph Heit's books. A notation on the page says: "From Dr. Heit".

The Schwan's had one son, Johannes, who married and fathered six children. They lived on the homestead in Strassburg . Johannes' first five children were girls, his youngest was a son, Johannes, born in 1846. Little Johannes' mother had tragically died of blood poisoning in childbirth.

Fortunately the Schwan's neighbours, Ludwig and Marianna (Bertsch) Erk were kind people. As it happened they had had a baby girl, Barbara, just a month before Johannes' birth and his mother's tragic death. Marianna Erk, a good Christain woman with a warm and loving heart, offered to nurse the neighbour's little baby boy along with her own daughter. Each day at feeding time one of Johannes' sisters would take the baby over to Mrs. Erk until the time came when he was weaned.

However, throughout his childhood and as a teenager, Johannes Schwan remained a daily visitor at the Erk home. He loved his nursing mother and was deeply devoted to her. Twenty years later she was to become his mother-in-law when he married Barbara.

Johannes and Barbara had seven children. The second born was Christine - Lawrence Welk's mother.

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### Electronic mail message of 12 May 2002 from Mary Lynn Axtman, Fargo, ND

I hope you might be tolerant of this posting to the list on this Mother's Day. Wherever we might be living today, it was their sacrifices that enabled our lives today.

They were the immigrant mothers who endured long and harsh travel, usually with many and probably very seasick children to arrive at their new North or South American destinations. They were the mothers of the families who stayed in Russia and struggled to feed their children, often times without their husbands who had been deported or executed. They were the mothers who made the long wagon or walking trek to Germany so their children might escape Stalin's Great Terror in Russia only to be forced to return again at gunpoint.

If they had some education, it did not mean much as they knew their German language and the English of North American or the required Russian language in Russia was new to them. Despite being in a new country or Russian cultural system, they continued to be the link to their past German culture. They were the teachers of religious traditions, recipes handed down for generations, their familiar stories and music. Yet, they seemed to understand that the old country, the old culture was past and the family had to work for the future.

The challenges of these stay-at-home moms were great: the language barrier, a society without a welfare safety net, prejudice and exploitation, lonely lives on the cold harsh prairies of North America or in Siberia.

Despite that, they raised children to be successful and educated adults. These matriarchs lived to see their grandchildren do even better in a country that still for them was the: New Land.

Each are Special...