

In Touch with Prairie Living

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By Michael M. Miller

Germans from Russia Heritage Collection
North Dakota State University Libraries, Fargo



GERMANS FROM RUSSIA
GRHC
HERITAGE COLLECTION

As the Holiday Season approaches, I wish to extend Yuletide Best Wishes and a special “Fröhliche Weihnachten” greetings to you and your family!

I would like to reflect on the wonderful comments made on 27 October at my 50th Anniversary Celebration at NDSU. I am humbled and honored by their kind comments about my career at NDSU and my commitment to preserving the heritage of the Germans from Russia Community.

From Dean Bresciani, President of North Dakota State University, “We’re here today to celebrate a contribution to a university, to a profession, and to a passion – that is a little hard for many to us to fully grasp. A lifework with few parallels. The Germans from Russia Heritage Collection has become an important piece of what places NDSU in the top ranks of universities nation-wide. But ‘important’ almost seems a slight to what it has taken to collect and preserve this collection. To contribute 50 years of one’s career, goes above and beyond what is ‘typical,’ that I have trouble finding the superlatives warranted.”

“Suffice it to say that Michael hasn’t just contributed 50 years of his career to us, but rather 50 years of his life. He has poured his heart and soul in a way that only someone consumed with his work can. His selfless sacrifice sets a bar that few of us will ever be able to achieve, and in honesty, many of us would more likely shy away from. But just a brief conversation with Michael Miller gives you a glimpse into a person with enthusiasm and passion for his work that it is difficult, if not impossible, to separate from his life. Thank you, Michael. It is an extraordinary privilege and opportunity to work with you and to have you continue a lifetime legacy that is still in the making.”

Longtime colleague Claudia Berg,

Director, State Historical Society of North Dakota (SHSND), commented, “Michael’s legacy was recognized by the State Historical Society in 2010, along with Tom Isern that same year, as a Heritage Profile Honor Award recipient. The award recognizes individuals who have made a lasting or significant contribution to preserving, interpreting, publishing, and promoting the knowledge and understanding of the history of North Dakota, and have demonstrated long-term dedication and personal commitments in pursuit of these goals. Michael’s career has centered, not on a few of these goals, but on all of these goals.

“On the national level, in 2011, the SHSND nominated the GRHC for the annual American Association of State and Local History’s Excellence in Leadership Award. Not only did they win the Leadership Award, the GRHC won the WOW! Award. A rarely presented award that recognizes projects and programs that are highly inspirational, have exceptional scholarship and are exceedingly entrepreneurial. The collections, educational and public programs, oral histories, exhibits, books, translations, travels, tours, radio programs, documentaries, and social media that Michael, his colleagues and partners have produced are remarkable and a leading example in the country of what one person’s passion and commitment can accomplish.”

“In 2015, Michael and many others were instrumental in creating the grassroots network that voiced support for the acquisition for the Welk site. In the heart of German-Russian Country, the Welk site became an anchor as a regional heritage tourism destination in south-central North Dakota. Michael was also a founding member of the Friends of the Welk Homestead and the

Tri-County Tourism Alliance.”

Dr. Ann Braaten, Curator of the Emily P. Reynolds Historic Costume Collection, NDSU, shared, “It is the textile and clothing collection that is the basis for my collaboration with Michael. Some 25 years ago, during a 3-day tour for new faculty across North Dakota with President James Ozburn, Michael guided us through German-Russian country in south central North Dakota. On the long drives between visits, Michael described the importance of the German-Russian dress traditions.” Today more than 350 textile items from the Germans from Russia have been donated to the GRHC and are housed at the Reynolds Collection https://library.ndsu.edu/grhc/history_culture/textile/index.html.

“Michael put his focus, incredible energy, and determination to gather theses, books, family and community histories, cookbooks, photographs, textiles and clothing so the German-Russian history would be documented and remembered. Because of his work, he has built the GRHC into a superb primary resource for future researchers. Michael’s vision and willingness to reach out to others to explore possibilities, has made him a central part of the fabric of our community at NDSU, of the state, and the world.”

“My lifelong dream has been to keep alive and enhance the heritage of the Germans from Russia.” Michael M. Miller.

If you would like more information about the Journey to the Homeland Tour to Germany and Ukraine; becoming a Friend of the GRHC, or would like donate (family histories and photographs), contact Michael M. Miller, NDSU Libraries, PO Box 6050, Dept. 2080, Fargo, ND 58108-6050. (Tel: 701-231-8416); Email: Michael.Miller@ndsu.edu; website: www.ndsu.edu/grhc.