

In Touch with Prairie Living

January 2018

By Michael M. Miller

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



GERMANS FROM RUSSIA
GRHC
HERITAGE COLLECTION

Happy New Year and best wishes for 2018! With this January column, I would like to reflect on further comments made on October 27, 2017, 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.

Dr Tom Isern, longtime colleague and Distinguished Professor of History at NDSU, shared, "A story in the *Emmons County Record* of August 23, 1967, includes, 'A Strasburg native has been named to the faculty of North Dakota State University, Fargo. Michael M. Miller, son of Peter and Mary (Baumgartner) Miller, was appointed by President H. R. Albrecht. Miller will teach library science, act as circulation librarian, and handle the library displays. An honor graduate at Strasburg High School in 1961, Miller received his bachelor's degree from Valley City State College. In June of this year (1967) he earned his master's degree at the University of North Dakota where he was an assistant at the library and the alumni office."

"You have told me Michael, how in 1978 President Laurel Loftsgard called you into his office for a 'talking to'. Actually, he called you in to create the Germans from Russia Heritage Collection and to place you in charge of it. So you and I, Michael, we have our ways by which we move along professionally in the academy, physically separated from our roots, but manage to remain in touch with them, even bring to the forefront of our academic careers."

"Now flash forward in early 2017, the 13th of January, when you were driving us home from a Tri-County Tourism Alliance Annual Meeting in Napoleon. On the road, I received the

call from an elder brother on the farm telling me that my mother had passed away during the night. We didn't talk for a while after that, and then when we did talk, in a gentle way that was appropriate. On arrival in West Fargo, you came into the house to join Suzanne and me for whatever we had for supper. Before the meal, you said you would like to offer a prayer. And you did, a simple petition, but one filled with understanding."

"And this, all of you, friends gathered today, is what Michael Miller is like. He is still, thank God, that native son of Emmons County who joined us here at NDSU in 1967. And Michael is indefatigable. He constantly reminds us that the Germans from Russia are our state's largest ethnic immigrant group; that their history is deep, complex, tragic, glorious and in every way worth the preservation and study; that to pursue and study; that to pursue the preservation and study of the German-Russian history and culture rebounds to their credit of our land-grant university; and that the Germans from Russia Heritage Collection is our marquee research collection of world class status. And so Michael, Go Bison, und Geh mit Gott, alter Freund. Wir lieben dich."

Acacia Jonas Stuckle, Emmons County Extension Agent, native of Fredonia, ND, spoke, "I've had the pleasure working with Michael both directly and indirectly for the past 15 years. As a freshman at NDSU in 2002, I began a work-study program at the GRHC. From that moment a spark was ignited in myself to learn more about my own German-Russian heritage. I had no idea the impact of working with Michael would have on my own life and career choices. He has taught me that no dream is too big if you're willing to

work for it."

"I remember the first time he told me that I should setup a Facebook page for the GRHC. At the time, I would never have thought that social media would become an entirely new way of connecting with German-Russians throughout the world. But Michael knew it. He is always a step ahead of everyone. The GRHC's Facebook page now has over 8,000 likes!"

"When you reflect on what Michael has accomplished in the past 50 years, many words come to mind such as inspiration, passion, collaboration and dedication. Michael is the 'King of Networking' with folks. Because of his ability to connect with anyone, anywhere, at any time, he has formed so many collaborations and partnerships. Second, Michael does not accept no for an answer! Michael will see that it happens. He is resilient when it comes to ensuring the heritage of the Germans from Russia is preserved. His work truly reflects North Dakota State University's mission and vision. His efforts and contributions to the research and preservation of the Germans from Russia are known and respected regionally, nationally and internationally. Congratulations, Michael, I'm proud to call you a mentor, colleague and friend."

"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.