

# In Touch with Prairie Living

August 2020

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



GERMANS FROM RUSSIA  
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HERITAGE COLLECTION

The Germans from Russia community has lost a “shining star” with the passing of Dr. Lewis R. Marquardt, Austin, Texas, on May 31, 2020. He leaves a living and enduring legacy with his research, writing and dedication to his German-Russian roots. We shared roots back home in Emmons County. Lew was a dear friend, a mentor, and a special colleague.

Lew was born November 7, 1936, in Jamestown, ND. He was very proud of his Black Sea German ancestry and his Irish roots growing up in Linton, ND. He graduated from high school in 1954. His undergraduate studies were completed at Minot State University where he financed his study by founding, directing and playing with the popular dance band, “The Collegiates” at countless high school proms across North Dakota and Montana.

After teaching music and band many years at Miller and at Webster South Dakota High Schools, he returned to higher education, acquiring a Ph.D. in Humanities at Arizona State University. He served in the United States Army from 1958 to 1961, primarily as a Russian linguist stationed near Kassel, Germany.

In 1959, he married his high school sweetheart, Judith Aileen Woods and together they enjoyed twenty-five years of marriage and five children. Every child should benefit from the discourse and debates he provided his children. He provided summer travel to the far corners of the United States with a car full of raucous youngsters, his patient wife and one dog. When Judith died in 1984, he married Dona Reeves in 1985 and learned how to live in Texas.

Lew and Dr. Dona Reeves-Marquardt were participants in the first Journey to the Homeland Tour in May 1996, traveling to Germany and Ukraine. He visited his ancestral German Catholic villages in the Kutschurgan District, near Odessa, Ukraine.

Lew was a charter member of the American Historical Society of Germans

from Russia (AHSGR) and some thirty years later, he served as president. Along the way, he established the Arizona Sun Chapter in Phoenix. He was also an Executive Director of the German-Texan Heritage Society. Dona and Lew provided many meticulously prepared lectures and presentations at AHSGR and GRHS conventions through the years.

Lew and Dona were researchers and scriptwriters for four of Prairie Public’s award-winning documentaries: *A Soulful Sound: Music of the Germans from Russia* (2005); *It’s All Earth and Sky* (2010); *At Home in Russia, At Home on the Prairie* (2012); *We (Never) Don’t Forget: Germans from Russia in South America* (2015).

Bob Dambach, former director of television at Prairie Public, shares, “One of my first memories of the first Homeland Tour in May 1996 to Odessa, Ukraine, was Lew, in a small village, getting an auditorium full of Ukrainians to sing ‘Home on the Range’ with our tour members as a sign of solidarity. Over the years, they would open their living room in Austin for us to become a rough-cut screening and editing room. I think one of Lew’s favorite part of working on the documentary productions was when we were selecting the background music. I don’t think the “band man” music educator ever left his soul. You’ll be missed my friend.”

Lew’s cousin Debra Marquardt, Distinguished Professor, Iowa State University and native of Napoleon, ND writes, “I know that over the years that I thanked him for his help and inspiration, but I doubt that I ever told him that I loved him, and that is my regret as I think about the passage of this great soul from the earth. The world seems smaller, poorer, and quieter without him in it.

When I was researching and writing about my German-Russian heritage, I came upon the name of Lewis Marquardt, a researcher who

was a leader in the effort to preserve and document German-Russian history. Lewis was originally from Linton, close to my hometown of Napoleon, and we shared a surname (albeit with his “dt” still intact in the spelling of our ancestral name). I wondered, who could this be?

When I finally met Lewis and his dear wife Dona, I had a feeling of instant family, mostly because of they were so warm, inviting, intellectually engaged, and nurturing. And indeed, discovered that we were family, as Lewis explained: his grandfather, Christian, and my great-grandfather, Joseph, were brothers who had come to Emmons County together in the 1880s from their village in South Russia to farm outside of Hague, ND. Studying the research work of Lew and Dona has given me a new understanding of the deep, complex, tragic, and rich history of our ethnic group.

Lew might scold me for not staying in touch or not doing enough to preserve our heritage, but then he would turn around and throw himself into the task of finding some invaluable piece of research that I was missing for a project. He was a taskmaster and a standard-bearer. Lewis shared a birthday with my own father, November 7th, and they were both small in stature, but imposing of personality.”

Timothy Geiger of Leader, SK, writes, “The respect that Lew had earned over his lifetime, his easy way of relating to everyone, his vast knowledge of all things German-Russian, and most importantly his willingness to share his knowledge and experiences will be his enduring legacy.” A legacy that lives on.

If you would like more information about the 24th Anniversary Journey to the Homeland Tour to Germany and Ukraine (May 2022), or would like to donate a family history and photographs, contact Michael M. Miller, NDSU Libraries, Dept 2080, PO Box 6050, Fargo ND 58108-6050 (Tel: 701-231-8416; michael.miller@ndsu.edu, or go to [www.ndsu.edu/grhc](http://www.ndsu.edu/grhc).

*August column for North Dakota and South Dakota weekly newspapers.*