

# In Touch with Prairie Living

May 2021

By Michael M. Miller

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



GERMANS FROM RUSSIA  
**GRHC**  
HERITAGE COLLECTION

The Germans from Russia community has lost a “Shining Star” with the passing of Janice Fay (Huber) Stangl. Our appreciation to Thomas Stangl, husband of Janice, for allowing us to use part of the text from her obituary.

Janice was born in a drafty homestead shack near Hosmer, SD, on October 23, 1936, the oldest child of Edward and Lydia (Haberer) Huber. She spoke only an old Swabian German dialect when she started school at age five, which led to her long avocation as a genealogical and historical researcher of her Germans from Russia heritage.

Jan attended Bowdle, SD, schools for 12 years before attending Northern State Teachers College in Aberdeen, SD, 1954-1956, earning an Associate’s degree in Intermediate Elementary Education, with a minor in Music. In high school, she was elected State President of the South Dakota Future Homemakers of America, and President of the North & South Dakota Conference of Evangelical United Brethren Youth. She also sang with a national chorus at Wrigley Field, Chicago, IL.

After graduation from college, Jan taught elementary school classes and K-12 choral music, full-time, part-time, and private music lessons until she retired in 1990. Jan then became a talented translator of old German letters printed in fraktur type in America German-language newspapers.

Janice co-authored “Marienberg: Fate of a Village,” published in 2000 by the GRHC. The village of Marienberg, Odessa Province, was a daughter colony of the Glückstal District villages of South Russia. The book was printed in German and English in the same volume. The book includes the rich collection of letters published in the Eureka Rundschau, Eureka, SD, between 1916 and 1932. Jan wrote, “Through two world wars, two major famines, as well as the terror and executions during the imposition of Communism, their society, as Germans from Russia once knew it, was completely destroyed. Despite this, the spirit and heritage of the Marienbergers has survived and lives today in its descendants in America and Western Europe.”

The Glückstal Colonies Research Association (GCRA) published in 2012

“Collectivization in the Soviet Union: Germans Letters to America, 1927-1932,” compiled with commentary and translations by Janice Huber Stangl. The letters tell the stories of Germans living in Russia from World War I to the beginning of the Soviet Union. Most of the letters were written by a lay pastor/teacher, Jakob Ahl, who was correspondent for several American German-language newspapers. The letters in German were published in the Eureka Rundschau, a weekly newspaper published in Eureka, SD, and in Der Staats-Anzeiger, a bi-weekly newspaper published in Bismarck, ND. The Appendix of this book contains two essays by her husband Tom about the KGB files for the arrests and sentencing of two of Jan’s maternal great uncles, Emanuel Seefried of Marienberg (executed in 1938), and Philipp Mainhard of Seebach (exiled in 1937), which were obtained from the Odessa Archives in 2010.

Janice and Tom were members of the Journey to the Homeland tours to Germany and Ukraine in 1998 and 2002. They visited Jan’s ancestral villages of Alt Elft, Arzis, Borodino, Neu Elft, in Bessarabia; as well as Glückstal, Kassel (Glückstal District), Marienberg, Neu Beresina, and Nesselrode/Birsula in Odessa Province. In May 2002, Tom and Jan attended the Glückstal Memorial Monument Dedication in Moldova.

Janice contributed several articles to the GCRA books, “The Glückstalers in New Russia and North America,” 2004, and “The Glückstalers in New Russia, the Soviet Union, and North America,” 2008. She participated in the writing of the script and was interviewed in the award-winning documentary, “Heaven Is Our Homeland,” produced by GCRA, 2004.

GRHC published the popular “Cookbook for Germans from Russia,” by Nelly Däs, with translation of German to English by Alex Herzog, editing by Janice (Huber) Stangl.

A more complete life story of Janice Fay (Huber) Stangl can be found on the website of the Adams-Green Funeral Home, Herndon, VA, at [www.adamsgreen.com](http://www.adamsgreen.com). Condolences and tributes may be posted on the site.

Allyn Brosz, Washington, DC, native

of Tripp, SD, shares his memories of Jan (Huber) Stangl, “Jan and I connected when she contacted me with a phone call – we both lived in the metro Washington, DC area. We talked about our common South Dakota heritage, and discovered that we are cousins as well. I’ve worked with Jan on many projects for the GCRA and the National’s Capital Area Chapter of AHSGR. I’ve delighted in her wit, her knowledge of the history and culture of the Germans from Russia, and the Schwäbisch dialect they spoke. Jan shared wonderful stories of her grandparents and her delicious cooking.”

Curt Renz, Ames, IA, native of Herreid, SD, writes, “I first met Jan Huber in 1952 or 1953 when we both participated in an EUB church youth group presentation in South Dakota. Our paths didn’t cross again until 30+ years later at a GRHS Convention. In the following years, we served on the GRHS Board of Directors. It was there that I came to know her as a thoughtful and kind person who used those gifts working with different German-Russian committees and projects.”

James Klein, Walla Walla, WA, comments, “I met Jan 25 years ago and was impressed with her knowledge and her compassion for her kindred folk – the Germans from Russia. As a member of the steering committee for GCRA, Jan’s compassion for people was evident in her relation to the people of those villages as well as those who have been forcibly relocated during the conflicts of the 20th Century. Jan expressed to me a mutual sympathetic interest we had with Anton and Rosa Wart of Glückstal who experienced much discrimination, multiple moves, and other hardships for being ethnic German within the Soviet Union. Jan’s heart for her people was devoted to preserving memories of their customs and sacrifices.”

For more information about the 24th Journey to the Homeland Tour to Germany and Ukraine, donating family histories and photographs, or how to financially support the GRHC, contact Michael M. Miller, NDSU Libraries, Dept. 2080, PO Box 6050, Fargo, ND 58108-6050, (Tel: 701-231-8416); [michael.miller@ndsu.edu](mailto:michael.miller@ndsu.edu); or go to [library.ndsu.edu/grhc](http://library.ndsu.edu/grhc).

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