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As far back as I can research, my ancestors on both sides are from Germany. My mother was born in Stuttgart, Germany in 1905. My father was born in Watervliet, NY in 1900, but his parents and grandparents were born in Germany and immigrated to the United States in the late 1870s.

Mother's father died while she and her two sisters were young. Their mother was not able to support them, so they were separated and sent to live with relatives. My mother wanted them to be together, so in the early 1920s, she immigrated to the United States, sponsored by my paternal grandmother in Watervliet. She came, not knowing any English at the time. My grandmother got a job for her with a wealthy family in Troy to be a housekeeper and cook. Mother's goal was to come to America, make enough money to reunite her family and return to Germany. This never happened. The only person Mother could communicate with was my grandmother. My father never spoke German but little by little, my mother learned some English. I can only admire the courage of this young woman.



My parents were wed in 1926 and together raised six children. My father's father had died while Dad was in the eighth grade, so he and his two brothers quit their education and worked to support their mother. They raised vegetables, fruits and chickens for eggs, and peddled these in the area.

Germany was devastated by World War II and the German people were poor. As soon as the war ended, Mother learned that her family was living in the French Zone, as the area was known. Mother sent care packages every week to her family, wrapping boxes in unbleached muslin, so they could use the packing. They would write and relate how grateful they were, and include mention of all the gifts they had received. In this way, Mother could know what items the French were keeping for themselves and then she would camouflage these things in the next package. She literally kept them alive and healthy.

In 1948, for the first time since she arrived here, my mother and grandmother took a steamer to Germany to visit relatives. By this time, Mother's sisters had married. Frieda stayed in Germany while Anna moved to Geneva, Switzerland.

My grandmother in Germany was doing poorly, so Mother's sisters encouraged her to return before their mother died. However, Mother had three children at home; the youngest was only 7 so she decided not to go at that time. Then in 1956, her sisters urged her to come since their mother was dying. Mother decided to go and went to Albany to get her passport. When she got home, there was a telegram that my grandmother had died. Mother decided not to go then.

In 1971, I accompanied Mother to Germany, which was her first time back since her mother's death. It was very difficult for her to go to the cemetery, but she was a very strong woman and handled everything in stride. In 1976, my parents celebrated their fiftieth wedding anniversary and her sister Anna surprised us by arriving for the celebration.

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I could write a book about how talented my mother was and all she did for others. She had taught herself to sew and made most of our clothes growing up. She outfitted five weddings in all, for my two sisters and my three brothers' fiancées, including the bridal gowns, two in the space of three months, and then made all my postulant's outfits since I was entering the convent the next month.

In 1987, my niece was asked by her company to go to Germany to work with clients there. She, of course, knew no German. She asked Mother to accompany her since her destination was very close to Mother's home. Although Mother had congestive heart failure, the doctor indicated to us that she should be able to handle the trip. So, on Sunday, March 29, Anne Marie and Mother flew to Germany. Mother showed Anne Marie her home and where she grew up. It was wonderful. Her two sisters met her arrival and so another reunion occurred. Mother went to bed that night, sleeping in her mother's bed. The following morning she did not appear in the kitchen for breakfast, although she was always an early riser. Soon her sisters realized she had died in her sleep.

What a shock! Anne Marie was told and couldn't believe it. She called my brother and told him, and he called the rest of us. Although it was a tremendous loss, we are all convinced that Mother had gone home to meet her maker, after one more short reunion with her sisters. My father had died just 5 months earlier.

I am proud of my heritage and realize the difficulties immigrants faced, having to leave family members behind and learning to adapt to a new culture and a new language. I thank my ancestors for accepting this responsibility; I am so grateful for my parents and all they did for me.

