THE JOSUA & FRENI STUCKY ZERGER STORY

Swiss Beginnings.

Josua and Freni Stucky Zerger belonged to families with deep roots in Switzerland. It is commonly believed that the Zerger surname was first attached to people who were in some way connected with the city or canton of Zürich, Switzerland. These "Züricher" folk eventually were known as Zürcher, then Zercher, and today they bear the name Zerger.[1]

Both the Zerger and Stucky families were also early converts to the radical Alttaeufer(rebaptizer or Anabaptist) movement of the Protestant Reformation, which began in the 1500s. Alttaeufersbroke with mainline Reformation leaders like Luther and Zwingli over such issues as rejection of infant baptism and the oath, and refusal to participate in military service. After concluding that baptism should only follow adult confession of faith, alttaeufersbegan to "re-baptize" one another, causing enormous consternation among both Protestant and Catholic church leaders. Early Anabaptist records for 1535 include a Jan Zürcher, "city dweller" from Schaffhausen (Canton Bern). A Peter Stucki from Oberiessbach (Canton Bern) attended the Anabaptist debate in Bern in March 1536 and was executed April 16 of the same year for belonging to the Alttaeufers. Although no direct ancestral links have yet been found between these individuals and the Josua and Freni Stucky Zerger genealogical lines, they serve to establish family origin in Switzerland and early links to the Anabaptist movement.[2]

From the earliest days, Swiss Anabaptists faced severe persecution, especially in Canton Bern: expulsion, drowning, beheading, scourging, branding, burning at the stake, hanging without trial, and being sold into galley slavery for Venetian merchants. Anabaptist ministers were not permitted to perform marriages, so any such marriages were not recognized by the state and any children were considered illegitimate and legally unable to inherit any property of their parents.[3] All who associated with Anabaptists had to pay a fine of 100 pounds or be banned for a year. Those who bought the property of an Anabaptist had to turn it over to the state, making land sales virtually impossible for fleeing Anabaptists.[4]

One reason for the Bern government's draconian measures was that much of the local populace refused to cooperate by turning in Anabaptist neighbors or family members. Often when bounty hunters came searching a village for Anabaptists, the villagers gave warnings of the coming posse by horn-blowing, shooting off muskets, and shouting. On other occasions, Anabaptists taken by bounty-hunters were forcibly released by mobs of irate citizens. Many fellow citizens actually sympathized more with the Anabaptists becauseof the government persecution, refused to betray them, and gave them food, clothing, and shelter.[5]

Mennonites were barred from many occupations and often could only provide for their families by farming, which they pursued with a "religious intensity" which led them to pioneer many progressive agricultural techniques. Swiss Mennonites became expert dairy farmers and cheese-makers, linen weavers and millers; circumstances of later migrations eventually forced them to become grain farmers as well.[6]

During a period of particularly intense persecution, from 1670-1671, Zürchers emigrated from Switzerland to the Palatinate, a German province.[7] The Stucki[8] family sought refuge from persecution in the northern Jura Mountains (Canton Bern), and finally, in 1723, fled across the Swiss border to Grandvillars, Haute Alsace, France, just east of the Comté de Montbéliard.[9]

Der Stammvater, Ancestral Father:
"An Unusually Talented Individual"
A Farmer and Weaver. Josua Zerger's oldest known ancestor is Johannes Zercher (or Zürcher), born around 1743 in the Palatinate duchy of Potzbach, Falkenstein, bordering Nassau-Weilberg.[10] Johannes was both a farmer and a cloth weaver, and was known as "an unusually talented individual."[11]
Faced with scarce land ravaged by constant war, restrictions on hunting marauding deer and wild pigs which destroyed crops, rising war taxes, and population growth limits, the Swiss Mennonite colony began leaving the Palatinate in 1784.[12] Two years later, at the age of 43, Johannes and his wife Magdalena, joined 18 other families and left with their six children for Einsiedel, East Galicia (Austria).[13]

Refuge in Einseidel. The Galician village of Einseidel was built on land confiscated by the Austrian crown from Polish monasteries during the first division of Poland in 1772. The clergy had been poor stewards of both the land and the serfs who were forced to till it; although the soil was fertile, productivity was extremely low. Economic development became a priority for Emperor Josef II of Austria, who, in 1781, issued the first "tolerance edict" designed to attract Protestants to the largely Catholic region: religious freedom, exemption from military service, the possibility of hereditary leaseholds for 35 acres, an equipped farmyard, and financial assistance in the purchase of livestock.[14]
The promise of Einseidel was not, however, without the shadow of religious restriction for the Swiss: no Mennonites except the original settlers could enter Galicia and no Galician citizens could join the group; the Swiss were prohibited from maintaining their own church record and had to report all birth and deaths to the nearby Lutheran pastorate; marriages could be performed only by a Lutheran minister.[15] As in the Palatinate, burial continued to present the potential for violent confrontation with non-Mennonite neighbors; initially, the cavalry had to be called out to enforce Mennonite rights to interment in the local cemetery.[16]
Einseidel was a small village situated on a hill. It consisted of one double row of side-by-side farm units separated by a single broad street. Each unit was composed of a nearly identical house-barn and shed on 35-50 acres of farmland.[17] Johannes and Magdalena lived in Unit #18.[18] Living quarters for the family of 8 consisted of a kitchen, 3 larger rooms and a utility area.[19]
Within ten years, Johannes and Magdalena found themselves caught up in an intense community-wide debate over whether to follow Amish religious principles or not. By 1795-1796, the small village was split between those who chose to adhere to the Amish Church Discipline of 1779 and the rest of the Swiss Mennonites. Johannes and Magdalena belonged to the Amish group. Eventually the two groups stopped meeting together for church services.[20]
Prodded by rising religious tensions within the village as well as mounting fears of land shortages, political unrest generated by war with Turkey, and unfriendly "plots" by Polish neighbors, the Zerchers and nine other families made plans to leave Einseidel. Around that time, a group of Hutterites were seeking additions to their Reditschoff Bruderhof at Wishenka, in Northern Ukraine. After several years of correspondence and personal contact, in 1796 the Amish Mennonite group left Galicia to join the Bruderhof, confident in the common ground the two groups shared.[21] Farm leaseholds were sold and government assistance was repaid, as required by law.[22] Knowing he was legally forbidden from ever returning to Galicia, 53-year-old Johannes still chose to emigrate. He and his family began another long, slow overland trek.

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Disillusionment at the Bruderhof. The Reditschoff Bruderhof was built along the River Dosna on one of the manors of Field Marshal Romanizov, near the village of Wischenka (located north east of the city of Kiev). Together with the Heinrich Müller and Johann Schrag families, Johannes and Magdalena arrived at the Bruderhof on May 18, 1796, eager to join the communitarian Hutterite Church. The three families were accompanied by two elders, whose job it was to evaluate Hutterite religious beliefs and study the communal living arrangements. Two weeks later, the elders had concluded that all was well and returned to Galicia to bring more families to join the Bruderhoff.[24]

Within weeks of their arrival, Johannes, Magdalena and the other two families were ready to join the Hutterite church. The Hutterites, however, urged a more cautious approach and suggested that the Bruderhof and the newcomers set aside some time to really get to know each other before formal joinder. Caution proved to be wise counsel, as grave misunderstandings and mutual suspicion began to develop. The Galicians claimed they had been deceived and that the Bruderhof was really a Aswanghaus' (slave-labor institution). The Hutterites said the problem was that the three Swiss families considered work at the Bruderhof too heavy and "the cost too high."[25] Johannes and the others began to regret their hasty decision to leave Einseidel and join the Hutterites.[26]

With the arrival in early October, 1796, of six more families from Einseidel, it was decided to make an effort at reconciliation. Nonetheless, tensions continued to mount as doctrinal differences became more intolerable.[27] Eventually, the Galicians insisted that before they would join the Hutterite Church, a new election of church officers would be necessary and Hutterite books would have to "be put under the bench."[28] With such deep differences and mistrust, reconciliation proved impossible and the Swiss made plans to leave.[29]

Unable to return to Einseidel, the Galicians spent the spring of 1797 wondering where they could go. When word arrived that land was available in Western Kiev near the Dutch Prussian Mennonite village of Michalin, the Zerchers and the families of Johannes Schrag, Heinrich Miller and Peter Krehbiel, made plans to head south and west. Just one year after arrival, Johannes and Magdalena were once again on the move.[30]

Legal Battles in Michalin. The noble who owned the ground on which Michalin was built had promised good terms to lure farmers to his property. For a small annual rental and a nominal "poll-tax," Prince Prot Potocki granted the Mennonites all the land they could farm, religious freedom, and military exemption. Although all grain had to be ground at the Prince's mills and all grapes processed in his presses, the Prince also provided support for the village's religious and educational life.[31] No wonder Johannes and the other Swiss Mennonites decided to settle here!

When Johannes and Magdalena arrived, however, they made a dismaying discovery: the village was mired in intense efforts to enforce the very rights that had lured everyone to Michalin. The problem was not with the Prince, but with the Russian government. Since 1793, when Russia had annexed Kiev province as part of the second partition of Poland, Russian magistrates had been refusing to honor the Prince's commitments to the Michaliners, and had sought to impose restrictions which would reduce the Mennonites to Russian serfdom. The Michaliners responded by sending one of their leaders, Count von Wedel to St. Petersburg to plead their case with the crown. Most accounts treat the matter as a court action, or at least as high-level negotiations with

the Czar's government to reinstate the privileges promised by Prince Potocki.[32]
Wedel eventually prevailed, but not until 1804. Hearing no word about his progress, the colonists became increasingly discouraged with life in Michalin, including harassment "by wild tribesmen who would plunder their farms, destroy property, and steal cattle."[33] When Wedel returned to Michalin in 1804, he found most of the villagers gone. Johannes and Magdalena were among those who, in 1801, accepted Prince Edward Lubomirsky's offer to settle in Volhynia.[34] At 58 years of age, Johannes once again took up the weary mantle of the emigrant.

The Last European Home: Volhynia. Heading west from Michalin, the Swiss Mennonite families established the village of Beresina near Dubno, Volhynia, in the river Ikwa's marshy flood plain. Johannes and Magdalena, together with a Schrag family lived on a "sort of island" in the marsh, while others lived in the surrounding vicinity. A dam kept the marsh at bay and the area was forested with birch trees.[35]
After only 8 years at Beresina, the Swiss were asked to move again. Prince Lubomirsky decided to build a papermill which would require a large dam and flooding of the Ikwa River basin, including the village of Beresina. At Lubomirsky's suggestion, the villagers moved two miles further west to the village of Wignanky.[36] In 1817, the Zerchers moved to Eduardsdorf, where it is presumed that both Johannes and Magdalena died.[37] The name "Zerger" was first entered in the Eduardsdorf Church record books in 1838.[38]
In 1861, the Eduardsdorf group moved 100-160 miles northeast into Eastern Volhynia and founded the village of Kotosufka. Farmland near Eduardsdorf had grown scarce and large land tracts were opened up for peasant ownershipin the east after Czar Alexander II abolished serfdom and limit the size of estates in the 1861 Emancipation Code.[39] Previously, the Swiss Mennonites had only been able to lease land from the nobility (sometimes for as long as 24 years, as in Eduardsdorf). But after 1861, the colony was finally permitted to purchaseland, and they bought the estate of a banished Russian rebel, Prince Kotosuf.[40] Along with the estate, however, came existing tenants who objected to their eviction. A court case was eventually initiated to resolve the dispute, which lasted the entire time the colony was in Kotosufka.[41]

Josua and Freni's Story
Growing Up in Kotosufka. Josua Zerger was born in Eduardsdorf on March 7, 1858 to Jakob and Freni Waltner Zerger. He was just three years old when the colony moved to Kotosufka. Freni Stucki was born in Kotosufka on February 17, 1860 to Johann and Maria Archelus Stucki.[42]
The Swiss Mennonite community Josua and Freni experienced was very different from the group of wanderers to which Josua's great-great-grandfather Johannes Zercher had belonged. The years in Volhynia had brought some prosperity and religious shifts within the Swiss Mennonite colony. Under the leadership of Elder Jakob Stucki, the Kotosufka community drifted from its Amish orientation toward more moderate Mennonite lifestyles and beliefs. Gone were the strict dress patterns, ties were accepted, hooks and eyes were discarded, note-reading in music began.[43] Nonetheless, dress was kept simple and women wore a prescribed head covering of fine black mesh cloth.[44]
Josua probably attended the village school from the age of six until he was ten or eleven, whenever he was strong enough to help on the farm and in the field. Although Freni also went to school when she was about six, she probably left at an earlier age. Schooling for girls was not considered essential and they were capable of doing useful "real" work like spinning far earlier than boys were strong enough to help with field work. As a result, most girls and women were

less literate than most boys and men.[45]
At school, both Josua and Freni learned Bible verses, songs, and stories, reading, writing, arithmetic, and good penmanship. School materials consisted of a primer, the Bible, a piece of chalk stone, and a slate board. If either were an "advanced" student, they would have used a goose quill pen and ink made from soot, plant dye and water. Children were assigned places on the long benches which reflected the quality of their school work (the better students sitting closer to the teacher). Both Josua and Freni learned early on never to speak to an elder unless spoken to.[46] One of Josua's favorite games was to gather with his friends into two teams facing each other, and then try to hit all those in the opposite team with a ball.[47]
As a youngster, Josua took his turn herding the communal herd of cows and sheep during the day, and the horses at night, all out on the communal pastureland. When he was old enough, Josua left school to help with the men's work: broadcasting seeds at sowing time, and harvesting with scythe and sickle. Only 75-100 sheaves could be cut in a single day, so the harvest always lasted many weeks. In spring, the lambs were sheared and the wool distributed to families according to need.[48] During the winter months, rye, wheat, buckwheat, oats, and millet were threshed and flailed. The left-over straw was used to stuff mattresses and bed livestock.[49]
At harvest time, Freni and all the village women joined with the men to bundle, shock, and haul the grain crops into the barn. Women also helped with the haying by raking as the men cut.[50] Much of Freni's time during the winter months was taken up with processing and spinning hemp, flax and wool, since all clothing was homespun and homemade. Since she had been given her own spinning wheel at an early age, Freni spent endless hours converting carded wool into yarn, and dried hemp and flax fibers into skins of thread. Hemp was used for rough clothing and to make rope for the village; linen and wool was for finer clothing and bedding. Thread and yarn was colored by soaking it in boiling water with different pieces of "dying wood," which often came from as far away as South America.[51] After the cloth was woven, the village tailor, usually a Jewish neighbor, would go from house to house cutting and sewing each family's wardrobe needs for the coming year.[52]
Food consisted of ryebread, milk, potatoes, lentils and vegetables. White bread was served only on holidays. Desserts were often from the abundant fruit orchards.[53] Often mealtimes consisted of a big bowl of soup in the center of the family table, with children and their families eating directly from the bowl, each using his or her own wooden spoon.[54]

Sailing to America. In 1870, when Josua was 12 and Freni was 10, news reached Kotosufka that Czar Alexander II had revoked all the special privileges the Swiss Mennonites had relied upon when they first emigrated to Volhynia. Growing nationalistic movements were pushing the Czar to initiate progressive reforms designed to bring greater social and economic equality to allRussian peoples, leaving no group—especially "German nationals"--with special privileges not shared by the peasants.[55] Most significant to the Kotosufka colony were the abolition of the military exemption and the Russianization policies, including a requirement that only the Russian language could be spoken.[56] Everyone had ten years to decide whether to submit or leave the country. Repeated efforts to obtain special dispensation left the Mennonites empty-handed and faced with a stark reality: drastic change was coming and they had to accept it or emigrate.[57]
The Kotosufka colony chose to emigrate, and considered Australia, Turkistan, and South America before settling on North America.[58] Plans were made to leave in the summer of 1874. Passports cost each family $50 and tickets for passage on the ship required another $80. Land

and all property had to be sold, usually at below-market prices since the buyers knew the Mennonites had no choice but to sell so they could leave.[59]
After everything was sold and their few belongings were packed onto wagons, the people gathered to take a last look at their beautiful village. Freni's uncle, Elder Jakob Stucki, led the congregation in an hour of payer. Tearfully they sang their farewell song: "The time has come for us to part/The journey to America start/Where thousands are content to stay/This gives us courage on our way."[60] The wagon caravan started to roll. On August 6, 1874, more than seventy families (441 people)--the entire congregation at Kotosufka except for two men--[61] began the long journey to America: by rough cart and standing-room-only trains through Russia, Austria, and Germany; by boat from Hamburg across the English Channel to Hull, England; and again by train to Liverpool where they boarded the S.S. City of Richmond which took them across the Atlantic Ocean into the port of New York City on August 31, 1874.[62]
Both Josua and Freni were young when they were forced to leave the only home each had every known. Josua was 16 and Freni was only 14; both had just recently baptized by Elder Stucki on November 3, 1873.[63] Neither had ever been far from Kotosufka, nor had they ever before even seen, let alone boarded, either a train or a ship.[64] To avoid seasickness when crossing the English Channel, they filled themselves with the rum, raspberry vinegar, and little bottles of "sure-cure anti-seasick drops" which peddlers in Hamburg sold the unwitting villagers. And though they may have boarded ship in good spirits, "the fish were [still] fed" as the small ship rolled over the North Sea to England.[65] The journey aboard the S.S. Richmond was more pleasant. The ship had both sails and coal-fired steam engines.[66] The German captain was friendly and accommodating, and only one day of storm interrupted an otherwise smooth voyage. The Zerger and Stucki families were assigned the lowest cabins since they and the others from Kotosufka were traveling third class. Each family shared a cabin with at least two other families. One man jumped overboard and drowned; one child died and had to be buried at sea; and a false fire alarm would have caused great panic had not nearly everyone slept through![67]

Castles and Flying Men. After reaching the United State, Josua and Freni were quarantined with the rest of the ships passengers for three days in Castle Garden, just off the New York shore, waiting to be processed through U.S. immigration. The first day the group was on the ground floor; the second day they were moved up into the first gallery level, and the third day they were moved still higher into the second gallery. Since it had not yet been erected, no Statute of Liberty greeted them, but the view from the Castle's balcony gave them their first glimpse of an elevated railroad. Russian rubles were exchanged for U.S. dollars, at the rate of 73 cents for every ruble. When given permission to leave, the family ferried over to Manhattan.[68]
From New York, the Kotosufka group boarded the Santa Fe Railroad and headed for Cleveland, Ohio. Along the way, Josua and his companions saw many wonders. Somewhere in Pennsylvannia or Ohio they passed "a lot of men in uniform playing with a big stick and a ball," whom they took to be soldiers practicing a special form of warfare. Who had ever heard of "baseball" in Volhynia! In Cleveland, they looked up to see two men hanging in basket at the boom of a large ball which flew through the air. Who would have thought men could sail through the air? It wasn't hard to begin believing that America was indeed a land of allpossibility.[69]
From Ohio, the majority went on to Kansas. However, those who had been too poor in Russia to pay their own passage stayed with Mennonite families in Ohio, Illinois, and Indiana to work off traveling expenses which had been advanced to them. Josua's family was among this group, and so they spent the next three years in Illinois working off their debt.[70] Fortunately, one of

Josua's uncles was able to put a down payment on a parcel of land in Kansas to hold it while the family was in Illinois.[71] Freni's family went directly to Kansas.

Kansas At Last. In 1877, the Zerger family was finally able to move to Kansas, but they found no village in which to settle. Instead, the former Kotosufka villagers lived on isolated farmsteads. So, the Zergers settled on a farm in the south 2 of the southwest 1/4 of section 19, Mound Township, McPherson County.[72] How different--and lonely--this must have felt after the bustling and crowded village life in Volhynia. In fact, a profound sociological shift was taking place among the Swiss-Volhynians.

In Russia, the village had togetherstruggled to push back enough forest to assure sufficient land for the next generation. The ever-present forest hemmed in the always-growing community, contracting vision and shrinking the horizon. In Kansas, things were just the opposite. Here, the constant struggle was to plant and grow trees on a windswept treeless plain. The horizon was so far away one could follow the curve of the earth. The huge expanses of prairie could only be worked by having individualfarms spread over great distances. Eventually, osage orange hedge-rows grew tall enough to further isolate each family in its own farmyard cocoon. Centuries of the same families living side-by-side in a close-knit village (Genmeinde) were over. On the great plains, the individual family became the primary social unit.[73]

In 1879, just two years after settling in Kansas, Josua and Freni were married. He was 21 and she was 19. They made their home as newly-weds with Josua's parents, Jacob and Freni Waltner Zerger.[74]

Life in the late nineteenth century was, for Josua and Freni, very different from life in the early twenty-first century. They traveled on foot or drove slowly by horse and wagon; a 15-20 mile trip could take two days with an ox cart, one very long day by horse. Roads were mostly muddy tracks through fields and bridges were only built near to a town. If a downpour came, roads and creeks became impassible and travelers had to be prepared to stop anywhere en route and wait out sudden Kansas snow and rain storms. Besides the unpredictable weather, Josua and Freni faced the very real dangers of grasshopper plagues, prairie fires, and rattlesnakes.[75]

Mules, oxen, and horses pulled field implements, and a rope and bucket pulled water up from hand-dug wells 30-60 feet deep. Women and children often helped with the field work. At first, only the walking plow was available, with which one person could work only about 2-3 acres a day.[76] Soon, however, the two-bottom riding plow made it possible to work many acres every day. With no trees to clear and more efficient implements to till the land, the Swiss-Mennonite families were soon owning and cultivating more land than had been worked collectively by even the largest village in Volhynia.[77]

In the early days, homes were often no more than earthen dugouts or glorified wood huts no more than 16 feet long by 14 feet wide, filled with simple, rough-hewn furniture on packed-earth or wooden floors. Candles and oil lamps gave a dim light at night, and music in the home "was the purr of the house cat, the laughter of children, or the humming of devotional songs."[78]

Food staples included dark rye or cornbread; "coffee" made from roasted barley, wheat, or chicory; fish, rabbit, prairie chicken, wild geese or duck, and an occasional "antelope." What fruits and vegetables were eaten had to be grown in the family garden. Cakes and cookies were seldom served except on holidays, and sugar was rarely put on the table. Prairie grass, sunflower stalks, cornstalks, and buffalo dung were used for fuel until osage orange hedge rows were mature enough to provide logs to burn. Milk and eggs were often traded in town for cloth and other food staples.[79]

Within a surprisingly short number of years, bountiful crops and advances in farming techniques and equipment brought prosperity. Huts and cabins were replaced by large farm houses and even larger barns.[80] In 1882, Josua and Freni, together with Father and Mother Zerger moved about 4 miles northwest to adjoining farms in Turkey Creek Township. Josua and Freni settled on section 11[81] and Jacob and Freni on section 14[82]. All but one of Josua and Freni's 12 children were born on this farm, and it was here that Josua and Freni lived until their deaths.[83]

Family Memories of Josua and Freni. Josua was of average size, strong and handsome. He wore a well-trimmed beard that he always washed thoroughly after coming in from the field, rubbing and rubbing it to remove all the dust. He worked hard and at a fast pace,[84] always finding the time to help other people in need. When someone was building a house, Josua was there. He usually did the masonry work, including chimneys since he was not afraid of heights. His foundations and basements were made with very large stones from the Peabody area. Josua was also enough of a skilled carpenter to be able to fix almost everything around his own farm with hammer and saw.[85] While Josua tended to be more serious, he certainly enjoyed the jokes of his brother Pete. He never taught Sunday School, but Josua took his turn leading the Wednesday evening Bible Study services.[86]

Freni was quiet and reserved, but had a good sense of humor and was really quite sentimental. When close friends died, she would cry openly. Though slower in action than Josua, she still was known as a hard worker, canning an abundance of food and helping with work wherever it was needed. During the winter months, Freni patched clothing and made over older dresses for the younger girls; she made comforters but didn't quilt. Rarely showing anger, Freni was always kind and gentle. If she didn't feel well or was upset in any way, she became very quiet.[87] She especially enjoyed visits from the seide pasz(silk aunt), a good friend who wore lovely silk dresses; Freni had none herself.[88]

Public displays of affection like kissing were considered in poor taste, but Josua and Freni still found ways to show that they enjoyed each other's company. When Freni said something funny, which she often did, Josua would giggle under his beard.[89] In the morning before breakfast was quite ready, Josua and Freni would snatch a few private moments to sing hymns together, sometimes so sweetly that it brought tears to the awakening children as they listened in.[90]

As a father, Josua enjoyed his children, and especially liked holding them as babies. One time he was caught laughing in delight when he saw his two very filthy little sons, Dan and Pete, happily eating jelly bread while they played outside in the dirt. "Children are cute," he said, "even when they are dirty." Nonetheless, Josua is remembered as a strict and exacting father, although not one to resort to physical punishment. He wanted work done right and he would reprimand his children quickly and directly if it wasn't, often being sorry later for what he had said in the heat of his frustration.[91]

Freni too was strict with the children and taught them how to work hard. Every Saturday the kitchen chairs had to be scrubbed and, in the summers, the windows were washed every Saturday as well because of spots made by hordes of flies. And Freni didhate flies in her house! To help in her on-going fly battle, she taught the children to take a rag and walk through the house shoo-ing the flies to the door and then on outside. Although she had little schooling herself, Freni was learned in the scriptures and always helped her children with their Bible studies.[92]

Life on the farm kept the Zerger children busy, but there was always time for school and music. All the children went to Peaceful Grade School for 4-5 months and then to German Bible School for another 3 months. Even after the busiest days in the field, the family often gathered on the big

porch to sing before retiring for the night. David played accordian and violin, and all the girls took lessons on the pump organ from Paul Crabb. Benjamin went on to lead the choir while Katharine played organ for Eden Church services.[93]

As each of Josua and Freni's children came of age, they courted and married. Courting was done at community parties, church events, and school programs, aided by whatever vehicle was then available, from horse and buggy to Model T cars. Most of the children's weddings took place in the Eden Church, with receptions at the bride's home. Traditionally the groom purchased his bride's dress and the bride purchased her groom's wedding shirt. Following the wedding, the bride stayed on with her parents for a few days until the groom returned to take her to the couple's new home. Many couples lived with one set of parents for a period of time before getting their own home.[94]

After the children were grown, they would return home nearly every Sunday with their families for a visit and often for the noon meal. Josua and Freni particularly enjoyed seeing some of their 59 grandchildren on these Sunday visits.[95]

Josua died of kidney trouble at age 52, on September 26, 1910. His youngest son, Pete, was just 8 years old. With the help of her older children, Freni managed to keep the home place and raise her younger children alone. Single-parenting took its toll on Freni, however, and in the last years of her life, Freni became quite frail and helpless. Once her youngest son Pete got married, Freni started staying in the different homes of her children, traveling herself to relieve the burden on any one child. When she moved from one home to the other, her favorite rocking chair would be carted along so she could sit in it no matter where she stayed. The grandchildren would always get the special pad smooth and ready for her to sit. Freni died on May 20, 1927, at age 67.[96]

[1]Kaufman, E.G., The Jacob Schrag Family Record 1836-1974(United Printing, Inc., Newton, KS 1974), p. 5. Another story told about the name is that an original ancestor left a dwelling place and then for some reason returned or went back (zurückin German), becoming known as a Zurücker. However, this requires an accent on the second syllable rather than the first (as in Züricher), making it a less likely linguistic beginning point for the Zerger name.

[2] Schrag, Martin H., The European History of the Swiss Mennonites from VolhyniaEd. Harley J. Stucky (Mennonite Press, North Newton, KS 1974) p. 17, fn. 1. See also, Krehbiel, James W., Swiss Russian Mennonite Families Before 1874(Old Springfield Shoppe, PA, 1995) p. 186. Anabaptists living in Comté de Montébeliard in 1759 included a Henri Zürcher from Reinacht (Canton Bern) and a Johannes Zürcher from Rüderswil, further evidence that the Zerger clan originally hails from Switzerland. Krehbiel, p. 186.

[3]Hertzler, Myrtle Schnell, "History of European Mennonites, Part IV," The Youth's Christian Companion(January 9, 1944; Mennonite Publishing House, Scottdale, PA), p. 12.

[4]Kaufman, P.R., Our People and Their History, translated by Reuben Peterson (Augustan College Press, No. 4, May 1979) p. 2; Stucky, Solomon, The Heritage of the Swiss Volhynian Mennonites(Conrad Press, Canada, 1981) p. 27-28. Within 150 years, it is estimated that about 4,000 Anabaptists in Switzerland were martyred for their faith. For a description of the extensive persecution in Bern, see, "Bern," The Mennonite Encyclopedia, Vol. I (The Mennonite Publishing House, Scottdale, PA, 1955), pp. 287-297.

[5]"Bern," The Mennonite Encyclopedia, Vol. I, p. 295.

[6]Schrag, p. 24.

[7]Goering, Stanley, A Genealogy and Short History of Joshua (sic) Zerger, (Paper, Mennonite

Historical Library, Bethel College, KS, 1954), p. 4; Krehbiel, pp. 2, 186.
[8]The change of spelling from Stucki to "Stucky" did not come until 1883, when Stucki descendants were in Kansas. Stucky, p. 173.
[9]Krehbiel, p. 152; Stucky, p. 52.
[10]Schrag, p. 23.
[11]Krehbiel, p. 187; Schrag, p. 29, fn. 13.
[12]Schrag, p. 25, 29. The Swiss also chafed under other Palatinate restrictions, including payment of tribute money ("Menist Recognition Money"), denial of residence in cities, prohibition on practicing a trade, a limitation on the colony population not to exceed 200, marriage only by permission of the state, and even exclusion from burial in common burial plots. Stucky, pp. 68-69.
[13]Krehbiel, p. 186. Anna Maria was 16, Christina was 12, Johann was 10, Anna was 8, Magdalena was 6, and Peter was 4.
[14] Stucky, p. 75-76; Schrag, p. 27, 32.
[15]Schrag, p. 31.
[16]Stucky, p. 78; Schrag, p. 31.
[17]Schrag, p. 32; Stucky, p. 77.
[18]Krehbiel, p. 186.
[19]Schrag, p. 32.
[20]Schrag, p. 30; Stucky, pp. 79-80. Particular points of dissension included the Amish discipline regarding clothes (wearing only a set pattern with hooks and eyes for closure) and enforcement of the ban.
[21]Shrag, p. 33, especially noting the shared rite of footwashing.
[22]Schrag, p. 34.
[23]Schrag, p. 30, 33; Stucky, p. 80, 83; Krehbiel, pp. 8-9, 186; Wedel, P.P., A Short History of the Swiss Mennonites Who Migrated from Wolhynien, Russia to America and Settled in Kansas in 1874(1929, transl. Mr. and Mrs. Benj. B.J. Goering, 1960; Mennonite Library and Archives, Bethel College, N. Newton, KS), p. 12; Goering, p. 4. The Zercher children who accompanied the family were Anna Maria (25), Christina (23), Johann (21), Susanna (19), Katharina (17), and Peter (15). Anna Maria married a Hutterite man in January 1797 and remained behind when the rest of her family moved on to Michalin, Kiev.
[24]Schrag, p. 34, Stucky, p. 83
[25]Schrag, p. 34; Kaufman, E.G., The Peter and Elisabeth (Graber) Kaufman Family Record, 1770-1787)(The Mennonite Press, Inc., 1988), p. 7.
[26]Stucky, p. 83.
[27]Schrag, pp. 34-35. Doctrinal differences included issues regarding the Incarnation, the nature of confession (Galicians insisted that "secret" sins did not need to be publicly confessed while Hutterites said they must be), and the prayer of intercession at baptism (Galicians said it was a Catholic remnant to be discarded while Hutterites believed it was essential).
[28]Schrag, p. 35. Apparently, the Galicians felt that the Hutterites gave more weight to their communal history and creed than to the Bible itself. Putting the Hutterite books "under the bench" was a way of saying that the Bible would take precedence.
[29]Stucky, p. 83; Kaufman, P.R., p. 10.
[30]Schrag, pp. 37-38; Stucky, p. 83-84; Krehbiel, pp. 11-12, 186.
[31]Schrag, pp. 37.
[32]Stucky, p. 84; Schrag, pp. 37-38; Kaufman, P.R., pp. 10-11.

[33]Schrag, p. 38, n. 13. See also, Stucky, p. 84; Kaufman, P.R., p. 11.
[34]Stucky, p. 84; Schrag, pp. 38, 53; Kaufman, P.R., p. 11; Krehbiel, pp. 12, 186.
[35]Kaufman, P.R., p. 11 ("Beresina" means birch); Schrag, p. 53; Stucky, p. 84.
[36]Kaufman, P.R., p. 11; Schrag, p. 53; Stucky, pp. 84-85; Krehbiel, pp. 12, 187.
[37]Krehbiel, p. 187.
[38]Schrag, p. 54; Stucky, p. 85; Kaufman, P.R. p. 12; Wedel, p. 14.
[39]Stucky, pp. 107-108; Schrag, p. 55; Kaufman, P.R., pp. 12-13; Kaufman, E.G., p. 10; Wedel, p. 15.
[40]Kaufman, P. R., pp. 13-14; Wedel, pp. 20-21.
[41]Kaufman, P.R. p. 14.
[42]Krehbiel, pp. 160, 189.
[43]Kaufman, P.R., pp. 56, 62-63; Stucky, p. 108-109.
[44]Schrag, p. 73.
[45]Schrag, p. 74; Stucky, p. 102; Kaufman, p. 27.
[46]Schrag, pp. 73-74; Stucky, p. 102; Kaufman, P.R., pp. 17, 23-27; Wedel, pp. 25-27.
[47]Schrag, p. 76; Wedel, p. 30.
[48]Stucky, p. 104.
[49]Kaufman, P.R., p. 42; Wedel, p. 21-24.
[50]Wedel, p. 22-23; Kaufman, P.R., p. 20.
[51]Kaufman, P.R., p. 21.
[52]Schrag, p. 75; Stucky, p. 111; Wedel, p. 24-25.
[53]Wedel, p. 31; Kaufman, P.R., p. 21.
[54]Schrag, p. 75; Stucky, pp. 103-104; Wedel, p. 31-32; Kaufman, P.R., p. 17.
[55]Stucky, p. 117.
[56]Schrag, p. 78;
[57]Schrag, pp. 78-79; Wedel, pp. 37-38; Stucky, p. 118.
[58]Schrag, pp. 79-80; Wedel, p. 38; Stucky, p. 118-119.
[59] Schrag, p. 81; Wedel, pp. 40-41; Stucky, p. 123-24. Buyers were solicited from as far away as Bavaria and Warsaw.
[60]Wedel, pp. 48-49; Kaufman, P.R., pp. 32, 80; Stucky, p. 126. One sixteen year-old in the group, perhaps Josua, related the pain of this parting: "I well remember when all our possessions were loaded high on the wagon and my dear mother with the little children sat on top of it and wept and father stepped to the side and looked back. The feeling of such moments you can imagine. The same holds true for other parents. At the end of the village where a large company of people had gathered they stopped and said farewell with many tears by those who left and by those who stayed, and after the last farewell wish 'Farewell dear fatherland, Farewell to all we know,' a two day journey by wagon began to Stolbanow where the closest railroad station was." Wedel, p. 50.
[61]Wedel, p. 41; Stucky, p. 125.
[62]Schrag, p. 82; Kaufman, P.R., p. 32, 36; Wedel, pp. 54-55; Stucky, pp 129-130. The ship lists which are available from the manifest of the S.S. City of Richmond do not include the name Josua Zerger, but do list as part of the Jacob and Froni Serger (sic) family a Josna (15), female and a spinster. They also list a "Froni" Stucki (12) in the Johann and Maria Stucki family. While these lists are considered "unreliable" and "crude," data, they do provide some confirmation of family groupings on the ship. Clarence, Ed. Brothers in Deed to Brothers in Need: A Scrapbook About Mennonite Immigrants From Russia 1870-1885(Faith and Life Press, Newton, KS 1974),

pp. viii-ix, 172-173.
[63]Krehbiel, pp. 186-189; Obituary of Freni Stucky Zerger, Mennonite Historical Library, North Newton, KS.
[64]Schrag, p. 82; Kaufman, P.R., p. 36; Wedel, p. 54.
[65]Kaufman, P.R., p. 81; Stucky, p. 130.
[66]Stucky, p. 130.
[67]Wedel, pp. 56-57; Kaufman, P.R., p. 82.
[68]Kaufman, P.R., pp. 36, 83-84.
[69]Kaufman, P.R., p. 85.
[70]Goering, p. 5; Wedel, pp. 41, 57-58. Initially, there was fear among the immigrants that these families had been sold into slavery, but these families were well treated and later able to join the rest of the congregation in Kansas.
[71]Interview of Adina Zerger Krehbiel by Pearl Zerger (1986), p. 4, Mennonite Historical Library, North Newton, KS.
[72]Descendants of Joshua Zerger and Freni Stucky Zerger, 1858-1981 (The Mennonite Press, North Newton, KS, 1981), p. 4; Goering, p. 5.
[73]Stucky, pp. 181-184; Wedel, p. 21.
[74]Descendants of Joshua Zerger and Freni Stucky Zerger, 1858-1981, p. 4; Goering, p. 5.
[75]Wedel, pp. 75-77, 103; Kaufman, P.R., p. 96-97.
[76]Wedel, pp. 74-79, 103-104.
[77]Stucky, p. 182.
[78]Wedel, pp. 71, 103; Stucky, p. 143.
[79]Wedel, pp. 72-73; Kaufman, P.R., p. 102..
[80]Stucky, p. 174-175.
[81]Now the Harold and Pearl Maas Zerger farm.
[82]Later home to Ray and Betty Zerger Lichti, and currently the Joe and Debbie Lichti farm.
[83]Goering, p. 5.
[84]Interview of Adina Zerger Krehbiel (June 18, 1986), p. 2.
[85]Compilation of Interviews of Adina Zerger Krehbiel, by Pearl Zerger (1986), p. 1, Mennonite Historical Library, North Newton, KS.
[86]Interview of Adina Zerger Krehbiel by Pearl Zerger (July 14, 1986), p. 1, Mennonite Historical Library, North Newton, KS.
[87]Interview of Mary Krehbiel Zerger (wife of Benjamin Zerger) by Pearl Zerger (July 14, 1986), p. 3, Mennonite Historical Library, North Newton, KS; Interview of Jacob Goering (husband of Lydia Zerger) by Pearl Zerger (July 2, 1986), p. 6, Mennonite Historical Library, North Newton, KS; Interview of Mary Wedel Zerger (wife of Dan Zerger) by Pearl Zerger (July 2, 1986), p. 5, Mennonite Historical Library, North Newton, KS; Interview of Adina Zerger Krehbiel (July 14, 1986), pp. 2, 3.
[88]Interview of Adina Zerger Krehbiel (July 14, 1986), p. 2.
[89]Interview of Adina Zerger Krehbiel (July 14, 1986), p. 2.
[90]Interview of Adina Zerger Krehbiel (July 14, 1986), p. 2.
[91]Interview of Adina Zerger Krehbiel (June 18, 1986), pp. 1, 3; Interview of Adina Zerger Krehbiel (July 14, 1986), p. 3.
[92]Interview of Adina Zerger Krehbiel (June 18, 1986), p. 4.
[93]Compilation of Interviews of Adina Zerger Krehbiel, p. 2.
[94]Compilation of Interviews of Adina Zerger Krehbiel, p. 3.

[95]Interview of Mary Krehbiel Zerger, p. 3; Interview of Adina Zerger Krehbiel (July 14, 1986), p. 3.
[96]Interview of Mary Krehbiel Zerger, p. 3; Interview of Jacob Goering, p. 5-6; Interview of Mary Wedel