

Leslie Angele



Scholastika Rödle was born in 1931 in the village of Oberrieden, Bavaria, about 90 km west of Munich. (In Canada, she changed her name to Leslie, because Scholastika was not a familiar name to most people.) She grew up on a small farm which had been, and still is, in the family for generations. She is the last survivor of the four siblings who grew up on this farm. Her one brother inherited the farm, as is

customary.

Leslie has clear memories of life in her village during the war years. The pre-war economy had provided many jobs, and people lived well. She attended school where she mastered the curriculum easily. Bavaria was not bombed to the same extent as many other areas in Germany, because the bombing was concentrated on the industrial areas, and less so on agricultural regions. Nevertheless, Leslie remembers sirens sounding the alarm over possible bomb strikes. On those days, the school closed, and the children went home. Other than that, Leslie says, life carried on quite normally throughout the war. People went to work; they went to church, and they found time to socialize and have fun. They appreciated how fortunate they were to be escaping the horrors of the war. Her father was a World War I veteran, and thus was not called to military service. Her brother, who inherited the farm, was also spared because born in 1933, he was too young. Government officials closely monitored the number of chickens, pigs, and cows on each farm, and demanded that a certain percentage be turned over to the state to feed the nation. But the family knew they were faring much better than the people in the cities.

One aspect of old village life which Leslie remembers is how the news was broadcast. Every Sunday, after Mass, the people would gather in the square and the Mayor or his helper would announce news items from the past week. If something important happened during the week, the town-crier (Gemeindediener) would come onto the street and ring his bell. People would then come out of their houses to hear what he had to say.

In 1939 at the start of the war, young men and horses were immediately called up for service in the German army, the Wehrmacht. This was a huge loss to the operations of Germany's farms. Women and children now had to run the farms. All the children had to work. Some babysat the little ones. Others did a wide variety of farm chores from herding the cows to grazing areas, to hauling the milk twice daily to the dairy and bringing home butter and cheese, to gathering eggs, working in the gardens, etc. Families with few or very small children "hired" children from large families who had many. Older men, exempt from military service, and older women as well, also

helped wherever they could. With early German successes in the war, French and Polish (mostly) prisoners-of-war were quickly assigned to villages to help with the farming operations. Leslie remembers that they quickly assimilated into the community, joining in soccer and church activities. Thousands of children from the cities were sent out into villages to save them from the bombing. They too quickly adjusted to rural life. The children played a vital role in Germany's wartime agriculture.

The task of organizing all the extra-ordinary activity in the village fell to the Burgermeister (mayor). He had to find homes for the POWs and the city children. He had to fairly distribute foodstuffs and other essentials which became scarcer as the war went on. He closely supervised the butchering of chickens and animals on the farms.

Leslie remembers the news about the bombing of Pearl Harbor and how it turned the war around. Prior to December 1941, Germany had looked un-stoppable. She remembers the June 1944 news of the Americans landing at Juno Beach, and the horrible bombing of Dresden in February 1945. The end of the war brought 11 million¹ refugees and displaced persons from Eastern Europe into Germany. Two million perished as they fled the advance of the Soviet Red Army. The refugees were welcomed into the towns and villages to replace the German men who would never return home. They filled the gap as tradesmen, as laborers in the factories, and as farm workers. Each family in Oberrieden was required to take in a family which stayed with them until the "Displaced Persons" camps were organized by the Allied Administrations. Leslie says that this influx of "new" people was a good thing for Germany. And because Bavaria was in the American Zone of Occupation after the war, they were treated well, and the American soldiers enjoyed their time there.

Politically, Leslie remembers the post-war inflation of prices and the flourishing black market which led to the introduction of a new currency – the DM or Deutsche Mark in 1948. She remembers the 1952 "Lastenausgleich" tax which aimed to recompense Germans who had lost properties during the war. Many saw the program as a huge re-distribution of wealth which everyone had to pay for. So much infrastructure had been damaged and destroyed during the war, many Germans could not envisage that Germany would bounce back. Thus, it is not surprising that the changes experienced during and after the war led many Germans to consider emigration.²

Scholastika continued her education by attending "Berufsschule" in nearby Pfaffenhausen. She walked the 5 kilometers every day one entire winter to attend a sewing school, but it was difficult to acquire sewing materials in the post-war market. Instead of continuing to learn this trade, she decided it was time to earn a living. She found work in a Doctor's clinic in Geislingen. She worked here for three years and received certification as a Medical Assistant.

¹ https://www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/wwtwo/refugees_01.shtml

² Leslie feels that these details of wartime Germany are an important part of her story. -- MW



Joe and Leslie engagement

In early 1953, Scholastika (Leslie) noticed an advertisement in a Catholic journal. A young man said he was immigrating to Canada, and if anyone wished to join him, they could travel as a group. Even though she had never thought about immigrating, Scholastika thought, “I could do this!” She contacted the young man, and while things did not quite work out as advertised, by the time Josef Angele left for Canada in June 1953, they were engaged to be married.

Josef Angele grew up in a family of nine on a small farm at Fischbach (about 20 km from Biberach). Fischbach is located in the far south-western corner of Baden-Württemberg, about 100 km west of Oberrieden. Josef’s life during wartime was much like that of Leslie’s (Scholastika). Living quite removed from heavy industry, he too escaped the severe bombing destruction visited upon much of Germany. Because he came from a large family, he worked

for other farm families in the area. Born in 1929, he was too young to be called into military service.

Josef’s uncle Max (brother to Joe’s mother) owned a large greenhouse operation in Mergentheim, where he apprenticed as a horticulturalist. Scientists there were already working with genetically modified vegetables, leading-edge research at the time. Joe pursued three years of advanced studies in horticulture in Stuttgart. Nonetheless, he felt the need “to find a new life”. He felt that he wanted to do something different, and he had read that Canada wanted immigrants. He crossed the Atlantic on the *Fair Sea*, a well-known Immigrant ship. He would join his friend who was working on a farm near McNutt, Saskatchewan. Josef’s immigration was employer-sponsored by a local farmer, and he arrived in time for the harvest season. After harvest was over, he moved to Saskatoon, where he quickly found work in Construction.³

Joe wrote a letter to Scholastika (Leslie) every week. Joe became her sponsor to immigrate to Canada, and she began organizing the documents she would need: medical records including vaccinations, birth (baptism) record, tax-clearance, education and employment documentation, and a background criminal check. Scholastika Rödle crossed the Atlantic Ocean with Joe’s brother, Otto Angele; they arrived in Halifax on the *Arosa Kulm* in March of 1954, having departed from Hamburg. They boarded a westbound train, but in Montreal, they ran into a complication. Otto’s ticket was taking him to Regina via CPR and Leslie was going to Saskatoon via CNR, and so they had to separate. In the Montreal CN station, Leslie was in the waiting room when another

³ More than 200,000 Germans emigrated from Germany in the post-war period 1951-1957– The Canadian Encyclopedia. A further 160,000 refugees from the Displaced Persons Camps in Germany also came to Canada after 1945.

immigrant approached her and said she recognized Leslie (Scholastika) from the Doctor's office in Geislingen. What a coincidence!



Joe and Leslie wedding

After three days on the train, Leslie made it to Saskatoon without further complications. She immediately found work as a housemaid, and she and Joe made plans to marry in St. Joseph's Catholic Church on Broadway Avenue in Saskatoon. They rented an apartment on Second Avenue for \$35.00 per month. Meanwhile, Otto had struck up a friendship on the ship with a fellow who was going to Kerrobert, SK where a mechanic's job was waiting for him. After he was settled in Kerrobert, this friend told Otto, who had been

trained as a baker in Germany, about a possible job at the bakery in Kerrobert. Otto moved to Kerrobert.

Leslie soon found other work at the King George Hotel on Second Avenue. Leslie says that jobs and apartments were easy to find through their social network. If a job opened up, the word quickly spread among relatives and friends. If an apartment became vacant, the same communication network soon found a renter. "Things happened quickly in those days." Otto, working at the bakery in Kerrobert, informed Joseph and Leslie that the bakery was actually for sale.



Joe in the bakery

Joe and Leslie and Otto together purchased the bakery which necessitated a move to Kerrobert on 01 November 1954. They lived in an area cordoned off from the storage room. The business generated enough profit as a result of their hard work, that by 1958, the Angeles built a new bakery with attached residence beside the main grocery store in Kerrobert. They also established a small coffee bar in the front of the bakery, serving breakfasts and lunches. Those were busy times, with babies on the way!⁴ That same year, Otto expressed his desire to join his brothers⁵ working at the aluminum smelter in

⁴ Joe and Leslie had five daughters, all born in Kerrobert. Their family has now grown to include 21 grandchildren and 31 great-grandchildren.

⁵ Four of Joe's five brothers immigrated to Canada. One brother later returned to Germany. Joe is the only one who remained in Saskatchewan.

Kitimat, BC. Joe and Leslie bought his share of the bakery business. Joe's younger brother Adolf, who had also apprenticed in Germany as a baker, joined them in Kerrobert that same year. The business grew and was soon shipping out bread, buns and doughnuts by train to surrounding towns and villages. When rail service was curtailed to smaller centers, Adolf began deliveries with a used Volkswagen van.

Joe and Leslie supported their local Kerrobert community by joining the Kinsmen and Kinette clubs and they were always strong members of the Knights of Columbus and the Catholic Women's League (CWL) organizations wherever they lived. Leslie had begun studying English on her own before she left Germany. Although neither had formal English instruction, both mastered the language quickly. Their business acumen showcased their strong German work ethic, as well as their shared partnership in work and marriage. They quickly gained the respect of the community.

The bakery soon attracted loyal customers among the large number of Russian Germans living in St. Joseph's Colony (Tramping Lake), descendants of early twentieth century homesteaders who had emigrated from present-day Ukraine. The Angeles appreciated the opportunity to converse in German with their customers, although some local Germans were not familiar with the Angeles's Schwabish dialect. One day a young farmer asked Leslie if she had any sisters back in Germany. Leslie's sister, Anna, was soon on her way to Saskatchewan to marry a young German-Russian farmer from the Broadacres area. Anna traveled with another young lady who would marry Otto Angele. "That's how things worked in those days!"

Joe and Leslie quickly learned that rye bread was not popular, and that crusty buns weren't practical because they are meant to be eaten the same day they are baked. In rural Saskatchewan, customers do not visit the bakery every day, so they preferred the soft buns which keep longer. The locals also preferred sliced bread, which meant the loaves had to be wrapped as well. Leslie remembers selling a loaf of bread for 17 cents. The wholesale price for the grocery store was even less. Cinnamon buns sold for 10 cents each or 60 cents per dozen.

In 1967 Joe and Leslie sold their bakery, to Adolf, and purchased the Wild Goose Motel in Kerrobert, which they would own for only 3 years. While the business did fairly well, especially during hunting season, there was not enough for Joe to do. Off he went to Kindersley to manage a larger bakery, leaving Leslie in Kerrobert to run the motel. But neither one liked the new living arrangement. The motel was sold, and Leslie and the five girls moved to Kindersley in 1970. Joe and Leslie eventually bought the Kindersley Bakery. It too was sold ten years later. The girls had all graduated from High School and had begun to attend the University of Saskatchewan. In 1980, Joe and Leslie moved to Saskatoon and purchased the home where Leslie still lives. Joe died in 2019.

Prior to the move to Saskatoon, Joe and Leslie had purchased an apartment building in Saskatoon, so the girls would have accommodation while attending secondary education. Joe took over the

caretaker and maintenance work of the apartment building. That worked so well, they purchased another one, and then another one. Leslie finally told Joe that that was enough.

Once in Saskatoon, Leslie concentrated on being a Grandmother to a growing family. Joe and Leslie were soon invited to join the German Canadian Club Concordia of Saskatoon. This was the beginning of a long association with the German community in Saskatoon. Joe sang in the choir, and Leslie became active in the Frauengruppe (Ladies' Group). As well, they enjoyed aquasizer sessions and swimming at the YMCA. They joined the Saskatoon Seniors for Continuous Learning (SSCL) and enjoyed classes in history, geography, and geology at the University of Saskatchewan.

Besides bake sales, the Frauengruppe at the time promoted many cultural activities for the German community in Saskatoon. At one meeting, a letter from the Multicultural Council of Saskatchewan⁶ was introduced. The letter promoted the idea of establishing language schools among the various ethnic groups in Saskatchewan. This was the beginning of the Saskatchewan Organization for Heritage Languages Inc.(SOHL). Leslie attended an organizational meeting in the fall of 1983 and came away as the Principal of the German Language School Saskatoon / Deutsche Sprachschule Concordia. It proved to be a huge undertaking – obtaining classroom space, advertising for students, recruiting teachers, finding appropriate curriculum materials for children as well as for adults⁷, determining a budget of revenue and expenditures. Then there was learning about various funding programs and filling out applications. Leslie is quick to point out that she was not alone, welcoming the help of Sigrid Kirmse and Reg and Loretta Reiter, to mention only three. A pre-kindergarten program was established in 1985. The Saskatchewan Association of Teachers of German was formed to provide professional development for its members. Leslie was at the forefront of all these cultural and language developments in Saskatoon. It was a huge learning curve, all done on volunteer time.

A senior German Dance group was already active when the Angeles arrived in Saskatoon in 1980. The idea of a Junior Dance group however came out of the Language School and was quickly encouraged by MCoS. Reg and Loretta became involved, with Loretta sewing costumes for the dancers. The Brule family too were early supporters of the dance groups, and still are. Again, space for practicing and instructors were needed. Leslie quickly credits Sigrid Kirmse for much of the organizing work in the background.

Several German cultural groups were now active in Saskatchewan, including the choirs, dancers, and language schools. Again, from MCoS came the suggestion that it was time for an umbrella organization to coordinate and to promote the German presence in Saskatchewan. As a result, the Saskatchewan German Council was born in 1984 with the first President as Joe Tauberger, and the first Executive Director as Dr. Brian McKinstry.

⁶ MCoS was established in November 1975 as a result of legislation which recognized the importance of preserving diverse identities, languages, and traditions. Saskatchewan was the first province to pass multicultural legislation.

⁷ Curriculum materials were eventually sourced in Germany.

For twenty years, the Angeles would meet with the Kulturkreis, once a month, to speak German. Guests were invited to give presentations in German. They enjoyed German films, and craft workshops with only German communication. It wasn't always easy, Leslie says, because some Germans have trouble with the Schwabisch dialect.

Leslie feels strongly that the preservation of culture is just as important as the preservation of language. She fondly recalls her involvement with a host of German cultural events in Saskatoon.

- Erntedankfest
- Martinstag or St. Martin's Day: Leslie remembers that the St. Martin's Lantern Walk in Saskatoon would end with buns and sweets provided by Traeger's Bakery.
- Saint Nikolaus Day: (Sankt Nikolaustag), Leslie recalls the Frauengruppe organizing crafting workshops for children.
- Adventszeit: Leslie loves the German tradition of setting up an Advent wreath, or the Adventskranz. It is a great way to get children involved. She remembers visiting Seniors' Homes with children and telling the story of how the Christmas tree came to Canada.
- Weihnachtstag or Christmas Day: Leslie misses the true "Midnight Mass" of her youth.
- Fasching or Karneval: Leslie recalls the Kinderfasching parties for children with the Prince and Princess and of course, their Guards, as another great way to create interest and enthusiasm for their German culture.
- Easter:
- Himmelfahrt, or the Feast of the Ascension of Jesus Christ.
- Etc.



Joe and Leslie at the Folkfest 1987

These are the things that Leslie missed, and still misses, about Germany, and the reason why she has worked so hard to promote these cultural experiences in Saskatoon. She fears that too many young people today no longer have a connection to, or a feeling for, their cultural roots.

Leslie also remembers Heldengedenktage as a big day in Germany before the war. Observed on 09 November, the country paid tribute to the military. An English translation would be "Day of Commemoration of Heroes". Another occasion was "Klopperstag", the beginning of the Advent season. Young children would go door to door and knock, demanding sweets or fruits in exchange for reciting a poem or a proverb.

Saskatoon's Folk Fest began in 1979. Leslie remembers one of the first such events was held in the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation building. The German community

has always been involved, with the German Pavilion always being one of the favorite venues.

Leslie speaks easily about her experiences as an immigrant. Right from the start, she found the people in Saskatchewan to be very friendly, welcoming, and helpful. In such a big country, Leslie says, people need each other, and so they are nicer to one another. However, she finds people here to be more competitive than the Germans of her homeland, acknowledging that Germany too has changed during the 70 years she has been away. The drive to get ahead – to succeed – is stronger here. She cites land ownership as an example. In Germany, agricultural land is almost sacred. It remains in the family generation after generation. Families rarely give up ownership of land. Here the situation is altogether different, hence the competition to which she referred earlier. Another observation by Leslie: in Germany expertise and proven performance are more important factors in professional promotions than are seniority and years of service. In Canada, this has come to mean that money is more important in society than knowledge. Germans, and Europeans in general, have a much longer and broader perspective of history. They understand current events better in terms of the past. In Leslie's estimation, Canadians do not really understand world history the way Europeans do.

One thing Leslie soon observed in Saskatchewan was the open discussions about political affairs. Germans tend to be hesitant to discuss politics, especially in public. She found this to be a difficult adjustment for an immigrant trying to fit into society, because she did not yet understand the political forces at play in her new country. She was often amused to observe how "everyone thinks they know what is best for the country".

Leslie also laments that Canadians do not really know how to relax. Canadians always feel that they need to be doing something. She feels that Germans in Germany are more family oriented. They have smaller social circles, and so family events are very important. Germans place a real value in relaxing and having simple fun with family. Canadians do not appreciate "Gemütlichkeit" the way Germans do – the feelings of warmth and coziness that come with a sense of belonging to a family.

Joe and Leslie made several return trips to Germany over the years, the first one in 1958. Sometimes they traveled together; other times they took turns. One had to stay home to take care of the bakery. All five daughters were able to visit Germany as young girls. Joe's parents also made two trips to Canada to visit their sons. Leslie has observed that the German economy has kept pace with the rest of the world and has offered a positive environment for the business community. At the same time, many conservative and traditional values have also endured. In many places, shops remain closed on Sundays, for example. Leslie feels that business prosperity and progress has not overwhelmed personal values.

Leslie Angele is a quiet and unpretentious lady, but also one who is very intelligent and thoughtful, with an analytical mind. She expresses her thoughts clearly and carefully. She has the ability to look at things from a distance, to see things that are not always obvious if one is too close. A devout Catholic all of her life, she has definite ideas about the differences between "then

and now”, with now not always being better. Her five daughters could not have had a better life-coach.

Leslie Angele has been very involved in Saskatchewan’s German community for many years. Her many hours of volunteer efforts will not be forgotten. Her influences will be present in the Saskatchewan German Council member groups for years to come. Her intelligence and ambitions have made Saskatchewan a better place for all.

Written by Mervin Weiss for Saskatchewan German Council