

Ancestry and Life Journey of Paul Engel

Introduction written by Paul and edited by Mervin Weiss

Paul Engel was born July 19, 1931. He was the son of Jakob Engel and Emilie nee Bruehler. They lived in Neukron, one of eleven German settlements of the District of Zaporizhia, Novo-Nikolayeva, Ukraine. The Engel and Bruehler families were traditional Lutheran farming people who had emigrated from the historical states of Baden and Württemberg, now combined as a state of Germany. Invited by the famous Russian Tsarina Catherine the Great, Germans began arriving in this area of Ukraine as early as 1766. The Tsarina had promised free land, freedom of language, of religion, of education as well as a ten-year tax exemption and permanent exemption from military service. She wanted good German farmers like the Engels and the Bruehlers to settle and populate the steppes of Ukraine. However, the original promises were later revoked, and Germans began leaving South Russia for the USA, for Canada, and also South America. Those Germans who did not leave persevered until the Russian Revolutions of 1917-1918, after which the Communists confiscated everything the German people owned. Anyone with property was called a “kulak” or enemy of the state.

Paul now begins to tell his story. Editing for publication by Mervin Weiss.

Our Mother told us that Grandpa Bruehler, deemed a kulak because he owned property, was severely beaten by a roving band, and left for dead behind a straw pile. However, Grandma and her children found him and nursed him back to health. The town leaders and all educated persons disappeared. We lost three relatives who were dragged away at night and never seen again: Uncle Peter Engel, Uncle Gustaf Bruehler and Uncle Paul Bruehler.



My father (on the left) in his younger years served as a captain in an elite Cavalry unit. He developed special skills like riding two horses while standing on their saddles. Later he was a printer, as well as a mechanic for the communal farm's equipment. For this work he was given a daily bread allowance, and I would wait for him at the front of our yard to bring this bread home. Father was also a shoemaker. He made his own Cavalry riding boots. He sewed the leather uppers by hand; the leather soles were nailed to the inner soles with wooden nails. The wooden nails swelled when wet and tightly held the boot together.

My Dad was also a musician. He played for special functions in a band with three others including Uncle Fritz Bruehler on the double bass and Uncle J. Engel on the clarinet. Years later I played some of their tunes (from memory) on the clarinet in my own orchestra, the Rheinlanders of Regina.

Our mother and the other women had to work in the fields of the communal farm (kolkhoz). The children had to stay in a strict day care. We were fed only kasha (buckwheat porridge), and we had to nap on cots. I didn't like it, so I escaped whenever I could. Grandma Bruehler was my Guardian Angel. I would run to her place, and sit on the fence rail waiting for my Mother to come home. Often it was already dark.

Grandpa Friedrich Bruehler was a carpenter and wagon maker, using only hand tools of course. He made fancy handcrafted furniture as well. I can remember him singing "Mein Gott und Ich" while he worked in his shop. He also kept bees in the garden, and I helped when it was time to extract the honey.

I remember little of my Grandpa Martin Engel. We visited him once in 1936. He lived in Friedrichsfeld, another German village in Ukraine. He was very ill and he died while we were there. Grandma Katharina Engel, nee Halblaub had already passed away before that, and I don't remember her at all.

My father was also my friend. In the summer when father was not at work, we would go fishing. He strapped two fish nets onto his back, put me in front of the bicycle and off we went down a rough trail to the Solone River. Father set the nets while I used a willow stick and line with a hook and worm. Sometimes we even caught a lobster in the net.

My father was also a hunter. He re-loaded his own shotgun shells with powder, pellets and paper plugs. In the winter he dressed warmly and went hunting for rabbits, a welcome source of fresh meat. The rabbits were butchered and soaked in water overnight. Then Mother roasted them like she roasted turkeys.

Our mother Emilie was the second youngest in her family. She was a seamstress who tailored men's clothing and made nice dresses for women. Our mother was a typical Hausfrau who supported our Papa, and worked very hard to keep our family going, especially when Father worked out of town. In the summers, mother worked in the fields. She would leave early in the morning and return in the dark. Then she milked the cow and made supper. My job was to fire the outside stove with straw.

In December, 1935, mother was not feeling well. Father arranged for a truck and driver, put straw in the back, and helped mother into the back of the truck, covering her with a blanket. I found out later they drove to the hospital in Zaporizhia because there was no doctor or hospital in our village. When they returned, I had a baby sister! Adele became a very active little girl, and I often had to watch out for her. After the village cows were milked every morning, a herdsman drove them to a pasture for the day, and returned them in the evening. One day, my little sister (wearing a red dress) went to meet the returning cows and the bull began to chase her. She came running and screaming into our yard, and I had to rescue her. Another time I found her headfirst in the rain barrel, head under water and kicking her feet. Again I rescued her.

Our “Momma” taught us to pray and sing hymns. But we had to do this secretly because anything to do with religion was forbidden in communist Russia. Mother locked the doors and hung blankets over the windows. Adele and I would sit on either side of her, and in the quiet candlelight, she taught us morning and bedtime prayers as well as German hymns. For Christmas, Momma baked cookies for us and placed them in a paper cone. There was no money to buy presents. I made my own toys like airplanes, sling-shots, and bows and arrows.

World War II arrived in June, 1941. Everyone was nervous about the future. On September 5, 1941 a Russian army unit arrived in our village on horseback. They had a list of names of males between the ages of 15 and 65. They went house to house notifying the men that they had to be out on the streets early next morning, and to be ready for travel. Father re-soled his boots that evening and Mother packed food, a blanket and clothing in a rucksack he had made for that purpose. The next morning there was little time for goodbyes or tears as the men were pushed out into the middle of the street and herded out of town like cattle with riders to the sides and rear. They headed eastwards, and most were never seen again.

The men were driven on foot from our village of Neukron without water or food. At night, they were herded together in an open field where they slept on the ground. On the way, anyone who could not keep up was simply shot and left lying on the ground. They made their way northward into the Ural Mountains of Siberia where they were put into a forced labor camp. Most of the men were worked to death on the meager food rations. One of the few who survived was our sixteen-year old cousin Edmund Engel, who was in the same camp as our father.

Edmund told us later that when the Russians learned that Father was once an Officer in the Cavalry, he was put in charge of a work crew and given a set quota of work to be performed. If the men wanted their food rations, they had to meet the work targets. Father would be punished if anyone in his crew tried to escape. This was called the Trudarmee, a Russian word for labor army. The men did hard physical work like digging ditches and working in the salt and coal mines. I did not learn any of this until after the “Iron Curtain” fell in 1989. Those Germans who had survived were allowed to finally return to Germany. I visited Edmund Engel in Nuremberg in 1995. He told me of the horrors they endured. Edmund said that father became very ill from malnourishment. He was black and blue and swollen, and finally died on February 13, 1943. He kept his faith to the end, longing for his family and not knowing what had become of them. His body was thrown into a mass grave along with others and a bulldozer filled in the hole. There were no grave markers. God rest his soul. I loved my father, and I miss him still today. He was only one of tens of thousands of German men who met the same fate. The “western” world knew nothing about this at the time, or cared to know.

Our own ordeal began in October 1941. Russian soldiers arrived in Neukron with orders that everyone must be packed and be ready to travel early the next morning. Only essentials like food and clothing were allowed. We were loaded onto wagons which took us east to the Haitschur railway station. A train of flat cars was waiting on a track. Soldiers began loading people and their packs onto the flat cars. The train pulled out before it was time for our family to be loaded.

Suddenly there was shooting, and the Russian soldiers were setting everything on fire and blowing up buildings. A German Army unit had arrived.

Those of us left waiting for the next train were left to fend for ourselves. We ran for our lives, away from the shooting and the explosions. We came to a small Ukrainian settlement where a family allowed us to take refuge in their root cellar. German soldiers later found us and were surprised when I answered them in German. They asked us questions and gave us some food in return. The Ukrainian family let us stay for a while. Their house had electricity. My curiosity got the better of me, when I wanted to learn how this electricity worked. I stood on a chair to remove a light bulb and stuck my finger into the socket. Of course, I was blown off the chair, but otherwise I was not hurt.

We thanked the family for sharing their home with us. We hired a wagon and driver and returned to Neukron, now in German-occupied Ukraine. Our house had been ransacked, but we made it our home again. However sixteen months later, in February 1943, the German Army ordered us to re-locate to Kronsfield, about 120 kilometres to the south, presumably because of the advancing Russian front. This proved temporary. In October 1943, the Wehrmacht said that we would be taken back to ancestral Germany! "Heim ins Reich," we were told. Again we packed food and clothing and blankets onto horse-drawn wagons and set out. The Germany army was to lead us to a railway station. As we were crossing the frozen Dnieper River, Russian warplanes dropped bombs which broke the ice. Some horses were killed. I recall at least one wagon going under, but most of us made it to shore and we found a train waiting for us.

We were crammed into loaded railway box-cars with wood heaters. The train made very few stops and days later we arrived in Crimmitschau, Sachsen, Kreis Zwickau, Germany. We were housed in a large building, given food, and assigned to sleeping bunks in a large room. We were well accommodated. However we soon learned we would not be safe here either. Constant Allied bombing runs forced us into bomb shelters for much of our time in Crimmischau.

We were processed as displaced persons, registered and given passports. We received German citizenship – Mother, Adele, me and Grandpa and Grandma Bruehler. We ate in a large dining room. Although the food was rationed, it was tasty and I even drank dark beer which I had never tasted before. I and another boy had the job of picking up fresh buns every morning from the bakery a few blocks away. For this, we each received five buns. Here too, we celebrated our first real Christmas with angels and a baby Jesus in a sleigh. This was never allowed in Russia.

In the spring of 1944 we were asked to re-settle again, and this time we were given a choice. We chose northern Yugoslavia, to get as far away from the bombing as we could. But Yugoslavia was also the home of Josip Tito's partisans, who supported neither the Germans nor the Russians. We were taken to a small village and given a house to live in. We registered at a City Hall an hour's walk away, and each person received a food ration card. Adele and I registered to attend school to which we walked every day. Mother worked for a farmer to earn extra money. I did chores around the house, and for a while, life seemed normal.

Airplanes overhead were a regular occurrence. One day, walking to school, we witnessed an airplane shooting at something on the ground, when it suddenly turned and began shooting on the road where we were walking. We dove into the ditch as the plane crashed nearby. We found a dead pilot in the crater caused by the crash.

In February 1945, Grandpa Bruehler became very sick and mother had to take him by horse and wagon to a German Army hospital where he died shortly after. Mother borrowed a buggy after work and took our grieving Grandma Bruehler to claim the body. Grandpa was buried in the town of Rann, Yugoslavia.

News of the steadily advancing Russian army and the atrocities being committed along the way drove hundreds of thousands of civilian refugees from all over Eastern Europe, along with retreating German soldiers westwards towards Germany. The farmer where Mother worked joined the rush to the west, but he refused to take us along. The feared Russians were coming, and there was Mother, mourning her lost father, and trying to look after us as well as her elderly recently-widowed mother. We were stranded and helpless in a foreign country. However, an officer in the last unit of the German army to vacate Yugoslavia said our family could join them. We could not all ride in the same vehicle, so I was placed with the driver of a tow-truck which was pulling a car, in which Grandma and Adelle were placed. Mother, who had our few belongings and some food, was placed in another truck.

Our convoy of miscellaneous trucks and vehicles never stopped for hours. Tito's partisans stopped the convoy near Cillii, Yugoslavia, I walked up and down the convoy looking for the truck which held my mother. I was threatened at gunpoint and ordered to return to my vehicle. I told my Grandma that I could not find my mother. We started moving again and we did not stop until we arrived in Carinthia, just across the border in Austria. We were now safe in the British Zone. We were taken to a refugee camp at Sankt Veit an der Glan – finally something to eat and a comfortable place to sleep, but where was our mother?

One day in June, 1945, Grandma Emilie walked to a nearby Lutheran church to pray. Overcome by grief for her dead husband and now her missing daughter, she succumbed to a heart attack. Summoned to the Church, I found her still on her knees. I had previously befriended a man and his wife in the village. He made the arrangements for a burial. Uncle Alexander Engel saw the death notice in a newspaper and arranged for us to join him and his son Alexander in the refugee camp in Klagenfurt, Austria.

In 1995 I returned to Sankt Veit an der Glan, and found the spot where Grandmother was buried. I also managed to find the son of the man who helped us bury Grandma. We met over coffee and I thanked him for his father's compassion and kindness in 1945.

July 1945. We lived in a refugee camp which was a former Army barracks. The food rations were meagre, and I was always hungry. Everyone was hungry. I once ate green potatoes I found in a field, and was very sick. Uncle Alexander had received cigarettes for doing odd jobs for the British

soldiers. I went into the town begging for bread by trading for the cigarettes. But the local people had very little to eat themselves.

In the spring of 1946, I was looking for food in the town. It was an hour's walk from the camp. At one house where I asked for food, the farmer (Franz Talk) asked me why I was not working. So I asked him if he had any work for me. After explaining my/our situation, I agreed to work for him and his wife for very little pay if Mrs. Talk would look after my ten-year old sister Adele, and if they fed us. I had only a shirt and short pants. With cooler weather coming in the fall, Mrs. Talk made me a pair of long trousers from a woolen Air Force coat. She even steam pressed a pleat into the pants. She was very kind to Adele and me.

So Adele and I next walked to Pichel Dorf and moved in with the Talks. I met their two hired men. They showed me all of the farm chores – feeding the animals, milking cows, cleaning the barn, cutting hay and wheat with a scythe, etc. It was hard physical work for a fifteen-year old growing boy who was still always hungry. We picked apples, squeezed the juice from them in a press and poured the filtered juice into a large wooden barrel in the cellar. There it was left to ferment into a tasty apple cider. I remember that breakfast was a large bowl of cereal, and each person had his or her own bowl and spoon!

I was able to save enough from my meager wages, that after two years I was able to purchase a pair of short lederhosen and a traditional Steirer jacket. I learned the Austrian German dialect and spoke it fluently enough to be accepted as a local. I had arranged for some food for a poor family which I had befriended, and in return was given a flugelhorn (similar to a trumpet). On Sundays we walked for an hour to the Lutheran church in Bruck an der Mur. A friend and I hand-pumped air for the organ and we rang the five bells in the tower. I took part in a church play at Easter time.

In the summer of 1948, an English Major working for the I.R.O. (International Refugee Organization) arranged for me to live with a blacksmith and to learn his trade. Mr. Talk was not happy, and he evicted me and Adele. Adele then went to live in the IRO camp in Leoben. When the arrangement with the blacksmith did not work out, the Major next placed me as an apprentice baker in Eisenerz, an iron-ore mining town in the mountains. There was no pay, but lots to eat and a place to live while learning a trade. I worked from 4 A.M. until noon and attended theory classes in the afternoon.



The miners in town had a brass band. One day while watching them practice, I was asked if I would like to join the band. The Bandmaster loaned me a trumpet and taught me how to play it. I also learned how to read musical notes. In return, I had to clean the hall after practice. Soon I was asked to attend the rehearsals.

Spring 1950. Through a common acquaintance, our mother's cousin, Frieda Krutsch nee Haydt, learned about us two orphans in Austria. "Aunt" Frieda had married Fred Krutsch in Canada, and they were living on a farm near Davin, Saskatchewan. Aunt Frieda sent us a care package and a letter inviting us to come to Canada and to live with them. But I replied that I had to first find my mother and father with the help of the Red Cross. Frieda said that I could do that from Canada. The English Major learned that we had relatives in Canada who were willing to accept us. The Major took charge and arranged everything.

October 1950. I gave my notice to my employer and went to Salzburg to meet Adele and the Major. We received our exit permits from Austria and our entry visas to Canada, as well as train tickets to Bremerhaven, ship tickets to Halifax and train tickets from there to Davin, Saskatchewan. We also received some money with which to buy food on the train in Canada. Because neither Adele nor I spoke any English, our names and destination were written on tags pinned to our coats. The Major had arranged all of this after "Uncle" Fred sponsored us and prepaid all of the travel expenses. I later re-paid these expenses by working on his farm.

At Bremerhaven we boarded the American Army Transport ship, the USS General C.C. Ballou. It was returning from Korea and heading to USA via Canada. After very rough seas and a detour to evade even worse weather, we finally arrived very seasick in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada. We were checked through Canadian Customs, sprayed with de-lousing powder, given some food, and directed to the train station. The sheer vastness of the country as compared to Europe immediately amazed me. Four days later we arrived mid-morning at Davin, Saskatchewan. Uncle Fred Krutsch met us, speaking to us in German. It was great to hear German again! We drove in his car to the Krutsch farm where we met Aunt Frieda and their two daughters Olga and Elsie. Their older daughter Friedl was already married and living in town. This was the first real feeling of home in nine years.

We quickly settled in. Adele started attending the school in Davin. I worked on the farm, working with the livestock and hauling wheat with a truck. One day, Uncle Fred and I took the train to Regina, where Uncle Fred helped me to pick out a new suit at the Army & Navy store. It was my first suit. We attended the Lutheran church in Davin, and got to know the people in the community. In the winter time we used horses and sleigh to get to town. I and some other boys

started to play music in the Davin school on Saturday nights. Crokinole was another favourite pastime.

In 1952 I and Adele joined Grace Lutheran Church on Victoria Avenue in Regina. Over the years, I served my Lord as Asher and Elder among other duties. Adele and I rented rooms on the third floor of a house. I learned that an orchestra was looking for someone to play saxophone and clarinet, and I joined a country music orchestra. In the spring of 1953 I started work at Regina Motor Products, doing repairs and auto-body work. I learned fast and I worked there for 16 years. Also In 1953 I bought my first new car. I picked it up in Oshawa and drove it back to Regina on the # 1 Highway, which was not yet paved in Saskatchewan. I started fishing and hunting, something I had not done since I was a boy with my father. I enjoyed the outdoors, and life was good.

I had begun to date Alice Wagner in 1953, and we married on July 12, 1954 in the Trinity Lutheran Church in Regina. I was looking forward to building a family to replace the one I had lost during the war. Our first child Pauline arrived in September 1955. What a joyful occasion. All this time, I was still actively searching for our parents.

Tens of thousands of Germans trapped inside Russia behind the Iron Curtain were looking for lost relatives. The Red Cross was not allowed inside Russia. People who wanted to leave Russia, but could not, would write their names, birthdates and addresses on slips of paper. Then they would go to a railway station and ask complete strangers who had travel permits to East Germany if they could please take the note along and place it on a bulletin board where a relative or acquaintance might see it. Our mother sent such a note which was posted at a railway station in East Berlin, part of the Russian zone. It was seen there by a friend of "Aunt" Frieda Boehm who was living in the Russian zone of Berlin. She was mother's cousin. I had had contact with her since 1946. Aunt Frieda quickly wrote to our mother in Syktyvkar, in the Urals of northern Siberia, and she soon received mother's reply. Our missing mother was found! It was the hand of God at work. After Aunt Frieda gave me the address, I wrote regularly to our mother, and sent her parcels of food and clothing, which were always opened and inspected before being delivered.

I had become friends with Victor Richert, a former Russian prisoner of war, but now a travel agent in Regina. Victor could read and write Russian, and he understood the communist system. Even though mother had health problems and was useless to them, the Russians would not let her leave. Victor and I began to look for a way to get Mother to Canada.

After the necessary wait of five years, I became a Canadian citizen in June, 1956. I had to give up my German citizenship at that time. I was thankful and proud to become a Canadian citizen because of the freedom it gave to me. In April 1958, our first son Alexander was born. A 1960 letter from Mother indicated that she had taken the train from the Urals to Moscow several times in an attempt to get a passport and exit permit. She was refused each time even though she was a widow, and the doctors had declared her unfit for work. In the fall of 1960, Victor sent another

letter, written in Russian. No response. In desperation, Victor hatched a plan for me to confront Premier Khrushchev of Russia, while he was in New York for meetings with the United Nations.

Victor booked a flight for me to New York. He also arranged for a stop in Ottawa, so that I could meet Robert Moon, a newspaper correspondent who could give me some advice and guidance. We also tried unsuccessfully to visit the Minister of External Affairs, Mrs. Ellen Faircloud. Mr. Moon and I went to the Russian Embassy in Ottawa, where we were told there was nothing they could do to help. Instead of flying, I took a train to New York. I had with me a letter written in Russian by Victor, which I hoped to present personally to Khrushchev when he arrived at the United Nations building. But the street was blocked and the police kept everyone well back.

By chance I bumped into one of the Canadian delegates to the UN, J. Halsted. I explained my situation and he asked me to accompany him to his office. I explained the plight of our mother and our frustrated attempts to get her out of Russia. His secretary typed a letter, which I approved, and she then made six copies of the letter. One copy would be dispatched to 680 Park Street where the Khrushchev delegation was staying. Another went to Glen Cove, a suburb, where the rest of the Russian delegation was staying. The Russian Embassies in Chicago and Ottawa received copies. A fifth copy would be hand-delivered to Mr. Gromyko, the Russian Foreign Minister. I kept the sixth copy for myself.

Hopeful, but nevertheless disappointed, I returned to Regina. The Canadian newspapers had picked up the story of my trip to New York. I was only home a few days when I received a letter from the Russian Embassy in Washington, DC informing me that Premier Khrushchev had received my letter and had forwarded it to the necessary authorities in Russia. Victor knew that if the USSR granted Mother an exit permit, it would be for a very short period of time, and we had to be ready. To this end, I borrowed \$750 from Uncle Fred Krutsch which we sent to the Canadian Embassy in Moscow, asking for their help to expedite the travel arrangements for Emilie Engel, should she be granted an exit permit.

It was the week before Easter in 1961. Without receiving prior notice that our mother had indeed been granted an exit permit, I suddenly received a telegram stating that Emilie Engel would be arriving in Regina that evening on an Air Canada flight. What a shock! What a surprise! Our mother was the first person to be allowed exit from Russia for Canada, while two others went to the USA. It seemed like the entire city of Regina was at the airport to meet our mother. As the plane came to a stop, Adele and I ran up the stairs when the door opened. A stewardess guided our mother into our arms. Our prayers had been answered. I thanked my Lord Jesus Christ. We had our mother back, but where was our father?

Mother already knew what had happened to our father. Her nephew Edmund Engel had communicated with her before she left for Canada. He told her about her husband's fate in the forced labor camp in the Urals, about which I have already written. Mother was now able to pass the sad story along to her two children.

Our second son James was born in December of 1963, another grandchild for our Mother to dote on. She proudly paraded him in the stroller up and down the street. Years later, he was able to drive her in his own car down the same street!

Adele and I were finally able to learn how we were separated from our mother that night in May 1945. The truck in which Mother had been riding broke down, and was pushed to the side as the rest of the convoy continued on its way. She and others were then taken captive by Czech soldiers, and forced to walk in an easterly direction. Escape was impossible. When they finally arrived in Syktvkar, Komi Republic, USSR, she was assigned to a forced labor camp where she and other women cut down trees with hand saws. They loaded the logs onto railway flat cars – all this in deep snow and severe temperatures. Seven days per week, sunrise to sundown. Food rations were reduced if a work unit did not meet its quota requirement. Mother lived in a drafty shack with a barrel-style wood heater. After gathering wood in the dark for the stove, she ate her ration and fell into an exhausted sleep. In the summer, she boiled weeds for a source of vitamins.

It is no surprise that she developed a severe pain in her hip. With no doctor present, Mother was taken by horse and wagon to a man who told her that she had a pinched nerve in her hip, and that he could kill that nerve with a needle. The result was that Mother could no longer do heavy physical work. As well, she had developed rheumatoid arthritis in her hands and had a weak heart. She was declared unfit for work by the doctors.

And so she was released from the labor camp. But in Russia at that time, if you did not work, you did not eat. She looked after doctors' children and worked other odd jobs. After we had made contact with her, we sent her care packages, but they were always opened before she received them with many things missing. Some items, like a warm coat or shoes, she had to sell in order to stay alive. Some money was used on train tickets to Moscow where she tried to apply for an exit permit. (It was not possible to send cash into Russia at that time.) But through the grace of God, she finally joined us at Easter, 1961. She was 55 years old.

Mother died in Regina on August 24, 1996. Her last year found her in poor health in the General Hospital. The medications made her anxious and frightened. Many times she tried to escape and had to be restrained. She began to have nightmares and hallucinations about all the atrocities she had witnessed in Russia. During her last Christmas season, the nurses in the hospital noticed her singing along as Christmas carols were being played over the sound system. The nurses asked her to sing some songs in German, which she did, surprising everyone at how calm she became. We finally moved Mother into Luther Nursing home. Cancer had already set in, and she died shortly after, with her Pastor and me at her side.



I had always enjoyed music and in 1964, I started my own orchestra, called the Rheinlanders of Regina. We played a unique mixture of ethnic German and Canadian style of music. We played for dances at the Trianon Ballroom, and at weddings for over thirty years. I also sang Bass baritone for the Regina German Choir. I still enjoy listening to classical music and hymns.

In 1969, a doctor told me that my lungs had been damaged by the unhealthy fumes of the automotive workplace and strongly suggested I needed to quit that line of work. An unemployment councilor next recommended that I upgrade my schooling to a Grade Twelve level, and then train as a Power Engineer in Saskatoon. Even though I had received very little formal education, I tested at a Grade Ten level. At the age of 38 years, I went back to school while receiving Employment Insurance support. After achieving the Grade 12 level, I began driving weekly to Saskatoon to attend the provincial technical school (SIAS). The maths were difficult but I studied hard. Within a year, I had passed all of the courses and I received a Class 4 Engineering ticket. I found work at the Plains Health Center, but I did not care for the rotating shift work. I next joined the Rogers Group as an Engineer and Building Manager, but that company went into receivership.



I took a month off between jobs to take a log-building course. It had long been my dream to build a log home in the mountains. In 1981, I purchased a small acreage property near Slocan Park, British Columbia. I designed the home myself and obtained a building permit, along with a permit from BC Forestry to cut selected lodgepole pine logs for my home. I drove my VW camper from Regina to Slocan Park and went to work. I hired a self-loading truck to deliver the logs to my property. I used the Scribe Fit method which required time and

patience. I could only prepare, scribe and fit two logs per day. I purchased a tractor with a front-end loader and began to erect the walls on a concrete foundation in 1982. It was a slow process, and dangerous. At one point, I fell and broke my right shoulder blade which prevented any further building progress for several weeks. But by the spring of 1984 I was ready to build the

roof. It would be a steep roof to allow for an upstairs and a balcony under a twelve-foot overhang.

In 1986 I got a job as a Steam Engineer at the RCMP Training Depot. So I hired someone to finish the roof and gables on the log home in BC. Again, I did not like the shift work. I could not adjust my sleeping pattern. My cousin Ken Engel, as secretary of the local Carpenters' Union, had suggested previously that I join the union. So I left the RCMP job and was soon working at the Co-Op Upgrader as a carpenter scaffolder. A pinched nerve in my neck however soon prevented me from working as a scaffolder because of the heights involved.

In 1989 I stopped playing with the Rheinlanders and freelanced as a musician for whomever called, limiting engagements to weekends only. In 1990 I sang with the Prince of Peace Lutheran Mission Church choir at a Lutheran Rally at the Arts Center. I also took Ball Room Dance classes because I liked dancing. I stayed involved with Choir and Dance classes.

I began to have heart problems in the mid-1980s. Angiogram tests indicated blockages in my heart. After a serious heart attack in 2006, I changed doctors and was soon scheduled for heart surgery. I received a quadruple bypass on April 20, 2008. I recovered and felt an immediate improvement to my health.



Photo: Paul Engel and wife Alice nee Wagner with their three children. About 1970.

My dream of living in a log home and of leaving a unique structure as part of my family heritage did not materialize. Sadly, it was eventually sold to strangers. But I thank God for the opportunity to build my dream log home. God has been good to me. He has kept me safe through several close calls. He has given me a good long life, and I am

thankful for the continuing family support. I have long felt a strong need to tell "my story".

I have been able to trace my ancestral lines: Engel, Halblaub, Brühler and Hoffmann. My 3x Great Grandfather was Andreas Engel born 16 Jun 1773 in Brackenheim, Baden-Wuerttemberg. He died in Neudorf, Tavrida, Russia in 1805. And my 3x Great Grandfather Johann Brühler was born about 1798 in Baden, Germany. He died in 1860 in Molotschna, Tavrida, Russia. Both Neudorf and Molotschna now exist as non-German villages in Ukraine.

Photo Gallery



Paul's parents: Emilie born Brühler and Jakob Engel



Brühler family, about 1923/24. Paul Engel's mother, Emilie nee Brühler is standing in the back row, third from left. Her parents (Paul's grandparents) are seated in the front row. All five of Paul's Bruehler uncles are also in the photo. Two were "verschleppt" or hauled off by the Soviets and never seen again, and two were simply found dead.

EWZ Durchschl.-Nr.: 795 534		Domi.-Kenn.-Nr.: 914 432	
Name: ENGEL		geborene: Brühler	Vorname: Emilie
fam. Stand	Geburts- Tag Mon. Jahr	Ort: Neukron	Kreis: Nowo-Nikolaewka
verh.	9. 9. 06	Gemeinde:	Staat: Geb. Saporoshje II bezw. Gebiet: ev.l.
Ehe geschlossen am: 22.4.29		in: Neukron	Beruf: Hausfrau
Herkunftsland: UdSSR		Lehrt. Heimatort: Ybromfeld	Kreis: Ray. Nowo-Nikolaewka Geb. Saporoshje II
Staatsangehörigkeit:			
a) bisherige: UdSSR		b) jetzige:	nachgewiesen durch:
Eltern Name:		geb. am:	in:
Vater: Friedrich		25.11.70	Alexanderfeld
Mutter Vorname: Emilie		geborene: Hoffmann	geb. am: 14.9.73
			in: Mariensfeld
			Gl.-Bek. ev.l.
			Lebt-geft.-in: Ums.
Ehefrau (bzw. Ehemann): wurde am 5.9.1941 von den Russen verschleppt.			
Vorname: Jakob		geborene:	berw.-geft. in:
geb. am: 1.4.05		in: Neukron	Kreis: Geb. Saporoshje
Vater: Martin		geb. am: 1863	in: unbekannt
Mutter Vorname: Katharina		geborene: Halblau	geb. am: 1866
			in: "
			Gl.-Bek. ev.l.
			Lebt-geft.-in: Friedensruh / unbek.
			ev.l. Lebt-geft.-in: Neukron 1929
Kinder, bezw. Herdangehörige Vor u. Zuname	Geburts- Tag Mon. Jahr	Ort: (Kreis)	Darzeitige Anschrift bei fehlenden Herdmitgliedern
Paul	19.7.31	Haittschur	ohne
Adele	19.12.35	Neukron	"
Vermögensausgleich bleibt vorbehalten!			
Lag. 121 Crimmitschau		UdSSR 795 534	
Aufenthaltsort: Krs. Zwickau/Sa.		Nummer des Herdoorstandes:	
Durchgeschleust am: 3.3.44		in: Crimmitschau/Sa.	
Durch Kom. Nr.: XXIII		Aufnahmekraft: -FW.-	

Paul and his mother and sister were registered as immigrants in Crimmitschau, 03 March 1944.

Volkstumsausweis Nr 314 Der Inhaber dieses Ausweises <u>Engel</u> <u>Paul</u> (Nachname) (Vorname) geb. am <u>19.7.1931.</u> in <u>Hajtschur</u> wohnhaft in <u>Neunkron Rayon N-Nikolajew</u> ist VOLKSDEUTSCHER. Er steht unter dem Schutz des Großdeutschen Reiches.	Certificat Nr 314 Posesorul acestui certificat <u>Engel</u> <u>Paul</u> (Nume) (Prenume) nascut la <u>19.7.1931.</u> in <u>Hajtschur</u> cu domiciliul in <u>Neunkron Rayonul N-Nikolajew</u> sta ca cetatean de origina etnica germana sub ocrotirea marelui Reich German.
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BK XXX 145025/314 Datum 10/11-42 <i>[Signature]</i> Unterschrift Der Ausweis ist nicht übertragbar! Jeder Verlust ist der zuständigen deutschen Dienststelle zu melden.	BK XXX 145025/314 Datum 10/11-42 <i>[Signature]</i> Semnatura Acest certificat nu se poate preda alte persoane. Pierderea acestui certificat va fi anuntat imediat autoritatii respective germane.
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Paul's "Volksdeutsche" Identity Card as being under the protection of the German Reich.

Everything has been tried

By ROBERT MOON

NEW YORK (Staff) — Reginald K., auto body worker Paul Engel continued his little-man's struggle to get his ailing mother out of Russia here Wednesday. As much as any single individual could ever do toward that cult end, Paul Engel did. He saw consular officials. He wrote letters. He interviewed consular officials and he went to a high-priced New York lawyer.

It, as had been his objective, was flying to this seat of the United Nations at this critical time of world consultations, he did not see Russian Premier Nikita Khrushchev.

He cold war and the rigid security precautions of the New York police proved just too much for the 29-year-old Reginald K.

This is no meet-the-people junket Mr. K. is on, as it was when he came to the United States only last year. Things are different now.

The police sirens wail whenever the Russian leader goes and his big black car is accompanied by dozens of motorcycles ridden by New York's finest. He is seeing only heads of state and no one else.

Mr. K's curbside press conferences have been notable by their absence this week, and he is going home in the not too distant future.

So, he thinks now, is Paul Engel, who sought to see the Russian leader personally and has so far failed in that particular mission.

He has not failed in the deeper purpose, which was to do everything that is humanly possible to obtain an exit permit to bring his widowed mother from Russia to Saskatchewan.

Paul Engel has done everything that is humanly possible, and he is still not done.

On Wednesday he checked with the consular representative of the Canadian permanent mission to the United Nations. He was told that a letter he wrote to Mr. Khrushchev had been given to a senior Russian UN delegate.

That was the second of his letters to go into the hands of the Russian delegation. The first went to the assistant to Mr. Khrushchev at the Russian delegations' UN headquarters.

Mr. Engel also went to see a New York lawyer who had been recommended to him as having had notable success in obtaining exit permits for his clients. The lawyer's fee is sizable if he is successful. Mr. Engel is thinking over that particular approach. He thinks he will wait a bit before deciding.

For Paul Engel, there almost certainly now appears to be more days and weeks, possibly months of waiting before he knows the outcome of his efforts.

His conscience, however, is clear. He has done his best. And somehow in his story can be read the big world story of the problems, tensions and frustrations of 1960 for which the world and Engel look to the United Nations and the goodwill of their leaders somehow, in some way, at some time, to resolve.

Mr. Engel left New York this morning on his way home to Regina.

New York newspaper article by Ottawa journalist Robert Moon.



FROM DOOR TO DOOR: Paul Engel of Regina went from office to office in Ottawa today in an effort to enlist aid to bring his mother to Canada from Russia. On Friday he went to the Russian embassy which promised to pass the matter along to Moscow. Mr. Engel is en route to New York Saturday, hoping to be able to make a personal appeal to Premier Khrushchev, who is attending the United Nations.

Soviet embassy to help

1960. Paul knocked on many doors in Ottawa soliciting help to bring his mother to Canada from Russia.

EMBASSY OF THE
UNION OF SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLICS
WASHINGTON 6, D. C.

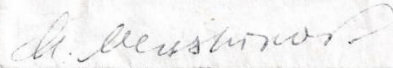
October 8, 1960.

Mr. Paul Angel
3618 21st Avenue,
Regina, Sask.
Canada

Dear Sir,

This is to acknowledge receipt of your letters and to advise you that Nikita S. Khrushchev, Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers, has been informed about your request. Upon his instructions your letters have been forwarded to the appropriate Soviet authorities for their consideration.

Sincerely,



Mikhail A. Menshikov
Ambassador

Letter from Russian Embassy in Washington, DC confirming that Paul's letter had been read by USSR Premier Khrushchev.



—Leader-Post photo

SON'S LOVE WINS OUT: Mrs. Emilie Engel embraces her son, Paul, who has worked doggedly for five years to bring her from Russia, as she arrives in Regina. Her daughter, Mrs. Adele Wagner, weeps the tears she has held back for so long. The 54-year-old woman, who had been working as a seamstress in Syktyvkar in northern Russia, left Moscow Friday afternoon on the long 44-hour flight which carried her to Brussels, Montreal and finally to her children in Regina.

Emilie Engel arrived in Regina late Saturday evening, March 25, 1961.



Paul's completed log home in Slocan Park, British Columbia.



September 2010. Paul standing in the rear, second from right, at the wedding of his oldest granddaughter.