

The Untold Story of an Uncommon Saint

Wallace Goldstein of the Jewish congregation in Westfield, MA asked me some years ago to relate to the congregation my recollections of my grandfather, Hermann Wolf. Present were Martin and Liesbeth Loescher (Hermann's daughter), their daughter Evie and husband, Walt Hopkins, as well as son, Dr. Ron Loescher and wife Nancy Loescher. Also, some of Ron's Jewish doctor colleagues were present. Mr. Goldstein introduced me.

The text below is a cassette transcription.

We're very pleased to have Dr. Manfred Kober with us this evening. Dr. Kober is professor of theology at Faith Baptist Bible College and Theological Seminary in Ankeny, Iowa. He is a native of Saxony in East Germany. His parents perished as a result of World War II. He grew up in a war-torn Saxony, experienced Communist oppression after the Americans yielded to the Russian army. He escaped to West Germany in 1952, got a visa and immigrated to the United States.

He stayed in Springfield, Massachusetts, with his uncle, attended Springfield Technical High School, received his Bachelor of Theology degree from Baptist Bible Seminary, and his doctorate from Dallas Theological Seminary. He travels widely, hosts many tours to Israel--in fact, he told me at one time that when he goes to Israel, it is like going home.

He periodically directs a Reformation Country Tour covering seven European countries. He returns to western Germany in the summer to help Baptist missionaries in their church-planting ministry. I have often asked him where he gets all of the time to do these things. He probably doesn't get too much sleep.

He's going to tell us about a man of special compassion and courage this evening, his grandfather Hermann Wolfe, who sheltered and helped Jews in Germany during Hitler's regime, a man whom we should never forget.

HERMANN WOLF

Thank you, Mr. Goldstein. This is a very tenacious gentleman. For three years he's tried to enlist me to speak to the Jewish congregation here in Westfield and any friends that might want to sit in. I am pleased to do so, because I have never spoken on my grandfather at all. The advertisement that appeared in the newspaper had a very good title -- "Hermann Wolf, Helper and Shelterer of Jews in Hitler's Germany." An alternate title would be, "***The Untold Story of an Uncommon Saint.***" I almost felt like saying "Unique Man," but then all of us are unique; all of us are creatures of God. He's made each of us in God's image and we are all unique in a sense.

Mr. Goldstein read an article in the Springfield newspaper about a family reunion our family had three summers ago, in 1991. That aroused his interest, because the article mentioned in passing the fact that my grandfather was aiding Jewish people in World War II days, and as I conversed with you on the phone, I mentioned that no, nobody in Israel knew about him. Though I've been there 25 times now and see Yad Veshim, the

Holocaust Memorial, very often; and my guide, who is a Jewish gal, married to the top security man in the whole country incidentally, says, “Why don’t you let us plant a tree in your grandfather’s memory?” But my rejoinder is, “We were never introduced to any of the people we helped because if the Gestapo came, we could not divulge any names of those individuals who were so often guests in our house.”

I thought, in order to paint a background for my grandfather and give special emphasis to his kindness to the Jewish people, it would help to understand something about his childhood, his career, and thus his convictions and his courage.

CHILDHOOD

You have in your hands a little flyer. I put his picture on there as he looked in World War I days, Hermann Wolf. His birthdate is given. You notice he was born on July 22, 1875, in the little town of Kirchberg and you can locate that on the map that you have in your hands. The other town, Falkenstein, is where we lived and where eventually he took up his residence until such a time that he was called home by the Lord.

He was born into a Christian family. His father’s name was also Hermann, and that is an area of eastern Germany that has always been greatly impoverished. Kirchberg lies in a little valley surrounded by rolling hills in a mountain range called the the Erzgebirge, or the Ore Mountains because for the past two centuries, silver ore and iron ore were mined there. As a matter of fact, many of the towns are still famous because of their mining tradition. One place especially is of interest to me. Right across the border into Czechoslovakia, lies a town Mariental, Mary’s Valley. The silver that was mined there was especially valuable and precious. The coins of that whole realm were made out of silver mined in Mariental. The German-speaking people called the coin therefore a Marian-thaler. They dropped the word Mary and called it “thaler” and then that was softened and became “dollar.” So the word dollar actually has its origin very close to where my grandfather comes from.

His father was a weaver. The mining business went defunct because the silver mines and ore mines had been exhausted. So these humble people had to look around for other vocations. They imported the lace-making techniques; ladies would sit in front of a round pillow and throw little wooden mallets together attached to strings, and made very elaborate lace. Others had large looms on which they produced curtains and a more coarse type of lace. The other tradition is that of woodcarving. Men and women took up the intricate art of carving figurines, especially for Christmas time. Much of what you see in American stores imported from Germany originated, even under Communism, right from that area.

CAREER

My grandfather’s father was a weaver, but my grandfather learned the trade of bricklayer. As I mentioned, he was born into a godly family. They went to church regularly and worshiped God the best they knew how; in very humble circumstances, however. With little employment, my grandfather soon had to look for other work. He moved in 1911 or 1912 to a town only about 15 miles from there, the town of

Falkenstein, where my mother and my brother and sister and I lived in the same house with them. My father, as with all the German men in those days, had to fight in World War II. In Hitler's army, if you didn't, you got a bullet hole through the back of your neck right here.

But at any rate, my grandfather, though a very personable individual, was an extremely private individual. You rarely heard him talk about his childhood, at least when I knew him. His daughter Mrs. Loescher is here tonight, and she might remember him talking about his childhood. But when we lived with him, rarely did he do so except on one occasion. We had a large garden, and in those days my grandfather had me do a lot of the garden work (we had fruit trees and various bushes and produce). He was going to make a sentimental journey back to Kirchberg. From Falkenstein to there, 15 miles, but it might as well have been across the ocean, because you did not travel in those days, especially right after World War II. But he was so excited that he was going to go home and visit whatever relatives were still there. I suspect he took me along so I could carry the two big pails filled with gooseberries and with currants. I carried the pails, he carried the responsibility. We took the bus to the closest bus station, and then we had to walk five miles. I was rather young then, and heavily weighted under the load of the pails, but from time to time he would carry them as well.

Then at one place as we came near Kirchberg he stopped and he pointed at a roadside ditch and he said, "That's the ditch I ended up in." Of course he didn't use bad grammar. "This is the ditch in which I ended up." And I said, "What do you mean you ended up in this ditch, Grandfather?" And he said, "Though I come from a Christian home, one day some young men convinced me to drink alcoholic beverages, and I became drunk and I couldn't stay on the road and I fell into the ditch. My companions left me lying there. When I got out of my drunken stupor, I resolved that I would never touch another glass of alcoholic beverage for the rest of my life." And he didn't. Instead, he made all sorts of good fruit juices; for ever in our house we had the best of healthful drinks available.

As we got ever closer to Kirchberg, he told more and more about his childhood. I felt extremely privileged because I would sit up at 10:00 with the old timers listening to their stories about the good old days or the bad old days, whatever. At home we had to go to bed at 8:00. All German kids still have to go to bed at 8:00, which is unconscionable, but that's the way they carry on the tradition there.

He moved to Falkenstein in 1911 or 1912, as I mentioned, and the main occasion, I think, for his moving was the building of the large and beautiful city hall in that small town of 12,000 people. He prided himself in having had a part in putting that city hall up. He was able to save enough money to purchase a house and immediately he put two big weaving machines or looms in the house on which curtains were produced. Then World War I called him into action. You can see him in his World War I uniform as a strapping young man, and also his first wife, a godly woman by the name of Lina, the mother of Mrs. Loescher and the mother of my mother, Hannah, as well.

He fought in the Kaiser's army in France. He was always glad that he never saw any action. He was the company cook, so he stayed in the back enjoying the good food while others had to do the fighting for him. While he was at war in April 1916, his first

wife Lina died and left five little children orphans. They had six children, but one only lived to be half a year old. There was Gottfried, my uncle from Springfield who just moved to be with his daughter in Florida. He and his wife are 90 now, still relatively healthy at their advanced age. There was Maria, who for a number of years lived in Hartford, Connecticut. And Liesbeth, here with us tonight, and Martha and Hannah who stayed in East Germany. Hannah, as I mentioned, was my mother. My grandfather returned from war to take care of these five little orphans. But they had some good Christian friends, and he married a woman who according to my aunt was very kind to the children and my grandfather outlived her. She died prematurely and then he married another godly woman, and he outlived her. So he had a very tragic situation there, but as a father and as a grandfather was able to build much into the lives of the children and grandchildren, as I can attest.

If you went with me to that little town in East Germany where he lived for so many years, the town of Falkenstein, and found somebody on the streets of that city maybe sixty-five or seventy years of age and asked, “Do you remember (as he was affectionately called) Wolfen Hermann?—you used the last name first—I think a smile of recognition would go over their face and they would say something like, “Yes, he always stopped to talk to me.” We never got anywhere with my grandfather. We’d go into town less than half a mile away, and it would take us an hour because he talked with everyone on the road. “Yes, he helped my parents in their business.” Somebody would say, “Yes, he made the best smoked herring in the whole county.” “Yes, he’s responsible for my being a Christian.” “Yes, he loaned me some money and when I couldn’t repay it, he forgave my debt.” “Yes, he had the best fresh fruit in his grocery store.”

After World War I, the looms were no longer relevant. He was a very industrious individual, as I mentioned. He was not just a man of piety, but a man of industry. He put a coal deposit in the basement of the house; in the first floor, a grocery store; and then he had in the back yard smoking ovens to smoke herring and eel and other fish that people brought to him. He gave away as much as he could, much to the dismay of his three wives. He always felt it was more blessed to give than to receive.

When I knew him in Falkenstein (as I said, my family lived with him in the same house—a very simple row house) he was not just very business-minded, but he felt that everyone who was a godly individual ought to act in a godly fashion. For those of you who may not know as clearly as might be possible the distinction between Christians and Christians—I know the Holocaust is blamed on Christians in Germany. Loosely speaking, Germany might have been a Christian nation. But when we speak about my grandfather’s being a Christian, we would consider him to be an evangelical Christian and by this we mean that he, sometime in his lifetime, gave his life over to the Lord Jesus Christ. He, as evangelical Christians, believed that the reference Isaiah 53 “He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities,” is a reference to the Lord Jesus Christ. If you believe that, and my grandfather was very consistent in that, then he felt if he followed Jesus Christ who called God His Father, then he ought to act like a member of the family of God. What he did, whether helping other people, or as I’ll relate in a few minutes, helping the Jewish people in a special fashion, wasn’t done to gain merit with God. He felt that God so loved him, that God had so enriched him,

that that was the least he could do, to do what God wanted him to do. I think his love for the Jewish people and for the Jewish state—and I was glued with him to the radio set in 1948 as we were listening to forbidden radio station RIAS (Radio in the American Sector) upon the birth of the state of Israel. That was one of the spiritual highlights of his life. He knew from both the Old and the New Testament that the Jewish people were God's chosen people, and he was always hoping that there would be a homeland for them. So he would not be a Christian in the general term, simply belonging to a Christian denomination; but he would be one who was a convinced Christian who had dedicated his life to follow the Lord and to do what His Word said.

CONVICTIONS

So when he moved to Falkenstein, as helpful as he was in the economic fashion, every Sunday afternoon he would go to some small group of Christians, meeting in a town where they did not have a regular pastor, and he was an unofficial worker in the church called an exhorter. My relatives over there were Methodists, the old-time Methodists, who believe the Bible to be the Word of God, and so on. While he was not called into the ministry, he would take us along; my mother, my sister, who is two years older than I, my brother who is two years younger than I (you can see us here, as we were back in those hoary days of yesteryear) and we would go and cut a path through the forest, the shortest distance to some town like Werda or Bergen -or Grünbach, five miles each way on a Sunday afternoon. We would carry our musical instruments. Totally unthinkable in America! You don't walk straight through the forest in the United States. Over there, they removed the lower branches on the trees and we would walk through the forest to Werda. We would play our instruments; my mother and sister played the guitar; I had the lute with the round back on it. So we would walk along singing songs and then we would reach the meeting hall. A small group of believers were gathered. He would read a passage from the Old or New Testament, and he would exhort the people in their godly life. We would provide some special music, he would close in prayer, we would walk back home. So that was our Sunday activity. And I really don't think we minded it.

Now as I drive around there every year, I ask myself and I tell my wife and our two children who make that trip with me every other year, I don't know how I managed to walk this far every Sunday. I think I still could do it, but we didn't look at distances in those days. We did it because we knew it helped these people in that town who didn't have a pastor.

So he was a very practical Christian who not only served in churches but in his own life had daily devotions with us, and we could tell of his deep faith as we lived with him day by day. When I talk about him in these terms as being a godly man or an uncommon Christian, I do so not out of a sense of filial piety that you want to make your ancestors look better than they really were. Because I had in juxtaposition to him, my other grandfather on my father's side. My father perished during the closing days of World War II. He was missing in action—he was probably killed by the Russians. But his father was not a Christian. Oh, he belonged to the Lutheran church. He was on the church board there. But he would curse at people on the farm fields that belonged to him, when they wanted to pick some little kernels of grain because they were hungry. He would

curse my grandmother, his godly wife, when he found her sneaking a pound of butter on a plate, hidden under a large stack of cottage cheese, so that he wouldn't see it. From time to time, he suspected she did that. He would brush away the cottage cheese and he would curse her and us. And I remember my two grandfathers sitting in that farmhouse on my father's side, the ancient farmhouse in a small town called Siebenhitz, just two miles outside of Falkenstein--it's still there. There were large wooden beams holding up the low ceiling; in the corner a gigantic white tile stove, a primitive-hewn kitchen table with two benches on either side, and there was Hermann Wolfe and there was Reinhart Kober. And here is little Manfred Kober listening in. Maybe I shouldn't have. But my grandfather on my father's side never could understand how you could believe in a God. He had seven sons and two daughters. Four of the seven sons had children, they were married and had children. Those four never returned from World War II. And he said to my grandfather Hermann Wolf, "Don't tell me there's a God when he does that to me." And my grandfather Wolf tried to explain, "Did God start that war? Or did Hitler? Are the German people to blame what is now coming upon them? Or how dare you blame that on God?"

When my grandfather on my mother's side experienced tragedy and trials, he didn't blame God. He said it could have been a lot worse but for the grace of God. As far as I know, my grandfather on my father's side never in a personal way turned to God and believed on Him as his Savior. So I could see a godly grandfather and unfortunately a very ungodly grandfather, so I applaud Hermann Wolf for his patience with my grandfather whom I admire, whose memory I still cherish, but who was the farthest thing from being a genuine Christian.

The war years were very difficult for us. The Nazi years were coming to a close, and they did not pass us in a cursory fashion. Hitler, just like the Communists years later, had his tentacles all over in every community. If you look at the picture of the house once more, my earliest childhood memory relates to looking out that third-floor window, the rounded window in the center, on the street below as a car screeched up to a house right next to us. It was a Gestapo car, and three Nazi agents jumped out of the car, went into the house, and pulled the sixteen-year old teenaged daughter out of the house. She was screaming at the top of her lungs, and they brutally shoved her in the car and sped away. Her mother cried hopelessly out in the street and we approached her and asked what had happened. She said, "Apparently my daughter had criticized Hitler in school, and now they are taking her away." We had the worst of fears. They were realized. Three weeks later she received word that her daughter had had a heart attack. In a roundabout way she found out some time after that the Nazis had poisoned her. Our next-door neighbors' daughter vanished. Some people across the street who had mental problems vanished. So we knew of camps where Hitler was shipping German people and exterminating them. Right from the start we had a very terrifying fear of what was going on.

COURAGE

But my grandfather, you recall, was a Christian and he believed both the Old and the New Testaments. He believed there was something very special about the chosen people. He would quote passages like Duet. 32:10 when somebody was surprised

about his special treatment of the Jews. He said, “Didn’t Moses in the swan song tell the nation of Israel that God kept His people as the apple of His eye?” And in Zechariah 2:8, where the prophet says, “He that touches you (Israel) touches the apple of God’s eye.” And my grandfather concluded, anyone that precious to God ought to be precious to us. God had given him a real love for the Jewish people.

But much of his relationship with them never came to light until years after I had left. He would never talk about it. I remember having Jewish people in our home. They shared our humble meal at mealtime. He never introduced them to us. And we didn’t ask why, because we knew. One of our pastors wrote an article about a situation that happened in our church in a church magazine over there. He mentioned coming to our house and finding us just ready to sit down to a meal, and my grandfather hospitably invited him to join our meager portion. He said, “Where four can eat, five can also eat;” however many people there were at the time. And then as the pastor bid us farewell, he said, “But I never got to meet Mr.---“ waiting for my grandfather to introduce him. My grandfather stopped him short and said, “I know what you want to know. He’s a friend. He’s a Jewish friend. He’s not the first Jewish friend we’ve had in our house, and he’s not going to be the last Jewish friend in our house. We want him to have a decent meal.” And this pastor in that article that he wrote just a short time after that happened said, “I admonished Hermann Wolf that he was putting his life at risk and that of his whole family.” And Hermann Wolf said, “Greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world.” The Nazis were motivated by Satan. But he felt he was doing the work of God, and God is in sovereign control over men and their fears of men. So he was fearless from the start.

He knew that Hitler was doomed. World War II had barely gotten underway when my grandfather said, and not just on one occasion—remember he talked with everyone on the street, and so everybody got the same line—“Hitler might as well give up on this war. He has lost it before he started it, because the Jewish people are God’s plumb line by which He’s going to judge the nations.” You remember Genesis 12:3, “I will bless them that bless thee [the seed of Abraham]. I will curse him that curseth thee.” So my grandfather was convinced that Hitler was doomed and Germany was doomed. When the Communists moved in, he was not surprised that at least part of Germany, really, stood under the judgment of God. In those days, though it may be hard for you folks in America to believe, we did not realize there were these concentration camps for the Jewish people. We thought some of them were shipped away like some of the Germans were, but not until the Americans came in and opened Buchenwald, the closest concentration camp to us, did we realize the full horror of the final solution.

My grandfather helped the local Jewish people whenever he could, often without anyone knowing of his altruism. I don’t think even my mother knew about much of that. Not until years later did his sister Martha tell me that her husband, Walter Adler, and my grandfather Hermann Wolf would go to Jewish homes under cover of darkness and deposit handfuls of money and put them anonymously in their mailbox. So the Jewish people might have suspected where the money was from, but they never knew. Mrs. Loescher reminded me that there were Jewish people in town by the name of Faber. As a matter of fact, she worked in their home for awhile as a housekeeper. Interestingly, they had a young man by the same as my first name, Manfred, except they called him

Mandela. There was the family of Eisenmann in our town, and I remember the largest department store was operated by a lady by the name of Auguste Levy. Apparently all these people were in our home. They were given meals, they were given money and then, toward the end of the war, as things were happening quick and fast, they were in our house, they shared our air-raid shelter. Part of our basement was an extension of the air raid room and behind large crates and boxes there was a special little side room where they were. They brought all their earthly possessions along, which I think they had put all in one large chest, sort of a cedar chest it would be in America. Then when the coast was clear, these people left by cover of darkness. Sometimes they left the chest behind and later someone else would come and take it for them. We little children were always curious—what on earth might they have in this chest? But we were never allowed to touch it, of course. We hoped and prayed that many of them made it to Eastern Europe and eventually to Israel.

But as far as them totally being exterminated by the Nazis, we never suspected that. Though we thought maybe some were, like the rest of the Germans who opposed Hitler. There's a tradition in our church. I remind you it was a godly Methodist church, an old fashioned Methodist church, that every New Year's Eve they had a service, I think they still do, right till midnight, to see the New Year come in. But at 10 PM sharp the pastor calls for a time of public testimony. Anyone who wants to, comes before the congregation to tell them how God has blessed them within the last year. It was also a tradition that my grandfather, who sat in the first row always with his eyes closed (and everybody assumed he was sleeping); but we knew when we went home and he questioned us about the service, he was not sleeping.

Hermann got up, walked these few steps up on the first step of the platform right beneath the pulpit, and he gave a testimony. And much to the amusement, I dare say, of some of the people, he concluded that the same stanza of a song, a well-known beloved church song each time. I'll give you the German four lines and my English translation:

No matter how difficult the year had been, and these war years were extremely difficult for him and even before as he lost one wife after another,

Sel'ger kann ich niemals werden
Als ich schon in Jesu bin.
Alle Freuden dieser Erden
Sind nur Trug und Scheingewinn.

The greatest treasures I possess,
Are those received from the Son of God;
Because the treasures of this world are false pretense,
And count for naught.

People thought that was just a nice way for him to conclude a testimony. As Pastor Pollmer wrote on another occasion, "There was a testimony time when nobody thought that Hermann Wolf would get up and walk to the platform," because just a few days

before, Christmas of 1950, my mother tragically died; his beloved daughter. How could he get up and testify that he still possessed the treasures in God that he always appreciated? And yet, as Pastor Pollmer says, “Grandfather Wolf came up there and gave his testimony, using the words of Job in the Old Testament who said, ‘The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.’ And then he concluded with that stanza again.” And their smiles vanished, because they saw that when he said it each year, he spoke from the bottom of his heart. I was there in that testimony meeting, and I remember.

I remember that no matter how tragic the situation: you can lose your father, you can lose your mother, through World War II. My grandfather and my parents used to say, “God will make it up for you.” And He has, and He will for any of us as we commit ourselves to God’s kind and gracious guidance. From our perspective, it may not make sense. But God is too wise to make mistakes, and He is too good to be unkind. I remind myself of that; I remind my students at Faith Baptist Bible College of that. So my grandfather from year to year entrusted himself to the care of the loving, of the sovereign God.

Help the pastor, but for this one in World War II days in Nazi Germany, was one of the cowards who refused to speak out against what Hitler and his henchmen began to do with the Jewish people since 1933 when they plastered their synagogues, when they smashed in windows and painted yellow stars and the most filthy of statements on Jewish homes. Many pastors refused to take a stand. They didn’t agree with that, but they were so afraid for their own life.

Only about four years ago I found out from one of those old timers who remembered my grandfather, he said, “Did you know that whenever it was in 1938 or 1939, your grandfather got up in that annual testimony meeting and said something to defend the Jewish people?” I said, “No, tell me about it.” He said, “It was the time of Nazi persecution of the Jewish people at their height. He got up from the seat, he just gave one quotation from the Scriptures, John 4:22: ‘Salvation is of the Jews.’ And the congregation held their breath, not knowing what to think of a brave man like that. And the pastor hung his head, red as a beet in shame. This pastor discontinued these testimony meetings for the rest of the war years, till his successor, [whom I knew] Pastor Pollmer came in.”

That was Hermann Wolf. He was totally unafraid. When the Communists moved in after the Americans had pulled out, the area where I lived was an area first occupied by the Americans and then, unfortunately, the Americans left us and the Russian armies came in. The Russians pilfered the city hall in Falkenstein, the same city hall that my grandfather helped build. They found a list of names; names of families that would be exterminated if Hitler won World War II. The Nazis had it planned down to a T. They told us, and I think it was the mayor of the town who was married to one of our relatives, but he told us, “You know who’s name was up there? Hermann Wolf and family.” Which means if Hitler had won that war, we would all have been sent to one of his extermination camps. So the Nazis knew what was going on. God in His grace protected our family in a marvelous way, and my grandfather was permitted to live out his life.

The article to which I referred earlier, and you have the headline at least reproduced on the handout sheet, on the back page: "The Gracious Art of the Old Hermann Wolf." According to our former pastor, there's only once in his lifetime that Hermann Wolf was very ungracious, he was very unkind. The pastor relates coming to the house and my grandfather visibly agitated said, "Do you know who was here just 30 minutes ago?" The pastor said, "No." "It was a former police commander's wife, Mrs. Miller. And Mrs. Miller wanted me to sign a statement; that her husband, [who was a monster in town carrying out the Nazi directives] treated you, Mr. Wolfe, very humanely because he didn't send you to an extermination camp." Because Mr. Miller, the police inspector, had called in my grandfather one day and said, "Hermann Wolf, I know what you're doing. But have you noticed," he said with a sarcastic smile on his face, "that your Jewish friends have turned against you one after another? And they were all taken care of?" My grandfather didn't know what all that meant, but he said, "I will never forget that." The police inspector didn't know what my grandfather meant. I don't either. But he remembered that the Nazis had touched God's anointed, the Jewish people. And now that widow, after World War II, was over, wanted my grandfather to sign a statement that Inspector Miller was very humane. And my grandfather, as sort of a confession related to the past, he said, "Then I screamed at her. I said, 'Get out, you woman. If I had dogs I would sic them on you.'" The only time, apparently, in his lifetime, my grandfather had been that agitated. He wanted to know from the pastor what he had done wrong. This pastor said, "No. You would have forfeited this injustice that was done in the name of the German people by allowing that man to again have a position of responsibility when he should be punished for what he has done." Thus the ungracious hour in the life of Hermann Wolf.

I last saw my grandfather on February 8, 1952. My father was missing in action, my mother died in 1950, my relatives in the United States, Mr and Mrs. Loescher who are here; Mr. and Mrs. Wolf who are now in Florida; my aunt in Hartford, my grandfather's daughter Maria; asked if one of us three children left as orphans from World War II would come to America. When the invitation came, I was the fortunate one to be chosen because my brother had been adopted by a fine Christian couple and my sister as well.

These were difficult times because that section of East Germany where we lived was like a prison within a prison. We lived close to the Iron Curtain. We couldn't even leave our county to go to the next county, because that's where the Communists had their military installation and uranium mines. The iron and silver ores were gone, but they extracted billions of dollars worth of uranium ore for the atom and hydrogen bombs in the Soviet Union from that area. So we couldn't even go to the next county. We committed the matter to God in prayer. We tried various escape routes; none of them worked. I finally sat down and I wrote a little letter to the East German government asking them if they would not please grant me an exit permit. I was not even a teenager yet. Would they please allow me to leave because of the death of my parents. I wanted to live with some friends in West Germany, not knowing how long it would take them to get a permit for the United States. The miracle happened. Within three weeks I had an exit permit, the only one of all my relatives since World War II who were allowed to leave the "Worker's Paradise." It took my relatives three days to realize this was a genuine exit permit. No one had ever seen one of these precious pieces of paper

before. Then they quickly packed my suitcases and bid me farewell and I went to the Kober farm to say farewell to my grandfather and grandmother there.

I knew I would never see them again. Once you leave a Communist country, the move is permanent. Little did I know that in 1957 the East German government would declare general amnesty and anybody who escaped before 1957, no matter how you got out. And there was my grandfather, who wanted to take me to the border. He wanted to be with me as long as possible. I had lived with him those last two and a half years. My brother had lived close by, my sister moved some distance away. And he became more kind during those two years than I'd ever seen him. He never could see any of us having a moment when we didn't have anything to do. He was not just a man of humility, piety and industry, but a man of idiosyncrasies. I think we all are. And as Mrs. Loescher will bear, he always was a workhorse and insisted we were workhorses as well. But he let up a little during those two and a half years. He was so kind and wanted to go with me to the border before the Communists realized what they had done in giving me an exit permit. As it turned out later, it was a bureaucratic blunder on their part and they tried to force me to come back; but by God's grace I was able to stay in West Germany and eventually came to the United States.

On February 8, 1952, we were at the border station of Guenfürst. The Communists had erected a primitive barracks, wooden vertical boards with wide space in between so the cold winter air blew right through. Just a little mass of people huddled. Even in those days, they barely let anyone leave. I was so upset that, unknown to my grandfather, I went out the building, sneaked around and deposited in the snow the indigestible food from my stomach. A brave young man, I went back in and just continued to talk with my grandfather till the parting moment came. Then I headed on the train westbound for Bavaria, West Germany, where I stayed for a year with some dear friends. He headed back to East Germany.

But on that last day, when he accompanied me to the border, he caught a severe cold. That cold developed into pneumonia and on April 16, 1952, he was on his deathbed; no penicillin available, no modern medication. He called all the family around his deathbed, a man who had lived 77 years honoring God, serving God, assured that he would enter heaven; not because of what of what he had done, but because of what his Savior had done for him. My brother said, "I wept when we were singing and he called me over and he said, 'Friedhelm, don't cry. I am about to have the most wonderful time in my life. I'm going to see the Lord in heaven.'" And then he asked them to sing a song that we all still sing over there, "Daheim, oh welch ein schönes Wort, ("At Home, oh what a blessed word"). And though not everybody has an easy death as my grandfather did, he opened his eyes widely, a smile went across his face as he apparently had a glimpse of that glory that awaited him. He closed his eyes, and his spirit departed for heaven.

On the other hand, his spirit is still very much with us. It remained behind of a wonderful example of a godly individual who, in the face of life-threatening danger, was going to risk his life and that of his family for a cause that he knew to be right. I wish I could say there were millions of people like that, Christians like that in Germany who tried to help in any way they could the Jewish people. There weren't in that pastor in that account said, "Herman Wolf was one of those rare breed." It's not for me to judge how many

Germans there were, but I think it does us good to remember there were some, and to remember why they did it. Because they had a love for God, they had a love for God's Word, and a love for God's people. I think God honors Grandfather Wolf. Not just right now in heaven as he is rewarded for his faithfulness on earth, but He honors him in the lives of his children. Five children, who grew up, 13 grandchildren; of the 13 of us, six are in the full-time ministry and the others are very actively involved. My cousin Ron is a medical doctor, his wife a nurse at the Holyoke Clinic. Liesbeth, her daughter Evelyn; that's my grandfather's granddaughter. Her daughter Becky with two sons Ethan and Philip, great-grandchildren already being brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. My family in Iowa, two wonderful godly children. So the blessings go on and on, and I think we see fulfilled in his life and I think in many lives of godly individuals, the promise that God made to Israel back when He introduced the Ten Commandments to them in Exodus 20. He said in verses 5 and 6 that he would bring iniquity to the third and fourth generation to people that hate Him and that disobey His commandments, to idolatrous people. But He said, "I will bless them to a thousand generations." In Deuteronomy 7:9 the word generations, "I will bless them to a thousand generations for the individuals who love Me and keep My commandments."

I think we as a family are blessed because of the godly grandfather who was willing to count the cost and willing to take the stand. Now it is no longer an untold story, but an uncommon saint.

I want to express to you my appreciation for letting me rehearse the life of an unusual man. May he be an example to all of us.