

Letter from Germany

Kupperitz, 20 January 1921

Dear Mrs. Fischer and dear relatives!

I would be very happy to know that my letter will be received by all of you in good health.

Dear Aunt, I want to write to you even though you don't know me. I want to write you briefly my life story. I was born on May 10, 1888. When I turned 6 years old, I started school in the Lutheran Elementary School in Hochkirch. After 8 years I left this school. I then studied how to make chairs for three years. After my apprenticeship I started work for my father. It was a wonderful time for me and my family. In 1905 our fate was shaken when my mother died. A very difficult time started for all of us. Father and I had to take care of everything, and we progressed slowly until I got married in June 1913. But my happiness should not last long, because the war started in 1914. I was drafted on August 22, 1914. My brother Ernst was drafted on the 5th of August. I was taken to a garrison. After 7 weeks of training, I was sent to Russia. After one year there I was given a 14-day furlough. When I returned home, I saw my daughter Helen for the first time. She was 10 months old. My wife, child and I were very happy. Then I was sent to another garrison and stayed a while. But then something very sad happened to me. In May 1917 my wife died of an illness which she battled for 1 ½ years. She was 23 years old. Helene was 2 ½ years old at that time.

Dear Aunt, you can imagine how very sad I was and how hard it was to accept her death. In December 1918 I was discharged from the military and started to work with my father once more. I felt forced to find another mother for my little daughter. In October 1919 I got married again. We are very happy. My wife is very dear to Helen. In August 1920 we became the parents of a little boy by the name of Johannes.

Dear Aunt, now you have had some insight into my life, and you realize that I have already experienced some tough days in my youth. We get along ok; however, everything has gotten so expensive in Germany which worries us a great deal. I and my family were very surprised receiving your dear letters and the wonderful gift. Father shared everything in Christian fashion.

Dear Aunt, we thank you very much. May God bless you for all you have done for us. I will send you a wedding picture of my bride and me.

Dear Aunt, now I have to ask you a favor. As I learned from your letter you have a newspaper man by the name of Proske. My wife and I are interested in that name as my wife's maiden name is Proske. When you see him again, please ask him if he still has relatives here in Germany. My father-in-law is John Traugott Proske and lives in Oberförstchen near Bautzen.

I will close here and wish you and your family a happy and prosperous new year.

Again many thanks for your generous gift. May God bless you and keep you.

With cordial greetings I remain with grateful memories your nephew Johann Rentsch, chairmaker, Neu Kupperitz, Postal office Pommritz, Saxony.

Translated by Margot Hendricks