

Chapter XI
RIEDENHEIM: HOME OF THE SCHOTTS

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Would I find them this time, and if I did, what would they be like? What was their philosophy, their way of life? What did they look like? And would they accept me? Or would I again return to the States only partially satisfied as I did three years Before, when after a long search I found the place but not the people?

These questions, among others, breezed through my mind like so many pieces of chaff whirling in the wind , as we sped along the Bavarian highway with cousin Reimund at the wheel of his little gas conserving Volkswagen.

We were doing a repeat. Reimund's mother Frieda, with whom I shared mutual great grandfather Sebastian Burkart, would again go along, aiding in the search and translating.

We traveled the same route as before. Drove the thirty kilometers from Dettelbach, past vineyards that spread like patch-work quilts over the hilly terrain. Past wayside images of the Virgin and several small shrines. Through the walled and towered towns of Sommerhausen, Ochsenfurt and Gelchsheim. Their arched gates providing entrance and their Late Gotish town halls dominating the scene.

Just like three years before. At that time we'd gone on a clue I had gotten back in nineteen sixty four, on my first genealogical trip to Europe. My then newly-found cousin Armin Burkard had told me that he knew of a Schott in Riedenheim. Based on this bit of information I'd finally gotten around to following up on this slender clue in my searching for the Schotts – my paternal grandmother's roots.

We'd gone to the parish house adjacent to the local church. Reimund had driven the Volkswagen down a little cobble stone side street where he'd parked in the shade and said as Frieda and I had gotten out, " Take your time mother and aunt, I have some reading I can do while you're gone." He would be chauffeur only.

With the sound of our shoes on cobble stones disturbing the quiet of the town we'd gone up the slightly inclined walk of the main street. Past fachwerk and stucco houses with their red and pink trailing geraniums accenting each place, until we reached the parish's residence.

In response to our ringing the doorbell, a middle-aged woman appeared and admitted us when we explained who we were and that we would like to see the Priest (priest). She'd then introduced herself as the housekeeper, Miss Memmel. Yes, Priest Kuchenbrot was in and she would be happy to take us to him in his study.

The priest had greeted us cordially with the traditional " Grüss Gott", and invited us to be seated, while we identified ourselves and briefly informed him of our mission.

" Are there Schotts still living in Riedenheim? " I'd asked hopefully. There were indeed Schotts here and had been for several generations, he'd responded. Elated, I asked if we could please look at the church records and perhaps establish that great-grandfather Andreas had come from Riedenheim. Or rule it out. Accomodatingly, Priest Kuchenbrot had

gotten the large record books from his file cabinet and placed them on the big round table in his combination sitting / study room.

We'd waited expectantly. Frieda with poised pencil. I, with tape recorder. We would have a two-way record, we'd assured ourselves.

As he thumbed through the German handwritten ledgers, the Priest had come to several Schott entrees. " Here is a son of Kaspar Schott, named Andreas, born on 27th September, 1822 ", he'd said at long last.

" This is him, this is him" I'd cried out excitedly. The dates had coincided with my records and this was indeed the Andreas Schott I was looking for.

While the Priest had searched and read, Frieda and I recorded the direct line back to seventeen hundred and one. And Andreas' siblings as well.

I'd noted with interest that Andreas was the third son. And I'd asked myself was that why he'd left for America when he was twenty-three and unmarried? With the rule of primogenitor was he to be beholding to his eldest brother who would inherit the entire estate? Was that why he had come to America with the group led by Michael Burkart in 1845? Michael, the teacher and brother to Matt's grandfather Josef? I wondered, as I asked the Priest about the home place of the Schotts. Was it still there? If so, where?

Yes, it was still there, he'd told us. " house number twelve." Schotts were still living on the place but he didn't know much about them because they didn't come to church. But were they members? I wanted to know. "of course ", he'd responded.

It had suddenly occurred to me then, that since a percentage of their taxes automatically went to the church that they were also automatically members. Or at least, it had appeared so.

I didn't press the Priest further on the 'why' of the Schott's nonattendance, but had asked if he would please tell us something about the community.

"Sure," he'd responded. And, since luckily he wasn't very busy at the present time he would be happy to accommodate us. Furthermore it wasn't often that an American who spoke some German searched out their little village, wanting to know something about it and its people.

We'd listened attentively as he told us that originally this village of some six hundred people was a swamp land of marsh, reeds and sedge grass. That the early folk had converted that swamp land into the black rich earth comprising the farms surrounding the village. It had become a source of wealth to the inhabitants of Riedenheim.

" Has the community grown and changed much?" I'd asked as the Priest paused momentarily, seemingly searching his mind for further information that I might be interested in. A gentle smile had emerged from the corners of his mouth, as he'd said, " Somewhat, but

leisurely". This latter had been obvious to us when we'd first entered the town and observed the exceedingly quiet atmosphere.

"When your great-grandfather Andreas lived here, and let's see, that was well over a hundred years ago, there were just about two hundred people in Riedenheim," the Priest had gone on. Impatiently wanting to know more about the folk who peopled this community, I had interrupted him with, " But the changes, what were they? How much---and where? "

" The changes? Oh yes - lots of things stay the same. But of course the farmers use more modern machinery, like to milk the cows and pull the sugar beets out of the ground. They don't plow with oxen anymore," And the Priest had smiled as this thought as though that were truly medieval.

"And for the women, how is it for them?" "Oh, now they have it a little easier. They have washing machines, for example" And did you notice that little bakery the Roth Bakery, in center of town? "

" Yes, we did, " I'd said as both Frieda and I nodded assent, " but what would you say has stayed the same, or pretty much so?"

" Oh yes the same - now that lies mostly in their way of life and attitudes. You see, nearly all of the six hundred people living here know each other. And they really care about each other. For example rain is eminent A neighboring farmer, for one reason or another has been unable to get his dry hay under protective sheds, other farmers help him bring it in from the fields", "Oh that's awfully nice " I'd interjected, while Frieda voiced agreement at the familiar helpful attitude of the Bavarian small town folk.

" Sure - if one farmer needs help others are always there to lend a hand, literally and figuratively " And the Priest had smiled with satisfaction at his pun. Besides in that way they make sure there's enough fodder for the cattle and horses for the coming winter. It's kind of a philosophy that one farmer's sufficiency is the sufficiency for all ".

As he paused momentarily, leaning back in his chair with his fingers entwined lightly at the base of his head, I'd asked "and the women?". I needed to know what the women were like. Their activities, their needs, to the degree that a priest could know them.

"O yes the women," straightening up in his chair "Well, they work in the fields just like the men; and in the barn. They make the garden and of course do the other 'Hausfrau'-things like cooking and baking 'n cleaning and take care of the kids".

The children were of utmost importance, his tone had implied. "Do women go along when the men are helping each other?" "Yes, sometimes some do may help prepare the food for the men. They like cooking together and exchanging the day's gossip. You know how women are," he'd answered, a twinkle in his eyes as he smiled knowingly.

I didn't know, but held my peace as the Priest continued. "the women help out too when there's a wedding or funeral---cooking and serving. They share in each others happinesses losses, joys and sorrows. They, as well as the men like the fun of get-togethers

and weddings, small gifts, music, dancing, and singing. O'how they can sing! You know, like any little town."

At that point the twelve o'clock noon bells from the church tower had signalled the time for the Angelus. The Priest arising from his chair had crossed himself, folded his hands, and with bowed head said a brief silent prayer. Frieda and I followed his lead. Just like Millet's 'The Angelus', I'd thought irrelevantly.

Shortly thereafter we'd prepared to take our leave. We thanked the Priest profusely with "Thank you, thank you very much, it was wonderful," and had asked him what we owed for his time and help.

"No nothing," he'd said waving his hand negatively. But when upon our insistence that he take something "maybe for a few beers?" he'd smiled and said, "Not for me, but yes for the church..." And he took the six Deutsche Marks I'd extended to him.

Just one more thing, I'd said, as the priest opened his study door for us, could he please tell us where house with number 12 was. He could and would, with pleasure. After he'd given directions to the place---just on the edge of the village, we shook hands expressed appreciation and said "Good bye" and walked out into the bright July sunshine.

Reimund, who'd been waiting patiently, agreed when we said it was time for something to eat. We noticed a little guest house on our way into town and were happy to note it was open. Here, at guesthouse 'Zum Hirschen' we'd had noon meal, comprised of soup, pork chops, vegetables, potatoes, and the ever present bread. Resplendent with a glass of beer.

We'd shared the meal with road workers who'd come in to eat at twelve o'clock sharp. They'd looked at us inquisitively, obviously wondering who we were and what we were doing there that time of day.

While we'd had no problem finding house number twelve, we were amazed at its size. "A virtual complex," I'd said, with wonder.

Frieda and Reimund had agreed, commenting that while the place typically set within the village, the way of German farms where the land was outside the town, the barns, animals, and machinery within, was much larger than most.

We'd been able to see over the wrought iron fence that there were actually two houses, numbered 10 and 12, about fifty feet apart with a rectangular courtyard between. Both houses, close to the street had the fence and a large iron gate separating them and the enclosure from it. The gate had swung open easily when we raised the latch and entered the courtyard. To our surprise, we were confronted, near the end of the cobblestone area, with a huge manure pile in front of the barns, and facing both houses. "this said the size of the manure pile denotes a farmer's wealth, and in that case the folks living here must be pretty well off," I'd said in my limited Bavarian.

"Sure," Frieda smilingly agreed. Gingerly watching our steps, we'd gone to the nearest door of the long stucco house, with the lace-curtained windows. With the red and pink flower-

potted window sills. With the red tiled roof. I had rapped at the door. All was quiet. I'd rapped again. Still no answer.

"They aren't at home" Frieda had said.

"Yes I too believe they are not present" I'd grudgingly acknowledged that apparently the occupants were not at home. As we'd turned to leave an elderly man from house number 10 came toward us, noting we obviously were strangers. After greeting each other with the traditional "Grüss Gott" we'd explained we were looking for Schotts we presumed lived here. "Georg and his sister Rita are in the fields harvesting grain, I think," he'd said in his Bavarian dialect. "And Alois works on the roads."

"But wouldn't they be in for mittagessen?" I'd asked. "No, they were home already, and ate and went away again." He went on to explain that for some reason they weren't taking the customary two-hour noon break today. Just how customary we'd learned later when we went to the town center to do a little shopping and found everything closed.

Since he lived in house number 10 (part of the original complex), would he be so kind as to tell us something about the place, we'd asked.

He would and had, as we'd stood next to his rose covered picket fence---somewhat away from the manure pile. As we drove along, lost in my reminiscences of three years I recalled some of the historical data he'd related to us.

It seems that many years ago, back in the eighteenth century, a Schott married a Norpel, and that's how the number 10 and 12 complex came by its name: Schott-Norpel, nummer twelve, as it is known today. Number 10 (where he, the neighbor lived) was sold at some undetermined time.

Fire had worked havoc here. And with no regular fire-fighting equipment, when fire broke out in the graineries in 1899, they burned to the ground. House number 10 had been damaged but wasn't rebuilt until 1930. Number 12 was rebuilt some years later.

As the neighbor had pointed out all that remained of the original houses was a bit of the old foundations and I'd taken a picture of that original stone and mortar I'd found myself projecting back in time, visualizing great-grandfather Andreas.

The foundation of his life had been laid here. Born in 1822, he'd spent twenty-three years of his life on this place. Born of Kaspar and Magdalena, he'd played, laughed, loved and worked on this place. He'd grown up with his two sisters and four brothers on this place. Here he'd said his "Auf Wiedersehen" (till we meet again) knowing full well they would not meet again, when he'd left to make his future. in America, On this place...

I'd visualized how sad the family, especially the parents must have been when Andreas left his homeland to set sail on the three-masted schooner Venice. Set sail June 24, 1845.

Then cousin Frieda's voice brought me back into the present when she'd said: "it's time to leave, isn't it?". Yes, it was time to leave. Reluctantly and somewhat depressed at not

finding the people who lived in house number twelve, we'd said good bya and thanks to the kind gentleman, taken a few pictures, and joined Reimund who'd stopped by to pick us up.

"Let's go to the town center, look around a little, and if there's time, to the cemetery," I'd said as we climbed into Reimund's little Volkswagen. "OK we can do that, we still have plenty of time". There would be enough time the ever pleasant and helpful Frieda had answered.

Reimund had again parked the car on the side street and read after dropping us off. There were a few small stores, but all were closed until 2 p.m. apparently there was no deviation from this custom, for we'd seen someone through the window in a hardware store, tried the door, but were ignored.

The quiet had seemed so loud that we were almost startled at the sound of our own voices. Scarcely anyone else had been on the sparsely-tree-populated streets. Like a ghost town; Frieda had smilingly remarked.

Flowers and religious figures abounded everywhere. I'd noticed even some of the newer construction had small built-in alcoves that served as a shrine,

As we'd walked up the slightly inclined cobblestone street the town church came into view. The white stucco church with its tall cross-topped steeple that contained bells which tolled deaths of the town's residents' (one toll for each year of life). Made the call to service and announced the Angelus at noon and 6:00 p.m.

The structure was indeed the focal point of Riedenheim. "Shall we visit the cemetery?" Frieda had said, questionally. We would go now to the cemetery, which was located behind the church, near priest Kuchenbrot's residence, I'd responded affirmatively.

As we'd walked between the flower covered graves we'd seen an unusual number of Schott markers. Markers with forenames having their counterpart in another land across the sea. Names like Appolonia, Matthias, Konrad, Mathilde, Rita. Appolonia, Matt's mother (Andrea's daughter's) name. Matthias, my father Matt's name. Konrad, though spelled with a 'c', Matt's son's name. Many others that I'd recognized as being carried through the genealogy of Andreas and his wife Katherina's children and grandchildren.

The realization had come to me then that the perpetuation of family forenames was part of the culture and value system held by the Schotts. Though I'd often said none in his or her right mind would name a child Appolonia, now, seeing the name repeated in several family plats, I'd understood.

Close to the cemetery was a small, old, church-like building. We'd tried the door but it was closed. Frieda had informed me that apparently it was used for cemetery services, and for housing the dead for a few days preceding the funeral. Like in all of Germany.

As in all other German villages, towns, and cities, Riedenheim had its roll of honor, the names and date of those who fell in world wars I and II. Here, we'd seen it in the

cemetery. A large cement plaque carried the identification of over a hundred men. Eleven were Schotts. Schotts, many of whom too had the familiar forenames. Schotts who fell in Poland, Russia, Rumania and La Groiz, France.

Schotts, who had a cousin Leo, descendant of Andreas, resident of the farming area of New Franken, Wisconsin, where Andreas had settled, who'd died fighting on the other side... It had been as though Frieda could read my thoughts when she'd said, "It's real sad – isn't it?" Right, it was indeed a sadness. Over a hundred names out of a current population of six hundred!

We'd turned to leave, both of us absorbed in our ambivalent thoughts. Joined Reimund who'd still been reading in his parked car and drove back to Dettelbach. We had truly found the home of the Schotts in Riedenheim.

Now, three years later if we could only find the people! The Schotts, who we knew inhabited this number twelve. Reimund, Frieda, and I had started out from Dettelbach sufficiently early that September morning that we arrived in Riedenheim well before the twelve o'clock closing period.

A kind of sameness prevailed over the village. Same flowers, though somewhat faded. Same few people on the streets. Same quiet. We went directly to house number twelve. "How I hope they're home this time!" I said to my cousins. "We'll see", Frieda said optimistically. we would soon see. I agreed nervously, as Reimund parked the car across the street from the familiar wrought iron fence enclosing houses number 10 and 12.

Here, too, a kind of sameness prevailed. Same flowers on the lace-curtained window sills. Same large manure pile. Same quiet. They had to be home this time! They must have received the letter I'd sent a week or more before, explaining my relationship to Andreas Schott who'd come out of Haus number twelve, and my likely relationship to them.

Again I rapped at the door, just like three years before. Again, no answer. Waited a few seconds. Rapped harder, until I thought my knuckles would bleed. Still no answer. I turned to Frieda and said unhappily, "Nobody at home". "No, obviously they aren't home" Frieda responded empathically. We would go into town and make inquiries, we all agreed, as Frieda and I got into the car.

Just like three years before, Reimund again parked on a side street where he would wait and read, while his mother and I would go to the main street where we would try to learn where the Schotts from number twelve might be at this hour.

Our first stop was the Roth Bakery. Here we met Frau Roth, a talkative, friendly, energetic kind of person. Before we could really introduce ourselves, she said, "You must be the people from America the Schotts from house number twelve are expecting to be here today."

Surprised, and pleased, we said yes we were the people. At least I was the one from America,

and how did she know. Frau Roth then explained that Alois, the youngest occupant of House number twelve, and a road worker had been in her store with eggs the day before and had very excitedly told her about my communication.

That his brother Georg and sister Rita had gone immediately to their widowed sister, Franziska, who lived in a nearby village. That all were very surprised (and somewhat disturbed) that anyone from America should be searching them out.

"Then you know them well?" I asked.

"Nobody knows them very well," she answered, "they're all to themselves...they don't even have a phone."

At my surprised look, Frau Roth continued, "Oh but they're not poor. They have many" And she rubbed her two fingers and thumb together in a gesture indicating the unspoken word for money.

"We stopped at the house but nobody was there. We were wondering if maybe you could tell us where they might be this time of day," I said, ignoring her gesture. "Oh? well they probably were home, but they're so to themselves they wouldn't open the door to a stranger. They could see from behind those lace curtains," she answered raising her brows knowingly. "Tell you what, I'll go with you. They know me." And she took off her white apron, preparatory to going with us.

"Thank you very much," Frieda and I said in virtual unison.

I never cease to be overwhelmed at the thoughtfulness of many small town and country folk. The thought crossed my mind that here was another example as Frau Hoff went with us to House number twelve. She'd left her little bakery to be hospitable to us. Strangers in her community.

As we entered the complex we could see a man and woman near the grainery, just beyond the long manure pile. The man was dressed in typical farm clothes, plaid short sleeved shirt, earth-soiled pants, visor type cap and appeared to be in his mid, or late fifties. The woman, somewhat younger, wore a paisely print apron (also earth soiled) over a pink flowered house dress. A scarf covered her head and was tied at the nape of her neck, allowing just a little of her red-blonde hair showing at the forehead.

We stayed back as Frau Roth went up to them and explained who we were. While they looked at us quizzically, she gestured for us to come nearer. As we came closer I was struck by their strong resemblance to some of my American relatives. Same red-blonde hair, greenish blue eyes, pink complexions. And on the man, sandy-red beard. Like Matt's!

"Grüss Gott," we greeted them. They smiling reservedly, returned the greeting". Mrs. Roth, needing to get right back to her bakery, took her leave as we thanked her profusely, adding we would be seeing her later.

"We never heard that a Schott went to America in 1845," the man who'd introduced himself as Georg, said in a strong Bavarian dialect. "Nobody ever said that 'till we got your letter where you said your great grandfather and ours was brothers. That's unbelievable."

It was unbelievable, his words and tone implied, and that he didn't believe it. The woman, who said her name was Rita, stood quietly by, saying little.

When I showed them the genealogical chart I'd brought with me, indicating Andreas was my great grandfather and presumably a brother to theirs, Johann, and asked what their grandfather's name was (in order to verify my data) Georg said, " Yes – I don't know," and what's more they'd never interested themselves in finding out. But they were absolutely certain they had no relatives who emigrated to America.

Since they didn't know their great grandfather's name, perhaps they could tell us their grandfather's. " Georg Michael," Georg volunteered. But he never knew him, because he was killed in the war in 1917. And he himself was just a boy of fourteen when his father died, and he never heard anybody talk about ancestors, not any that went to America, anyway.

George continued studying the chart, skeptical, while I explained how it worked, pointing out the various data. Over and over again.

I commented on how much Rita looked like my cousin Louisa in America, who, like myself would be her fourth cousin. At this Rita warmed up a little and looked on the sheet with her brother. When I asked the name of their grandmother, it was she who answered, "Veronica."

It was obvious there was no overcoming without further proof, so I said, " You can go over to the priest's house and see for yourself, it's all in the church records". I'd no more than gotten the words out of my mouth when Frieda's eyes met mine, communicating what the priest had said to us three years ago. His tone of annoyance as he'd said, "They don't go to church." We both knew they wouldn't go to the priest's house.

"We will visit the priest and come back later ", Frieda said, nudging me to leave.

Georg and Rita nodded assent as we left to the priest's house, assured we would return.

Frau Memmel greeted us like old friends with " Grüss Gott" and how were we---the usual amenities. sorry, priest Kuchenbrot was away and wouldn't be back for a week. At our disappointed look, and comment that we had only a few hours in Riedenheim, she invited us in and asked if perhaps she could help us. She certainly could. When we explained that we'd met the folks at house number twelve---the Schotts---, that they didn't believe they had relatives in America, that they need more proof, Frau Memmel nodded smilingly saying, "that figures". She then went to the Priest's study upstairs, brought down the ledgers with the birth records entered in the German handwriting, and plazed them on the round dining room table. She and Frieda pored over the difficult writing until they finally came to the entry of Georg Michael, showing he was the son of Johann.

Frieda copied the data, satisfied that this, along with the information we'd already shown my new-found genealogical cousins, should suffice.

After saying "Thanks and goodbye" to Miss Memmel we returned to the Schott farm. Here we got the surprise of our lives. While we were gone Rita had brought out an old cemetery marker and had it leaning against the house. A thin marker, about two feet by one, it had the vital statistics of Georg Michael inscribed on it.

Apparently the cemetery had been renovated, that it's older graves readied to accept the new as is done in many European communities, in the interest of conserving limited land. And; with the view of beautification. How glad I was that I'd seen 'the old' three years before! While anyone who was related, or wished to have the old marker could have it, the Schotts had the one of their grandfather.

When we showed Georg and Rita the data we'd just copied they immediately got the marker. We made comparisons. A perfect match! At last Georg said, "That unbelievable!" Unbelievable, but true, his tone implied. His face broke into a wide smile as he repeated "unbelievable" The wonder in his voice was marvelous to hear, as though something truly big had come into their lives, truly unexpected.

Rita smiled her shy, timid smile. So like cousin Louisa in America. And I thought poignantly, indeed genetics knows no time or place... For a few seconds my mind went back to Matt, whose mother's people came from this place, whose reddish-blond mustache and beard had been so much like Georg's. Whose name, Matthias, came out of this place...

" I have something else to show you," Rita said, " I'll go in the house and get it." We waited expectantly. Soon she returned carrying two framed pictures. One of the original house number 10, the other of 12. I could scarcely contain my excitement at seeing these old pictures, pictures of the places the neighbor had told us about three years before.

Although number 10 had been rebuilt in 1930 the picture looked much the same as the present day house with a few variation such as a single rather than two small windows in the peak. The general architecture varied little. The same was true of number 12.

I'd known the Germans tended to rebuild in the same style when their buildings were damaged or destroyed by war but here was evidence some also did it when there was destruction by fire. Or, the ravages of time.

When I asked who had built house number twelve, Georg pointed to the plaque on one of the barns and read the inscription: Johann Michael Schott, 1859. His great grandfather. The plaque had been there for years but apparently none knew their relationship heretofore, or hadn't given it any thought.

Georg said, from what he'd heard, that there was a very old house here before. The present one (built after that old house was torn down) was itself severely damaged by the fire that burned the graineries to the ground. His father had restored it in 1937, when he (Georg) was a boy of thirteen.

How to get copies of those precious pictures? I'd been unable to know these folk well enough to ask them to loan them to me for copying. And my simple instamatic camera

wouldn't do.

After expressing my frustration to Frieda, she said, "Reimund keeps a good camera in the car, he'll take the pictures for you."

Luckily, the sun was very bright and offered Reimund the best conditions to take the closeups out of doors. I hope trying to squelch my inner anxiety. As it turned out I needn't have been concerned for in a few weeks Frieda sent excellent copies to me in America.

It was time to leave. Time for Mittagessen. Past time for Georg and Rita, who'd expressed as much.

After taking a few pictures, we shook hands, and I again commented how much they looked like the Schotts in America, how nice it was to meet them, how I hoped we would meet again and we said "Good Bye"

My last image of Georg as we left the complex was his studying the genealogical chart, with Rita looking on, saying "it's unbelievable!".

Did we bring a new dimension into their lives? Would they go back to the fields today to pick up potatoes with something new to think about--to speak of? For folks who'd said they had never been interested in their ancestry they certainly came a long way during those few hours after we first met. And so did I.

Not really in the way I'd hoped though. True, I found the people, but was unable to get inside them. We'd spent so much time and energy in overcoming their skepticism. We never got inside the house. We never had "Kaffee trinken", or finished a "Flasche Wein" over which so much of what was inside people came out. We never talked about the war as I had with several of my other cousins in Europe. Never learned, could only assume, that Georg and likely his brother Alois were in that war.

Were they occupied as were some of my other relatives in Germany and France? Did the brothers serve the customary ten years in the German army? If so, was that why, when they returned to a rundown farm and to care for a widowed mother and sister, they didn't marry?

Was the greater number of women and fewer men after the war Rita's reason for staying single? Or one of the reasons? I could only guess, and feel saddened. For when and how could I ever get to know these people and what they were like inside?

These thoughts occupied my mind as we drove to the giesthouse 'Zum Hirschen' for what we hoped could still be, Mittagessen. Sorry, we were told, but we were too late for the regular meal. We could have Bratwurst, Brot, and Beer. "Yes," we said.

"We visit Mrs. Roth once more, don't we?" Frieda questioned by way of reminding me we'd promised to return before we left Riedenheim.

" Yes for sure and we will buy some cake " We would purchase bakery to eat on the way back and for coffee drinking later.

Frau Roth had opened her bakery a little before two, and asked as we placed our order how everything went. When we told her she expressed great surprise at our relative success. Surprise because, "they were so to themselves---didn't socialize like most people in Riedenheim. Didn't even have a phone..."

Again expressing appreciation, we took the 'cheese cake' and tart and were on our way.

Farewell Riedenheim. Would I be back? So much yet to learn. So many unanswered questions...

As Reimund drove the little Volkswagen, smoked a few cigarettes, Frieda and I tried to find some answers. She, too, wondered why of four children only one, the eldest daughter, Franziska, married. And why were they so inhospitable? So unlike Franconians?

I agreed with Frieda's observations and questioning. How well I knew. For she and other Dettelbach relatives really gave me the red carpet treatment whenever I visited. As to their helpfulness, today was a prime example.

But then again, we posited, maybe Georg and Rita were just shy, overwhelmed. Nothing like this had ever happened before. Hadn't Frau Roth told us that when they'd gotten my letter they'd driven the fifteen miles to their sister Franziska's place to ask her what to do?

While driving through the rolling hills and charming small towns, nibbling cheese cake along the way, Frieda pointed out places of interest. St. Georg's church. "Here, on April 24 farmers from nearby communities bring their horses to be blessed," she said.

I then realized why so many men in that area were named Georg. Georg was their patron saint, just as Kilian was in Dettelbach. And, just as those emigrants brought the lame Kilian to the new land, the Schotts brought the anglicized " George" and sprinkled it throughout birth records.

We couldn't seem to shake the memory of the three unmarried Schott siblings , further wondering what was life like living in that big house, on that big place, with so much to do. So much work.

"They are tied to the land," Frieda said, "remember the Priest said they didn't go to church. And all social activities do center around the church."

I agreed. No public gathering place. No movie theater. No library. What was there in life, especially for Rita, who was in her early fifties. Tied to the land, as was her brother Georg.

Did we bring a new dimension, a new interest? I hope so, as I see their faces and hear them say, " It is unbelievable, unbelievable!" Unbelievable!