

## Mother's Day

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### From Sam Brungardt

In Ellis County, Kansas, New Year's is still the day to call on grandparents, parents, godparents, and possibly close friends. When a child wishes an adult a happy new year (which we called "winching," or a little more correctly wünsching), the custom is for the adult to give the child some money (Wünschgelt, or wishing money).

How much Wünschgelt we'd get depended upon whom we were wishing a Happy New Year (also, a Wunsch in German often paid off better than one in English). Most often, we'd get a quarter, half dollar, or dollar (often a silver dollar). Although, my grandpa was lucky enough to have oil on his land, so in his later years he gave all his grandkids a crisp \$5 bill). Of course, to give new, crisp paper money is more appropriate for the New Year than old, crumbled bills. My dad's 82 and he still gives me (I'm 51) Wünschgelt whenever I manage to make it home for New Year's.

Adult visitors who wünsch their host are given a shot of whiskey, glass of wine, or a beer instead of money. Needless to say, things can get pretty merry by the end of the day.

The New Year's Wünsch varied with the family, which colony they were from, and whom you are wünsching. Almost always the Wunsch is very respectable. However, I've heard some that are pretty racy (In one, the wüscher wishes the wünschee Hundsfotts [Hundsföttsche'], or dog farts).

Here's one that's respectable and you don't have to be afraid to use:

Ich wünsche euch ein glückseliges Neues Jahr. Langes Leben. Gesundheit. Fried und Einigkeit. Und nach dem Tod, ewig Glückseligkeit. (I wish you [everyone in your family] a luck-filled New Year. Long life. Good health. Peace and unity. And after death, eternal happiness.)

The recipient might respond:

Danke schön. So wünsche ich euch auch! (Thank you very much. I wish you [all] the same.)

There are quite a few Wünschen in "Thunder on the Steppe."

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### Letter from W. P. Anhorn to Brother Placid Gross regarding family traditions

9 January 1999

Brother Placid Gross  
Assumption Abbey  
Box A  
Richardton, ND 58652

Dear Brother Gross,

Reading your "Folklore Forum" in the GRHS newsletter and the "Pride in Your Heritage" essay in the *Heritage Review*, sparked some memories of traditions practiced in our family circle years ago. The practice of wishing our Elders New Years Greetings on New Years day could be a very profitable venture for us children. The earlier in the first morning of the New Year that this could be done the better. We children of the family each learned a "Nei Johar Winschen Spruch" to be recited "ouswindich" to our Aunts and Uncles as they were called on.

The idea was to call on the relatives as early in the morning as possible, even to get them out of bed, to deliver the greetings. The older ones would recite the following:

Vile dos nies Johar ist kommen  
 Hob ich mere es fore genomem,  
 Tzu ich winschen in de ziet  
 Feel glick und seligkeit  
 So feel dreflien in dos reigen  
 So feel glick und so feel seigen  
 Sol iche Gott de miastay gaben  
 In deses neies Johar

Because I was the smallest one in the troop, I had a very short verse to memorize. It went like this:

Ich bin ien kiner man,  
 Ich winsch iche vas kun,  
 Gelt rous, gelt rous,  
 Oder ich schiez ien loch ins Hous

These early New Years Day recitations yielded each child a reward of a nickel or a dime from each of the households visited. If you called real early and recited without hesitation, you may even have gotten a quarter.

This tradition was practiced in the 1930's within our extended families in Medicine Hat, Alberta. This visit by the children to the Aunts and Uncles was much looked forward to by all. Not to make such a call would have been considered a "slight".

Submitted for your sharing with others. You may want to brush up my Swabian German phonetics.