

XYZ - After the Tears, the Vision

By Alfred Opp, Vancouver, British Columbia

Edited by Connie Dahlke, Walla Walla, Washington

World War II caused many scars and unfolded a drama that was shameful and unjust to millions of people. Men, women and children fell victim to the cold-blooded massacre of war, and hate touched the lives and souls of people all over the world. War leaves no winners - there is bloodshed for all. Many areas of the world were left in shambles. I personally experienced the devastation of Europe, especially of Germany. It seemed that every living person was hurt by the war and walked around showing no feelings. For thousands of Germans, the suffering did not end with the war. Many ended up outside their home areas and were unable to escape from the rapidly on-coming forces. They got caught and were held behind barbed wire on charges of guilt. In the East where we were as the war ended, women, children and seniors were held in detention camps. The treatment we received was inhumane. We were given almost no food, and after a time we were simply let go in humiliation. Christians turning against fellow Christians - how could that be justified? How could this be done to children who cannot understand what got them into this situation? How could people see the looks on the faces of these children as they cried out for basic sustenance, for human love and kindness, and walk away with no response? These also became the walking wounded - wounded in their souls for life!

During the war, the War Lords brain-washed the common people into believing that their neighbors could not be trusted. Your neighbor could be your enemy, and even cast you as a traitor. The level of distrust became so bad that people turned against one another. That was the worst of times. In the end, we lost the ability to reach out to one another. Some even gave up on God, and thought that God had given up on them. The war at last came to a merciful end.

Eventually we started to pick ourselves up and began to walk away from the ashes. We had to learn to go on and live in peace. This was an important step - one that we had to make on our own. No-one could do this for us. We could not give up our love for the Fatherland and become something we were not. We are born to the land, and so were our ancestors. We were in need of our identity. Our forefathers had been beaten down before and had gotten up. It was now our duty to do the same. With nearly half of the population of Germany homeless and on the move, the first focus was the search for family members. Bringing relatives back to the family circle was a struggle. To deal with the missing was painful. We had to look past the ruins and the crosses to find the rising sun.

The war taught us the lesson that we make a choice as to how to deal with difficulty. Then we live by our choice. If we live by the love, kindness and the heart for forgiveness that is offered to us, then we can rebuild our lives. It didn't take long for people to open their doors to reach out to one another. There were beautiful, heartfelt and unforgettable moments on the road to our new life. What seemed lost to us, we were able to recover. The sky began to open up to us, and we came alive again. Not all is lost in a war. We learned to appreciate that which we had nearly lost - the gift of life. Many of us came to realize how important little things are. Values that we previously didn't see are now important elements in our life. I would not be the person I am today if I had

not learned faith from my ancestors before I experienced life to those depths. Thank you, God, for keeping me safe.