

The Wenk Family of Darmstadt, Germany And the Bethke Family of Baltimore, Maryland

By Rudi Bethke, Jr.

Of all the family histories, the Wenk family was the most difficult to write primarily because it is the story of two families and it is still being written. Furthermore, information on this family was limited and was largely based on firsthand accounts of Rudi Bethke, Sr. and the findings of Rudi Bethke, Jr.

Information on the Wenk family prior to World War II is extremely limited. Ironically, the primary documentation available at this time was a product of the Holocaust of that war. Of the great atrocities of the war, one stands out above all others, the systematic extermination of six million Jews. But, how did the Nazis know who was Jewish and who was not?

All German families were required by law to produce proof of their ancestral religious affiliation. This proof was documented on a family tree that recorded names, dates, places, and religion. The forms came home innocently at first as school projects and then as official mail. The Wenk and Schönig families were fortunate in that they descended from Agnostic and Evangelisch [Lutheran] ancestors.¹ Agnostics believe that there is insufficient evidence to confirm the belief in a god. Given the state of affairs in Nazi Germany during the 1930s and 1940s, being Agnostic was safe. Once completed, the local courts inspected the document for certification where it was stamped with the Nazi iron eagle and swastika.

This same document recorded the earliest Wenk as Julius Wenk (b. November 21, 1843² - d. November 30, 1908³) who was married to Johanna Fuß (b. July 10, 1846⁴ - d. June 26, 1903⁵). Julius and Johanna resided in the Catholic Parish of Thornisch-Papau, in Thorn, West Prussia.⁶ Thorn was located in the southernmost part of West Prussia, however, the town today is called Toruń in the Kujawsko-Pomorskie Province of Poland and is situated on the Vistula River. Thorn was the birthplace of Nicolaus Copernicus in 1473 and who declared the sun, and not the earth, was the center of our solar system.

Julius and Johanna Wenk had at least one son, Hugo Arthur Adam (b. June 1, 1878⁷ - d. January 15, 1942⁸) born in Thornisch-Papau.⁹

Hugo Arthur Adam Wenk married Johanna Laubmann (b. September 1, 1877¹⁰ - d. early 1960s¹¹), the daughter of Johann Laubmann (b. May 13, 1823¹²) and Hlifabay Wolf (b. January 22, 1841¹³). Johanna was born in Hof on the Saale, Bavaria.¹⁴

Johanna (Fuß) Wenk died at age 56 years on June 26, 1903. Her death was recorded in the Evangelische Kirche of Sankt Georg, in Thorn. She was buried in Danzig, West Prussia on June 29, 1903.¹⁵ Danzig is now Gdańsk, Poland and is 104 miles north of Toruń at the confluence of the Vistula River into the Baltic Sea.

On November 30, 1908, Julius Wenk died at age 63 years. His death was recorded in the Evangelische Kirche of Sankt Georg, in Thorn. He was buried in Danzig, West Prussia on December 3, 1908.¹⁶

It is believed that Hugo Wenk served in World War I on the eastern front in what was at that time Eastern Prussia or present day Poland. This information was based on a

cabinet that in 1982 was in the possession of his son, Fritz Wenk. The cabinet was inscribed at the top with "Russland" [Russia] and the dates 1912-1919, and at the bottom with Hugo Wenk "2 Komp." [2nd Company]. Along the sides of the cabinet appeared the German names of engagements in which he presumably participated: Graudens [Grudziadz], Ziechanow [Ciechanow], Rypin, Serbes, Mlawa [Mlawa], Klinki, Djoldowko [Dzialdowa], Prosnjisch [Przasnysz], Grudusk [Grudusk], Putrusk [Pultusk], Kowno [Kovna], Neue-Georgijewiewisk [Novo Georgievsk], Wilna [Vilna] and Smorgen [Smorgon].¹⁷

The Deutsche Dienststelle, Germany's national depository for military service records, has no evidence of Hans' service, however, based on these engagements, it is likely that Hans was a member of the German Ost [East] a.k.a the 8th Armee [Army]. At the outbreak of the war in 1914, the German 8th Army was approximately 225,000 strong. They faced off against the Russian 1st Army, 230,000 strong, and the Russian 2nd Army, 230,000 strong. Although the Russians possessed superior numbers, the Germans held superior firepower by nearly an additional 50%.¹⁸

By 1909, Hugo and Johanna had moved south away from Thorn to Magdeburg, Sachsen Anhalt, Germany about 80 miles southwest of Berlin.¹⁹

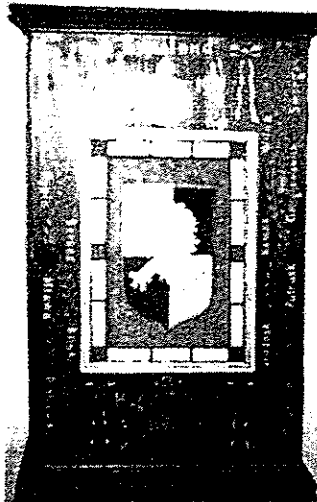
Hugo and Johanna had two sons: Hans Hugo Otto (b. August 5, 1909²⁰ - d. November 6, 1985²¹); and Fritz (b. aft. 1909²² - d. aft. 1986²³). The birth of their first son occurred in Magdeburg.²⁴ By 1942, Hugo and Johanna had settled in Mannheim, Baden-Württemberg, or Darmstadt, Hessen region of Germany.²⁵

Again, little information is known, but based on photographs Hans Hugo Otto Wenk enjoyed the outdoors in his youth. He participated in organized hiking groups into his teen years.²⁶

Before the war, Hans Hugo Otto Wenk may have been employed as a worker in an iron mill or as a locksmith.²⁷ The earliest record of Hans' employment dates to November 11, 1932 with the Deutsche Reichsbahn, the DR. It is with the Deutsche Bundesbahn, the DB, that Hans would spend the remainder of his career.*

On November 7, 1936, he married Margarata Schönig (b. July 16, 1912²⁸ - d. November 20, 1985²⁹), the daughter of Johann Georg Schönig (b. February 2, 1890 - d. September 14, 1956)³⁰ and Adele Amanda (Scholte) Schönig (b. February 6, 1892 - d. January 21, 1986)^{31,32} Margarata, already pregnant with the couple's first born. She was born in Oldenburg in Blisa, Niedersachsen just west of Bremen in the

* The German Railroad had several names. During World War II it was the Deutsche Reichsbahn (DR). After World War II when Germany was split into East and West Germany. The railroad in West Germany became the Deutsche Bundesbahn (DB) and the railroad in East Germany remained the DR. After the unification all German railroads were united under the DB.



Hugo Wenk Cabinet

northern part of Germany.³³ Her father had been an administrating sergeant or a non-commissioned officer in the Krieg Marine [German Navy] in the #2 Dockyard Division, Wilhelmshaven. At the time of his daughter's marriage, he was serving in the Hessen Police.³⁴

Together, Hans and Margarata had two sons: Klaus Jürgen (b. April 2, 1937³⁵ - d. November 22, 2012³⁶); and Rudi (b. July 29, 1940³⁷ - d. February 1, 2010³⁸) both were born in Darmstadt. Rudi was born at Elizabethenstatt, a hospital.³⁹ Although Hans was an Agnostic, their mother raised both boys as Lutherans.⁴⁰

With the onset of all-out war, Margarata's father returned to War Navy Dockyard, Wilhelmshaven on February 27, 1939 to support the Mine Sweeper Division. He worked in Wilhelmshaven until the German capitulation on May 8, 1945 when he gave his position as Leiter der Verwaltung [chief of administration].⁴¹

Hans Arthur Adam Wenk died on January 15, 1942 at age 63 years in the city hospital in Mannheim. His cause of death was a cerebral concussion and skull fracture as a result of falling down steps. At the time of his death, he was employed as a Steindruckmaschinenmeister [Master Lithography Machinist] and was residing at Dorfgartenstraße 12 in Mannheim-Neckarau. His death certificate recorded that his religion as "gottgläubig" or God-Believer.⁴² Gottgläubig was a Nazi religious movement of those who broke away from Christianity but kept their faith in a higher power or divine creator. The term implies to someone who still believed in God, although they did not have any religious affiliation.⁴³

At the time of her husband's death, Johanna was reported as residing at Neue Niederstraße 1 in Darmstadt.⁴⁴

In 1942, Hans Wenk was recorded as a Betriebsschlosser (operating locksmith) residing at Klappacherstraße 30 in Darmstadt. His brother Fritz was a Drogist (druggist) residing at Karlstraße 1.⁴⁵

On September 3, 1943, Hans was conscripted into the Wehrmacht, the Deutsches Reich Army, in Darmstadt. His Identity Number was #2844 in the Stammkp. Grenadier Erste Battalion, 211 Infantry [Stammkp. Infantry First Battalion, 211 Infantry] stationed in Hannover, Germany.⁴⁶ It is believed he operated chiefly in the lower European Theater during World War II.

On or about September 23, 1943, Hans was recorded as a Private in the Feldeisenbahn-Maschinen-Abteilung 6 [Field Railway Machine Unit 6].⁴⁷

Between 1944 and 1945, his unit, Feldeisenbahn-Maschinen-Abteilung 6, was in operation around Milan, Italy under Feldeisenbahn Command 5.⁴⁸

On March 18, 1944, Margarata, at home in Darmstadt, gave birth to twins, Karin (b. March 18, 1944⁴⁹ - d. March 13, 2021⁵⁰) and Manfred Wenk (b. March 18, 1944 - d. March 24, 1944)⁵¹. Based on documents filed after the war with the Langericht, Darmstadt, Karl Loder, an old friend of Margarata's, was implicated as Karin's father.⁵²

During the pregnancy, the positioning of the twins left Karin with a slight defect in her leg. This defect would be corrected with surgery after the war.⁵³

Germans were not exempt from the atrocities of war. If the Nazis made one's religious affiliation a crime punishable by death, the Allied bombings made open war on all Germans not in the concentration camps. On September 11, 1944, the Allied air offensive turned their sites on Darmstadt. The British launched an air campaign against Darmstadt composed of 226 Lancasters (12 lost) and 14 Mosquitos of Number 5 Group.⁵⁴ On a single night, 700 explosive bombs and 300,000 incendiary bombs destroyed

much of the town in a firestorm that left more than 12,000 people killed.⁵⁵ The damage was concentrated in the center of town and those districts immediately south and east of the center. Property damage was almost complete.⁵⁶

"Germans [in the surrounding towns] watched the night sky above the city of Darmstadt: 'The light grew and grew until the whole of the southern sky was glowing, shot through with red and yellow.' It was the night of Allied terror bombing.⁵⁷"

"The fires set by the incendiary bombs were so intensely hot that of the night's 12,300 mortalities, the bodies on many of those who were trapped in the underground shelters shriveled to the size of dolls. 'A crying boy in an air force uniform came out of the cellar, a covered enamel bucket in his hand,'

an anonymous survivor remembered. 'It contained his parents'⁵⁸"

Darmstadt was nearly completely destroyed. "People lived huddled together in the ruins of houses, in cellars and in bunkers, and trudged in a dazed condition over what they once knew as streets but what were now only heaps of rubble. The stench of dead bodies buried underneath the rubble lingered on for many, many months.⁵⁹"

"The Allied armies were within 100 miles of Darmstadt and the civilians were under the mistaken impression that they would be spared. The horror was not that the attack was

particularly special or difficult, it was the routine of it all that made it so terrible.⁶⁰"

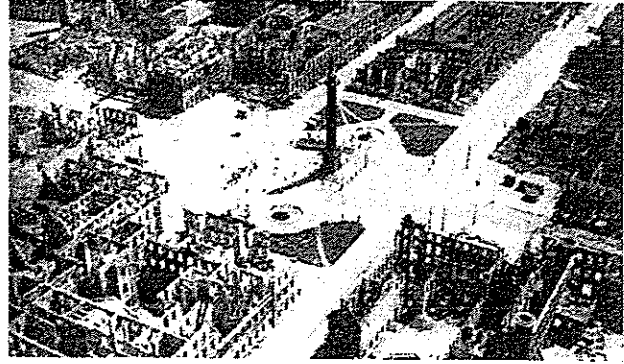
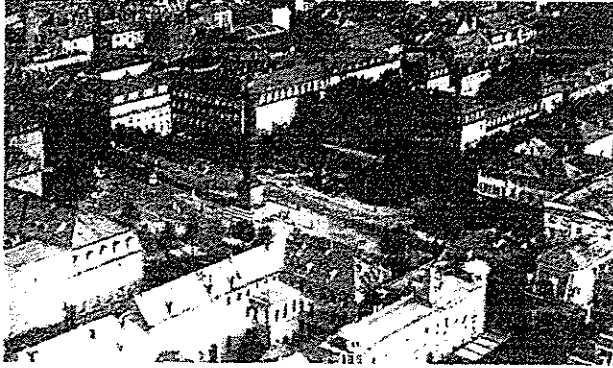
In the absence of major industries the Royal Air Force defended the raid by pointing out the railway communications passing through Darmstadt; the directive for the offensive against German communications had not yet been issued to Bomber Command, although advance notice of

The signature of Hans Hugo Otto Wenk



Composite photo of Margarata Wenk c.1951 and Hans Hugo Otto Wenk, c.1958

The signature of Margarata (Schönig) Wenk



The Darmstadt Fire Bombing September 11, 1944. Lusen Platz in 1944, before, and 1946, after the bombing

the directive may have been received. Darmstadt was simply one of Germany's medium-sized cities of lesser importance, which succumbed to Bomber Command's improving area-attack techniques in the last months of the war when many of the larger cities were no longer worth bombing.⁶¹

Margarata most likely took refuge in the surrounding woods around Darmstadt the night of the bombing. Her aunt, Margaretha (Bar) Schönig (b. September 25, 1892 – d. September 12, 1944)⁶², wife of Adam Schönig (b. October 29, 1891 – d. October 26, 1967)⁶³, and her cousin, Margarata Schönig (b. September 29, 1920 – d. September 12, 1944)⁶⁴, however, did not survive the bombing.

This was the sad childhood for a generation of Germans, among them Klaus, Rudi, and Karin. With their father in the Wehrmacht fighting the war in Italy, the position of provider and protector was the sole responsibility of their mother. Decisions made in times of war are often driven by a much deeper desire to survive. Was Margarata's infidelity one such decision, we will never know?

On April 28, 1945, Hans was listed in the 4 Kp. Feldeisenbahn-Maschinen-Amt 1 [Company 4 Field Railway Machine Depot 1] and was under the charge of the Wehrmacht Verk. Direction Division, Italy.⁶⁵ After this date, no military information is available from the Deutsche Dienststelle.

As the Allied forces, specifically the U.S. Third Army under General George S. Patton, invaded Europe from the south through Italy, many Germans were captured as they retreated north.

Hans was captured in Alessandria, Italy. He was reportedly taken prisoner while transporting a truckload of wine out of Italy when Allied aircraft strafed his truck. Whether he was smuggling the wine or he was operating in an official capacity is not known.⁶⁶

Immediately after his capture, Hans was probably taken to a camp behind the Allied lines before he was removed to a larger camp later. A prisoner in his own country, Hans signed his certificate of discharge #232869 from Prisoner of War Enclosurement (PWE) Camp 26 located in Bad Aibling, Bavaria, on October 12, 1945. He reported his pre-war civilian occupation as a lock driver [possibly locksmith] and his home address as Darmstadt, Neue Niederstraße 1, Rheinhausen. Also noted

was that he was the father of three. The release was signed by Robert L. Christ, Commander, Captain, Infantry, 1st TD Brigade 3rd U.S. Army.⁶⁷ Captain Christ was in command of the camp from June 16, 1945 until November 9, 1945.⁶⁸

Prisoner of War Enclosurement (PWE) Camp 26 was created in April 1945 and operated by the U.S. Third Army until late summer 1946 outside of Munich. It was used to house prisoners of war captured chiefly in northern Italy and southern Germany.⁶⁹ His service records, on file in Berlin, list the date of his discharge as November 2, 1945. He was mustered out of service as a Private E-2.⁷⁰

After the war, Hans returned home to his wife and children in Darmstadt. By 1945, 78% of the inner city area had been destroyed and approximately only 50,000 of the original 190,000 inhabitants remained in the city. Another 70,000 former inhabitants had been made homeless. Beginning in 1945, the United States armed forces began occupying the destroyed city.⁷¹

The years immediately following the war were hard.

Food was scarce and Margarata's wartime infidelity had created an internal strife in the family. The children were sent to search for food. Rudi would later remember that a good day included finding a potato the size of his 5 year old fist. On another occasion, Klaus and Rudi interrogated their father on what type of meat they had just had for supper. Hans urged them not to ask, however, the boys persisted. The father's only answer was to imitate the galloping sound of a horse with his fingers on the table. They had been reduced to eating horsemeat.⁷²

Hans and Margarata could no longer make their marriage work by 1948. On May 7, 1948, the Lower Court of Darmstadt granted them a divorce.⁷³

On June 17, 1948, in the Langericht, Darmstadt, Hans Wenk reported his occupation as Lockführer residing at Neue Niederstraße 1, Darmstadt. In this

document, Hans argued that he was not the father of Karin Wenk born March 18, 1944. He had had no sexual relations with his wife between May 21, 1943 and September 19, 1943. He further accused Karl Loder, then residing at Frankfurterstraße 25, Friedberg, as being the father.⁷⁴ At the time, Margarata Wenk was residing at Erbacherstraße 27, Roßdorf.^{75,76}



Nieder Ramstadt Kirche (Church). 1986



The Wenk apartment in Nieder Ramstadt. Apartment windows visible in the roof on left. Taken from the Bach (brook), c.1954

On November 19, 1948, in another Langericht, Darmstadt document pertaining to Karin Wenk, Hans reported his occupation as Lokomotivführer [locomotive engineer].⁷⁷

Sometime in August 1950, Hans married Margarethe (a.k.a. Gretel) Emig (b. September 29, 1915 - d. February 11, 2004)⁷⁸, the daughter of Heinrich Emig II (b. December 20, 1888 - d. bef. November 19, 1965⁷⁹)^{80,81}. She was born in Neider Ramstadt, Hessen, a small village situated just south of Darmstadt.

By March 7, 1951, Hans and Gretel were residing in an apartment located at Ober-Ramstaderstraße 32, Nieder Ramstadt. Also residing with them was Klaus and Rudi.⁸²

Hans Wenk received custody of all three children namely Klaus, Rudi, and Karin by a decree of the Lower Court of Darmstadt given March 29, 1951.⁸³ The children had been residing with their mother since her divorce from their father.

Between 1952 and 1955, Hans, his brother Fritz, and their mother were recorded as residing at Neue Niedertsraße 1 in Darmstadt. Hans was recorded as a Lokführer (Train driver). Their mother was recorded as Hugo Wenk, Ober Drucker (printer) widow.^{84,85}

As a child, Rudi suffered from chronic bouts with asthma.⁸⁶ Between November 6 and December 17, 1953, Rudi was a patient at the Asthma-Kinderheilstatte, a children's asthma clinic, located in Bad Reichenhall near Munich.⁸⁷ This caused him to miss a month of school. As part of the treatment, he and the other children would be taken into the salt mines to breathe the therapeutic air.⁸⁸



Sergeant Henry Carl Bethke, c.1950

Between 1953 and 1954, Rudi resided on and off with his father's mother on Eberstaderstraße in Darmstadt.⁸⁹

On January 30, 1953, the Wenks moved to Ober-Ramstaderstraße 38, Neider Ramstadt. The apartment had 2 rooms, a kitchen, a bedroom and a room in the cellar for storage.⁹⁰ Hans and

Gretel would remain at this address until about 1980.

Margarata (Schönig) Wenk, married U.S. Army Sergeant Henry Carl Bethke (b. October 16, 1928⁹¹ - d. February 24, 2013⁹²), the son of Henry John Bethke (b. September 5, 1890 - d. October 11, 1971)⁹³ and Marie (Holscher) Bethke (b. September 1, 1904 - d. October 17, 1928)⁹⁴, in Ludwigsburg, Germany on February 20, 1954.⁹⁵ She was sixteen years his senior. Henry was of Baltimore, Maryland.⁹⁶ Henry's mother had died of hemorrhaging hours after his birth. Blamed by his father for the death of his mother, he was sent away to reside with his grandparents until he was about age 10. He was allowed to return home only after his father had married again.⁹⁷

On October 31, 1955, Rudi Wenk signed a three-year apprenticeship contract to be a painter under Rudolf Hirzel of Darmstadt. Rudi gave his date of birth as July 29, 1938 perhaps to meet an age requirement to the contract. Hans Wenk endorsed the contract.⁹⁸

Since Henry Bethke was a U.S. serviceman, he would eventually return home to the United States with his new wife. Margarata Bethke asked her children if they would like to accompany them to reside in the United States. The terms to this accompaniment were legal adoption.⁹⁹

The first to be adopted was Karin Wenk sometime in 1956.¹⁰⁰ The second adoption occurred May 13, 1957 with Rudi Wenk. The terms of the adoption included his renunciation of all claims to the name Wenk and from that date forward he would be known as Rudi Bethke. The Decree of Adoption appeared in the Lower Court of Kaiserslautern and became effective June 13, 1957. The adoption was approved by Hans Wenk on February 26, 1957 when he permitted Rudi to be adopted by Sergeant Henry Carl Bethke and carry the name "Bethke." At the time of the adoption the Bethkes resided at 200 Manheimerstraße, Kaiserslautern.¹⁰¹

After his adoption, Rudi went to reside with his mother and stepfather on Manheimerstraße, Kaiserslautern, Hessen. He was employed as a pinboy at a bowling alley while his stepfather was stationed in Kaiserslautern.¹⁰²

In October 1958, the Bethkes immigrated to the United States.¹⁰³ On January 11 1960, Hans' eldest son, Klaus Wenk, immigrated to the United States as well.¹⁰⁴

Between 1961 and 1963, Klaus returned to Germany as a soldier in the U.S. Army stationed not far from his father. After serving his time overseas, he returned home to Baltimore.¹⁰⁵

Continuing to work for the Deutsch Bahn (DB), Hans had been promoted to an Oberlokomotiveführer [locomotive engineer supervisor] by August 7, 1961.¹⁰⁶

On December 9, 1971, Hans Wenk retired from the DB. During his retirement, he enjoyed traveling with friends on tours of southern Germany and northern Austria among other places.¹⁰⁷

By 1975, Hans' son, Rudi Bethke, reestablished communication with him. They wrote each other intermittently and telephoned each other every Christmas morning. Shortly afterwards, Rudi also helped his brother reestablish communications with his father.¹⁰⁸

Sometime about 1978, Hans suffered a debilitating stroke, which paralyzed him along his right side and slurred his speech.¹⁰⁹

By 1980, it became clear that their existing home was no longer adequate to their needs. The steps had become increasingly more difficult for Hans to navigate. The Wenks

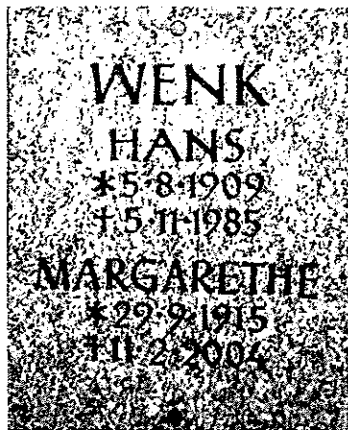
The signature of Margarethe (Emig) Wenk [a.k.a. Gretel Wenk]

moved to a first floor apartment at Eberstadterstraße 12. Neider Ramstadt. The apartment consisted of 2 bedrooms, a kitchen, a bath, and 2 rooms, all located on a single floor.¹¹⁰

In 1982, Klaus visited his father for a few days while attending a grade school reunion in Germany. It was the last time that Hans would see either of his sons.¹¹¹

On November 6, 1985, Hans Hugo Otto Wenk died at age 76 years. He had suffered another stroke a few days before. He died in a hospital in Darmstadt. His body was cremated and his ashes were placed in niche in the mausoleum at the Friedhof, Neider Ramstadt.¹¹²

In America, Rudi, Sr. and Rudi, Jr. attempted to make an emergency flight to Germany to see Hans before he died. But neither had a passport and before the plans could be completed, Hans died. The trip was postponed until January 1986, when it was more convenient and would not interrupt Rudi, Jr.'s college studies. Much of their time was spent in Neider Ramstadt with Hans' widow, Gretel Wenk, and



Wenk marker at the Friedhof in Nieder Ramstadt, 2004

members of the Schönig family in Darmstadt. It was the first time in 28 years that Rudi had returned to Germany.¹¹³

Hans' widow lived the remainder of her life in the one floor flat that she had shared with her husband of 35 years. She made her last will and testament on May 25, 1993 in which she left all her estate to be divided among the grandchildren of her

surviving brother, Ludwig Emig, (b. April 3, 1913 - d. December 31, 2003)¹¹⁴ and her sister, Philippine (Emig) Klose, (b. April 3, 1913)^{115, 116} On February 11, 2004, Gretel Wenk died of pneumonia at age 88 years in Elizabethenstatt, a hospital in Darmstadt.¹¹⁷ She was cremated and her ashes were placed in the same niche as her husband in the mausoleum at the Friedhof, Neider Ramstadt.

Her will was probated on March 5, 2004 in Darmstadt and the estate was divided among her nine nieces and nephews.¹¹⁸

THE BETHKE FAMILY IN AMERICA

The Bethkes left Bremerhaven, Germany on board the U.S.S. *General H. W. Butner*, a U.S. Navy transport for serviceman and their dependents. The U.S.S. *General H. W. Butner* arrived in Brooklyn, New York on October 10, 1958.¹¹⁹ The transatlantic crossing took approximately a week. After the Bethkes arrived, they traveled south to Baltimore where they stayed for two weeks with Henry's family. The Bethke family resided on a farm located at 8810 Pulaski Highway, on a small hill at the crossroads of Pulaski Highway and Rossville Boulevard.¹²⁰

Upon his return from Germany, Henry was stationed at Fort Hood, Texas. Between 1958 and 1959, Henry Bethke and his new family resided at the Golden Rocket Trailer Park, Kaleen, Texas. Rudi found work as a pinboy on the base as he had done in Kaiserslautern.¹²¹

Rudi declared his intention to become a United States citizen on December 16, 1958, in Waco, Texas. At the time, he was residing at 320 south 8th Street in Killeen, Texas.¹²²

In 1959, unable to find a real job in Texas, Rudi packed what possessions he owned into two suitcases and took his chances in Baltimore. Until he could find a home of his own, he resided for a short time on the Bethke farm.¹²³

By 1960, Rudi had found a small apartment to rent above Bridget's Beauty Shop located at 3907 Eastern Avenue in the Highlandtown neighborhood of Baltimore. His older brother, Klaus, who immigrated to the United States in the summer of 1960, later joined him.¹²⁴

Rudi had secured a position as a painter and custodial worker at Sacred Heart Church and School at 600 South Conkling Street just around the corner from his apartment. When his brother arrived from Germany, he found a position for him at the school too.¹²⁵

In 1960, a mutual friend introduced Rudi to Charlotte German. The mutual friend at the time was engaged to an U.S. serviceman, was dating another man and seeing Rudi on the side. The introduction was more of a "lightening of the load!"¹²⁶

Charlotte introduced Rudi to her parents as a boy who recently arrived from Germany and who painted at Sacred Heart Church. Her mother, Edith, read a little more into it and believed Rudi was a foreign exchange student who painted murals in churches. He did paint the church but he painted the walls - usually one color!¹²⁷

On January 29, 1962, Rudi received his orders to report for his U.S. Army induction physical.¹²⁸ He reported to 3401 Foster Avenue, Baltimore, on February 9, 1962 and received a Statement of Acceptability. Rudi's Selective Service number was given as #41-5-40-390.¹²⁹

Rudi enlisted in the U.S. Army on April 24, 1962 and given the rank of private E-1 and serial number #RA13761200.¹³⁰

He reported for duty at Fort Jackson, South Carolina, to begin his eight weeks Basic Combat Training on May 3, 1962. While stationed at Fort Jackson, he was attached to Company C, 19th Battalion, 5th Regiment.¹³¹ He was later assigned to the Headquarters Battery, 1 Battalion, 59th Artillery, Depot Center as a Supply Handler.¹³²

On August 16, 1962, Rudi (Wenk) Bethke married Charlotte Marlene German (b. September 11, 1941¹³³), the

daughter of George (Conrad) Joseph German, Sr. (b. December 18, 1905¹³⁴ - d. October 7, 1967¹³⁵) and Edith Lillian (Matthews) German (b. May 18, 1915¹³⁶), at the Basilica of the Assumption, Baltimore City.¹³⁷ Because Rudi was scheduled to leave for California, plans for the marriage were hastily made during a 10-day pass. They were refused permission to marry in Charlotte's parish church, the Shrine of the Little Flower, by Fr. Metzger



PFC Rudi Bethke and Charlotte German wedding photo August 16, 1962

because of the short notice, and his suspicions about a quick marriage. The wedding was performed late in the day at the Basilica downtown. Rudi wore his summer khaki Army regulation uniform for the wedding. Because he was Lutheran and not Roman Catholic at the time, the service was performed outside the altar. The reception that followed was held at the German's home at 3417 Lyndale Avenue. They honeymooned at the New Motel on Eastern Avenue and explored historic Lexington Market.¹³⁸

On August 24, 1962, Rudi was promoted to Private E-2.¹³⁹ Between August and October 1962, he was stationed at Fort Ord, California in preparation for departure overseas to South Korea.¹⁴⁰ While stationed at Fort Ord, he was attached to Company B, 14th Bg., 4th Brigade.¹⁴¹ He received eight weeks of instruction between August 28 and October 26, 1962 for the position of Auto Maintenance Helper.¹⁴²

In California, his orders were delayed for a possible re-deployment to Cuba pending the outcome of the Cuban Missile Crisis of October 1962. With the crisis averted, Rudi was sent to South Korea as originally planned.¹⁴³

Rudi departed for South Korea on October 27, 1962 on board the *U.S.S. Daniel I. Sultan*.¹⁴⁴ On route, his unit was sent to the U.S. Naval Station, Guam where the unit received a letter of appreciation on November 20, 1962 for assisting in a cleanup of a severe storm that had hit the island.¹⁴⁵ He debarked at Inchon, Korea on November 29, 1962.¹⁴⁶

Between October 31, 1962 and November 14, 1963, he was stationed in South Korea and was attached to Battery A, 1st Battalion, 21st Artillery under the First Calvary where he worked in the Motor Pool.¹⁴⁷ While there he was promoted to Private First Class, E-3 on December 24, 1962.¹⁴⁸

He reported to the dispensary on July 3, 1963 and was treated for Tonsillitis and released July 6.¹⁴⁹

His last promotion occurred in South Korea on August 21, 1963 when he was promoted to Specialist 4th class, E-4.¹⁵⁰

He departed Korea by ship on board the *U.S.N.S. Barrett* on November 7, 1963¹⁵¹ and arrived in California on November 23, 1963.¹⁵² His tour of duty in South Korea qualified him for the National Defense Service Medal¹⁵³ and the Korean Defense Service Medal¹⁵⁴.

His return to the United States was marked with the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. On Rudi's return flight to Fort Bragg, North Carolina, actor Peter Lawford, at the time a member of the Kennedy family, was returning on the same flight to Washington DC for his brother-in-law's funeral.¹⁵⁵

As for the use of firearms, Rudi qualified for the M-1 Rifle on June 5, 1962,¹⁵⁶ the Carbine on January 24, 1964,¹⁵⁷ and the M-14 Rifle on December 8, 1964.¹⁵⁸

On January 11, 1964, he was reassigned to the 92nd Chemical Company, Fort Bragg where he continued to work in the Motor Pool.¹⁵⁹ During June 1964, his unit was on maneuvers in the Mojave Desert.¹⁶⁰ On June 16, he reported to

the dispensary for a blistering rash on his cheeks and neck. He received medical clearance by June 22.¹⁶¹

While at Fort Bragg, Rudi submitted his petition, number #3268, for citizenship to the U.S. Court Eastern District of North Carolina on December 16, 1964. On December 28, 1964 in Raleigh, North Carolina, Rudi Bethke became a naturalized citizen of the United States by certificate #8833169.¹⁶²

On February 6, 1965, Rudi was assaulted at Fort Bragg and hospitalized. He reported that he had been involved in an altercation with another soldier at about 4:45 PM in the 92nd Chemical Company area. The other soldier had

struck Rudi as he left the mess hall. The blow reportedly left him dazed. The Sergeant of the Guard took him to the Womack Army Hospital at 5:30 PM. He was sent to the Emergency Room complaining of pains in the right side of his face. The doctor diagnosed fractures to the inferior rim of the right orbital, the lateral wall of the right maxillary antrum, the zygomatic frontal suture and the right zygomatic arch. An operation was performed to restore the right cheek area that required his mouth to be wired shut.¹⁶³ Concerned for her husband, Charlotte took her first solo trip outside Baltimore to visit him. Upon seeing her husband's mouth wired shut, she jokingly asked the doctors if it could remain that way!¹⁶⁴ Rudi was discharged from the hospital on March 4, 1965.¹⁶⁵

On March 25, 1965, he was awarded the U.S. Army Good Conduct Medal at Fort Bragg.¹⁶⁶

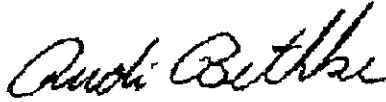
Special Orders #94, dated April 21, 1965, from the Headquarters, XVIII Airborne Fort Bragg, signed by Brigadier General Robert R. Linvill, approved Rudi for discharge. On April 23, 1965, Rudi Bethke, Specialist E-4 was honorably discharged from the U.S. Army at Fort Bragg.¹⁶⁷ He returned to his wife in Baltimore where they resided at

his father-in-law's home at 3417 Lyndale Avenue.¹⁶⁸

Rudi's Army Reserve obligation expired April 20, 1967. His reserve reporting office was the United States Army Reserve Control Group (Reinforcement) XXI U.S. Army Corps.¹⁶⁹ With the escalating war in Vietnam, Charlotte was glad that his obligation period was over.

After he returned home from the army, his brother, Klaus, had secured a job for him just as Rudi had done for Klaus when he arrived in the United States. The new position was as a rubber conveyor belt slitter at Maryland Rubber Corporation, located on Edison Highway about 1 mile from Lyndale Avenue. This was a new job for him for which he had no experience. He quickly learned the trade and became a master conveyer belt slitter. The position often required trips throughout the country to install conveyor belts in rock quarries, and shipping ports, as well as installing expansion joints in power plant facilities, both nuclear and hydroelectric.¹⁷⁰

On February 18, 1966, Rudi and Charlotte's only child, Rudi Bethke, Jr. was born at Mercy Hospital in Baltimore.¹⁷¹ Still upset that Charlotte's own parish would not perform her marriage, they opted to have the baptism performed at the Basilica of the Assumption.¹⁷² He was



The signature of Rudi Bethke, Sr.



The Basilica of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Baltimore, MD



The signature of Charlotte (German) Bethke

baptized Roman Catholic by Msgr. Porter J. White on March 6, 1966. Charlotte's brother, George Joseph German, Jr., and sister, Mildred Dolores (Hembree) Shacklock, were chosen as godparents.¹⁷³

In May 1967, Charlotte left her job at First National Bank, in Highlandtown to stay at home and care for their son.¹⁷⁴

For about a month, September 1, 1967 through October 7, 1967, Rudi and Charlotte separated. The separation was the result of arguments about whether they should move into a place of their own. Rudi didn't earn enough to support the family and an apartment on his salary alone. He left and moved in with his mother and stepfather at 1701 Leisure Lane in Glen Burnie, Anne Arundel County, Maryland. He visited Charlotte and Rudi, Jr. frequently.¹⁷⁵

On October 7, 1967, Charlotte's father, George (Conrad) Joseph German, Sr., died at age 61.¹⁷⁶ His death spurred Rudi to move back with Charlotte and for another two years they continued to reside with her mother helping her with her grief and saving money for a place of their own.¹⁷⁷

In January 1968, Charlotte reentered the workforce as a secretary at American Oil Company [later known as Amoco] located downtown in the Blaustein Building.¹⁷⁸

By November, both Rudi and Charlotte were making enough to finally get a place of their own. On November 23, 1968, they rented an upstairs apartment at 3214 Chesley Avenue, Baltimore City. The apartment was located on the second floor and included 4 rooms, a private bath and a finished attic.¹⁷⁹

Between September 1972 and June 5, 1980, Rudi, Jr. attended the Shrine of the Little Flower School grades 1 through 8. The Catholic school was located on Brendan Avenue just off Belair Road behind the church. Rudi, Sr. would take

Rudi to school, and after school, Rudi would take the school bus to his grandmother, Edith German's home on Lyndale Avenue. It was during this period that Rudi, Sr. converted to Catholicism at the Shrine of the Little Flower.¹⁸⁰

In 1973, American Oil Company relocated its Baltimore office to Atlanta, Georgia. Charlotte resigned and took a secretarial position with the Office of the Mayor for the City of Baltimore. By 1976, she had worked her way up from secretary pool to appointment secretary and eventually to personal secretary for Mayor William Donald Schaefer at Baltimore City Hall.¹⁸¹

During the nation's bicentennial celebration in 1976, City Hall was in the midst of an extensive renovation. The Mayor's Office, staff, and the City Council were temporarily housed at 26 South Calvert Street and 131 East Redwood Street. Charlotte was working as the mayor's appointment secretary at the time on the seventh floor of the 131 East Redwood Street building. On April 13, 1976, Charles A. Hopkins, disgruntled over the Health Department's decision to close his carryout business, forced his way into the Mayor's Office searching for Mayor Schaefer. He carried a .38 revolver in a brown paper bag. Upon entering the offices, mayoral aid Kathleen Nolan accosted Mr. Hopkins to determine his business with the mayor and to escort him back to the receptionist area.¹⁸² Mr. Hopkins in reply said, "I'll show you who I am" and shot Ms. Nolan in the chest. Charlotte was standing with her at the time.¹⁸³ Mr. Hopkins then confronted Ms. JoAnne McQuade, the office manager and demanded to see the mayor. After being told falsely that he

was in Annapolis, Hopkins demanded to see a councilman. Mr. Hopkins then fatally shot Councilman Dominic M. Leone, Sr. He then forced Councilman Carroll J. Fitzgerald to take him to the mayor. When they arrived at the mayor's office they were confronted with police officers where Mr. Hopkins was subdued.¹⁸⁴ Throughout the hostage situation, Charlotte found refuge standing atop a toilet in the lady's restroom.¹⁸⁵

News of the shooting was quickly made public over the radio and television. The entire family waited to hear if Charlotte was all right. When the shooting was over, Charlotte immediately called her mother, and her husband. The messages left for Rudi were never delivered by Maryland Rubber's front office.¹⁸⁶

Disgusted by the way the front office failed to inform him of his wife's safety, on May 13, 1976, Rudi, Sr. resigned from his position at Maryland Rubber Corporation then located at 6350 Frankford Avenue. The incident over the messages was only the capstone behind his resignation.¹⁸⁷ For months prior to his resignation, most everyone in the front office and the warehouse had poorly treated him. Suspicions abounded about his friendship with the former Maryland Rubber Manager, Brian Filicko. Friends since his first years with the company, Brian had recently left for a new position as manager for a competitor, Briggs Rubber Corporation headquartered in Newark, Delaware. Many at Maryland Rubber accused Brian of taking major accounts with him. Rudi had had enough and asked Brian if he could find a position for him should he leave Maryland Rubber.¹⁸⁸

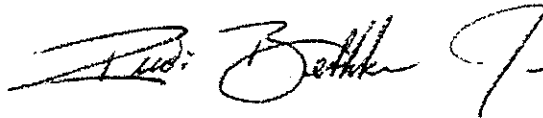
Rudi began work at Briggs Rubber Corporation located on Moravia Park Drive the following week as the shop foreman. At most, Briggs employed only two other workers in the warehouse, and three salesmen but it was a position title he enjoyed holding.¹⁸⁹

To make a little extra money, Rudi, Sr. worked every Saturday to clean the offices and bathrooms. It amounted to \$125 every month. He continued to do so until about 1979 when Rudi, Jr. took over the task. It provided Rudi with his first paying job even though it was "under the table."¹⁹⁰

In 1976, a record number of Americans tuned their televisions to "Roots", a made for television miniseries which chronicled the family history of Alex Haley from an African slave to present day. Like most Americans, Rudi, Jr. started asking questions about his family. The end result is this history you are reading today. It was also at this time that Rudi, Jr. discovered the truth about his Wenk origins and his father's adoption.¹⁹¹

On October 28, 1976, Rudi and Charlotte purchased a row house and the ground located at 4338 Berger Avenue for \$26,000 from Patrick B. and Linda S. Shannahan.¹⁹² With the help of the benefits provided Rudi, Sr. under the G.I. Bill, the house was made affordable.¹⁹³ The house was an end of row built about 1940. It consisted of 3 bedrooms, 3 rooms, a finished basement, and 2 baths; a small yard in the front and a backyard that was used as a carport.¹⁹⁴

Between September 1980 and June 1, 1984, Rudi, Jr. attended Archbishop Curley High School grades 9 through 12. His studies were college preparatory and focused on accounting, history, religion and science.¹⁹⁵ He was inducted into the Lawrence Cardinal Shehan Chapter of the National Honor Society on April 24, 1983 with Lawrence Cardinal Shehan himself present at the induction ceremony.¹⁹⁶ At his



The signature of Rudi Bethke, Jr.



Rudi Bethke, Sr., Blacksmith. 2004

laborer for the City of Baltimore at the Hanover and Dickman Street Central Garage a month later. For the first six months he was confined to general custodial work around the garage. Afterwards, he applied for the position of apprentice blacksmith and a year later became the only blacksmith employed by the City of Baltimore. Confident he could acquire the skills he needed once shown, he falsified his resume to include a previous blacksmith apprenticeship in Germany to secure the better paying position. With his ability to master anything shown him, he soon became proficient at blacksmithing.¹⁹⁹

During the summer months of July and August of 1982 and 1983, Rudi, Jr. became a summer hire for the Mayor's Office of Special Projects. He supervised the games, miniature golf, and stage equipment for the War Memorial Plaza in front of City Hall.²⁰⁰

Through Rudi, Jr.'s connections at Curley, namely Fr. Dennis Jaworek, he was hired as a painter for Archbishop Curley High School. During the summer months of June and August of 1984 and 1985, he painted the halls, classrooms and chapel, and refinished a number of the doors in the building.²⁰¹

The family helped out the high school bingo each Thursday night between 1983 and 1989. The bingo was originally the responsibility of Fr. Dennis, however, after Fr. Dennis developed cancer, Bro. Gerald Seipp took over the bingo. Charlotte and Rudi, Sr. worked the floor and Rudi, Jr. helped out as the banker counting the nightly receipts. The proceeds from the bingo went to the maintenance and improvements of the high school. Rudi, Jr. and his close friend Rodney Milbourne took over the banking and became close friends with Bro. Gerry. The three of them shared an avid joy for model railroads.²⁰²

Between August 1984 and May 1987, Rudi, Jr. attended Loyola College in Maryland, Cold Spring Campus located on Charles Street. He elected to pursue a business degree with a concentration in Accounting. What came to him easily in high school was difficult in college. His terrible study habits caused his grades to suffer and he struggled with most classes.²⁰³

By 1987, Rudi, Jr. decided to change his concentration to Marketing and it was clear that another school would be more appropriate. He tried to transfer to Towson State University, however, lacking certain academic requirements, he was forced with no other alternative than to attend Essex Community College (ECC) in Baltimore County to fulfill them before attending Towson State. The curriculum

class' Baccalaureate Mass. Rudi, Jr. was the recipient of the annual Excellence in History Award.¹⁹⁷ On June 1, 1984, at the Cathedral of Mary Our Queen on Charles Street, he graduated 72nd out of a class of 173.¹⁹⁸

In April 1982, Briggs Rubber Corporation laid off Rudi, Sr. The Newark, Delaware based company had decided to close its Baltimore location. Rudi, Sr. quickly found a position as a common

at Loyola had been all business classes. Towson State required an art, physical education, health, and political science prior to his transfer.²⁰⁴

Between September 1987 and June 1989, he attended ECC. One class that he excelled in was photography. He enjoyed photography to the extent that he continued on at ECC while attending Towson State to complete the photographic curriculum.²⁰⁵

By the fall of 1988, Rudi, Jr. had completed his academic requirements and began his studies at Towson State University. He graduated from Towson State University with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Business Administration with a concentration in Marketing on January 7, 1990.²⁰⁶

On November 20, 1985, Margarata (Schönig) (Wenk) Bethke, died at age 73 years old. She was buried at Glen Haven Cemetery, Glen Burnie, Anne Arundel County, Maryland. Her cause of death was recorded as emphysema.²⁰⁷ Shortly before her death, upon hearing the death of her ex-husband she said, "At least I out lived him."²⁰⁸ And so within two weeks Rudi, Sr. lost both his parents on two continents. Had he left to visit his father he would have been away when his mother died.

In January 1986, Rudi, Sr., and Rudi, Jr. visited Germany for 10 days. It was the first time Rudi, Sr. had returned to Germany since he left in 1958. They visited with his stepmother Gretel Wenk. They also visited his grandmother, Adele Amanda (Scholte) Schönig (*b. February 6, 1892 - d. January 21, 1986*)²⁰⁹, his aunt, Amanda (Schönig) Zoller (*b. November 5, 1920 - d. August 11, 2005*)²¹⁰ and her son, Werner Zoller (*b. May 8, 1943*)²¹¹, in Darmstadt. The grandmother had been bed ridden and was convalescing at Amanda's home. On January 21, 1986, just days after they returned home to Baltimore, they were informed that Adele Amanda (Scholte) Schönig had died at age 93 years.²¹²

The Baltimore Sun ran an article on Rudi, Sr. on December 19, 1985. The article appeared under City Life on the front page of the Maryland section and was entitled "When needed part or tool doesn't exist, city calls on master blacksmith Bethke." The paper went on to describe his duties, which included the fabrication of parts for old machinery where the manufacture no longer existed, the forging of tools and the fabrication of specialized equipment for the city. He never shoed a horse.²¹³

Between May and August 1986, Rudi, Jr. was employed as a temporary clerk at Maryland National Bank's Mortgage Department. That same summer Mayor Schaefer ran for governor. It was not until late November, after the election, that Charlotte was informed she would be accompanying the new administration to Annapolis.²¹⁴

In January 1987, Mayor Schaefer was sworn in as the Governor of Maryland. Charlotte was appointed the office manager of his office in Baltimore. Over the years, the family and the mayor had become close friends.

Between May and August 1987, Rudi, Jr. returned to Maryland National Bank. This time he took a position as a temporary clerk in the Consumer Credit Department. He returned again between May and August 1988 to Maryland National Bank to work in their Check Processing Department.²¹⁵

The 1990 federal census recorded Rudi, Sr. and Charlotte residing at 4338 Berger Avenue with their son. At the time, Rudi, Sr. was employed as a blacksmith and Charlotte as an office manager. Rudi, Jr. who had just graduated was unemployed.²¹⁶

After graduating from Towson State University, Rudi, Jr. found it difficult to find immediate employment in



Rudi Bethke, Jr. and Christine Ann Bryan wedding photo. July 11, 1992

advertising. In May 1990, he took a position as an Assistant Manager at the Rite Aid Pharmacy. He was first assigned to the training store at Towson Market Place off Joppa Road where he met Christine Ann Bryan, a cashier. She was an undergraduate at Towson State University pursuing a degree in Theater. After completing his training, he was sent to the Eastpoint Mall location. The division chief had approached

him twice asking him to manage his own store. Rudi had decided though, that he did not particularly enjoy retail and after his one-year contract was completed, he would leave. On February 18, 1991, the division chief fired him for not taking the positions offered. And so, he learned his first hard lesson in the work place.²¹⁷

On July 4, 1990, Rudi, Jr. began dating Chris Bryan. Their first date was at the Senator Theater on York Road to see "Dick Tracy". The Senator was the last of the movie palaces in Baltimore and had been the site of several world premiers for director Barry Levinson and John Waters.²¹⁸

After six months of dating, Rudi, Jr. proposed to Chris on a very cold New Year's Eve January 1, 1991 at 12 o'clock atop Federal Hill overlooking the Inner Harbor. Their engagement was announced the following morning to the entire family at the annual New Year's Breakfast his parents held.²¹⁹

Between February 19, 1991 and April 1992, Rudi, Jr. was unemployed. Having applied to numerous job postings and been on several interviews with no success, he had become disappointed in his lack of success of finding a position outside retail.²²⁰

In April 1992, he took a position as a sales associate for the Ritz Camera Store at Kennelworth Mall in Towson. Having already secured a position in Philadelphia, Rudi, Jr. left this job on July 10, 1992 the day before his wedding.²²¹

On July 2, 1992, the U.S. Navy International Logistics Control Office (NAVILCO) hired Rudi, Jr. As an accounting technician, for Foreign Military Sales (FMS): he made a little more than \$18,000 a year. This position was by no small part the result of a successful campaign orchestrated by his future father-in-law, the Director of Systems and Policy at NAVILCO. He traveled to Philadelphia that day to complete his employment papers and immediately took two weeks leave without pay to get married and go on his honeymoon.²²²

On July 11, 1992, Rudi Bethke, Jr. married Christine Ann Bryan (b. June 25, 1970), the daughter of Thomas Michael Bryan (b. November 21, 1946) and Margaret "Peggy" Joan (Bender) Bryan (b. September 24, 1943), at the Basilica of the Assumption in Baltimore by Fr. Mark Curesky, OFM.²²³ Fr. Mark was the leading Franciscan Friar on the East Coast and one of Rudi's former principals from Archbishop Curley High School. Chris was born in Dayton, Montgomery County, Ohio²²⁴ but had grown up in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania and

Mt. Laurel, New Jersey. They honeymooned in Orlando, Florida and visited Disney World and Sea World. After the honeymoon, they moved in with her parents at 691 Lincoln Drive, Mt. Laurel, Burlington County, New Jersey until an affordable apartment could be found.²²⁵

They rented an apartment in Ramblewood Country Club in Mt. Laurel on August 1, 1992. The unit had 1 bedroom, 1 bath, 4 rooms, a small deck, and a fireplace. It was located at 6B Pine Cove on the second floor. The monthly rent was \$639.00.²²⁶

In August 1992, Chris was employed as a sales clerk at Joy Buster Brown Shoes Store in the Moorestown Mall. The position was temporary until a professional job could be found. Unfortunately, or perhaps fortunately, a fire damaged the mall on December 23, 1992; she became unemployed when the store announced it would be closed for several months.²²⁷

On January 4, 1993, Chris took a position with the Army Corps of Engineers as a receptionist for Public Affairs. The position was anything but what she hoped for, making a little more than \$13,000 a year. She applied and was accepted for an upward mobility program. The program trained selected individuals of promise for higher positions in the Corps. She advanced quickly and became an economist. As an economist, she was responsible for the inventorying of all structures along the Jersey Coast south of Barnegat Lighthouse and north of Cape May. Her economic evaluations determined the feasibility of Army Corps of Engineers beach replenishment projects.²²⁸

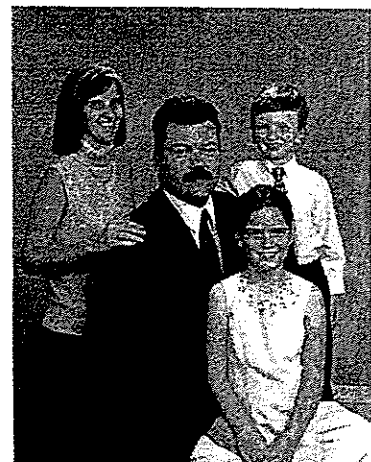
Rudi and Chris purchased their first home, a townhouse, from Geraldine P. Walter, on April 30, 1993. The house was located at 108 Bayberry Court in Marlton, Burlington County. It included 3 bedrooms, 1½ baths, and 5 rooms and was built about 1978. The cost was \$102,000 and they assumed a mortgage of \$89,900. The balance was paid at closing.²²⁹

In March of 1993, the accounting function at NAVILCO was capitalized and became a part of the Defense Finance and Accounting Service - Denver Center (DFAS-DE), Defense Accounting Office in Philadelphia (DAO Philadelphia). Overnight, Rudi's position in the Navy had been terminated and transferred to the Department of Defense. The activity would be relocated to Denver at some future date. With this in mind, Rudi began to search for another federal position in the Philadelphia area. However, due to the poor economy, jobs were still hard to find and many government activities were downsizing or in a hiring freeze.²³⁰

In January 1995, with the election of Parris Glendening as Governor of Maryland, Charlotte retained her position as Office Manager for the Governor's Baltimore Office. She bid farewell to her friend Governor

Christine A. Bethke

The signature of Christine A. (Bryan) Bethke



The last family picture of Chris, Katelyn, Bryan and Rudi Bethke, Jr. April 2004

Schaefer who had served his maximum two terms.²³¹

By August 1995, Rudi was notified that the consolidation of the DAO to Denver would occur in June or July of 1996. As part of an effort to accommodate all the employees not willing to move to Denver, DFAS posted those employees on a "stopper list" giving them preferential treatment as displaced government employees. One week prior to the birth of his daughter, Rudi was offered a position with his former command, NAVILCO, as an accounting technician. He quickly accepted.²³²

On December 3, 1995, Rudi and Chris' first child, Katelyn Abigail Bethke, was born at The Memorial Hospital of Burlington County in Mt. Holly, Burlington County.²³³ She was the first child in Rudi's family not born in Maryland since the middle 1600s. To remedy this serious situation, Charlotte quickly managed to arrange a Honorary Maryland Citizenship via a formal proclamation from the governor!²³⁴

Katelyn was baptized Roman Catholic at Saint John Neumann Church, Mt. Laurel by Fr. Anselmo M. Florio, O. Cist. on March 10, 1996. Her parents chose her great-uncle, Enoch "Shack" Calvin Shacklock, Jr., and her aunt, Patricia Lisa Bryan, as godparents.²³⁵

On April 30, 1996, Rudi and Chris sold their home at 108 Bayberry Court for \$105,000 to Mark J. and Barbara Callahan.²³⁶ They had entered a contract to purchase a single-family home at 725 Decatur Drive in Mt. Laurel from Mary Jane and Joseph William Thompson, Jr., just one street over from his in-law's home. The sale of the new home would not be finalized until June 14, 1996.²³⁷ During the interim, they moved back in with Chris' parents storing all their household goods in their basement and garage.²³⁸

Rudi was officially employed by NAVILCO on May 26, 1996 as a financial liaison to interact with his former activity, DAO Philadelphia that had relocated to the Denver Center in Colorado. On September 30, 1996, NAVILCO Stands Down (was removed from the U.S. Navy roles as an independent command) and became the Navy Inventory Control Point - Directorate for International Programs (NAVICP-OF). Rudi's position remained unchanged.²³⁹

On June 14, 1996, Rudi and Chris finalized the purchase of their new home at 725 Decatur Drive. The home was situated on a quarter acre lot measuring 80' by 125' and was built around 1974. The house had 3 bedrooms, 2½ baths, 4 rooms, and a 2 car garage and cost \$169,000. They assumed a mortgage of \$160,500 and the balance was paid at closing.²⁴⁰

Rudi and Chris' second and last child, Bryan Wenk Bethke, was born at The Memorial Hospital of Burlington County in Mt. Holly on September 23, 1998.²⁴¹ His name incorporated his mother's maiden name "Bryan", his grandfather's original name "Wenk" and his father's given name "Bethke" - all surnames. For his father, it made a critical connection to his Wenk ancestry.²⁴²

Bryan was baptized Roman Catholic at Saint John Neumann Church, Mt. Laurel, by Fr. Anselmo M. Florio, O.

Cist. on November 29, 1998. He shared the same godparents as his sister, Katelyn.²⁴³

By age three, Katelyn was still not communicating verbally as much as children her own age. She was diagnosed as having delayed speech, which was being seen more common in children who were born premature. Her parents enrolled in her Mt. Laurel's Special Needs Pre-K where she would receive speech therapy. Between December 1998 and June 2001, Katelyn attended Countryside School where she learned to socialize with other children and receive one on one speech therapy.

Frustrated with being overlooked for promotions, Rudi resigned from his position at NAVICP for a better job effective December 31, 1999. Earlier in December he had approached his friend, Mary Beth McIntyre, the manager of Information Network Systems (INS) Incorporated, on the possibility of hiring him. She had frequently asked him in the past to come work for her. On January 3, 2000, Rudi took a position as a Senior Financial Analyst with INS, a government contractor operating within NAVICP. He was responsible for the reconciliation of a major portion of the Navy's foreign sales of the F/A-18 fighter plane and managed a staff of ten financial analysts. As a result of his change of employment Rudi realized an immediate 33% increase in salary.²⁴⁴

The 2000 federal census recorded Rudi Bethke, Jr. and his family residing at 725 Decatur Drive, Mt. Laurel. Recorded with him were Chris and their children, Katelyn and Bryan. Rudi reported his occupation as Senior Financial Analyst working for a government contractor. Chris reported her occupation as an Economist working for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in the Wanamaker Building in Philadelphia. Their daughter, Katelyn, had attended nursery

school while Bryan remained at home. The Bethkes were selected to complete the comprehensive (longer) census form.²⁴⁵

Having seen the signs with their daughter, Katelyn, Rudi and Chris determined that their son Bryan also had a delayed speech problem. Beginning in 2000, Bryan was a subject in a New Jersey State program that taught sign language to children under three classified with delayed speech. The sign language permitted the child to learn communication while simultaneously receiving speech therapy. Between September 2001 and June 2003, he was eligible to receive speech classes offered by Mt. Laurel and was enrolled in the new Springville Elementary School in Mt. Laurel. He attended two years of Per-K and received one on one speech therapy.

In October 2001, Chris left her position in the Economics Department and became a Project Manager in the Planning Department. She was responsible for acid mine drainage and flood control in Eastern Pennsylvania.

Beginning in 2001, Katelyn attended Hillside Elementary School in Mt. Laurel grades Kindergarten through 4.



725 Decatur Drive, Mount Laurel, NJ., 2002

Chris and Rudi refinanced their home on September 19, 2002 for \$174,635. The refinancing gave them an opportunity to have the house appraised and have the mortgage insurance requirement removed from the loan.²⁴⁶ The loan was paid off with a subsequent refinancing on October 19, 2005.²⁴⁷

Having completed two years of Pre-K at Springville, Mt. Laurel recommended promoting Bryan to Kindergarten in the 2003/2004 school year. Being so close to the cut off, his parents decided to "hold him back" until the following year for Kindergarten. The Mt. Laurel School advisors would not comply so a private school was found. Between September 2003 and June 2005, Bryan attended the Montessori School in Marlton. The Montessori School proved to be excellent for his needs and even better than the Mt. Laurel schools.

On February 11, 2004, Rudi, Sr.'s stepmother, Gretel Wenk, died of pneumonia in Darmstadt. Rudi, Sr. secured a compassion flight leaving from Baltimore on February 12. Rudi, Jr., Chris, Katelyn and Bryan secured a compassion flight leaving from Newark, New Jersey on February 13. The trip was Chris, Katelyn, and Bryan's first trip to Germany. While in Germany, they were given a glimpse of the towns and places the Wenks frequented. They traveled to Nieder Ramstadt, Darmstadt, Heidelberg, Ulm, Munich, and Burg Frankenstein.

In Nieder Ramstadt, they attended Gretel's funeral and visited the grave of Hans Wenk. They explored the small rural town and saw the apartment house where the family resided after the war and the church they attended. They were introduced to the Emigs, Gretel's family, and talked about life in America vs. life in Germany.

They explored the ruins of Frankenstein Castle, not far from Nieder Ramstadt. In Darmstadt, they saw the Schloß [palace], the Kaiser Ludwig Memorial and the Kaiser Kirche [church] and the Bahnhof [train station] where Hans Wenk worked. They then traveled to Heidelberg to see the castle and the Market Platz [place]. By train, they traveled to Munich's Atlen Stadt [Old City] to see the Residenz [the winter palace of Bavaria's ruling family], the glockenspiel in the Rathaus [city hall], Marian Platz, and dine at the famous Hofbrau Haus. On the return to Darmstadt, they made a quick stop in Ulm to see the Cathedral, the tallest in Europe. Rudi, Sr., Rudi Jr., Chris, Katelyn, and Bryan left Germany together on February 20, 2004 for Newark.²⁴⁸

On April 29, 2004, Rudi, Sr. retired from the City of Baltimore.²⁴⁹ At the time of his retirement, he was the last blacksmith ever to be employed by the city. The Baltimore Sun contributed an article to his retirement in the March 1, 2004 edition.²⁵⁰

In July 2004, Rudi, Jr. was appointed the Deputy Project Manager of the Philadelphia Office, a position in which he supervised a staff of 25 analysts.²⁵¹ The position required several trips each year to Naval Air Systems Command located in Patuxant River, Maryland and to DFAS Denver.

By the fall of that same year the relationship between Chris and Rudi had begun to change. They had begun to grow apart. Chris had become more engrossed in her work and Rudi's now five days, 45 hours a week made it increasingly more difficult. Added to this was the increasing

frequency in which Chris unexpectedly worked late or met often with friends after work to play pool.

In March of 2005, Chris asked Rudi for a divorce on the grounds that she was no longer happy in the marriage and had been for several years. The couple agreed to marriage counseling in an effort to save the marriage. By July, the marriage counseling was discontinued because it had developed into personal counseling for Chris.

Unbeknownst to Rudi, Chris had already sought legal advice as early as April 13, 2005 concerning a divorce when she visited the offices of Wells, Singer, Rudin, and Muslin, in Mt. Holly.

On August 28, 2005, Chris, under pressure from her parents, confessed to Rudi that she was having an affair. The affair with Mike Ryba (*b. June 26, 1954 - d. November 8, 2012*)²⁵², a labor lawyer with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, had begun no later than October 2004. Rudi, who had been reluctant to agree to the divorce because of the children, now openly agreed.

Two days later, on August 30, 2005, Rudi retained the services of Michael D. Fioretti, lawyer. He was advised that under the New Jersey divorce codes no separation period prior for a divorce was required on the grounds of adultery. Since Chris had confessed that she was having an affair, there would be no problem proving the case.

On September 19, 2005, both Rudi and Chris signed the divorce property agreement, deed to the house, and warranty deed for 725 Decatur Drive. The agreement stated that Rudi would retain the house and nearly all the contents. In return, Rudi was to pay \$70,811.04 (less allowances) to Chris for her one half of the equity in the house. After allowances, the net cash payment to Chris totaled \$64,496.23. The agreement also stipulated that both parents would have joint custody of the children and that no child support or alimony would be required on the part of either parent.

The primary residence for the children would remain 725 Decatur Drive. Custody of the children would be divided equally with each parent having both children for one-week intervals beginning and ending on Wednesday at noon. Rudi had sought to seek sole custody of the children but a custody battle was ill advised by his lawyer on the basis that the mother, nine times out of ten, usually won and the father often came away with less time. Furthermore, a custody battle could cost upwards of \$40,000, money that he could not afford if he wished to keep the house.

To secure the payoff money, Rudi refinanced the house and assumed a mortgage of \$200,000.00.²⁵³ Of this sum \$24,896.29 went towards the divorce payoff, the remainder paid off the previous loan, and covered the settlement costs.²⁵⁴ The balance of the divorce payoff was secured through the liquidation of BP (British Petroleum) - Amoco common stock his mother had obtained while working for American Oil Company in 1968. The payoff was to be made in three installments: the first on October 8, 2005 for \$20,000.00 upon her moving out of the house; the second on October 28, 2005 for \$27,811.84 upon receipt of the settlement check; and the last upon a court order authorizing the release of \$16,684.39 from Rudi's government retirement fund.

On October 8, 2005, Chris moved out of 725 Decatur Drive and in with her parents at 691 Lincoln Drive -



*Charlotte and Rudi Bethke, Sr.,
August 2008*

just around the corner. Custody exchange of the children began the following Wednesday.²⁵⁵ She continued to reside with her parents until February 1, 2006 when she took possession of her town home at 128 Farnwood Road, Mt. Laurel located in an adjacent development.²⁵⁶

The complaint for the divorce was signed November 15, 2005 and filed with the Superior Court of New Jersey on November 22, 2005.²⁵⁷ Chris acknowledged the summons and complaint of divorce on December 12, 2005.²⁵⁸

Judge Jeanne T. Covert of The Superior Court of New Jersey granted a judgment of divorce on February 9, 2006 in the case of Rudi Bethke, Jr. (Plaintiff) v. Christine A. Bethke (Defendant) thereby ending the marriage. The judgment also ordered that the agreement of the parties signed September 15, 2005 be permitted as part of the final Judgment of Divorce.²⁵⁹ As part of the divorce, Chris retained the name Bethke.

For final settlement to Chris, the sum of \$16,684.39 was to be liquidated from Rudi's government retirement fund. Due to incomplete paperwork having been filed by the lawyer, the liquidation was not approved. To finance the payoff, Rudi secured a second mortgage for \$17,000 with installments of \$143.45 beginning May 12, 2006 and continuing through April 12, 2021.²⁶⁰ This second mortgage was paid in full on March 10, 2009.²⁶¹

Between September 2005 and June 2008, Katelyn attended Hartford School in Mt. Laurel for grades 5 and 6. It was in grade 6 that she was declassified as requiring speech therapy in the upcoming grade 7. Between September 2005 and June 2009, Bryan attended Hillside Elementary School for grades 1 through 4. He continued to have one on one speech therapy for his speech articulation problem, as did his sister.

On April 1, 2007, Rudi was promoted to project manager. This position gave him complete responsibility for the Lockheed Martin FMS financial operation and staff at the NAVICP. Although a position he had long sought, it promised yet an even longer workweek but rewarded him with the additional income he needed to provide for his children and home.

On August 30, 2007, Rudi Sr. and Charlotte purchased a first floor condominium in Holiday Village, a Mt. Laurel retirement community. The condominium located at 135 West Berwin Way had two bedrooms, two baths and 3 rooms. They moved in on November 27, 2007.

Beginning in March 2006, Rudi Sr. began a series of heart related issues that contributed to his declining health. On March 27, 2006, he was admitted to University Maryland Hospital in Baltimore for chest pains; the following day he was administered a stent in an artery near his heart. Complaining of tightness in his chest, on June 17, 2008, he received a heart catheterization at Virtua Garden State Hospital in Marlton where it was determined that there were several blocked arteries requiring bypass. He was transferred to Cooper Hospital in Camden where on July 18, 2008 he received a quadruple heart bypass. By December 2008, Rudi had continued having trouble breathing. During a scheduled cardio checkup on January 16, 2009, his cardiologist directed him to immediately go to Kennedy Hospital in Voorhees, New Jersey as a result of tests performed in the office. Rudi Sr. remained at Kennedy Hospital several days before being transferred to

Cooper Hospital in Camden where on January 21, he received a defibrillator.²⁶²

Between September 2008 and June 2010, Katelyn attended Harrington Middle School in Mt Laurel for grades 7 and 8. Between September 2009 and June 2011, Bryan attended Hartford School for grades 5 and 6.

Feeling weak and not himself, Rudi Sr. was admitted to Virtua Garden State Hospital in Marlton on January 8, 2010 where he was diagnosed with an idiopathic blood disorder which destroyed blood platelets. Additional tests diagnosed that Rudi also had a small cell lung cancer mass on his right lung and trachea, which may have been the root of the blood disorder, low blood count, and his labored breathing. On January 27, he began the first of three chemo treatments ending on January 29. The chemo treatments proved to be too much for his already weakened condition and his vitals deteriorated. On Monday, February 1, realizing that his condition would not improve and seeking to forgo additional pain, he was placed on comfort care and only morphine was administered for pain relief. At 9:18 PM, Rudi Bethke, Sr. died in his sleep at age 69 years.²⁶³

Rudi Sr.'s funeral was held at Murray Paradee Funeral Home in Cherry Hill, New Jersey on February 4 and at Schimunek Funeral Home in Perry Hall, Maryland on February 7 and 8. A Catholic Mass for Rudi was held at Saint Joseph's Fullerton, Maryland on February 9. His body was cremated and his ashes returned to New Jersey.

Having been single since September 2005, on August 1, 2009 Rudi Jr. began dating Karen (Esposito) Wodarczyk (b. October 10, 1969²⁶⁴), the daughter of Frederick Esposito (b. January 7, 1941 - d. May 10, 2017)²⁶⁵ and Cynthia "Cindy" (Bujnowski) Esposito (b. July 12, 1942 - d. August 10, 2020)²⁶⁶. Their first meeting was at Laurel Acres Park. Both Rudi and Karen resided only a few blocks from each other in the same development. She had three daughters: Gina Marie (b. July 30, 1997)²⁶⁷, Allison Mary (b. September 14, 1999)²⁶⁸ and Erica Rose (b. February 26, 2003)²⁶⁹ who attended the same schools as his children. At the time of their meeting, Karen was going through her own divorce, which would not be final until June 29, 2010. As part of her decree, she reverted to her maiden name, Karen Esposito.²⁷⁰

On August 24, 2009, Rudi Jr. secured a home equity loan for \$22,000.00 to finance additions to his home at 725 Decatur Dr. The addition was the construction of a front porch. The loan arranged for monthly installments of \$170.43 beginning September 27, 2009 and continuing through September 27, 2029.²⁷¹

The 2010 federal census recorded Rudi Bethke, Jr. as divorced residing at 725 Decatur Drive with his children.²⁷² He reported that both his children, Katelyn and Bryan were residing with him, although he shared equal custody with their mother residing in Mt. Laurel.

The same federal census recorded Charlotte Bethke as residing alone at 135 West Berwin Way in Mt. Laurel.²⁷³

On March 15, 2010, he refinanced the existing 30-year mortgage and home equity consolidating both into a single 20-year mortgage for \$220,500. As terms of the mortgage, Rudi agreed to pay monthly installments of \$1,973.88 beginning May 1, 2010 and ending May 1, 2030.



Rudi Bethke, Jr. and Karen Esposito, 2009



Katelyn Abigail Bethke, 2014

He received a release from his home equity on March 22, 2010²⁷⁴ and from his original mortgage on April 9, 2010²⁷⁵.

Between September 2010 and June 2014, Katelyn Bethke attended Lenape Regional High School in Medford, New Jersey. While attending, she was nominated by her teacher and received the 'Junior of the Month' in May 2013 for her photographic contributions to the school and her volunteerism with the Boy Scouts of America for her brother. She cultivated a love of photography during her years at Lenape and was the photographic director for the school paper in her senior year. She was a two-time winner in the Ocean County Photography Contest, 2013 and 2014. In her senior year, she was a recipient of 'The Teacher's Choice Award' nominated by her photo teacher Mr. Townsend; she was the recipient of 'The Annual Academics and Activities Award' for her contribution to "The Smoke Signal", the school paper. Katelyn graduated on June 20, 2014 at Lenape High School.

Between September 2011 and June 2013, Bryan attended Harrington Middle School for grades 7 and 8.

In 2012, Charlotte paid off her mortgage on 135 West Berwin Way. This was done to free any future legal or financial encumbrances that might have arisen because the mortgage was also in her husband's name.

Rudi Bethke, Jr. appeared at the Mt. Holly Courthouse on April 29, 2013 to file his father's last will and testament. The will was probated on May 6, 2013. This was not only a necessity, but also a precaution to avoid any problems that might arise with the sale of Charlotte's house in Baltimore.

By a deed dated June 26, 2013, Charlotte sold her home in Baltimore to Lorena W. Donaldson-Williams for \$78,000. The house was sold for less than the value of the mortgage, \$90,214.30. As a result, Charlotte had to assume a new mortgage on her property at 135 West Berwin Way to cover the difference and fees of the sale amounting to \$21,780.70.



Bryan Wenk Bethke, Eagle Scout, 2016

Bryan achieved the Boy Scout of America rank of Eagle Scout on June 23, 2016. For his Eagle Service Project, he had raised money, constructed three benches, and installed them in Mt. Laurel State Park. He also remarked the existing trail through the park for hikers on October 10 and 11, 2015.

Between September 2013 and June 2017, Bryan Bethke attended Lenape Regional High School as did his sister before him. In his sophomore year, he participated in the Future

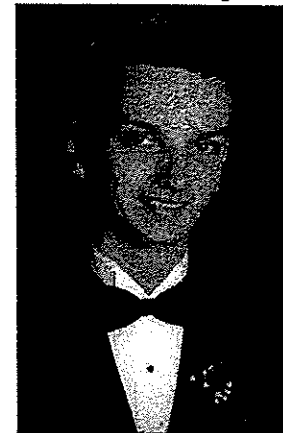
Business Leaders of America (FBLA) - South Jersey Regional Conference and won first place in the Introduction to Business Category qualifying him to advance to the New Jersey State Level FBLA Leadership Conference to compete in the Introduction to Business Category. In acknowledgment of his FBLA achievements, he received the Annual Academic and Activities Award and a school medallion. In his junior year, he was nominated and inducted into Delta Epsilon Phi, the German Honor Society, and appointed Treasurer of the German Club. He graduated June 16, 2017 at Lenape High School.

To assist with the cost of college expenses, Rudi took out a \$20,000.00 home equity loan with Beneficial Bank on July 20, 2014.

Between September 2014 and 2018, Katelyn attended Ramapo College in Mahwah, New Jersey. Located in northern New Jersey, Ramapo was a small college of approximately 5,800 students located in a valley setting just west of New York City. Katelyn received her diploma from Ramapo College on May 17, 2019. She graduated with a Bachelors of Science Degree with a concentration in Visual Arts specifically Photography.

In March of 2016, Rudi experienced a career change. Lockheed Martin with whom he was employed lost their defense contract with the Navy. General Dynamics Information Technology (GDIT) was awarded the contract and as part of the transition Rudi took a position with the new company as the Project Manager of the Program Management Office. He was now in charge of the financials of the \$47 million contract and for making directives for those employed under the contract. Unfortunately, GDIT won the contract by significantly under bidding Lockheed Martin. As a result, Rudi took a 13% reduction in salary to remain employed.

Bryan's college selection was a cause of great tension for his father. Bryan had ambitions for attending out of state schools, which his mother supported. His father, however, urged him to consider in state schools, which were more affordable in light of his recent salary reduction. Ultimately, Bryan conspired with his mother to thwart his father's wishes and applied to Virginia Tech secretly without his father's knowledge. Upset at his son's deception and Chris' complicity, Rudi cried foul and believed they had violated the property settlement agreement of their divorce and refused to pay his 50% of the cost to attend Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Virginia.



Bryan Wenk Bethke, 2017

On February 6, 2017, Bryan, unable to face his father for his actions, moved out and went to reside with his mother full time. Rudi was devastated by the turn of events. He had poured so much of himself into Bryan especially with Boy Scouts and baseball. Now for his son to totally shun him and not speak to him was heart breaking.

As if to add injury to insult, Chris filed a motion in the Burlington County Court on April 12, 2017 requesting, among other things, Rudi pay his 50% of the college tuition for Bryan. The two appeared in court with their lawyers on June 23, 2017, where the judge had denied several of Chris'

requests but in part had “granted but denied” others. Those “granted but denied” were to be settled in mediation scheduled for August 3, 2017 in Cherry Hill. At mediation, Rudi’s contribution towards Bryan’s college was reduced to 45%, however, Rudi now became responsible for 45% of health insurance premiums, car insurance, and cell phone costs for the children which he had not been before. It was also agreed that any expenses over \$100 would be discussed. The court approved the agreement on September 22, 2017.

To pay for the tuition cost of Virginia Tech, Rudi consolidated his existing debt into a \$244,000.00 mortgage at 3.25% over 15 years on October 11, 2017. With the equity from his home, he paid off his existing mortgage, and home equity loan with Beneficial Bank, as well as his car loan. What remained from his equity, \$39,945.00, was put aside for future tuition costs. Rudi had removed all but 20% of the equity in his home to avoid mortgage insurance premiums.

At the Borgata Casino and Hotel in Atlantic City, New Jersey on December 10, 2017, Rudi proposed to Karen and the two became engaged.

On March 9, 2018, Karen purchased a shore home at 501 Village Road, Villa, Cape May County, New Jersey, a 4 bedrooms, 3½ bathrooms, 6 room, single home situated on the Delaware Bay. The home was only 50 yards from beach offering sunset views over the bay. Rudi was not able to cosign the mortgage due to his recent mortgage on his own home; as a result his name could neither be on the home or mortgage. In the months that followed, each weekend Karen and Rudi made repairs and improvements to the new property. They decided to make the property a vacation rental to defer mortgages payments and other costs.

In June 2018, Charlotte paid off her mortgage for her condominium at 135 West Berwin Way.

By January 2019, Rudi had decided to consolidate to 736 Amsterdam Road and move in with Karen. Many of his home furnishings had already been moved to the shore house but many of his belongings remained at 725 Decatur Drive.



Bryan Wenk Bethke, Lieutenant Colonel, VPI Cadet Corps, 2020



Rudi and Karen’s summer shore rental, 501 Village Road, Villas, Cape May County, NJ, 2018.

Beginning in the summer of 2018, Katelyn found employment as a part time wedding photographer. Her employer, based in Philadelphia, assigned her photo editing, weddings to photograph, and wedding shows to attend to secure potential wedding assignments. Additionally, between March and June 2019, she was asked to manage the Photography Lab at Ramapo College Monday through Wednesday that required a weekly commute to

northern New Jersey.

On May 17, 2019 at the Prudential Center in Newark, New Jersey, Katelyn graduated with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Contemporary Arts with a concentration in Visual Arts. She had qualified to graduate in May 2018 but had decided to take additional classes in hopes to become qualified to teach photography. She was advised by her councilor to graduate after her teaching studies so that her degree would be more current when she entered teaching.

After graduation she attempted to pass the teaching certification but was unsuccessful.

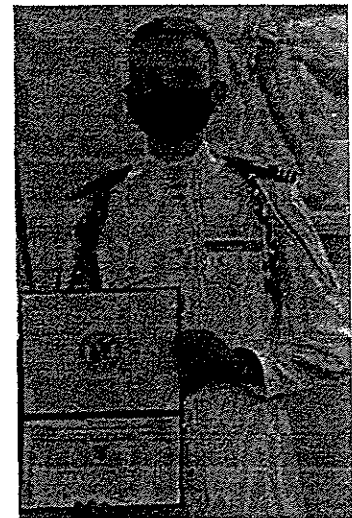
In early July 2019, Charlotte had been diagnosed with uterine cancer for which she underwent a full hysterectomy on September 6, 2019 at Virtua Hospital Voorhees. Post Operation follow-up on September 27, 2019 reported that all the cancer had been removed and no radiation would be

required.

On August 8, 2019, Rudi resigned his position as FMS Financial Project Manager with GDIT. He had accepted a position as senior logistics manager with Zenetex, a competitor. Under Zenetex, Rudi began his employment working Business Development specifically the upcoming recomplete for the FMS contract that his former company was the incumbent. Additionally, Rudi supported the Royal Australian Navy’s H60 program at NAVAIR. The new position brought an increase in salary and peace of mind. He had grown tired of the malicious management tactics of GDIT’s Philadelphia team, which had caused great consternation with how the employees, many of who were his long-time friends, were being treated.

Beginning on December 1, 2019, Katelyn and her boyfriend, Jason Plevinsky, rented the 725 Decatur Drive property for \$1,000.00 a month.

In March 2020, the Corona Virus (COVID-19) spread across the world; cities around the world were quarantined leaving streets deserted. Schools were closed and students received instruction online. Anyone who could telework did, but some professions like Katelyn’s photography came to a complete stop. The nightly news reported how deadly COVID-19 reporting the increasing deaths in the U.S. and around the world. New Jersey and New York were two states hardest hit



Bryan Wenk Bethke, Battalion Commander VPI Cadet Corps, graduation, November 18, 2020.

in the early months of the pandemic.

In July, COVID-19 would visit our home and infect Karen: her mother, Cindy: Allison: Gina: and Rudi, Jr. Cindy was severely affected requiring hospitalization on July 16 where she ultimately went to the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) and received plasma from COVID-19 survivors, an early possible cure for the infection. The others, who were chiefly asymptomatic, suffered only a mild cough and remained quarantined at home. On August 10, 2020, not quite a month after she was admitted to Virtua Hospital Voorhees, her four children met at the hospital and were allowed entry into the COVID-19 ward two at a time to say their last goodbyes before she was removed from the ventilator.

Cynthia "Cindy" (Bujnowski) Esposito died at age 78 years from COVID-19 and complications from preexisting health issues. She was buried in the mausoleum at Park View Cemetery – Kirby's Mill in Medford, Burlington County.

Beginning in September 2020, Rudi became the program manager on the Zenetex FMS contract. Zenetex's win ousted Rudi's former employer, GDIT. Rudi assumed the management of 176 billets and a five year \$75 million contract with employees in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Washington, DC.; Dayton, Ohio, and Pensacola, Florida.

During the COVID-19 pandemic and while observing social distancing practices, on November 18, 2020, Bryan Bethke attended a Virginia Polytechnic Institute (VPI) Cadet only graduation ceremony; he was one of eight graduating mid-year. He had achieved the rank of Battalion Commander, one of the top ten in cadet rank on campus at the time of his graduation. He returned home on November 22, 2020 to complete his classes for the semester as part of the COVID-19 social distancing enacted at Virginia Tech. He completed his college education a semester early with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Business Management.

After his college graduation, Bryan commenced employment with MacKee Inc. on January 4, 2021 as a junior financial analyst in FMS under his father's Navy contract. Shortly afterwards, Katelyn also started employment at MacKee Inc. on January 25, 2020 as an administrative technician scanning documents under her father's Navy contract.

This is where the story stops for now. There can be no real end to this chapter in my lifetime. This story will continue with Katelyn and Bryan, the latest generation. They will add to this work with their own life experiences in time.

¹ Wenk / Schönig family tree of World War II

² *ibid.*

³ *Germany, Lutheran Baptisms, Marriages, and Burials, 1567-1945*, Evangelische Kirche Sankt Georg Thorn. Record # 117, pp. 360-361. www.ancestry.com

⁴ Wenk / Schönig family tree of World War II

⁵ *Germany, Lutheran Baptisms, Marriages, and Burials, 1567-1945*, Evangelische Kirche Sankt Georg Thorn. Record # 51, pp. 245-246. www.ancestry.com

⁶ Death Certificate #171, Mannheim, Germany, Death Records, 1870-1950

⁷ Wenk / Schönig family tree of World War II

⁸ Death Certificate #171, Mannheim, Germany, Death Records, 1870-1950

⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁰ Wenk / Schönig family tree of World War II

¹¹ Observation made from Wenk family photographs

¹² Wenk / Schönig family tree of World War II

¹³ *ibid.*

¹⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁵ *Germany, Lutheran Baptisms, Marriages, and Burials, 1567-1945*, Evangelische Kirche Sankt Georg Thorn. Record # 51, pp. 245-246. www.ancestry.com

¹⁶ *ibid.*, Record # 117, pp. 360-361. www.ancestry.com

¹⁷ Hugo Wenk cabinet in the possession of Fritz Wenk in 1982. Information obtained from a picture taken by Klaus Wenk

¹⁸ *Atlas of the First World War*, pp. 87, 90-97

¹⁹ Wenk / Schönig family tree of World War II

²⁰ *ibid.*

²¹ Nieder Ramstadt Friedhof, grave of Hans Hugo Otto Wenk

²² Oral History of Rudi Bethke, Sr.

²³ Personal recollection of Rudi Bethke, Jr.

²⁴ Wenk / Schönig family tree of World War II

²⁵ Death Certificate #171, Mannheim, Germany, Death Records, 1870-1950

²⁶ Observation made from Wenk family photographs

²⁷ Oral History of Gretel (Emig) Wenk 2003

²⁸ Schönig Family Tree

²⁹ Glen Haven Cemetery, Glen Burnie, Anne Arundel County, Maryland, grave of Margarata (Schönig) Bethke

³⁰ Schönig Family Tree

³¹ *ibid.*

³² *ibid.*

³³ *ibid.*

³⁴ Johann Georg Schönig Krieg Marine service record. Deutsche Dienststelle, Berlin, Germany

³⁵ Wenk / Schönig family tree of World War II

³⁶ Klaus Wenk Obituary

³⁷ Wenk / Schönig family tree of World War II

³⁸ Rudi Bethke, Sr., New Jersey Death Certificate

³⁹ Oral History of Rudi Bethke, Sr.

⁴⁰ *ibid.*

⁴¹ Johann Georg Schönig Krieg Marine service record. Deutsche Dienststelle, Berlin, Germany

⁴² Death Certificate #171, Mannheim, Germany, Death Records, 1870-1950

⁴³ "Gottgläubig",

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gottgl%C3%A4ubig>

⁴⁴ Death Certificate #171, Mannheim, Germany, Death Records, 1870-1950

⁴⁵ *Amtliches Adreßbuch der Stadt Darmstadt und Umgebung 1942*, www.ancestry.com, p. 208

⁴⁶ Hans Hugo Otto Wenk Wehrmacht service record. Deutsche Dienststelle, Berlin, Germany

⁴⁷ *ibid.*

⁴⁸ *ibid.*

⁴⁹ Document #IR139/48 by Dr. von Brentano Erwin Löhlein, Rechtsanwalte, 16 Darmstadt, Landwehrstrasse 6, dated March 22, 1948

⁵⁰ Oral History of Rudi Bethke, Jr.

⁵¹ *Death Certificate # 484*, Manfred Wenk, Hesse, Germany, Deaths, 1851-1955, www.ancestry.com

⁵² Document #IR139/48 by Dr. von Brentano Erwin Löhlein, Rechtsanwalte, 16 Darmstadt, Landwehrstrasse 6, dated March 22, 1948

⁵³ Oral History of Rudi Bethke, Sr.

⁵⁴ *Campaign Diary September 1944, 11/12 September 1944, Royal Air Force Bomber Command 60th Anniversary*,

<http://www.raf.mod.uk/bombercommand/diary/sep44.html>
April 26, 2004

⁵⁵ *International Network of Engineers and Scientist Against Proliferation Bulletin 18 – Space Without Weapons*. <http://www.inesap.org/bulletin18/bul18art27.htm>
March 27, 2004

⁵⁶ *Campaign Diary September 1944, 11/12 September 1944, Royal Air Force Bomber Command 60th Anniversary*, <http://www.raf.mod.uk/bombercommand/diary/sep44.html>
April 26, 2004

⁵⁷ On the Natural History of Destruction, by W.G. Sebald, <http://kwsnet.com/weblog/2003/09/11.html> March 27, 2004

⁵⁸ *Der Brand*, by Jörg Friedrich; *The Fires That Will Not Die. A harrowing best seller recounts the devastation of German cities under Allied bomb campaigns*, a review by Ursula Sautter, December 8, 2002
<http://www.time.com/time/europe/magazine/article/0,13005,901021216-397470.00.html> March 27, 2004

⁵⁹ Quote from Professor Gerhard Rempel, Western New England College
<http://mars.acnet.wnec.edu/~gempel/courses/germany/lectures/35defeat.html> March 27, 2004

⁶⁰ *Bomber Command*, by Max Hastings, Touchstone Books 1989, *Bombing for bombing's sake?*
http://authors.booksunderreview.com/M/Mundlak,_Max/Mundlak,_Max_6.html March 27, 2004

⁶¹ *Campaign Diary September 1944, 11/12 September 1944, Royal Air Force Bomber Command 60th Anniversary*, <http://www.raf.mod.uk/bombercommand/diary/sep44.html>
April 26, 2004

⁶² Schönig Family Tree

⁶³ *ibid.*

⁶⁴ *ibid.*

⁶⁵ Hans Hugo Otto Wenk Wehrmacht service record, Deutsche Dienststelle, Berlin, Germany

⁶⁶ Oral History of Gergott Rudolf, Neider Ramstadt, Germany, February 15, 2004. Gothard married a niece of Gretel Emig and was close to the Wenks

⁶⁷ Hans Wenk discharge #232869 from Prisoner of War Enclosurement (PWE) Camp 26, Bad Aibling

⁶⁸ The Internet <http://www.usafsa.org/ASABadAibling.htm>

⁶⁹ The Internet
http://www.globalsecurity.org/intell/facility/bad_aibling.htm

⁷⁰ Hans Hugo Otto Wenk Wehrmacht service record, Deutsche Dienststelle, Berlin, Germany

⁷¹ The Internet
http://www.igd.fhg.de/archive/1995_wvvv95/darmstadt/city-info/Documents/History.html

⁷² Oral History of Rudi Bethke, Sr.

⁷³ Rudi Wenk Adoption papers, Deed No. 1266/57
Kaiserslautern, Germany

⁷⁴ Document #IR139/48 by Dr. von Brentano Erwin Löhlein, Rechtsanwalte, 16 Darmstadt, Landwehrstrasse 6, dated March 22, 1948

⁷⁵ Amtsgericht Document #3C629/48 dated January 6, 1949

⁷⁶ *Amtliches Adreßbuch der Stadt Darmstadt und Umgebung 1949*, www.ancestry.com, p. 343

⁷⁷ Langericht Document #IR581/48 dated November 19, 1948

⁷⁸ Margarethe (Emig) Wenk death certificate

⁷⁹ Last Will and Testament of Heinrich Emig II (Probate)

⁸⁰ Last Will and Testament of Heinrich Emig II

⁸¹ Oral History of Gothard Rudolf, Neider Ramstadt, Germany, February 15, 2004. Gothard married a niece of Gretel Emig and was close to the Wenks

⁸² Announcement confirmation dated March 7, 1951

⁸³ Rudi Wenk Adoption papers, Deed No. 1266/57
Kaiserslautern, Germany

⁸⁴ *Amtliches Adreßbuch der Stadt Darmstadt und Umgebung 1952-1953*, www.ancestry.com, p. 209

⁸⁵ *Amtliches Adreßbuch der Stadt Darmstadt und Umgebung 1954-1955*, www.ancestry.com, V. 2, p. 269

⁸⁶ Oral History of Rudi Bethke, Sr.

⁸⁷ Rudi Wenk, medical release forms from Asthma-Kinderheilstatte, Bad Reichenhall, Bavaria. Dated December 17, 1953

⁸⁸ Oral History of Rudi Bethke, Sr.

⁸⁹ *ibid.*

⁹⁰ Ober-Ramstadterstraße 38, Neider Ramstadt Rental Agreement

⁹¹ Rudi Wenk Adoption papers, Deed No. 1266/57
Kaiserslautern, Germany

⁹² Henry C. Bethke obituary

⁹³ John Bethke headstone, Zion Church Cemetery, Golden Ring, Baltimore County, Maryland

⁹⁴ Marie Holscher Bethke headstone, Zion Church Cemetery, Golden Ring, Baltimore County, Maryland

⁹⁵ Rudi Wenk Adoption papers, Deed No. 1266/57
Kaiserslautern, Germany

⁹⁶ *Bethke Family History*, by Joyce Lena Zink

⁹⁷ Oral history from Hilda Antje (Bethke) Zink about 1986

⁹⁸ Rudi Wenk, "Handwerkskammer für den Regierungsbezirk Darmstadt"

⁹⁹ Oral History of Rudi Bethke, Sr.

¹⁰⁰ Rudi Wenk Adoption papers, Deed No. 1266/57
Kaiserslautern, Germany

¹⁰¹ Rudi Wenk Adoption papers

¹⁰² Oral History of Rudi Bethke, Sr.

¹⁰³ Bundesrepublik Deutschland Reisepass of Rudi Bethke #B0472145

¹⁰⁴ *New York State, Passenger and Crew List, 1917-1967*, New York, 1957-1967, A3998, Roll 269, www.ancestry.com, "Wenk, Claus J."

¹⁰⁵ Oral History of Rudi Bethke, Sr.

¹⁰⁶ Hans Wenk, Krankenversorgung Der Bundesbahnbeamter (KVB) dated August 7, 1961

¹⁰⁷ Letter of Appreciation from the President of the DB Frankfurt to Hans Wenk dated December 9, 1971

¹⁰⁸ Personal recollection of Rudi Bethke, Jr.

¹⁰⁹ *ibid.*

¹¹⁰ *ibid.*

¹¹¹ *ibid.*

¹¹² Nieder Ramstadt Friedhof, grave of Hans Hugo Otto Wenk

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¹¹⁴ Amtsgericht Document # 40 IV W 14/04, Last Will and Testament of Margarethe (Emig) Wenk (Probate)

¹¹⁵ *ibid.*

¹¹⁶ *ibid.*

¹¹⁷ Oral History Gothard Rudolph

¹¹⁸ Last Will and Testament of Margarethe Wenk (Probate)

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¹²⁰ Oral History of Rudi Bethke, Sr.

¹²¹ *ibid.*

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¹²³ Oral History of Rudi Bethke, Sr.

¹²⁴ *ibid.*

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¹²⁶ Oral History of Charlotte Bethke

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