

I am writing this down because people who have heard my story have told me I should.

I was born April 11, 1935 in Berlin, Germany.

My parents were Emma (Kujat) Wies(e)ner - born June 23, 1902 in Niespodsjanka, Ukraine, of ethnic German background and died January 10, 2000 in Milton, Ontario, Canada - and Otto Wilhelm Wies(e)ner - born September 13, 1905 in Borgesdorf, Sachsen-Anhalt, Germany (probably Polish now) and died February 16, 1968 in Toronto, Canada. He was a master carpenter and furniture maker.

During World War I, my grandfather, Adam Kujat (Emma's father), was drafted into the Russian army. My grandmother, Emilie (Timm) Kujat (Emma's mother), was sent with all the children to Siberia during the First World War - that is:

- Emma (Kujat) Wies(e)ner - my mother
- Elisabeth (Kujat) Wolff, born April 9, 1914 - Emma's sister
- Wilhelm (Bill) Kujat, born January 1, 1901 – Emma's brother
- Victor Kujat (Kuyat), born Sept. 10, 1909 – Emma's brother
- Erich Kujat, born July 17, 1912 – Emma's brother

After the First World War, they all came to Germany but did not like it there.

Wilhelm (Bill) and Victor consequently emigrated to Canada. I believe an uncle, Rudolf Timm, who lived in Neudorf, Saskatchewan helped them.

I have a sister, Irene Gisela (Wiesener) Oldford, born October 13, 1939 in Berlin, Germany, and known as Reni.

In 1943, my father was drafted into the German army during the Second World War. All women with children were evacuated from Berlin if the husband was in the army.

We went to Poland (at that time German occupied) to stay with one of Emma's cousins (Hedwig Timm) and her family who had been sent from Russia to the German-occupied Poland during the war (a village).

In the summer of 1943, we were bombed out in Berlin (Kluckstrasse 3) and lost everything. The same year my father had a couple of days off from the army and came to Berlin. My mother went to Berlin as well. They, with the help of another neighbour, went into the basement under the ruins of the bombed-out apartment building and were able to rescue some things.

From Poland, we were evacuated to a village in Silesia (Germany at that time but now Poland) in the summer or fall of 1944 because the Russian army was advancing.

From there we had to leave within 3 hours after Christmas because the Russian army was coming. We could only take what we could carry, that is my mother, my sister Reni (5 years) and I (9 years).

We were taken by train to the ethnic German part of Czechoslovakia. (a village called Klein Gruen at the time). We were very lucky. On the way, the train stopped about 1 hour outside of Dresden because the train station was full of refugee trains. That night Dresden was totally destroyed, including the train station with all the refugee trains. We could have been killed in the train station.

We were in Czechoslovakia until the end of the war.

The night before the end of the war (I believe May 8, 1945), we could hear the fighting from the front. Luckily, the war stopped in time, and the Russians came in without fighting.

Since my mother could speak Russian, Polish and Ukrainian, we again were very fortunate, and nothing happened to us.

Shortly thereafter people were told to go back to where they came from. That meant we had to go back to Berlin. I believe it was at the beginning of June 1945. The trip back to Berlin was a nightmare, especially for my mother.

We had to leave most of our belongings behind. The suitcases we did take were mostly emptied by Czechs in Prague. You could not really blame them. After all, they had been occupied by Germany.

On the way we had to change trains several times. At one place, already in Germany, my mother was called out of the train to come and translate. While she was gone the train left with me (10 years old) and Reni (my sister, 5 years old), and an elderly lady from Berlin whom we originally had met in Silesia.

We were on a freight train sitting on top of potatoes destined for Berlin. That again was lucky for us because when the train stopped people were cooking some of those potatoes over fire, also for us. So we had something to eat. We were stopped for 3 days.

During that time, my mother must have gone out of her mind. On the third day, another freight train loaded with potatoes pulled up, and my mother was sitting on top of the potatoes. She jumped down, and we hardly had time to get back onto our train with my mother, and our train left for Berlin.

Berlin was one big pile of rubble - no transportation or anything.

A young man going in our direction found some sort of cart. All the luggage was piled on that, and we walked across Berlin to the area we used to live in. No house was left standing on the street where we used to live. In the next block was an apartment building still standing. My mother used to know a rich lady in that house. The lady was not in Berlin, but her housekeeper was. She had taken in several refugees and took us in too temporarily.

My mother soon walked across Berlin again to see if her sister Lies was still alive. She found her. Her building had not been destroyed.

Some time later my mother was able to find a room with a glassed-in porch in a former government office building for us (Pohlstrasse 89). There was a kitchen and toilets on the same floor. There was suitable office furniture, just no beds. Later, we were able to add another one of the rooms, and we stayed there until we came to Canada.

In the fall of 1945, my father, who had been a Russian prisoner of war came to Berlin. He found us by going to the bombed-out apartment building where we used to live. My mother had attached a note there indicating that we were alive and where we were living.

That fall I was very sick with typhoid fever.

Bill and Victor Kujat, who were living in Canada, were able to find us in Berlin through the Red Cross. Bill Kujat had us come to Canada in January 1951 (to Weyburn, Saskatchewan). We arrived in February 1951 and lived on his farm near Weyburn for about a year. Since my father did not like farming, we moved to Moose Jaw in 1952.

I went to high school there. I won a scholarship to go to Queen's University in 1954. In 1955, my parents moved to Toronto, so I switched to the University of Toronto. I graduated in 1958 and got a scholarship to spend a year studying in France. 1959-1960 I attended OCE (Ontario College of Education) to become a teacher.

There I met my dear husband Robert Radko practice teaching in Toronto, and we got married July 29, 1961.

We have 2 wonderful sons: Richard Radko, married to Sarah. They have 2 great boys, Russell and Trevor. And Ronald Radko, who has 2 wonderful twin daughters, Nicole and Kaitlyn.

