

*Trials & Errors,
Laughs & Terrors*

by

Arthur O. R. Thormann

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*These stories are dedicated to all my friends:
I'm sure they know who they are!*

*My gratitude goes to my daughter Nancy and my
friend Diana McLeod for their valued corrections
of my typos and faulty construction.*

*I'm also grateful to my wife, who suggested
excluding some contentious stories.
All mistakes that remain are mine.*

Preface:
About the Book Title

What are trials? Tryouts, distresses, or court processes? What are errors? The result of trials or actions resulting in trials: Do trials end up in errors, or do errors end up in trials? What about successes? When do trials end up in successes, and when do successes end up in trials? Can trials always test theories for errors?

The *Encarta World English Dictionary* offers us for “trial and error” this definition: “A method of finding a satisfactory solution or means of doing something by experimenting with alternatives and eliminating failures.” However, my book goes beyond this definition – it also delves into life’s distresses. Life is obviously full of trials and errors, and it often appears to us that the safest course is to do nothing. But to do nothing may cause even more distresses and, perhaps, also errors. Sometimes, hopefully not too often, we become a trial or distress to our friends, neighbors, and other souls. When that happens, error can also come into play.

Other circumstances are portrayed in a TV show called *Trial and Error*. In this show, criminal suspects are brought to trial and convicted; later, when errors are discovered in the legal process, the convictions are usually overturned. These errors happen all too often in our civilization. Sometimes, I think the expression “trial and error” should more properly be called “trial and terror,” but I leave that to you to judge.

At one time, I looked back on my life and my experiences, which I had considered at the time they occurred very serious situations, and I was astonished, when I reflected on them, to also find some humor in these circumstances. I do not want to imply that we should always poke fun at all the unfortunate events in our lives, but, often, there is a silver lining that may escape us. Ask yourself, why are some disabled people happy while others are miserable? The answer may be that some disabled people have found a silver lining in their predicament.

So, considering everything, I have decided to give this book the title *Trials & Errors, Laughs & Terrors*. I believe the stories in this book are best represented by this title. I hope you enjoy reading them as much as I have enjoyed writing them.

Arthur O.R. Thormann
Edmonton, May 2006

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Beginning of an Exodus

It was a bitterly cold day on the first day of February in the Ukraine. The year was 1913. The two Brothers Ronald and Albert were sitting on wooden crates in a barn near a German colony, twenty kilometers southwest of Novograd Wolynsk. They were finished with their evening chores and were silently smoking their pipes, lost in deep thought. Each held a small glass filled with vodka in his hand. The occasion was Ronald's twenty-ninth birthday. A lantern, hanging from a nearby post, was throwing eerie shadows around them, making their moods even gloomier.

"Well, then, here's to better times," said Albert, holding up his glass. He was trying to cheer up Ronald, who had given him some grim political predictions.

"Better times, yes," said Ronald, "but not for us, Albert – at least not in the Ukraine."

"What makes you so pessimistic about the political situation, Ronald?" asked Albert.

"Rumors, mostly, I must admit."

They smoked their pipes in silence a while longer.

"What, exactly, are these rumors, and where did they come from?" Albert wanted to know.

"The government is going to disown us, Albert, confiscate our lands, drive us right out of the country. The sources are people with close connections to highly placed government officials."



The Brothers were born in Slobodka, a small town west of Balta, near the Moldavian border, and had lived in the Ukraine most of their lives, cultivating a good part of the surrounding land, eking out a demanding livelihood, and making do with bare necessities. They also spent a good part of their time, when not busy with farming, hewing railway ties.

“I don’t believe it. They owe us, Ronald. Without us, this would still be wasteland. The rumors may well come from people who are trying to take advantage of our gullibility – buy our possessions cheaply.”

“I think there’s much more behind these rumors, Albert. The problem we have is our German ancestry.”

“Surely, you’re not abandoning your life’s work based on mere rumors, are you, Ronald?”

“I am. If I wait for these rumors to be confirmed, it may be too late to take appropriate actions, Albert.”

“So, what, exactly, are you going to do?”

“I’m going to sell what I can and move my family to Germany. Whatever I can’t sell, I’ll leave in your care, Albert.”

“Have you considered the hardship this will cause Hennie? You have two children that are still babies. Anton is barely two-and-a-half years old, and Annie is barely one-and-a-half. Besides, Hennie is four months pregnant with another child. Think, man, what hardships this move will cause her and the children.”

“I have considered this, Albert, but it is the price we must pay to secure our future. You should consider coming with us, Albert.”

“No. If I leave here, I’ll go straight to America.

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Germany doesn't appeal to me, Ronald. I like the democratic freedom that the Americans have."

They smoked their pipes in silence again.

"It may be hard for you to travel through any territory west of here," said Albert.

"I know; that's why I'm thinking of heading north first, through White Russia." Both he and his wife, Hennie, spoke the Russian language fluently, and he was thinking of catching a boat or ferry from some port along the Baltic Sea.

"But you'll eventually have to head west, either through Lithuania, or through Latvia or Estonia."

"I could go farther north, all the way to St. Petersburg. I don't know yet, Albert. I'm still evaluating my options."

"Traveling all the way to St. Petersburg is too far. Have you considered going through Hungary and Austria, or through Czechoslovakia?"

"I have, but I think the mountainous terrain would create undue hardships for Hennie and the babies, Albert."

Albert nodded. "If you travel north, do you intend to end up in East Prussia, then?"

"No. We'll probably sail from there to North Germany. I'm favoring Schleswig-Holstein at the moment."

Albert nodded again. "Well, I must say, you're more ambitious than I am." He held up his glass in a solemn salute: "Good luck, Ronald! Let me know what I can do to help you."

"Thanks, Albert. I think I'll need it!"

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They emptied their glasses and left the barn.

That night, Ronald lay awake in bed for many hours, thinking of his and his family's uncertain future. Eventually, his wife sensed his restlessness and whispered, "What is it, dear, are you not feeling well?"

Ronald took a minute to answer her. She knew better than to press him for it. Finally, he said, "I'm going to ask a lot of you in the next few months, Hennie – especially in your condition and with two babies on your hands – but it can't be helped. To secure our future, I'll have to relocate us to Germany."

She gasped. "Not during the winter, Ronald!"

"No," he said. "We'll wait till spring. But I don't want to push it off too long. The situation is becoming too precarious in the Ukraine. Besides, I want to get us settled somewhere before the baby comes."

"I have faith in your judgment, Ronald," she assured him. "And don't worry, I'll do my part. Now, catch some sleep, dear."

"Thanks, Hennie. I knew I could count on you." And he closed his eyes and relaxed.

They spent the next two months making the necessary preparations. In early March, Hennie insisted that they should obtain a birth certificate for Annie, and Ronald had to ask Albert to hitch a horse to a buggy and take him to Novograd Wolynsk, where the pastor of their Lutheran Church could issue the certificate. At the same time, Ronald could take the opportunity to purchase some more supplies in the city for the trip to

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Germany.

As they were traveling through the white landscape toward Novograd Wolynsk, Albert asked, “Have you made up your mind which route to take, Ronald?”

“I have. I think the route through Vilnius from Rovno to Königsberg is best for us. Another route is shorter, but may not have train service all the way. The route I’m favoring, via Vilnius and Kaunas in Lithuania, is longer but may be quicker because of the available train service. We’ll determine in Rovno which route to Königsberg is more advisable. And from Königsberg, we intend to sail to some port in northern Germany. However, I have not yet figured out the best way to get to Rovno. I could catch a train at Dubrivka, which is closest to us, but the train service from there is sporadic and unreliable. Or, I could try to catch a freight wagon in Korets, which is about sixty-five kilometers from Rovno, but that’s iffy as well.”

“I wouldn’t worry about getting to Rovno, Ronald. I’ll have to take you either to Dubrivka or to Korets in any case, so I might as well take you all the way to Rovno. I have a friend named Ivan, who’s working a farm near Rovno with his wife, Sonia, and I’m sure they would put us up until you catch your train.”

“I appreciate that, Albert. That sure takes a load off my mind!”

“When do you plan to leave?”

“Sometimes after the middle of April, whenever the weather is favorable. I’m trying to settle us in

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Germany well before the baby is due.”

“Smart thinking, Ronald.”

And so, after settling most of their affairs in early April, Ronald and Hennie waited patiently for dry weather, which finally arrived in the third week of April. They decided to leave the following day at sunup.

While Hennie dressed and fed the children, the men loaded two trunks and some hand luggage onto the wagon and decided to add some blankets to keep Hennie and the children warm during the chilly morning hours. Feed and water for the horses had already been loaded the previous evening. They quickly hitched the horses to the wagon and were ready to leave. The sun was already well above the horizon as they pulled out of the German colony, on their way to Korets and Rovno.

Three hours later, they stopped briefly west of Korets to feed and water the horses. Albert said, “I hope we can make it to Ivan’s farm before sundown, Ronald.”

“That shouldn’t be a problem. The road is fairly dry and in good condition here.”

“Well, let’s get going again.”

Without stopping for lunch, they ate the sandwiches and drank the tea that Hennie had prepared the evening before. The children seemed fairly content. Hennie read them stories while they were awake, but for a good part of the trip they were sleeping under their blankets. Every two hours, Albert insisted on

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stopping to feed and water the horses, and to give them a few minutes of well earned rest, since they were trotting right along. But, despite their good progress, it was nearly sundown when they pulled into Ivan's farmyard at the edge of Rovno.

Albert introduced Ronald, Hennie and the children to Ivan and Sonia. Ivan was surprised to see them but gave them a hearty welcome. Sonia immediately took charge of Hennie and the children, while the men unhitched, fed and stalled the horses and threw a tarp over the wagon.

The large kitchen also served as a living room. While the women prepared for supper, the men sat around the kitchen table smoking their pipes, each enjoying a glass of Ivan's vodka. Albert explained the purpose of their trip to Ivan.

Ivan, taking a drag on his pipe, said, "Hmm. I have some doubts about your plans to head north through White Russia, Ronald. There's been some flooding in the lower swamp areas. My recommendation is to head to Warsaw via Brest."

"I had assumed that the route via Vilnius and Kaunas to Königsberg might be more reliable."

"Why do you want to end up in Königsberg?" Ivan wanted to know.

"To sail from there to a northern port, in Schleswig-Holstein – Lübeck or Kiel."

"You could do that from Gdańsk. From what I hear, there is good train service to Gdańsk from Warsaw, and Gdańsk is a busier port than Königsberg. Remember, also, both Poland and Lithuania have had

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quite a few political disruptions and economic upheavals lately, but this has had a worse effect on Lithuania, I believe.”

“I’ve never thought of the sea route via Gdańsk.”

“It’s just an idea. You should check it out in Rovno tomorrow.”

“Thanks, I will do that,” said Ronald.

Ivan smiled and refilled their glasses with vodka.

Next morning, Albert and Ronald hitched a horse to one of Ivan’s buggies and headed into Rovno. They spent two hours visiting various freight companies to enquire about the best and quickest route to Germany. Then they went to an inn for lunch and discussed the best option.

“The consensus clearly favors Warsaw,” said Ronald. “Hennie would have been more comfortable with a route through White Russia, of course – mainly because of the language.”

“You will find quite a number of Polish people who can speak Russian very well, Ronald.”

“Well, Warsaw here we come, then.”

“And what about Gdańsk? You heard the supervisor at the last freight company say that he recommends the route to Berlin, via Poznań – mainly because it’s quicker. You might consider that route rather than the one over Gdańsk when you get to Warsaw.”

“I will. The only reason I had planned on sailing is because of the route north that I had in mind.”

“I’m not sure if sailing would save you any

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money or time, Ronald.”

“Well, we’ll find that out in Warsaw. In any case, Hennie will be happier with solid ground under her feet, I suspect.”

“You’ll probably have good train connections to Lübeck or Kiel from Berlin.”

“I wouldn’t doubt it. Well, I might as well buy the train tickets to Warsaw while we’re here.”

That evening, they all sat around the kitchen table discussing Ronald and Hennie’s future plans.

“I’m afraid I’ll have to ask you two to put us up for two more days,” said Ronald, addressing Ivan and Sonia.

“You’re very welcome here,” said Sonia.

“Yes,” agreed Ivan.

“Why two more days?” Hennie wanted to know.

“There’s no earlier train, I’m afraid,” said Ronald. “The railroad to Warsaw is still mostly single track, which slows down traffic.”

“Too bad it’s not five days,” said Albert. “Then we could pay a visit to Hennie’s birth place.” He turned to Ivan and Sonia to explain: “Hennie was born just sixty kilometers from here, in a village called Ugorsk, ten kilometers northeast of Kremenets.”

“What a coincidence,” said Ivan, “Sonia and I were in that vicinity just last September. Beautiful country, with all the autumn colors.”

They all looked admiringly at Hennie, who was embarrassed by the sudden attention she was getting. “My parents left Ugorsk when I was very young,” she



explained. "I don't remember much of the place."

Albert and Ronald delivered the two trunks to the train station the next morning, and checked them through to Warsaw. As he pocketed his receipt, Ronald enquired about the train's arrival time in Warsaw. The stationmaster looked at a schedule and said, "The train you chose hauls a great deal of freight, with several loading stops along the way. It arrives in Warsaw at ten o'clock the following morning."

Ronald nodded. "That's faster than I had anticipated."

"Passenger trains take only half the time," said the stationmaster, giving Ronald an accusing look that said, "You should know better than to pick a freight train." He added, "This train also has fewer conveniences, like no dining car."

"We'll manage," Ronald assured him.

The stationmaster just shrugged.

As Albert and Ronald stopped at the inn for another lunch, Albert asked, "Why did you pick this particular train, Ronald?"

"The passenger train doesn't leave for another week."

"Ah. Well, I'm sure you won't miss a dining car. Sonia will probably pack enough sandwiches to last you for a week."

"I'm certainly grateful for the hospitality your friends have shown us, Albert."

"They love it, Ronald. They don't get many visitors at their place."

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“I hope I can repay them one day.”

“They’re not expecting that, but you never know.”

When they returned to the farm, Ivan was just finishing some chores and then joined them for a smoke and a glass of vodka. “What made you decide to leave the Ukraine, Ronald?” he wanted to know.

Ronald thought for a minute. He did not want to offend Ivan with his suspicions about the government’s intentions. So, he said, “Hennie and I have decided on a change of scenery, Ivan.”

Ivan gave him a questioning look. “You don’t like the scenery here, Ronald?”

Ronald just shrugged as an answer, and Ivan still continued his questioning look.

Albert jumped in, “I wouldn’t mind a change of scenery myself one day – perhaps America.”

Ivan said, “You’re joking?”

It was Albert’s turn to shrug, but he had managed to avert Ivan’s attention.

After a minute’s silence, Ivan said, thoughtfully, “I must admit, the thought of a change of scenery has occurred to me as well. I just hadn’t thought of such great distances – more like the Black Sea, for example.”

“That wouldn’t be a bad idea either,” said Albert. “The climate is certainly easier to take in that area.”

The last comment really got Ivan started. He told them at great length about an earlier trip that had hooked him and Sonia on the Black Sea region. “If you like to be by the sea, Ronald,” said Ivan, referring to

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Schleswig-Holstein, “you should consider our Black-Sea region – it’s second to none!”

“I’ll definitely do that, Ivan,” said Ronald, not wanting to get into the real reason for his leaving.

Ivan, apparently satisfied, poured them another glass of vodka.

Next morning, everyone was up early. Hennie got the children ready, Sonia started breakfast, Ivan went about his morning chores, and Albert and Ronald hitched the horses to the wagon and loaded the hand luggage. They all had breakfast together and then bade Ivan and Sonia good-bye. Sonia hugged Hennie and the children and expressed the hope to see them again sometime.

They met up with very few people at the railway station. “Probably because it’s a freight train,” offered Albert.

“When is it scheduled to leave?” asked Hennie.

“Nine o’clock,” said Ronald.

“It’s almost nine o’clock now, and the train isn’t even here yet!” cried Hennie.

“It’s still on a side rail over there, loading some more freight,” said Albert, pointing.

However, twenty minutes later, the train rolled in. Albert hugged Hennie and the children, and then Ronald. “Don’t forget to write as soon as possible. I don’t want to lose track of you. Hear?”

“I’m even going to send you postcards from all major stops, Albert.”

“Good.” Albert passed the luggage to Ronald,

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who was in the only passenger car, and they waited for the train to leave. Both men had tears in their eyes as they waved good-bye to each other.

“Not bad,” said Ronald as the train pulled out of the station, “only forty minutes late.”

But, as foretold by the stationmaster, the train made frequent stops to load and off-load freight.

Midafternoon, when the children were sleeping, Hennie looked silently out the window. Her eyes were brimming with tears.

“What is it, dear?” said Ronald, deeply concerned.

She didn’t answer him.

“Dear?”

“This is the last time I shall see the Ukraine.”

“For the time being, yes.”

“Don’t lie to me, Ronald. This is the last time I shall see the Ukraine,” she emphasized.

“Probably.”

“And my parents, and my brothers and sisters? Was this, too, the last time I shall ever see them?”

“I’m sure they’ll follow us, Hennie. I’m sure that our departure is just the beginning of an exodus from the Ukraine. We’re the pioneers, as it were, preparing a new place for others.”

She looked at him sadly for a long while. Then she put her head on his shoulder and cried silently. He stroked her back to comfort her.

They arrived in Warsaw at ten to ten the following morning. Ronald took Hennie with the children and the



luggage to the waiting room and then busied himself reassigning the trunks to Berlin. Next, he purchased new tickets. He was told that the train to Berlin would leave on schedule at four o'clock that afternoon.

"When will it arrive in Berlin?" asked Ronald.

"Barring unforeseen events, at eight o'clock tomorrow morning."

"Are there many unforeseen events?"

"Not usually on this stretch, unless more freight than we expect has to be loaded in Poznań."

When Ronald returned to the waiting room, Hennie was just giving the children their lunch. Ronald said, "I could use a sandwich myself, Hennie."

"We're fortunate. Sonia packed enough food for us to last us a week."

"She's sure a friendly woman, but I don't know about Ivan. He seemed aloof, somehow."

"He just couldn't understand why we're leaving the Ukraine – neither can I, by the way."

"I'll explain it to you in detail once we are in Germany, Hennie."

She let it go and busied herself with the children. Two hours later, Ronald said, "We might as well board the train, Hennie. It's already sitting out there."

The train left on time, and the trip was relatively uneventful. The train promptly pulled into Anhalter Bahnhof in Berlin five minutes to eight. Hennie and the children had been so tired that they had slept right through the stop at Poznań. Ronald took Hennie with the children and the luggage to the waiting room again, and then bought new tickets for and reassigned the

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trunks to Lübeck. It was almost ten o'clock by the time he returned to Hennie and the children. They were happy to see him and clung to him like burs. He smiled and said to Hennie, "We're in luck: The next train to Lübeck is leaving in two hours." Hennie smiled, too, and gave him one of the remaining sandwiches for breakfast. She hated long waiting times, having to keep the children at bay.

The train left sharp at twelve o'clock. After they had eaten their lunch and the children were napping again, Hennie said, "You better tell me now why you have decided to relocate us and why you have chosen Germany and particularly Schleswig-Holstein, Ronald."

Ronald gave her a detailed account of the rumors he had heard, in the Ukraine, that the government intended to confiscate their property and deport all citizens with a German ancestry. Hennie was as disbelieving as Albert had been.

"I had this on good authority, Hennie. In any case, here we are. And as far as Schleswig-Holstein is concerned, I've read a very interesting report on this province. Schleswig-Holstein is literally booming, with its ports to the Baltic and North Seas. It has an excellent trading relationship with Denmark. It also has a very active farming community – unemployment is almost nonexistent. Besides, it's a very pretty province, from what I understand. I think we'll like it there, Hennie."

"I hope you're right."

"Oh, and guess what? I've met a very interesting



man in the ticket lineup. He gave me the address of his brother who has a farm north of Lübeck, near Lensahn. This chap told me the last he's heard from his brother is that his brother is looking for help. So, after I've put you and the children up in a Lübeck hotel for a few days, I'll make a quick trip north to see if I can land a job and settle us properly. I'll leave you the address of this chap's brother – just in case you need to contact me.”

And so it happened that Ronald found a job soon after his arrival in Germany and settled his family in a small town called Koselau, where Hennie gave birth to a son in early summer. They called him Alban, to remind them of Ronald's brother, who had provided them with so much selfless help when they left the Ukraine.

Ronald was naturally grateful to his first employer in Germany for the job he had offered and given him, and he stayed on for a year; but, after the Great War broke out, he got a better job offer just a few kilometers away, near Schwienkuhl, and he decided to relocate his family once more. In Schwienkuhl, in May 1915, is where Hennie gave birth to another son – they called him Rolf – and for the next five years they enjoyed their residence in Schwienkuhl.

When Anton was ten years old, Ronald wanted better school facilities for their children. Another job opportunity came along that year, and he broached the subject to Hennie of yet another move. At first, she raised objections. Ronald was prepared for that.

“You'll love the place,” he told her. It's a village-

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like estate, called Neuvorwerk, and it's located near Ratzeburg, just a few kilometers south of Lübeck. It has excellent living quarters for families; also, much better school facilities for our children are available. It's a beautiful region, Hennie. I'm sure you'll love it there."

Hennie relented, and, thus, Roland relocated his family for the third time. To her pleasant surprise, Hennie liked Neuvorwerk very much. But, as the 1920s rolled by, Roland became more and more dissatisfied with the conditions and the political situation in Germany. On the other hand, he was very impressed by the way Britain treated her subjects. For example, he noted that their government reimbursed British farmers who lost their crops – even if they farmed abroad. He also heard about Canadian homesteads, which were available for \$5.00 per quarter section. And Canadians were also British subjects – weren't they? So, he slowly made up his mind to relocate his family to Canada.

He discussed the move with Hennie. As he suspected, Hennie gave him sound, opposing arguments. "With the inflation in Germany having eroded most of our savings," she said, "how are you going to pay for our trip to Canada?"

"We couldn't all go, Hennie – at least not at once. I could go ahead by myself, buy a homestead, and earn enough money to bring all of you to Canada."

"You would leave me all by myself to look after four children?"

"Anton and Annie are almost grown up," he said.



“Even Alban, at seventeen, can look after himself. If you like, I’ll take Rolf with me. I think there’s enough money for the fare for two of us.”

“I’m not staying at Neuvorwerk without you, Ronald!”

He looked helpless. His job situation and inflation in Germany was so bad that he was unable to save any more money. Furthermore, the little they had saved in earlier years was almost used up. Even for the trip costs and to leave Hennie enough to live on, he would have to sell everything they owned except some of their personal belongings. A homestead in Canada looked to him like the best solution, but he, too, hated to separate himself from his wife and children.

Hennie could see the anguish in her husband’s eyes. She knew full well how bad the situation had become for them in Germany. She repeated, “I’m not staying in Neuvorwerk without you, Ronald, but I’m willing to move to Berlin, to be closer to my brothers and sister.”

Ronald looked up at Hennie with a surge of new hope: Two of Hennie’s brothers, one sister and one nephew had also left the Ukraine and had settled and found jobs in Berlin. “That’s a wonderful idea, Hennie,” he said.

“No. It’s not wonderful to be without you, Ronald, but it’s the best I can offer you under the circumstances.”

“Thanks, Hennie,” he said. “You know I’m only suggesting this to secure a better future for us.”

She nodded. She had heard this before –

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seventeen years before. And now, Ronald, at forty-six, was still giving her the same assurance. She had to admire his courage, though. Most men his age were dreaming of retirement, and here he was, dreaming of breaking new ground – literally. She looked at him with tears in her eyes: “I’ll miss you so, Ronald.”

“I know, Hennie. I’ll miss you, too. But it can’t be helped. It’ll only be for a little while.”

And so it was settled. Ronald and Rolf sailed in June 1930 to Canada, and Hennie, Anton, Annie and Alban left Neuvorwerk to take up new residence in Berlin.

As it turned out, Hennie and Ronald had to wait five lonely years before they were reunited. Eking a living from a homestead in Canada was much harder than Ronald had imagined. Three years after he and Rolf had started work on their newly acquired homestead, Ronald had saved barely enough to bring Alban over to Canada, to help them. And it would take another two years to save enough money to reunite himself with his beloved Hennie.

When Hennie arrived at the homestead, she was appalled at its primitive conditions. There was no electricity; no running water; no indoor toilet facilities; no telephone; and their living quarters were very cramped. It reminded her of the Ukraine – even worse, in some ways. She was seriously questioning if this kind of “secure” future would not have been better elsewhere.

Ronald saw the questions in her eyes. “It’ll be all right, Hennie,” he assured her. “We’re making good

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progress. In a few years, we'll build a new house, perhaps at another homestead, not so far from Barrhead, the closest town."

Hennie nodded, but she was not convinced. She was forty-three years old and had raised four children – mostly in dire circumstances. How much more could she take? But she didn't say anything to Ronald. Ronald expected her to pull her weight, along with him and the boys, and she would not disappoint him. She smiled at him and said, "Everything is fine, Ronald, as long as we're together."

He sighed with relief: "I knew I could count on you, Hennie. Conditions will be primitive for a while longer, but you'll love the freedom in this country, Hennie. It's like nothing we've ever experienced – either in the Ukraine or in Germany!"

In the meantime, things in Germany went from bad to worse. Ronald tried hard to save enough to bring their remaining children with their families to Canada, but before he was able to do so, World War II broke out. It would take another six years after the war ended before Ronald would accomplish this, but finally his family was reunited – in a land that valued personal freedom and had countless opportunities for personal development.

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