

The Volga German Dialect and where is it now?

My experience hearing my father from time to time speak German was very little when I was a young boy in the mid- 1940's up to about 1960. He only spoke German in short phrases and a few words that I remember well and to this day of just how those phrases and words sounded. It was only when he took me along with him to meet immigrant friends and family members did I hear him conversing in German. We would generally end up in beer taverns which was a great social meeting place located in the Volga German ethnic community of Portland, Oregon.

I personally never conversed in German or even at the time understood what was being said. My four sisters who were seven to twelve years older than me at the time had no clue about a dialect or the German language for that matter.

In 1954 at the beginning of my sophomore year in high school I took a first year class of German but never pursued a second or third year term.

Much later in life I reflected back on all those classmates with familiar and recognizable Volga German last names. While attending high school it just never dawned upon our conscious minds to ask, "Are you of Volga German descent?" Or "Were your parents or grandparents from Russia?" The stark reality was that we were All American teenagers interested in the opposite sex and ushering in the advent of Rock and Roll! My older sisters experienced relatively the same along with big band music. My immigrant parents simply enjoyed American culture of the time from the early 1900's onward.

It didn't take long in the evolutionary move forward to become fully immersed in being American. This wasn't a bad thing as I see it, but more of the natural flow of life living in a country where English is the official language. The same could be said perhaps of the Volga Germans who immigrated to Spanish speaking countries in South America.

The positive note to all this is that many of us descendants for some time now are learning of our roots, family genealogy, history, culture, stories, notable characters and so much more. I suspect that Germany in the region of the German State of Hesse where I served in the U.S. Army for two years, that one can discover the

roots where the Volga German dialect originated. This being a major region where Catherine The Great's manifesto recruited Germans from Hesse in Germany to settle the Volga region of Russia back in 1763.

Mit Freundlichen Grüsse,

Roy Conrad Derring
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Words and Phrases of Conrad Derring 1896-1981
Immigrated to Portland, Oregon in 1912 from the Volga German Settlement of Norka, Russia

English	Standard German	Dialect
Good Morning	Guten Morgen	Gu Morzha
Where are you going?	Wo gehst Du?	Vo geest Du?
I'm going home	Ich gehe heim	Eisch gee hahm
I'm not going	Ich gehe nicht	Eisch gee nit
That's good!	Dass ist gut!	Dahs eest goad!
I have no money	Ich habe kein Geld	Eisch hoap kahn Gelt
The people	Die leute	Dee light
Happy New Year!	Frohe Neu Jahr!	Fro-uh Nigh Yor
Go home you bad boy!	Gehst Du heim Du böse Bub!	Geest Du hahm Du bayza Boop!
Krautkuche, Potatoes & Sausage	Krautkuche, Kartoffeln und Wurst	Grautgoge, Gahdovil und Vorscht
That's beautiful!	Dass ist schön!	Dahs eest she! & Dahs eest shane!
I don't know	Ich weisse nicht	Eisch vahs nit
Is'nt that so? Is'nt it? Eh? *		gel? *

Note: The sample dialect shown here is not how a person of this dialect would have written it. It is simply a phonetic version and example of how the dialect sounds in comparison to standard German. A basic understanding of standard German is helpful.

*The dialect word 'gel' made after a statement when speaking with someone, is to confirm that statement with one self and to the second party. Although it can command a response, essentially it is merely stated rhetorically.