

# **The Life Stories of my Grandparents Oskar Schmidt and Jakobina Monat.**

by Leo Rung.

**Forward:** (translated from the original German by Mervin Weiss)

I would very much like to thank <https://www.blackseagr.org/> for its research work. Much data from the archives in Saratov, Russia is freely accessible on this website. I would like to especially thank German descendants living in the USA and Canada for this data. With the encouragement of the Wahl family, the research team of the late Dale Wahl (friend and mentor who died in 2008) created the website <https://www.blackseagr.org/> in order to continue his passion and his commitment to the free exchange of genealogical information with others. Researchers from different geographical areas around the Black Sea (Crimea, Odessa, Bessarabia, Dobrudscha) belong to this team. They have different religious backgrounds, ie. Catholic, Lutheran or Mennonite. If one researches his Black Sea German ancestors, he/she will understand that the colonies were mainly Lutheran or Catholic, although there were also Swedish Lutheran and Mennonite communities. They all learned to get along, and some even intermarried.

## **Family History:**

My Grandfather Oskar Schmidt, son of Gottlieb, was born 19 Jun 1927 in Kirovobad. Azerbaijan and he died 10 Nov 2006 in Nürnberg, Germany.

His paternal ancestors came from Schwabian Württemberg, Heidenheim, village of Dettingen. In 1818 they went to the Caucasus and settled in the colony of Alexandersdorf, near Tiflis (today a district of Tbilisi, the capital of Georgia). Due to the lack of land and being the middle son, Oskar`s father Gottlieb Schmidt was forced to leave Alexandersdorf and seek his fortune elsewhere, likely in Annenfeld, which was later called Schamkir (Schamchor or Schjamkir). In 1925 he met Katharina Simon, a Volga German.

Katharina, born 08 July 1904 (died 21 Sep 1987 in Pavlodar, Kazakhstan) had moved to Azerbaijan because of the famine on the Volga and worked as a maid for the wealthy Hummel family.

Gottlieb and Katharina married on 16 Jun 1927 in a civil ceremony in Leninkend, Schamchor district, Azerbaijan SSR [Soviet Socialist Republic-MW]. The first son, Oskar, quickly followed on 19 July 1927, followed by a second son, Arnold on 28 April 1929 (died 31 Aug 2012 in Lörach, Baden-Württemberg, Germany). The third son Waldemar was born in March of 1932 in Kirovobad and he died in 1977 in Uralsk, Kazakhstan. Their youngest child, a daughter Selma, was born 30 July 1935.

With the beginning of World War Two and the decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet on 28 Aug 1941 – “On the Transfer of Germans) – the Germans were exiled because of their ethnicity.

The Schmidt family was resettled with other hundreds of thousands of Soviet Germans to the village of Bogdanovka, Pavlodar region, Kazakhstan. Gottlieb Schmidt was recruited in 1942 for forced labor in the Trudarmee / Labor Army Nizhniy Tagil, Sverdlovsk region / Urals, where he

lived until 1956. Very difficult years full of hardship and hunger followed for his wife Katharina and their four children.



**Photo:**  
**Gottlieb Schmidt and Katharina, nee Simon, 1935.**

Oskar Schmidt explained how he, as the oldest son, had to go begging. His siblings dug into the straw because they had nothing warm to wear. To survive, Oskar had to hunt for gophers, mice and other small animals for food. At an early age he had to work in the collective farm. In 1947 he was sent to Karaganda where he graduated from the FSO Vocational School on 08 Feb 1947, and the next day he was employed underground in coal mine # 55/57.

My grandmother is Jakobina Schmidt, nee Monat, born 27 Dec 1925 in the Catholic village of Dulat in Crimea, now living in Nürnberg, Germany. Jakobina's parents were Michael Monat (02 Mar 1897 – 31 Mar 1943) and Brigitte Scherer (30 Oct 1899 – 02 Apr 1957). Both were born in Crimea. Michael Monat died in Ajaskij, Ordshenikidse district, Kustanaj territory. Brigitte Schmidt Monat died in Karaganda, Kazakhstan.

The story of my great-grandparents goes like this. The invasion of the German Wehrmacht into the Soviet Union and the beginning of the German-Soviet War gave Stalin cause on 28 August 1941 to order the expulsion “for eternity” of almost 53,000 ethnic Germans from Crimea, and more from Georgia and

Azerbaijan.<sup>1</sup>

Like a bolt of lightning in clear sunshine in the morning of 17 Aug 1941, a rider entered the village of Dulat and announced the order to be ready to leave by 1 pm. They were told to take with them the most necessary clothes, blankets, sheets and food for 40 days. The clothes were soaked for washing, wrung out and packed. They locked the house and let the pig was out of the barn. The cow and geese were already loose. A horse-drawn wagon pulled up in front of each house, loaded up the people, and took them to the [train] station where they were crammed into the cattle cars.

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<sup>1</sup> Stalin did this out of fear that Russia's Germans would collaborate with the enemy, ie. the German Reich. In great haste they had to pack their most necessary things and were transported, crammed into cattle cars, mainly to Siberia and Kazakhstan. Many died from the stresses of the multi-day journey.

The families included Vogel, Klotz, Raphael Fitterer, Nikodemus Hoerner, Volodia Scherer, Martin Fitterer and Friedrich Schenkel, as well the entire Monat family –father Michael Monat and his family of nine. His wife Brigitte carried two-month old Anna in her arms; Ella was two and a half years old; Leo was 9 years old, Katharina 12, Luzia 13, Jakobina 15 and Johannes 18 years of age. Their brother Klemens had died as a small baby in 1935. The three younger siblings did not survive the hardships of the trip. At first the Black Sea Germans were taken to the North Caucasus, where they made a stopover in order to help with the harvest. Then it was off to Baku where they, along with wounded Russian soldiers, had to wait for a ship to cross the Caspian Sea. Next they were again taken in cattle cars to Ashkhabad, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and further north to the Kustanaj region of Kazakhstan, where it was already winter. When Jakobina and her family had left Dulat, it was still summer. When they arrived in Kustanaj, Kazakhstan, it was already winter. They were wearing only light summer clothes and had to walk in the snow in their summer sandals. Conditions in the winter of 1941 were devastating. There was no food, no warm clothing, and no shelter. People dug holes into the frozen earth with their bare hands, trying to escape the cold and to survive.



**Photo: Brigitte Monat, nee Scherer and Michael Monat, 1936**

In 1942 the Soviet regime developed plans for a labour army (*Trudarmee*) to work in the mining industry including coal, forestry and in the oil industry. My Great-grandfather Michael Monat and his eldest son John were conscripted into the labour army in February 1942 and taken to the labour camp Tawda in Sverdlovsk region, to cut trees. A large number of people mobilized for labor had to be “released” because of their disabilities. This number included Michael Monat who, in March 1943 with amputated toes and his health at an end, dragged himself home to his family. At the railway station he was advised to wait out the night because it was stormy and very cold.

He replied that he still wanted to get home to have dinner with his family. He collapsed not far from where his family was living, and was only found frozen to death on 31 March 1943.

Jakobina Monat, my grandmother, was mobilized at age 16 to the Archangelsk region in the Far North, where she worked as laborer in an open-pit mine at Orletzy. There, like many women of the German minority, she had to endure hard labor in temperatures well below -20 degrees under inhuman conditions, half frozen and hungry. With pickaxes, crowbars and hammers, the women had to break loose the limestone rock, which was needed by the state-owned Archangelsk Paper Factory. The stones were then loaded onto lorries, which the women had to push to the storage yard, where the stones were loaded on barges (ships) with the use of wheelbarrows.

Jakobina's younger sister Luzia Monat (born 26 Dec 1927 in Dulat, died 01 Feb 2020 in Beilefeld, Germany) was deported in 1943 to Karaganda where she had to work in underground mines. In 1948 the entire family met in Karaganda for a family reunion. Those who attended included her mother Brigitte Monat (nee Scherer, born 30 Oct 1899 in Crimea, died 02 Apr 1957 in Karaganda), the eldest brother Johannes (born 20 July 1923 in Dulat, Crimea, died 31 Aug 1986 in Ukraine), and the youngest sister Katharina (born 01 Dec 1929 in Dulat, Crimea, died 02 Feb 2019 in Bonn) from Kustanaj district.

In 1948 Jakobina Monat met Oskar Schmidt in Karagana. They married 09 Nov 1949.

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**Photo: Jakobina Monat and Oskar Schmidt. (07 July 1949)**