Harry O. Rennat

August 6, 2012 - August 11, 2012

Harry O. Rennat passed away peacefully on Saturday, August 11, 2012 5 days after his 90th birthday at Sterling House of Fort Collins. He was born on August 6, 1922 in Viljandi, Estonia. He grew up on a collective farm managed by his parents, Alexander and Olga. His older sibling, Ivar, died of meningitis in 1927. In 1941 the family fled to Germany when Estonia was invaded by Soviet forces. They spent the war years in a displaced persons camp and immigrated to the United States in 1949. In 1951 he married Ingrid Millistfer, a childhood friend whose family had also fled Estonia. They moved to Madison, Wisconsin, where Harry completed a Ph.D. in 1956. Their two sons, Ivar and Eerik, were born there. In 1956 they moved to Fort Collins where their daughter, Kaarin was born. Harry began a 32 year career as a professor in the Mechanical Engineering Department at CSU. He was a dedicated and recognized teacher. Harry was an excellent photographer, documenting the family's life and travels with tens of thousands of individually labeled slides and photographs. Classical music was another passion. An avid hiker and snowshoer, he enjoyed weekly outings with family and friends. The family belonged to the Colorado Mountain Club for many years, climbing numerous Colorado fourteeners. Long camping trips in the western U.S. were enjoyed almost every year. After retirement, Harry and Ingrid traveled to Europe many times. Harry is survived by his son, Ivar Rennat with wife, Marilyn and daughter, Alka and daughter, Kaarin Valvur with daughter, Mia. Preceding Harry in death are his wife, Ingrid and son, Eerik. Harry's family would like to

thank all of those who were so competent and compassionate in his care. Memorial contributions may be made to the Sierra Club or to Pathways Hospice of Fort Collins. A graveside service for family and friends will take place at Grandview Cemetery on Monday, August 20 at 11:00 a.m. Rennat / Millistfer Families WWII Experiences Written by Harry Rennat, Spring 2007 Ingrid Rennat, maiden name Ingrid Millistfer, was born in Tartu, Jan. 28, 1925. In Tartu for medical reasons. She was the only child of Johan and Magda Millistfer maiden name Magda Sarap. The Millistfer and the Rennat families were close friends, and Harry's father was Ingrid's godfather. Ingrid grew up on the family farm near Viljandi. She graduated from the high school in Viljandi. Her father was a decorated hero of the Estonian War of Independence against communist Soviet Russia 1918 -1920. He became an "enemy of the people" when Soviet Russia occupied Estonia in 1940 and again in 1944. He and his family faced deportation to forced labor camps in Siberia - the fate, if not death, of most participants in the War of Independence. Not having another chance, he and his family fled to Germany in 1944. Ingrid's mother wrote detailed notes of their five week long travel with a horse wagon.

I, Harry Olaf Rennat, was born on August 6, 1922 to Alexander and Olga Rennat maiden name Olga Kingo. In 1934, the family name was changed from Reiterovsky to Rennat. Heimtal was a small community near Viljandi where my father was the manger of an experimental farm. I had a brother Ivar, born 1919; he died of meningitis in 1927. In 1926, my father became the manager of a large farm in Olerstvere about 13 miles north of Viljandi which was an agricultural school. I went to country grade school for five years. In 1934, my parents sent me to a semiprivate school in Tallinn that emphasized foreign languages: German, French, English, Russian, and Latin. Because of TB tuberculosis I stayed home for a school year. After annexation of Estonia by the Soviet Union in August 1940, people in notable positions were arrested or simply disappeared. My father felt increasingly insecure, and he resigned from his position. With only a few suitcases we went to Tallinn where we were

semi-hiding in the home of some distant relatives. By claiming to be of German origin, our family succeeded in getting permission from the communist government to go to Germany. My parents, grandmother, and I left Estonia in March 1941.

In Germany, we were placed briefly in a resettler camp a school building in Auerbach, a small town about 70 miles south of Leipzig. I started to attend the local high school there. My father went to work as an interpreter for some branch of the government, and from there on we saw him very infrequently. My mother and grandmother went to live with the Borgas who were our longtime family friends from Estonia. They had immigrated to Germany in 1939. The Borgas had a farm near Dirschau, a town and railroad station at the Weichsel River, and about 20 miles south of Danzig. Their farm was also the destination of the Millistfer family when they fled from Estonia in September of 1944.

I remained in Auerbach to continue my high school education but because of my inadequate knowledge of the German language, I had to repeat a school year. I lived in a student dormitory and graduated from high school in the spring of 1943. At that time, I had a flare up of TB and spent several months in a TB sanatorium. I remained under treatment pneumothorax until early 1945 when we were fleeing from the Russians. Because of my TB, I was not drafted into the military.

In the fall of 1943, I enrolled at the Technische Hochschule Technical University in Danzig. During the summer of 1944, I had a drafting job at the University. Toward the end of January 1945, we were hearing more of the cannon rumble in the east, but there was no information about where the front was. Fleeing was strongly discouraged, but now we know that the military had ordered the main roads to be cleared for free movements of troops, thereby leaving the civilian population to suffer under the brutality of Russian soldiers. In the middle of February, I went back to Danzig for a day to get some of my things. The trains ran on time and life in Danzig appeared quite normal. Being

worried about the closeness of The Front, we decided to go farther west. Ingrid and I were shocked several years ago when we saw a special issue of the German magazine Spiegel with the title "Die Flucht der Deutschen" The Flight of the Germans, 130 pages. It showed that already at the beginning of February, The Front had advanced far west and north toward Stettin on the coast. We and also millions of Germans were thus trapped even before we started to flee. The Borgas had fled much earlier, we saw them near Hamburg in 1949.

We left on Feb. 20 on two covered wagons, each drawn by two horses. We were 11 persons: Ingrid with parents, grandmother, and aunt, my mother, grandmother, and myself and another Estonian couple, and a single older woman. The two grandmothers sat on the wagons, all others walked. We did not know anything about my father. On the wagons, we had all kinds of warm clothing, blankets, pillows and a good supply of food stuff. The winter of 1945 was unusually cold to over – 20 degrees F and snowy. Because of a snowstorm and icy roads, the horses were falling, so we decided to turn back the same day, starting again early the next day. The roads were often jammed with other wagons like ours. We spent the nights in barns or shared a place with the horses or cattle. The owners of farms where we stopped were mostly very friendly and helpful, permitting us even to use their kitchens. Toward the end of February and early March, the weather was much milder and we spent most of our nights sleeping in our wagon. We found the roads ahead blocked and were told by police to turn back or head north toward the coast. No explanation was given and nothing was said about the Russians. We were soon moving back east on smaller roads near the coast. On March 8, we passed through a small village, Schmolsin, just east of Leba Lake, pulled off the road and stayed overnight on a small hill where we were above the road and somewhat hidden from the tress. We were again sleeping on the wagons. The next morning, March 9, quite early, we saw a large group of Russian military marching by. We then moved on a couple of miles, turned on a dirt road, and stopped near a barn at the edge of a large marshland south of Leba

See lake. There were only a couple of small abandoned houses nearby. The grandmothers found shelter in the small house of an old German woman about a half mile away. There they did some cooking for all of us.
We had somewhat hoped that away from the main road there would be fewer Russian soldiers passing by. Maybe it was so, but initially we had several "visits" every day, mostly in small groups. My mother and Ingrid's parents spoke fluent Russian, but seemed often not to make any difference. Every morning, Ingrid and I went into hiding in the marshland. As a young girl, Ingrid was always in danger. I was also at high risk for being for being taken for a hiding German soldier. Even our mothers and Ingrid's aunt did not feel safe from the Russians. They kept their hair messy and when they saw Russian soldiers coming, they took their dentures out and moved slowly like old women. Our homes were taken on the first or second day. In searching for valuables and watches, the soldiers just emptied our suitcases onto the ground which was often muddy. One of the first things taken was my camera. It was a bulky one and certainly was thrown away. Early one morning, while Ingrid and I were still at the wagons, a group of Russians on horses surprised us. They were searching our wagons, so Ingrid's father carried a limp Ingrid from our wagon to the other, telling the soldiers that she was very sick. At another time, a Russian soldier liked Ingrid's father's pants and high boots, so he told him to take them off.
When hiding in the marsh, we had binoculars and could see what was happening at the wagon. One scary incident was when we saw people marched away by Russian soldiers. Without them, we would have had to come out of hiding and what then would our and our grandmother's fate have been! It was a great relief when we saw them all coming back after a couple of hours. Speaking Russian, they talked to an officer who let them go. We learned later that the Russians on that day had taken any German who could walk, regardless of age or sex, and put them into cattle wagons to be transported into Russia to work there.
While hiding in the marshland, Ingrid and I once had a very scary moment. We

saw a Russian soldier with a gun walking from the side toward us. What other reason could he have had than searching for people hiding in the marsh. Fortunately, there were ponds where peat had been harvested in his way and he had to turn away, so he didn't see us. We lay there flat on the ground. Also, there were some bushes to shield us.

On April 29, the Russian commandant of the nearby village Glowitz ordered us to move into a house in the village. There we saw very few people on the street, most homes appeared abandoned, a couple of homes were burned down, other had broken windows, vandalized interiors. Later, walking on the surrounding fields, I also saw two dead German soldiers whom nobody had cared to bury. The Russian commandant's name was Krug, he was of German ancestry, a reasonable man, he helped women to hide when soldiers were passing through the village. The home assigned to us was without furniture, but after having slept over seven weeks on wagons, it felt good to be under a roof and shielded from rain: With the blankets and pillows from our wagons we slept well. Since the looting soldiers could take away little with them, they destroyed much of what they left behind. Many houses had later been emptied and so there were in backyards piles of broken furniture, broken glassware and dishes, books, picture albums, framed pictures, from these trash piles we got some furniture and kitchen items. Our supply of foodstuff was about used up and we were given some bread and raw meat. From then on we were regularly provided with food. For Ingrid's mother, Ingrid, and myself, the first job was to herd eight horses. That was a pleasant task, maybe particularly so because Ingrid always loved horses. Later we had to herd nearly one hundred cows. We had a lot of nice spring weather with plenty of sunshine. There was always enough green grass so that the cows rarely strayed away. The cows there were from small farms in the surrounding area. While herding cows I had a scary incident. I was sitting on a clod when I heard a plop next to me, and immediately after a gunshot. It couldn't have been anyone else but a Russian soldier practicing shooting. Had I been

injured or killed, there would have been no one to blame or to ask for medical help. In late summer there were rumors that the cattle and we as caretakers would be going to Russia. We had had a few thoughts about escaping to the West, but that seemed prohibitively difficult. We knew that the war had ended, but not much more. On October 1, a sunny and warm day, came a big and happy surprise. We were out on the field when we say my father Papi walking toward us. In late summer two older women from the village had decided to go west and my mother had given the address of Dr. Hans Zimmer in Maulbron, a place where they could find temporary shelter I am sure you remember Hans Zimmer well!. It was the place where my father spent some time while searching for us and now he met there the two women. My father had much to tell us, particularly so because we had been shut off from the rest of the world. No newspapers, no radio. We had assumed that the area of Germany where we were would become a part of Poland. For a while already we had had a communist Pole as the village boss. We also were being paid for our work and the payment was in Polish money. My father told us that trains were running between Danzig and Stettin, and we had money for the train tickets. We started our flight at midnight on November 20. I do not remember why we couldn't have started earlier. The first and big step was to walk to the nearest railroad station which was in Stolp, close to 25 miles away. For our bags- almost all with clothing- we had two handcarts. We needed to move these on the road as quickly as possible in order to reduce the chance of being noticed and questioned. One handcart had wheels with steel rims and these we wrapped with thick cloth strips. The other one had bicycle tires. We could not expect our grandmothers to walk the 25 miles in one night and so we sent them on the road a day earlier. We left at midnight on November 20 and were lucky not to be stopped and questioned once. There were only a few cars on the road and their headlights gave us early warning to get off the road and hide. We were in Stolp the next morning at 10 o'clock and were happy to see our grandmothers there and well. We got on the train to Stettin late in the evening and arrived there the next morning. The train became increasingly

crowded so that there was barely any standing room left. There were crowds of people in Stettin, almost all Germans who had been expelled from eastern German areas. There we saw several people lying on the side of the road who appeared to be dead and nobody seemed to care. In Stettin it took us a couple of days to get on a truck to Berlin; this for money Polish and-I guess-a few valuables. We were in Berlin from November 25th through 29th. There we stayed at night in a large concrete air raid shelter, managed for transient expellees and fugitives by Berlin's social services. To be admitted we had to have a medical checkup for pestilence and varmints. There we were also given bread and soup. We stayed in Berlin until we found a truck that would take us and other fugitives to Heiligenstadt, southeast of Gottingen, a point for crossing from the Russian to the British occupation zone. As past citizens of the Soviet Union we were a little apprehensive of difficulties at the border, but there were no questions asked or documents requested. We were in a mass of Germans expelled from formally eastern German areas, not wanting to stay in the Russian occupation zone. Many of them carried only a few bags just as we did. We had to form lines of six abreast and were counted, that was all. We crossed into the British occupation on December 2nd at 10:15 am. What a relief it was! It again took us several days to get to our final destination, a displaced persons DP camp. Schwarzenbek, a small town 20 miles east of Hamburg. My father had been at that camp and now was registered there. It was a camp for Balts- Estonians, Latvians, and Lithuanians only, maybe around 1100 in all. What was called a camp was a large factory with machinery, a large nice office building with many rooms, and a number of temporary buildings where the workers foreigners? were housed. The accommodations thus varied from nice office rooms to shabby barracks. It was one room for a family or for several single persons, mostly one bed on top of the other. Blankets were available for making partitions in a room. Bed bugs were continually a problem until insecticide became available. We were generally in fairly good condition, even our two grandmothers. However, Ingrid had a surprise: the medical checkup at admission showed that she was

carrying diphtheria bacilli. She was therefore quarantined for two weeks in the camp hospital. In the beginning we were given enough food, it was also the Christmas season, but early in 1946 the quantity and quality of food became meager: corn soup, 2 oz. margarine for a week, and some bread. Whether it was true or not, the opinion prevailed that by starving the DPs the English were trying to push them to go back to their native countries. The German marks had no value but, since we all received cigarettes, and smokers would rather starve than give up smoking, cigarettes served as money. A black market in the camp was tolerated and for a couple of cigarettes one could buy in the camp a nice fat smoked herring, available much of the time. The average educational level of people in DP camps was high- very few common laborers had fled from their countries because of communist regime. Thus there was soon much intellectual activity in the camp; schools for children, language courses, theatre, folk dancing, choir, chess club, lectures on a variety of topics, sport activities, and handicraft groups. Ingrid did knitting, her father wood carving, items that the English liked and paid for with sugar, margarine, and cigarettes. Since Ingrid and I had had only high school English we both took English courses. In addition I learned Russian on my own. With scarcity of news of interest to DPs a group was formed that collected and translated news and had theses read at a daily evening meeting, called Elav Sona Live Word. In 1947 the camp in Schwarzenbek was returned to Germans and became again a factory. The DPs there were transferred to another camp in Geestacht, a small town at the Elbe river, 8 miles from Schwarzenbek. I had become quite restless knowing that I wasn't advancing in life. Many younger people felt the same way and took the first opportunity to leave Germany. Some young men went to coal mines in Belgium a bad choice, men and women to England for menial jobs such as janitors, and cleaning women in hospitals. By 1947 the German economy was moving again and in late 1947 I got a job at the factory in Schwarzenbek where our camp had been, first as a lathe operator, later as a draftsman. I rented in

Schwarzenbek a place to sleep and went on weekends to my parents and grandmother in Geestacht. There had been a money reform in Germany and I was then earning real money. My first big purchase was a bicycle, so useful for my trips to Geestacht. The 18 months employment in Schwarzenbek brought me a pension and the monthly payments are still coming! In 1948 came a nice surprise: United States was going to accept 200, 000 WWII refugees. The requirements were: everyone had to have a sponsor in the U.S., a person or an organization responsible for helping the immigrant to start a life in the U.S. A health check was required but there were no age limits. Even though Ingrid's and my father were almost 60 years old, there was still little hesitation about leaving Germany that was in ruin. My mother had a cousin in upstate New York, she and her husband were our sponsors. A Lutheran church near Boston was a sponsor for the Millistfer family. The x-ray on my chest showed that the TB was completely calcified. This I had expected since I had not had any problems with my lungs and felt perfectly healthy. We flew from Hamburg to New York with a special flight, the cost paid by U.S. government. We arrived in New York on July 4th 1949. It was there an uncomfortably hot day. From New York we took a train to upstate New York where our sponsors, the Jamens, had a farm. The Millistfer family had arrived in New York 10 days earlier, they also came by airplane. The Diary of Ingrid's mother Magda Millistfer Our Journey by Horse from Kõlo, Estonia to Germany On September 22nd, 1944 at about 2 o'clock, we left our beloved home and headed out into the unknown.

Early in the morning, German soldiers with one officer were at our farm. We gave them coffee and breakfast. They were grateful and told us a secret that the Russians would be here in a few hours and suggested that we leave. We had already had two wagon loads ready for a couple of days, in order to flee to the woods if necessary, since the Russians were quite close. We of course thought this would be temporary, because the Germans would push them back again. However, since the German officer said they were fleeing and abandoning Estonia, there wasn't much time left for anything. The loads

remained as they were and Jot Ingrid's father asked of the officer if we could accompany their military convoy. If you have good horses, was the answer. And we did.
On our farm was a family from Võru, about eight people, and my mother happened to be visiting us.
The aunts Jot's mother's sisters had also been with us for quite some time, having fled from Viljandi. They were staying in the living room. Jot spoke with the Võru people and explained the situation. They asked to be taken along. Having good horses, they were ready to undertake the long trip. Jot ran to Närska. Golding, the owner of the Närska farm, and Mrs. Tahthein, their relative, were ready to come along. We were supposed to meet at our property line at 2 o'clock.
Tomusk farmhand and communist was walking in the farmyard with his hands in his pockets and said to me, "Madam, go where you may go, the Russians will catch you one of these days.'
I telephoned Elsa Jot's sister at the Aindu estate where she was staying, but there was no connection with Viljandi.
I had also given my word to Mrs. Ilves of the Susti farm that, if we fled, we would take her along. She promised to come to the bar in Loodi.
We had slaughtered a pig and I had a pot of cabbage soup cooking, but there was no time to eat.
The Võru people had the idea of taking some of the cows and sheep along. I told them to do what they wanted, but that I was leaving them all behind.
It was 2 o'clock as we left the Kõlo farm courtyard. Golding was waiting at the property line. My mother sat in the wagon. The three of us: Jot, Ingrid and I, walked.
I scratched my leg on some barbed wire; it bled a lot. I ran back home to wrap a rag around it. I saw as our farm-hand Tomusk's sons emerged from the woods, rifles on their backs. My dear dear dogs, Boy and Loda, accompanied us to the property line.
I ran yet to the Taabre farm, the third farm from ours. I wished them Godspeed

and told them that we were fleeing.
We waited by the Loodi bar for a quarter of an hour, but Mrs. Ilves didn't come. I was unhappy and worried. Jot was nervous. The German military flowed along the main road. We joined them.
We rode and rode. There were fires everywhere. The horses were afraid. Approaching the Moks farm, the owner wondered where we were going. Burning everywhere and the Germans are blowing up the bridges.
Our cows and sheep scattered. The ditches were full of all sorts of things that had been thrown from the wagons.
September 22 - 23. We spent the night at Halliste Crossing, in the ___? ___. Burning everywhere; railroads were being blown up. Jot got hay for the horses. Large piles of German military bread. Our horses didn't eat.
On the 23rd, we passed through the Abja estate village. Terrible burning. Airplanes were bombing; bridges being blown up. About 6 o'clock we were in Talli County, where a military policeman would not permit us to continue along the road. He said that the Russians would be there in two hours and that we wouldn't be able to get anywhere anymore. We offered him pork fat and Golding offered gold coins. He was arrogant and a bit drunk.
Somewhere we got together with Lyda Uncle Carl's wife's sister, who had also somehow gotten out of Viljandi with the Germans. I have never in my life been as tough ? as then. I ran with Lyda to a military commander one km away and told him our story. He gave written permission to join them. We had to lighten our loads, because the road through the forest was very bad, between two large ditches and covered tree branches. That commander was a wonderful man. He even sent a soldier along with us so that there would be no further misunderstandings with the military policeman!
We discarded from the loads whatever came to hand. We left only the suitcases and a milk container full of porkmeat and fat. We traveled through the night. The road was impossible. Ingrid and her father walked alongside the horse-drawn wagons so we wouldn't go in the ditch. Totally dark. From the

wagon in front of us, a German soldier showed us the way with a flashlight.
September 24.
We stopped. We passed through the Latvian border; we were in Heinaste. Our stomachs were very empty; we chewed dry bread.
September 24 - 25.
We spent the night in the village of Bubetz in Neubad. Ingrid fed the horses, giving them whatever she could find. We were very worried about Gedi, since she was at her home in Toila and we knew nothing of her.
We didn't get anything warm to eat.
September 25 - 26.
We were in Neusalat. We met a landowner from a farm in Halstre who gave us one kilogram butter. Oh, we were happy. Bread we still had ourselves. We also ate raw beets from the fields.
September 26 - 27.
We spent the night at a forest supervisor's. Still 16 km to Riga. Very friendly company. We got to eat warm soup.
September 27 - 28.
We passed through Riga during the night. I was in a desperate mood. Jot was ill. I drove the horses and cried; my nerves were through.
September 28 - 29.
We spent the night in Kaluzien. A nice reception; we drank wine. Jot is getting better.
September 29 - 30.
The journey continues toward Frauenburg.
September 30 - October 1.
I am amazed at how brave Mother is. She sits calmly atop the load, wearing Jot's large leather coat. She only laments about Gedi.
We spent the night 20 km north of Frauenberg - in a poorhouse.
How good and wonderful these German soldiers are. They give us whatever they have. The air here is awfully thick.
October 1 - 2.

The journey continues ever onward. We were on the Varpus farm, owned by Mrs. Helene Tschernov. For the first time, we stop for a longer time: two nights and one day. We rest the horses. We got to eat well and the horses got hay. The farm was full of Germans; I got cigarettes and chocolate for Mother. Mrs. Tschernov is very kind and friendly. It's raining awfully.

October 3 - 4.

We spent the night on the Kirnus' farm in a large barn. Seven km to Eber. Our stomachs are full. We got milk. We boiled potatoes. The horses ate.

October 4 - 5.

We're on a quiet farm 28 km from Eber. The unfriendly people wanted to put us to harvesting potatoes. We traveled on.

October 5 - 6.

We spent the night in the Gramide County building with electric lights. We wrote a letter to Sascha nickname for Harry's father. We got sugar from the Germans.

October 6 - 8.

We were on a Lithuanian farm - in the sauna. The Germans are taking very good care of us.

Jot's and Ingrid's hands are very torn up, with large blue blisters. The German doctor gave some good medicine.

We heard from the German boys that Aino Gedi's friend had also fled with them somewhere. Here, all of Ingrid's documents and Lyda's gold things were stolen.

From here begins the worse part of the journey. We heard that the Russians had broken through. We traveled through the night. We fed and rested the horses before the town of Grotengen. We passed through town in the morning. A horrible sight. Large air raids. Horses' and people's corpses everywhere. The crackle and popping of firing started. We drove through town in a dreadful hurry. The horses were in a white lather. Outside of town, under the bombardment of Russian planes, we rode over ditches and stumps. Constant swarms of Russian planes about our heads. A simply terrible ride.

October 9 - 10.
We spent the night before Memel on a large farm. Jot spoke with the owner, who knew Captain Bergman a good friend of Jot's from his days in the cavalry. The Russians had broken through near Tilsit. Terribly strong air raids. We were in a park before Memel; we shoed the horses. We got food from the Germans.
October 10 - 12. With great effort, we reached Memel. We began to wait for a ride across to the Nehrung. It was terrible. The Russians are constantly bombing. We were able to take Mother to the cellar of a large house.
The Germans took care of her, bringing her food and drink. Our mother certainly was tough. Ingrid and I alternated between going to father by the horses and going to see Mother. I had a terrible headache.
Our nerves began to give out. We tried every which way to get across to the Neerung. We gave pork fat; Golding gave gold coins. Nothing helped. Refugees' horses by the thousands, German military columns. - A simply strange thing happened. Having survived the night between life and death, Ingrid and I went to see what the situation was. Golding was simply a bundle of nerves. We saw a German commander starting to shave. Upon seeing us, he asked if we might have a small mirror. Ingrid did, and gave it to him. He was very grateful and asked what he could do in return. I asked whether he could take us across. He replied yes. He gathered our horses together Golding's and The Võru people's too and took us across with a ferry located some distance away. We were very fortunate. All the others, horses upon horses, remained there.
We spent the night in the woods, on the Neerung. On the other side, it was terrible. Airplanes bombed; artillery pieces boomed. Everything was lit up as if by day.
Jot fell very ill. He had drunk some horrible green water, albeit through his handkerchief. He had diarrhea and was vomiting. I knew that we had one bottle of grain alcohol and one bottle of vodka. By the light of the air raids, I

tried to untie the ropes. It was an awfully hard job. i broke off my fingernails, but I finally got hold of the bottle of vodka. Jot drank some and gradually began to get better.
The German military moved in a constant stream. We later heard from them that all those who had been waiting to come across had been obliterated. My God, how lucky we had been.
Now we were in a total desert. Sand, sand and sand. The road was terribly full of holes. Large, deep wells were dry. There was no water anywhere.
We reached the foot of a mountain somewhere. The mountain was round, like a haystack. Roads went in every direction. The mountain was covered with young pine trees. I went around with Jot and searched for the road. What beautiful pine mushrooms there were. A mad woman was washing her hair in the sand and muttering to herself. Ghastly.
Trilbey horse is sick. Ingrid is fussing over him; Golding gave him a handful of hay. We were 14 km from Memel.
October 14 -15.
We spent the night in the woods. Lyda left. Ingrid and I brought water from the sea for the horses. The sand was deep. The Russians were bombing. On October 14th we reached Schwarzert. The Germans found herrings in a cellar. It was a large deserted ___?__ house. We ate. We cooked in the large beautiful kitchen. The Narva mothers and the Võru people went on ahead. We were left alone. We anguish that Trilbey is done for. From the Estonian soldier Zimmermann, we get a new horse Mustik in exchange for a bottle of grain alcohol.
October 15 Sunday.
We met up with Golding. He is ill - his stomach. We covered 30 km. We spent the night under the wag

Tribute Wall

JL

Dear Rennat family, I only happened to see the news of Prof Rennat's passing in my CSU newsletter a couple of days ago. What a magnificent long life. I was always grateful that he showed me the cooking grille that he hid in a rock crevice on Gray's Mountain. I used it several times and always carefully returned it to the hiding place. It is probably still there. Sincerely, Jacob Laete

Jacob Laete - January 15, 2014 at 12:00 AM

EH

Liebe Kaarin, lieber Ivar, ich schicke euch mein tiefes Mitgefuehl. Harry und Ingrid sind fuer mich wie meine zweiten Eltern gewesen. Wir werden sie in guter Erinnerung behalten. Herzlich, Eva Please accept my deep sympathy. Harry and Ingrid have been like parents to me. We will keep the memory alive.

Eva-Maria Hillmann - September 04, 2012 at 12:00 AM

SH

Liebe Kaarin, lieber Ivar, mein herzliches Beileid zum Tod eures Vaters. Er hat die langjährige Freundschaft zwischen unseren Familien begründet und gepflegt. Ich habe ihm meine ersten Eindrücke von Amerika und Reisen zu wunderschönen Orten zu verdanken - ihm und natürlich der lieben Ingrid mit ihrer warmherzigen Gastfreundschaft. Ich möchte euch für die Berichte über die Flucht aus Estland danken. Sie haben es mir ermöglicht, Ingrid und Harry vielleicht noch etwas besser zu verstehen. Auch in meiner Erinnerung haben diese beiden lieben Menschen einen festen Platz. Herzliche Grüße, Sabine Hillmann-Metz

Sabine Hillmann-Metz - September 04, 2012 at 12:00 AM

JV

Harry and Ingrid were wonderful friends for many decades. I valued Harry as an elder colleague at Colorado State University, and as the de facto leader of local Estonian-Americans. Not just a professor but a real engineer, Harry designed and built a very unique passive solar retirement home, with a panoramic view over the front range, which he got to enjoy for several decades, and where he and Ingrid graciously entertained friends from far and near. Suurtänu kõige eest, Harry ja Ingrid!

Jaak & Liia Vilms - August 20, 2012 at 12:00 AM

GV

It was such a privilege to know your Dad, and to meet you and Mia. You two have become some of our favorite people! We truly value your friendship. May the Lord comfort you, and give you peace during this time.

Gregg & Sandra Veal - August 20, 2012 at 12:00 AM

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Gregg & Sandra Veal - August 20, 2012 at 12:00 AM

BG

So Sorry, but a life well lived!

Bill & Sundae Gray - August 19, 2012 at 12:00 AM

GK

Dear Kaarin and Ivar, Please accept our sincere condolences on the loss of your father. May you have peace in his memory. Sympathetically, Kersh & Jolene Kershaw

Gary Kershaw - August 18, 2012 at 12:00 AM

LW

Dear Kaarin, Ivar and Marilyn, I send my heartfelt sympathy to all of you in the loss of your father/father-in-law. I never think of your family without thinking of Estonia and his obituary made mention of that and so many other interesting facts about his life-it was well-written and he was a man of many interests and talents throughout his life. I"m glad I was able to read about him and sorry I didn't meet him. His writing of his family's WWII experiences read like a novel. I"m so glad you made it available online. How much and how many frightening experiences they went through. The diary of Ingrid's mother was also filled with very tense experiences. You all have a rich family history. Kaarin, you were a faithful caregiver for both him and your mother. I know you all miss him-and her. I am sorry for your loss. Jim would share in the sending of our condolences I know. With love and prayers, Linda Wagner

Linda Wagner - August 16, 2012 at 12:00 AM

ST

My thoughts are with the Renate family. Continue your love of the outdoors to honor your family beliefs. With sincere sympathy,

Susan Tree - August 16, 2012 at 12:00 AM

KA

My sincere condolences to the family. Karen Rosener

Karen - August 15, 2012 at 12:00 AM