

Life History of Franz Hübert (1913 – 1944)

Written by Sister Maria Kliewer (née Hübert)

My twin brothers Gerhard and Franz were born on January 29, 1913 in the village of Nikolaifeld, in the Territory of Omsk. Franz was very weak: he had the English disease (rickets). To that was added an ear infection that never healed, so for life he remained partially deaf. As a result, he became shy, remaining in the background in company. But Gerhard and Franz were one heart and one soul. Gerhard protected his brother in everything, even if he had to use his iron fists from time to time. But Franz managed school quite well, being especially strong in mathematics.

In their early childhood the brothers had to work unspeakably hard because we had a large enterprise with lots of land. When the collectives were created, Franz was chosen as a bookkeeper in a tractor brigade. At the age of 28, in the year 1941, on November 20 in the village of Putschkowo he married Susanne Schröder. (We moved to Putschkowo in 1924.)

But in March 1942 he was already conscripted into the work camps. He first went to Nasywaewka, but later he was transferred to Barnaul. Here began the full path of sorrow: forced labour, hunger, illness. His strength disappeared. He was so weak that he saw no way out but to flee. In the meantime, in September 1942, his son Franz was born. One evening in the summer of 1944 Franz got the courage to get up and leave: emaciated, hungry, weak. His one wish was to see his son before he died. His plan was first to go to Pawlodar, to his sister-in-law Tina Neufeld; here he wanted to rest, and then continue to Putschkowo, to his family. Three weeks he wandered. By day he hid in straw stacks or in thick forests, where he found leaf mushrooms or berries with which to stay his hunger. His boots disintegrated, leaving raw flesh instead of boot soles. Finally he reached his goal. Tina did everything possible to help her brother-in-law. When 3 weeks had passed, Franz said, "Now Tina, tonight I'm leaving for home."

She gave him her bicycle with a good pack of provisions, and he left. But just 2 km. out of the village and the green coats were already after him. He was arrested. Later it was learned that Tina's neighbour, a Volga German, a spy, had immediately called the NKVD. Yes, Franz was then taken to a camp near Kriwoschökowo for punishment (near Novosibirsk). Initially he worked at falling trees. It was inhumane – 10 km. to work, and 10 km. back, at -40 C, with only bread and stinky soup. His weakened body could not bear this for long, so Franz was hospitalized. There he completed his suffering. He lived just 31 years. His grave is the second unknown grave in our family.