

## Life History of Maria Kliewer (née Hübert) 1915

My twin little sister Margarethe and I were born December 10, 1915 in the village of Nikolaifeld, in the Territory of Omsk. Mama recounted to me that one day shortly thereafter my uncle, Uncle Jakob Hübert, leader of the Mennonite Brethren Church, had come by and with raised hands had spoken a blessing over us. Knowing about this act has given me the strength to battle on in my hardest hours. My sister lived only till 2.5 years of age.

My sister Lena was born after the death of my father. Mother then had a hard life: the large farmyard, 8 children: small, smaller, and smallest. As a result, we learned to work early. At age 6 I marched off to school, in slippers with wooden soles. Almost all the children wore such footwear—and that resulted in such noise and rattling around, as if a troop of soldiers had marched in.

My backpack—crocheted out of rough hemp sacks, filled with a slate tablet to which was tied a moist wiping cloth and 1 slate pencil. I was such a proper dummy, but Father had arranged that all of us had to begin school at 6 years of age. I completed 3 grades in Nikolaifeld. I had a wonderful, wise teacher (a Miss Helene Koop), who understood how to engender the love of learning into even the most shy children.

With the move to Putschkovo I entered a different school, one I didn't like. But I had to get along. And then as the collectives were developed we all actively shared the work and our social situation markedly improved. We had a good leader, who also organized the youth. A sports program was developed, field trips were organized, and music and song circles were held regularly. The youth was always busy.

In the '30s two of my older sisters married, and two brothers. And I also married in 1938. The chosen one was Heinrich Kliewer from Nikolaifeld. On the day of our wedding a heavy rain began at midday, with lightning and thunderclaps till the next day at noon. I think that was a bad foreshadowing of my future, since Heinrich Kliewer left his family and created a new one. Since starting his second family, he never visited his first one. But the ruined family produced three children: Margarethe 20.02.1941, Margita-Lenore 04.09.1942, and Heinrich 17.04.1947. We came to Germany with Margita and Heinrich in 1990, and Margarethe came in 1996.

By profession I was a teacher, but in 1958 I was fired because of my faith. In 1959 I moved to Alma-Ata, and worked in a vineyard and in various other jobs, until I felt led to leave Alma-Ata. In 1966 I moved to the city of Omsk, and worked there for 3 years. I've now been retired since 1970.