

MEMORIES OF MY FAMILY

BY Fritz Westhues - April & May, 1983

Edited by Sr. Mary Westhues

My Father was born on a farm at Horst, near Werne, South of Muenster. All I know about my Dad before he married is as follows:

He was drafted into the German Army when he was twenty-one years old. During his time in service war broke out between Germany and France. He was in the infantry but he didn't carry a gun because he was fortunate enough to be chosen to take care of the officer's horse. So he also had a horse to ride. On cold nights he would take the cover off the horse and wrap in it himself.

When I was a boy he told many stories about the war. His home was with his Mother and Father and one brother and one sister. After his stay in the Army he went back home but saw there was no future for him there. It was a small farm and the German custom was that the oldest son got the farm. So he went to look for a job. He came past a church and stopped to ask God to help him. Shortly after that he met a Government official and asked him for a job. The man hired my Dad to be his chauffeur. Dad took care of his team of horses and drove the Officer and members of his family anywhere they wished to go.

He told many interesting things that happened during the time he worked for this person. He often thought of his future, and he knew he could not spend his life in this job.

My father wanted to marry but could not find the right girl. One day he was talking to a group of girls and there she was, Theresa Peters. She had blond hair, big blue eyes, a beautiful girl. He immediately fell in love with her and after a short courship they were married. My Father was 32 years old when he married and my Mother, who was born at Sythen, near Haltern, was 18 years old.

They moved to a rented farm near Greven, Germany, North of Muenster. (We are not certain where the first three children were born, even though Father Joe had listed 'Greven' as his place of birth. The Church records there did not show this. Theresa, Henry and Bernard are recorded at St. Martinus Church in Greven.)

They didn't have much money but they were happy. They raised most of their own food. They didn't have to work hard because of the over-population of Germany. My Mother always had a maid and my Father always had a hired hand who lived in the house with the family. They didn't have to pay them much . . . sometimes they just stayed for their board and keep.

My Mother's Mother (Mrs. Peters) and some friends had already moved to America, and they wrote and told her what a beautiful country it was. Because they could not find a farm to purchase, America looked like an answer, so my parents, with their six children, came to Missouri in 1892.

They came to America because they wanted to be free. In Germany tax collectors and other government officials were appointed instead of elected so they were often rude to people and not at all accommodating. My parents wanted their freedom. They also didn't want the boys to serve in the German Army because the Officers treated the private soldiers like slaves. The officers were rough and dominating.

My Grandmother (Mrs. Peters) with four of her five sons came to America about 1885 (?) I don't know the exact date. My Mother was the only girl in the family. One son, Joseph, stayed in Germany as he worked for a railroad company and made a good salary. The other boys were George, Fritz, Henry, Herman and John.

Fritz Peters became a priest. While he was still young he asked Archbishop Glennon to let him be a chaplain at the state prison, which he did for several years. The program he began is still going today. Then the bishop bought 12,000 acres in the wilderness of Dunklin County, down in the boothill of Missouri. He asked Father Fritz go go there and start a settlement and a parish. The land was all in timber and very swampy. The first masses were said in an old abandoned barn. The men got sawmills down there and built a new church out of lumber from the land. Because the land was so wet, they had to make drainage ditches and then clear the trees and stumps so they could farm. Their main crop was cotton.

George Peters, the oldest son, and his wife and three sons, John, Ted and Fritz, and five sisters also moved to Glennonville in Dunklin County and settled on a farm. They had been living in Aholt, Mo. As they had a large family, we have a lot of cousins down there that we don't know. Uncle George was a tall man with a full beard and mustache. He was very kind and gentle, and was a big help for Uncle Father Fritz in settling that new and wild land. When they moved down there, they still had many wild animals there, wildcats, bobcats, wild turkeys and deer. It is now a beautiful farming community.

Uncle John Peters also became a priest. A few years after ordination, Archbishop Glennon asked him to establish a parish in St. Louis where there were a lot of Catholics but no rich people. Father John was a good organizer so he got the people to work. He didn't ask any of his parishoners to give much, but he asked everyone to give a little. He built a large church, school and all purpose building with bowling alleys. He was very independent. The bishop would come and try to tell him what to do. Father John would tell the bishop to go take care of your diocese, and I'll take care of my Parish. Father John loved young people. He worked and played with them constantly and always had young boys taking care of his house. Quite a few of these boys became priests. He was a great athlete and major league scouts tried to get him to try out to be a catcher but he wanted to be a priest.

Uncle Herman Peters was the third son. He married Mamie Tihen and they ran a small grocery store in Jefferson City. They had no children of their own so they adopted one boy and one girl. Uncle Herman had a beautiful tenor voice and sang many solos in St. Peters Church during services. Aunt Mamie had a brother who was a bishop in Kansas, Bishop Tihen.

Uncle Henry Peters never married. He spent his winters in Dunklin County with Father Fritz and in the summers he worked for a farmer in Iowa.

I was young when my Grandmother Peters died, but I can remember many good times we had when she lived here with her sons. They were a fun loving family and always playing tricks on their friends. We were often invited to their home for dinner. After dinner we always played some kind of games and would have a parade. We would cut branches off trees, hold them up and march around, anything for fun. When they came to our house for evening meals we would sing a lot and play games. Three or four would go into a room and make up a play. Then they would come and put it on for us.

When my Father went to buy his ticket to America, he was scolded by the authorities. They told him it was wrong to take five boys away from the Kaiser. They must have had world conflict on their minds then already. It took them about ten days to cross the ocean. One day they were mostly on deck when someone saw a strange object on the ocean and all the people rushed to that side of the ship. It almost tilted, and the crew had an awful time getting things straight again. Another time they lost Henry, who was four years old. They looked all over the ship for him and were about to give up the search when someone found him in the captain's room, asleep on the sofa.

They landed in New York where they had to exchange their money - \$1500.00. They put this money on the counter. The man glanced at it and grunted a time or two, and then gave them their money. They took a train to Salisbury, Missouri and the branch train to Glasgow. The Peters boys met them at Salisbury and they went first to Grandmother Peters home.

The Peters boys had several farms picked out for them, all in the Missouri bottoms. My Father told them he would move back to Germany before he would settle in the bottom. Then they took him east of Glasgow to see the Pat Neville place, but he wouldn't buy that because it had a railroad track right in front of it. Someone in the group always kept saying, "Let's show him Pepens place". So they finally took him to Pepens place and he bought it before he walked in the front gate.

Herman Pepen was an immigrant from Germany, not married and had no relatives or money. Almost every home in our community had a room for Pepen. He was a typical bum but everyone respected and loved him. He also worked for people in the community. This place had a large two story house on 37 acres. It stood on a beautiful location on top of a hill. They bought it from Mr. C. Ikelbant for \$80.00 an acre. My father made a small down payment on it and borrowed the rest of the money from the local bank.

They had a hard time getting started here. They had to buy horses, equipment and everything to establish a home. Grandma Peters had lived here for a few years and she was well thought of and she helped them to borrow money. The stores in town also gave them credit until they could raise a crop.

Theodore, the oldest, was twelve years old when they arrived. As they grew up they all helped with the work on the farm. There were four more children born here in America. . Mary, John, Anna and Fritz. It was a well-organized family . . each one had his or her work to do. After Theo and Will got old enough to work the fields my Father became a good gardener. He loved to raise chickens, turkeys, ducks and geese. He loved dairy cows and we always milked about 10 cows. My Mother made butter from the cream which we sold at the grocery store and the hotel.

It was also a religious family. At meal time no one touched any food until everyone was seated and prayers were said. Besides the meal prayer they said the Angelus three times a day. During Lent and Advent they always said the rosary after supper. The rest of the year they said the Litany of the Blessed Virgin after supper.

My Father and Mother went to Mass twice a week. They had a heavy buggy and took butter and vegetables along. I took many a pound of butter to the hotel. We had a blue bucket to take it in. I would go in the front of the hotel, up one flight of steps then turn right through a long spooky hall and turn left through another hall, finally I got to the kitchen to deliver the butter. My Father only paid his grocery bill once a year. He would take so much produce to the store that at the end of the year when he paid his bill sometimes the groceryman owed him money.

We also had an ice cellar, it was 12 feet by 12 feet and was 10 feet deep. We would fill it up with ice in winter, taking 21 wagon loads of ice to fill it. Then we put straw on it. It would keep all summer. Twice a week we got ice out of the cellar and filled the ice box. It worked fine. We had home made ice cream and fried spring chicken about twice a week.

I was the last child born, the runt. My Father took a look at me. He looked at me and seemed to be thinking 'He is a little scrub but if we feed him good we can make something out of him.' My Father was a strict man. He was honest and expected the family to be obedient. He was five feet ten inches tall and weighed 160 lbs. He was very strong for his size. He was a serious man but loved a good joke. He would not put up with a dirty joke . . . that was a no-no.

My Father loved to eat. My Mother used to put the best food on his plate and feed him like a child. He raised his own tobacco and smoked a pipe most of the day. After supper he always smoked a cigar and read the German newspaper, "The America". My Father took a jigger of whiskey every day, keeping a bottle in the ice box always. He loved a bottle of beer at 10 o'clock in the morning with a country ham sandwich. He had his own vineyard and made his own wine every year which he shared with his family and friends. I never once saw him drink too much. My father was loved and respected by all his children.

My father loved any kind of poultry, he also loved cattle and horses. With the family's help he cared for all this stock. He raised three mule colts every year. He would keep them until they were two years old, then break them to work. They would match them up in pairs and sell them, making good money that way. They also raised about 20 calves every year. They kept them around the barn and fed them in winter, when spring came and grass grew they turned them out on the wooded ranch. That was the easiest money they made. They also kept 8 sows to raise pigs. When they weighed about 225 lbs. they sold them. They raised wheat to sell, and raised corn and oats to feed the livestock. When they bought the wooded ranch it was a jungle. There were large trees on it and the under-brush was so thick they could not ride a horse through it. At that time Glasgow had a population of 2300 people, half of them were black. They wanted work, so my Father hired them to cut cord wood off the ranch, paying them \$1.50 a cord. In the spring my brothers would sell the wood in town for \$8.50 a cord.

My Mother was a beautiful lady. She had large blue eyes, silvery hair and a good humor. She was very religious, always joining my Father when he went to Mass and joined him in prayers. When a severe storm came she would light a blessed candle and gather the family together to say some prayers. On Christmas eve when all the gifts were given and all the celebration was over she would light a blessed candle, then one of us kids would carry the candle with her as she sprinkled every room in the house with holy water. My Mother didn't work in the garden very much. . my father didn't want her to. Sometimes she took the hoe and worked a little. Then they would ring the Angelus at St. Mary's Church in Glasgow and she would lay her face on her hands and say the Angelus. . it was a very impressive sight.

The first thing I can remember of life is my mother putting me to bed every night. She would tuck me under the covers, then she would put her check against mine and say 'Ahh'. I can't remember my mother ever kissing me on my mouth, but when I was a child she often gave me an 'Ahh'. My father was a stern, very strict man. He was kind and gentle but didn't believe in any foolishness. His main goal in life was to take care of his family. Then there was the other nine kids.

The children all attended St. Mary's School in Glasgow. They had no transportation so they walked. After the children were old enough to start life on their own, Mr. & Mrs. Westhues made out a plan.

If they wanted an education, Mr. Westhues would pay for it, but then they were on their own. If they wanted to stay home and be farmers later, he would help them get started. If they stayed home until they became twenty-one years old, they got a horse and buggy of their own. After that they got \$250.00 a year put in their savings account. They were given their spending money. If they stayed home and didn't marry until they were twenty-eight, they would also receive \$1000.00, three horses, a plow, wagon, harrow, two cows and two sows.

Will was the first one to marry, before I can hardly remember. He loved to sing. He wasn't afraid of anybody or anything. He also played the french harp (harmonica). They settled on a farm adjoining the home place. He married a carpenter's daughter and her father built the house for him, using native lumber, cutting the logs off the land he bought. They raised five boys and two girls.

Theodore married next. He was the oldest and stayed home and helped my Father until he was 32 years old when he married Lena Moorman from St. Louis. She had been keeping house for her Uncle, Father Waeltermann, pastor of St. Mary's Parish. Theodore was the quiet type, peaceful and kind. He always wanted to do something for somebody else. Their first two babies died in infancy. They raised three boys and two girls.

Father Joe was the third son of the Westhues family. He was gone to college before I can remember, going to Quincy, Ill. and St. Louis, being ordained at 23. My dear brother, Father Joe, was a very dynamic person. He was an excellent speaker, his first parish was at Kahoka, Missouri. He was then appointed to a large parish (Holy Trinity) in St. Louis. After spending many years there, Archbishop Glennon asked him to establish a new parish in Riverview Gardens in north St. Louis. He built a church, school

and multipurpose building. The people of his parish were mostly gardeners and not wealthy, but they all helped and were successful. The multipurpose building made them lots of money, for besides their own activities they rented it to other organizations for picnics, etc. Businesses entertained their employees there also. Father Joe had two personalities. When he performed his priestly duties he was soft and gentle. He had a great love for the church. When he was out with the boys he was tough. He loved baseball and played it hard. He loved to wrestle with his brothers. He never tired of hunting, he could hunt from morning till night and not get tired.

Theresa stayed home for some years and helped her mother. She lost her health and decided not to marry. She said she didn't want to leave a motherless family behind. She kept house for Father Plaus in Jefferson City for many years . . she was his housekeeper, secretary, and drove his car for him. Her illness became worse, so she came back to her home in Glasgow and died a few years later. She loved beautiful things. She bought the antique lamp that we still have. I was six years old when she bought it. She taught me love songs when I was so young I didn't know what they meant. One went like this: 'Oh you kid, kiss me quick or else I'll have to scold you, nod your head and don't your answer no sir, Oh you kid'. When company came she would make me sing it for them. I was only six years old and just a little runt. She also taught me Christmas songs, and helped me with my lessons. She had a beautiful death. . Father Bonkamp brought her communion about eight o'clock one morning. After she received the sacraments, she yawned a time or two and slept away. She has been gone almost seventy years but I think of that beautiful person often.

Henry left the farm when he was seventeen years old and I don't remember much about him at that time. He worked in town a few years at the drug store, then went to St. Louis University law school, graduating when he was twenty-three. He, like Ben, loved to date the society girls in Glasgow. He opened a law office in Jefferson City, and later was appointed City Attorney there. A few years later he got into politics and was elected Prosecuting Attorney for several terms. After that he ran for Circuit Court Judge three times and was elected every time. Half way through the third term he resigned because a large corporation offered him much more money. Then the great depression hit the country and the corporation went broke. The Supreme Court of Missouri Judges were so far behind with their work that they needed help. So the Governor appointed Henry as commissioner to the court. A Supreme Court Commissioner does the same work as a Judge and received the same salary. After some years he was appointed a member of the Missouri Supreme Court. Then he was made presiding Judge of the court. Henry and his wife, Helen Roer, had six girls and one boy.

Ben loved horses and mules. He liked to break them to work. He wasn't any larger than his brothers, but he was strong. He liked the girls and they liked him. He had a beautiful black horse and a shiny buggy. He would drive his beautiful horse and buggy to town to show off. Then he would date the society girls. He often gave me good advice. If he caught me doing something wrong he never told my parents, he would give me a talking to, he was very conscientious. When he was twenty-eight he married a girl from Moberly. He bought a farm north of the home place and lived there a few years. He saw greener grass in Moberly so he sold his farm and moved to Moberly. Ben and his wife raised two boys and three girls.

Mary stayed home and helped her mother until she was about twenty-five years old. She was engaged to a boy who was in the service in the first world war. When he came home from service they were married. They ran a dairy in Glasgow for some years. She died at the age of about forty years. Mary and her husband had four boys and two girls. I remembered her as a sophisticated type person. She had to have everything clean and neat. She spent a lot of time reading novels and anything interesting. She loved music and also played the piano. She loved pretty clothes. When there was work to be done she didn't waste any time, she got it done.

Mr. Westhues died when John was twenty-five years old. Then there were just three left on the home place . . Mrs. Westhues, John and Fritz.

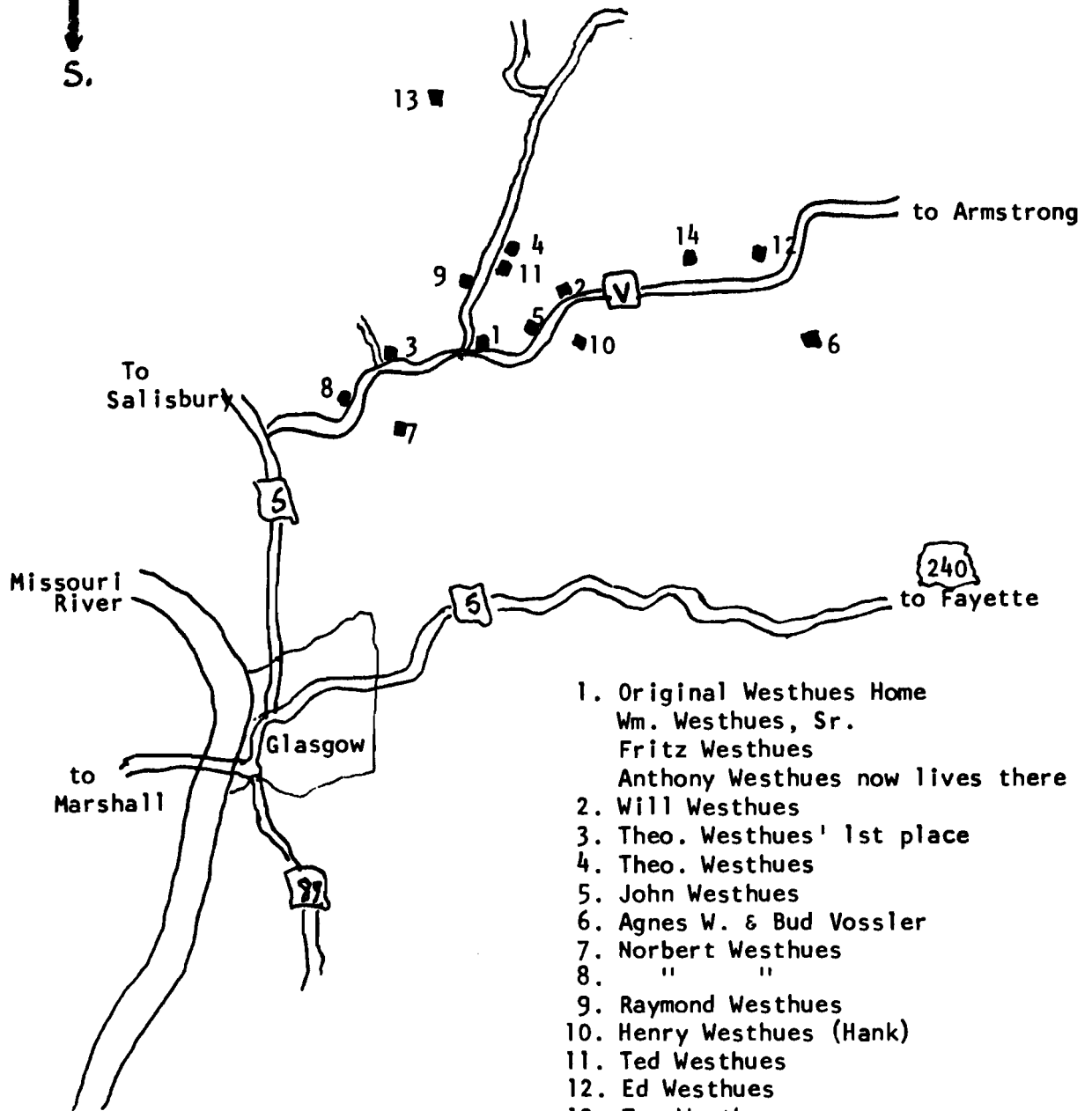
The next year John married a girl from south of Glasgow. There were two hundred acres left of the home place, so Mrs. Westhues sold one hundred acres to John. He built a house on it, also using mostly native lumber that he harvested off the land he bought. John and his wife raised four boys and two girls. John's hobbies were purple martins, coon hounds and baseball. We spent many an hour playing catch baseball. He taught me how to throw curves. He would build martin boxes in winter then put them on a long pole in the spring. The martins would come by the dozens and nest in his bird boxes. He loved to watch them. He would never tire of coon hunting. He had the patience to train a dog, he would take his dog out for two or three nights and not catch a thing, but he would never give up. He made quite a bit of money at it too. He played a lot of baseball and when he got too old to play himself he always managed a boys' team.

After John married, Mrs. Westhues and Fritz lived on the home place for five years. Mrs. Westhues died when Fritz was twenty-six years old. Fritz then bought the home place and married a girl from Kansas City. Fritz and his wife raised five girls and three boys. Fritz was small in size and wasn't very strong. He loved everything about the farm and sports. His father wanted him to go to college, but he said he wanted to stay on the farm and break young mules and hunt rabbits.

Anna lived at home and helped her mother until she was twenty-two years old. She married a boy from Osage County who had purchased a farm in the river bottom. After a few years the farm was destroyed by the flooding of the Missouri river. The river changed its course and went right through their land. They sold what they had left and moved to Jefferson City where they opened a grocery store and butcher shop. They were very successful. Anna and her husband had six girls and one boy. Anna was the youngest girl and was a strong girl, almost a tomboy. We rode horseback together and played down by the cold spring, built dams by the waterfall, stole watermelon and always had chores to do. We took care of ducks, turkeys and chickens. Anna was good at doctoring little chickens when they got the 'gaps.' She played the piano and spent a lot of evenings singing.

Editor's Note:

Uncle Fritz wrote this in three articles entitled "The William Westhues Family," "All I Know About My Dad Before He Married" and "A Boy Growing Up On a Farm." For clarity and to avoid duplication, I have incorporated all the material into this article. I have changed a few names and dates for accuracy, but other details I was unable to verify.



1. Original Westhues Home
Wm. Westhues, Sr.
Fritz Westhues
Anthony Westhues now lives there
2. Will Westhues
3. Theo. Westhues' 1st place
4. Theo. Westhues
5. John Westhues
6. Agnes W. & Bud Vossler
7. Norbert Westhues
8. " "
9. Raymond Westhues
10. Henry Westhues (Hank)
11. Ted Westhues
12. Ed Westhues
13. Tom Westhues
14. Art Westhues

Some of the Westhues farms at Glasgow.
at various times