

Brief History of Dr. Erich Fischer, M.D.

by Steve Fischer

My father, Erich Fischer, was born in Kattovice, Germany (now Poland) in October of 1901 and raised with a brother and sister who both died of childhood illnesses.

The family moved to Breslau, Germany (now Wrotzclaw, Poland) to allow Erich to attend the University of Breslau and then medical school. He specialized in ear, nose, throat, and eyes at several universities including the University of Munich. He completed his internship and residency at about same time Hitler came to power (early 1930's).

Shortly after Erich began practicing medicine, Hitler began his ascent to the Chancellorship of Germany. Limitations soon began to be imposed on Jews, gypsies, any religious or political dissidents and many others.

It quickly became evident to Erich and his parents that non-Aryans were being discriminated against and that he soon would not be allowed to practice medicine.

My grandparents (Rosa and Josef Fischer) wrote to an uncle in Kansas City, Missouri and asked him to sponsor my father's immigration to the United States. At that time, sponsorship was required to enter this country and to certify that one would never become a ward of the State.

He arrived in Kansas City in 1935 with very little command of the English language and with a heavy German accent. Unfortunately, the United States and hospitals here did not recognize the medical educational facilities in Europe, even though they might have been far superior. He was required to repeat his internship and residency at Jewish Hospital in St Louis. Upon completion, he reentered private practice in St Louis.

By this time, Germany had invaded Poland and "Kristallnacht" had initiated the atrocities of World War II. My grandparents endured another few years in Breslau after having their business and lives confiscated by the Nazis. They existed because food was smuggled to them by former household help and some gentile friends.

My father met my mother, Liesel Friendsdorf, in St Louis. She also had a cousin to sponsor her immigration. Both earned their U.S. citizenship and were married in December 1939.

My family truly loved this country and the haven and opportunities it provided them. It was not surprising that my father would volunteer to join the Army Medical Corps at the age of 40. He served four years and followed the Marines onto Iwo Jima and Guadalcanal in the South Pacific. His heavy German accent made it very difficult for him.

I was born shortly after he was shipped overseas and did not meet my father until I was two years old.

Once Erich obtained his U.S. citizenship, it raised the lottery number of his parent's to emigrate from Germany. By good fortune, they reached St Louis a mere two months before the "death

trains" came to Breslau to take Jews to concentration camps and death. At this point, my mother, father, and both sets of grandparents and I all lived in a three bedroom apartment on a soldier's salary.

Dad returned from the war and resumed private and hospital practice. His experiences in Germany and the war remained with him until his death in 1977.



<— Dr. Erich and Liesel Fischer



Steve Fischer —>