



Vahsholtz Cousins

Spring 2008 Vol. 2 No. 1

<http://www.vahsholtz-cousins.org>

Join the fun

2008 Vahsholtz Cousins Reunion
will be July 25-27 in Branson, MO

The Vahsholtz reunion family meeting will be held Saturday, July 26, at reunion headquarters, the Savannah House Hotel. The hotel's breakfast room is available throughout the reunion for socializing and photographs.

See the agenda inside and fill out the registration form to let us know you'll be coming.

Vahsholtz Reunion members get a 15-percent discount

for the family-friendly, country-music show

Presleys' Country Jubilee

7 p.m. Saturday, July 26.

\$23.72 for adults

\$11.86 for children under 12

Tickets must be purchased before June 30.

Send money and ticket information to

Allan Brockmeier

11764 Kingston Dr.

Festus, MO 63028

(636) 937-7865

Make your hotel reservations before May 30
to guarantee the reunion rate

Be sure to mention the Vahsholtz-Cousins Reunion to the get the discount rate.

Savannah House Hotel

165 Expressway Lane

Branson, MO 65616

1-800-335-2555

or online at

www.savannahhousebranson.com

New cousin found in Berlin thanks to Web site

Cornelia Vahsholtz from Berlin, Germany, sent an e-mail greeting – “Happy New Year for all Vahsholtz relatives in the world” – and found that indeed she is linked to a big group of Vahsholtz cousins in the United States.

Webmaster Les Vahsholtz said he was delighted to hear from a new relative. “That’s why we built the Web site,” he said.

Cornelia was surfing the World Wide Web when she came across the Vahsholtz-Cousins Web site and sent her message across the world.

“We would like to come to the Vahsholtz reunion, but I think we don’t have holiday in July,” she wrote (in English).

Years ago, U.S. family historians had tracked down another Vahsholtz cousin in Germany and remain in contact with Martin Vahsholtz, who lives in Remagen, Germany. Martin and his son, Wolfgang, and daughter, Barbara, keep in touch with the U.S. cousins, and some U.S. cousins have visited Martin in Germany.

It seems, Cornelia and Martin are related – although they don’t know each other.

See COUSINS, Page 4

A life changed by war

By Bobbie Mlynar
Emporia Gazette
Reprinted by permission

Paternal twins Milton and Melvin Vahsholtz shared a bond that is common between twins.

"We played together, and we laughed together, and we went to church together," Milton Vahsholtz said.

On March 13, 1945, they almost died together.

The boys, born June 24, 1927, in Herington, were two of the 13 children of Henry L. and Lena Vahsholtz. The twins were children when the family moved into Lyon County, near Americus, and they'd grown up taking care of each other.

"Anybody who wanted to fight had to fight both of us," said Vahsholtz, the other of the twins. "They got to where they didn't do it."

When they were 17, the boys realized they were about to be drafted into World War II; they enlisted together in the Army, where they served in the 43rd Infantry Division after completing basic training at Fort Hood, Texas.

The twins were stationed in San Francisco for a time, before shipping out on a 23-day journey on a troop ship convoy to a base in New Guinea. En route, they were intercepted by ships of the Japanese Navy.

Church services were under way at the opposite end of the ship when the torpedo attack began on the convoy. At least one of the ships was struck and servicemen scrambled to get off the ship and away from it as it sank.

"The suction of the boat will pull you under," said Vahsholtz, explaining the men's need to put as much distance as possible between themselves and the ship.

The rest of the ships made it to New Guinea, where the men encountered what Vahsholtz called "by far the roughest terrain" he'd seen.



Milton Vahsholtz with a photo of himself and his twin brother, Melvin, during World War II.

There, his lieutenant gave the soldiers advice: "You have two choices – you live or you die." Vahsholtz recalled the officer saying, "Don't be afraid to shoot."

The Japanese didn't hesitate, and Vahsholtz got his first taste of warfare.

"When I first knew I was really in combat, seeing those little dust spots – it was bullets," he said.

Eventually, the twins' unit landed on Christmas Eve 1944 in the Philippines, where some of the war's fiercest battles raged.

The country, made up of islands, was rife with mosquitoes that pestered the men continually and made life miserable.

The insects also spread malaria, despite medications dispensed by the Army. Soldiers easily recognized new troops because they lacked the yellow complexion caused by the anti-malaria drugs and common among the seasoned soldiers.

Vahsholtz said he contracted malaria twice during his tour of duty.

"I run a 106 fever and the nurse said 'Boy, you was lucky. You wouldn't have lived much longer,'" he said. "They had field hospitals, and they was full."

In between fighting Japanese soldiers and malaria, Vahsholtz and his twin sometimes managed to take off a day or two. Once, they hitchhiked 50 miles to secure pieces from the wings of one of the Japanese "Zero" fighter planes that lay, along with ships, sunk in the harbor. They fashioned the metal into bracelet souvenirs he said their mother kept in her top dresser drawer.

The boys traveled north to Baggio, where Gen. Douglas MacArthur kept a "beautiful summer home," Vahsholtz said. Seated in the mountainous area, Baggio enjoyed a cooler climate than the steamy south, where the 43rd Infantry was stationed.

Most of their time was spent looking for Japanese, digging foxholes and fighting the enemy.

The soldiers carried their ammunition and other supplies on their backs on their marches into the Philippine bush to flush out Japanese. Some soldiers hired Filipinos to carry supplies, which sometimes proved to be a mistake.

"If they got fired at, they'd throw everything down and run," Vahsholtz said.

He remembered seeing Japanese soldiers approach, and lying down flat on the ground to pick them off as they drew nearer.

On another patrol, the unit heard voices coming from a nearby creek.

"We crawled in through the brush and there was a whole company of Japanese eating dinner," he said. "We kind of ruffled them up a bit. They didn't know we was even around."

Vahsholtz grew accustomed to seeing death and its aftermath, describing bodies that had been dismembered and flies crawling into eye cavities of Japanese soldiers.

"War is a horrible thing. For them and for us," Vahsholtz said. "I suppose they had families waiting at home."

The twins were together in a foxhole on March 13, 1945, when a mor-

See LIFE CHANGED, Page 3

Life changed: War takes its toll

Continued from Page 2

tar shell came screaming in. Melvin took the main hit and when the dirt cleared, Milton could see his twin was critically injured.

"I pulled him over and put his head on my lap and he was really bleeding," Vahsholtz said. "He died in my arms."

Melvin's foot had been blown off and an arm hung on by a thread of skin.

"He did talk to me some, but he was going into shock. He looked pretty forlorn laying in my lap. It was hard to take," he said. "...He looked at me and I looked at him, 'cause I knew that was going to be it. He grabbed my hand and told me good-bye and that was about it. He told me to tell Mom good-bye."

"She took it hard," Vahsholtz said of Melvin's death. "She couldn't wait for us to come home. Of course, Melvin didn't make it."

Melvin was buried in the national cemetery about three miles outside Manila on Luzon Island, Vahsholtz said. Their father, Henry, also died while Vahsholtz was in the Philippines; he was unable to go home for the funeral service.

"We were having battles, you know," he said, resignedly.

He continued to fight in the Philippines until the war ended; then he guarded Japanese prisoners of war until he was discharged.

Despite Vahsholtz's yen to go home, a part of him enjoyed the quieter times in the Philippines, he said.

The people were friendly and often expressed gratitude to the soldiers by inviting them for dinner and decorating graves of the Americans who'd died trying to help them.

Vahsholtz and others made friends of the children and sometimes bought items at the PX to give to the little ones. As he was preparing to board the boat to go home, he said, the beaches were lined with children waving and hollering at the soldiers.

Vahsholtz came home and settled back into civilian life. He and Melvin



Siblings Milton, Eleanor and Melvin at home during the twins last furlough Milton and Melvin had before going overseas.

had planned to farm together, but that plan died with Melvin.

"I looked up at the good Lord – what to do, and he told me," Vahsholtz said.

He became a carpenter and spent his professional life building houses, all with fireplaces, and other structures. He built the veterans' memorial in front of Messiah Lutheran Church and often teases Administrator Mary Forsythe about his willingness to put a fireplace and a deck at Flint Hills Care Center, where he now lives.

Life on the whole has been good to Vahsholtz, after the rocky years in the 1940s were behind him. He and his wife, Joan, raised a family that extends down to great-grandchildren and his son and grandson took up the carpentry trade, too.

With his memory intact and his family nearby – granddaughter Tiffany works in the care center office – Vahsholtz is happy as he wheels up and down the halls, visiting with other residents. The hand injury he received during the fatal shelling in the Philippines doesn't deter him. His commanding officer recommended at the time that he put in for a Purple Heart because of the injury. Vahsholtz declined. "I've got my brother's Purple Heart," he said.

Vahsholtz brothers model for sculpture

By Bobbie Mlynar
Emporia Gazette
Reprinted by permission

Family and friends say that Milton Vahsholtz worried that people will forget his twin brother, Melvin. If a fund-raising drive going on in Junction City proves successful, Vahsholtz will not have to worry.

Efforts are under way to raise \$40,000 to install a bronze sculpture within a new roundabout at Junction City. The sculpture, which will be done by Emporia sculptor John Forsythe, will feature an obelisk surrounded by four panels representing the military service branches. One panel, representing the Army, will portray two men in a foxhole during World War II. Forsythe will use a photograph of the Vahsholtz twins in uniform, taken in 1944, to capture the faces of the young men.

The twins were sharing a foxhole in the Philippines when a Japanese mortar exploded in the foxhole and killed Melvin Vahsholtz. Melvin died in the arms of his twin.

Jim Waters of the Waters Hardware chain was instrumental in making arrangements for the roundabout and worked to gain approval to seat a sculpture within its perimeters.

"They had to clear everything with the town itself, so that process, I believe, is over and they're into the fund-raising end of things," Forsythe said. Water knew of Forsythe's work at the Negro League Hall of Fame in Kansas City, and asked him to take on the artwork. Forsythe submitted three "maquettes" – prototypes of his proposal – and the military format was chosen.

Cousins: New relatives found via Web site

Continued from Page 1

According to her e-mail, Cornelia is "the first daughter from Horst Gustav Eduard Vahsholz born 11.02.1932. And we are very sad, that he died 29.09.2006," she said.

"His father was Gustav Vahsholz (1903-1973). He was one son of Otto Albert Gustav Vahsholz (1869-1947), and he was one son of Franz Vahsholz (1839-1904), which was a son of Martin Vahsholz (1791-1848) and was even a son of Erdmann Vahsholz (1747-1807), the son of Christian Vahsholz (1705-1753), which was a son of Martin Vahsholz (1675-1725)."

Family historian Marge Vahsholtz compared Cornelia's family history and the Vahsholtz history published in the *Road to Zwilipp* family history book.

Cornelia mentions Franz Vahsholz, and he is mentioned in our Zwilipp book on Page 18 and in the family tree on Page 18A, Marge said.

Information about Franz in the book comes from Melvina's writings and the "Stammtafel der Familie



Cornelia (Conny) Vahsholtz (back, third from left) and family in Germany.

Vahsholz Hof Nr. 3" that came from 'our' Martin in Germany in 1990.

"For what it's worth, my computer relationship calculator says that (Cornelia's) Franz is a great-grand-uncle of 'our' Martin (b 1929)," Marge said.

Cornelia was born Sept. 12, 1955 and her only sister, Heike, was born Sept. 14, 1963. "We have

also children, which are living in Germany, like some other Vahsholtz relatives," she said.

"I would be happy if I could hear news from time to time about the relatives in America," she said.

Find lots more interesting history and information about your Vahsholtz cousins around the world at www.vahsholtz-cousins.org

Family loses historian

Duane Vahsholtz passed away at home in Vancouver, Wash., on Monday, Dec. 10, 2007, of cancer. Duane, the eldest of six children, was born Dec. 16, 1933 in Woodbine, Kansas, to Roy and Frieda Vahsholtz.

Duane was a special person who touched many people's lives. His contributions to the Vahsholtz family will continue, thanks to his work to preserve family history.

It is his photograph on the cover of *The Road From Zwilipp* book, taken during a trip he and his wife, Joanne, took there. The family Bible, known as Christian's Bible (See Page 15 of the book), was preserved by Duane, who had it rebound so it would survive for future generations.

Duane was very helpful in lots of the articles for the book as he had

been in touch with Martin (in Germany) over a number of years and supplied some of the old family documents used to build on the "begats" portion of the older family, too. Duane also had old data from his branch's early days. He was a very important player in the writing of the book.

He retired after 35 years in the Vancouver School District. As his profession changed from industrial arts teacher to high school counselor, his students continued to know him as an educator who cared about kids.

He married Joanne Peterson in May 1958, nearly 50 years ago. Over the years he became a devoted father to Carla, Trina and Angela. He was particularly happy when his grandchildren arrived and he was able to spend time with them.



'Uncle Hank' passes

Hank Vahsholtz, 94, of Woodland Park, Colo., died Dec. 14, 2007. In a fashion befitting "Uncle Hank," a horse and wagon carried his casket about a mile to the grave site. Hank was featured in the Fall 2006 of the Cousin's newsletter. He talked about water witching and how to carry a calf in a Model A Ford. You can see Hank's interviews online at <http://vahsholtz-cousins.org/2006-VIDEO-CLIPS.html>

AGENDA

2008 Vahsholtz-Cousins Reunion

REUNION HEADQUARTER IS THE SAVANNAH HOUSE HOTEL

Family meeting and registration will be in the spacious Savannah House breakfast room area

Friday - July 25

- 3-8 p.m. - Reunion sign-in at Savannah House Lobby (photos of families as they register)
- 9-11 p.m. - Free ice cream and cobbler in Savannah House breakfast room (provided by hotel for those staying at Savannah House)

Saturday, July 26

- 6-9 a.m. - Free hot breakfast in Savannah House breakfast room (provided by the hotel for those staying at the Savannah House)
- 9-10 a.m. - Continuing Reunion sign-in Savannah House breakfast room (photos of families as they register)
- 10 a.m. - Vahsholtz Cousins reunion meeting in Savannah House breakfast room. (other family photos can be shot at this time)

As meeting adjourns cousins may to go in groups to enjoy Branson together as they choose.

- 6 p.m. - Meet at Savannah House for those who want to carpool to Presley's Country Music Show.
- 7-9 p.m. - Presley's Country Jubilee Music Show.
- 9-11 p.m. - Free ice cream and cobbler (provided by hotel in the breakfast room for those staying at Savannah House)

Sunday, July 27

- 6-9 a.m. - Free hot breakfast (provided by the hotel for those staying at the Savannah House).
- 1 p.m. - Check out for those leaving the Savannah House

Sunday-Monday

Many cousins may choose to continue vacationing in Branson with their families and/or other Vahsholtz-cousins.

Everyone is responsible for booking their own rooms at the Savannah House - Tele: 800-335-2555

<http://www.savannahhousebranson.com/>

Important Note! We are blocking a group of rooms at the Savannah House. July is a busy season in Branson, so don't wait until the last minute to book a room. You can always cancel the room reservation if you decide not to come. **Motel reservations must be made before May 30, 2008**, to insure getting one of these blocked rooms! Room rates are reasonable but will vary depending on the number of occupants and size of the beds. For example, 2 queen beds with 2 adults is \$64.95 per night. Any additional adults are an extra \$8.00 per night. There is a maximum occupancy of four persons per room. Children under age 17 are free. Ask for the block of rooms reserved for the "Vahsholtz-Cousin Reunion."

Remember: Make reservations for the **Presley's Country Music Show** separately with Allan Brockmeier, 11764 Kingston Dr., Festus, MO 63028 (636) 937-7865. Discounted tickets are \$23.72 for adults and \$11.86 for children under 12. Tickets must be purchased before June 30 through Allan.

Check out these websites for information on exciting entertainment and family fun available in colorful Branson, MO. And, Branson has some of the nation's best "outlet malls"! <http://www.branson.com> <http://www.cityofbranson.org> <http://www.bransonsshows.com>

cut along line and return by US Mail or provide same information via e-mail to webmaster

PLEASE REGISTER SO WE CAN PLAN FOR YOUR ATTENDANCE

Names of all attending family members: _____
Address: _____ State _____ Zip code: _____
Telephone numbers: Home _____ Mobile _____
Email addresses: _____
Lodging location for reunion: Savannah House _____ Other _____
Friday or Saturday arrival time: _____

Register by US Mail to Les Vahsholtz, 7910 Hauser, Lenexa, KS 66215 Or choose to register by email to:
webmaster@vahsholtz-cousins.org or call (913) 522-9781

Please sign in with our Vahsholtz reunion volunteers in the Savannah House lobby when you arrive at Branson Friday 3-8 p.m. or Saturday 9-10 a.m.