

Lier Family



he family name Lier came to Frankenmuth through Joseph Georg Lier who was born in 1906 in Deidorf, Germany. He was the son of a merchant. Joseph was the sixth of eight children born to Johannes Lier (1875-1949) and his wife, Cassilda Kaufhold (1873-1909).

In 1925 at the age of 19, Joseph felt that he could not make a living in Germany and immigrated to the United States. He boarded a train to reach his ultimate destination of Caro, Michigan. Joseph was to meet a friend of his father's in Caro, but the train only took him as far as Owosso, which is located approximately 60 miles southwest of Caro. Because Joseph was unable to speak English, he had given the train conductor a prepared note, which informed him of Joseph's destination. Fortunately, when Joseph got off the train in Owosso, he found that the train conductor had arranged to have two young men take him to Caro in their Model "A" Ford. They arrived in Caro at nearly midnight. One of the young men went to the door of the home, where they were instructed to take Joseph, and then came back to the car for Joseph's suitcase. By that time, Mr. Sieland, Joseph's father's friend, was at the door to greet them. Because Joseph did not speak English, he asked Mr. Sieland, in German, to express his gratitude to the young men; but they were gone and Joseph was never able to express his appreciation to them or find out who they were.

Mr. Sieland took Joseph to the sugar factory to get a job. He was given a choice of living arrangements – either to stay with a widow a few years younger than he was or with a family who spoke German. Joseph never regretted choosing the widow's home because he quickly learned to speak English while living there. Joseph started working at the sugar factory and then went to work in a Saginaw saw mill. Eventually, Joseph decided that he would switch jobs.

He thought it necessary because of the hard labor and extreme weather conditions he had experienced at the saw mill. He went to work at the Shust Bakery for the two years. Joseph moved from job to job throughout those early years, but was never unemployed; he was always able to line up his new job before he quit his old one. At one time he worked for Abele's Greenhouse for 10 cents an hour, 10 hours a day and 6 1/2 days a week. Joseph also worked at Lufkin Rule in Saginaw.

In 1928, upon returning home from the Lufkin Rule Christmas Party, Joseph was introduced to a guest, 16 year old Helen Ortner. Even though they barely spoke to one another that evening, Joseph told Mrs. Hoffman after Helen left that he was going to marry this young woman. In 1930, Joseph Georg Lier and Helen Ortner were married. Their marriage lasted 51 years until her death in 1980. The marriage was blessed with three children: Edward, Bonnie Lou and Joy. Their grandchildren include: Jeffrey, Yolanda and Jerome Phillips, also, Gloria, Edward, Allen, Josef, Ralf and Larry Lier.

Joseph, better known to his family and friends as "Joe", retired from Lufkin Rule in 1965 after 27 years of service. Joe joined the Boy Scouts in 1937 and remained active in the Scouts even after 55 years of service. For his work with the Boy Scouts, Joe received every citation including the highest award, the "Silver Beaver". The State of Michigan awarded him the "Keep America Beautiful" award and the City of Frankenmuth awarded him the "Herb Keinath Award". He continued to be active in Frankenmuth Community organizations which include the Lion's Club, the Frankenmuth Conservation Club and St. Lorenz Lutheran Church. He is an honorary member of the Frankenmuth Rotary Club and Director of the Frankenmuth Woodcarvers Guild. Joe has donated some of his woodcarvings to various community organizations.

