

Bechanko Family



The Bechanko name comes from Russia and was originally spelled Bychanko, which means a "story teller". Alex Bechanko and his wife, Pauline nee Pesaranko, were born in a small village located about 30 or 40 kilometers from the large city of Saratov. Both the village and the city are located on the Volga River.

The Bychankos and the Pesarankos farmed large fruit orchards and gardens. After they were married in 1907 they had a daughter, Katherine. In 1909, Alex came to Detroit and worked for the Ford and Dodge Motor Companies. While Alex was in Detroit, his daughter, Katherine, died. Pauline then went to work in the thread mill to earn enough money to join Alex in Detroit. Pauline joined Alex in 1913 and they lived in Highland Park. July 23, 1915 another daughter was born, also named Katherine. March 13, 1917 their son, John, was born.

The Bechankos moved to Sebewaing, Michigan in the early 1920's because of health reasons. In 1929, they bought a farm in Tuscola County near Fairgrove. In 1948, Alex and Pauline moved to where their grandchildren remember going to see them. Their grandchildren also remember calling them "Baba" and "Deedu", shortened forms of the Russian words "Babushka" and "Dadushka" (Grandma and Grandpa). Alex died on July 25, 1959 and Pauline died November 12, 1974.

John Bechanko and Evelyn Beneman both grew up on farms and became acquainted through ice skating, playing cards, Halloween pranks, etc. They married September 14, 1940, in Bay City, Michigan. John was working for Briggs Manufacturing Company at the time, making auto bodies for Chrysler. In 1941, John and Evelyn bought a house in Ferndale, Michigan. March 28, 1941 they were blessed with fraternal twins, Gerald Lee and Judith Kay. A third child, Carol Jean, was born on November 13, 1947.

In 1948, John bought his father's farm near Fairgrove, Michigan and returned to farming. This farm house is still in the Bechanko family. John went to work at the Frankenmuth Brewery to earn additional money, doing both jobs for 20-25 years.

In 1966, after the children were grown, John rented out his farm and bought a house in Frankenmuth. Evelyn worked at the Frankenmuth Bavarian Inn until 1979, the year both John and Evelyn retired.

Daughter Judy worked for the Bavarian Inn Corporation from 1966 to January 2000, progressing from waitress, hostess, Schnitzelbank shop manager, to buyer for the Frankenmuth Gift Ship, Inc. She married John Thomas Humpert on December 26, 1959 and they divorced in 1965. Judy had three children: Deborah Kay, Donald John, and Darcie Kay. Darcie Kay also worked for the Bavarian Inn Corporation from 1985-1998.

The son, Gerald (Jerry) married Joanna Mae Robinson on August 31, 1963. Jerry graduated in 1964 from Michigan State University with a degree in Mechanical Engineering. Jerry held part ownership in Future Technologies Inc., since 1989, as well as holding the position of president. Jerry and Joanna had three children: Steven John, Thomas William, and Susan Kay.

The third child, Carol, married Clarence John Mahnke on June 26, 1965. For the next 23 years, Carol devoted herself to homemaking and/or the mothering of their two children, Daryle John and Dallas John.

Evelyn Bechanko died on September 22, 1995 and John died March 24, 1999. John and Evelyn's family, as of 2005, consists of their three children, eight grandchildren, fourteen great-grandchildren and one great-great-grandchild. The expanded family plans get-togethers on holidays.



*Researched & Compiled by Bavarian Inn Lodge
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