

Brender Family



The Brender family has been traced back to the year 1520, with the birth of Melchoir Brender. The marriage of a son, Caspar, born in 1560, was entered into the Herbrechtingen Evangelical Church records as Caspar Brender. It is through this marriage that the Frankenmuth Brenders trace their lineage.

Dr. "Fritz" Brender, (prominent Frankenmuth physician from 1935 to 1972), son of Georg Friederich Brender and Friederike nee Vogel, was the oldest son of ten children. At the age of 21, "Fritz" emigrated from Giengen, Wuerttemberg, Germany. He first arrived in New York, and after another 2 1/2 days of train travel, came to the destination of Kalamazoo, Michigan. There he was met by his second cousin, Leonard, who had assumed the sponsorship of "Fritz". In turn, "Fritz" worked on the Brender farm in Otsego, Michigan until repayment of this sponsorship was made.

It was during this time that "Fritz" decided to utilize the teaching degree he had received in Germany. Certification for teaching in Michigan required attendance at one of the Michigan universities. In order to earn the money required for tuition and fees, "Fritz" worked in a radio factory in Allegan, Michigan where he polished the cabinets. When enough money had been saved, he enrolled at the University of Michigan. Funds were still not readily available, so every night he would clean and wash dishes at "The Old German", receiving his meals as payment. He also tutored Dr. Simpson's son, Bonn, who had polio. It was through close contact with Dr. Simpson that "Fritz" received encouragement and support when he decided to become a physician.

After graduating from medical school in 1931, "Fritz" fulfilled his internship at Detroit's Harper Hospital. He completed a residency in pediatrics at Denver's Children's Hospital.

He then returned to Detroit where he completed a residency in Obstetrics and Gynecology at Detroit

Women's Hospital. It was there he delivered a child of the famous baseball player, Joe DeMaggio.

In 1935, Dr. "Fritz" Brender answered an advertisement for a German speaking physician. He came to Frankenmuth and went into practice with Dr. A.E. Pillsbury.

In 1936, Dr. "Fritz" Brender married Antonie Ogurkowski. The couple was blessed with five children: Frederick Heinz, a systems analyst; Charlotte Roxanne, a registered nurse; Elizabeth Ann, an office manager; John Helmuth, a systems analyst; and Thomas Michael, a policeman/parole officer.

Dr. "Fritz" Brender served Frankenmuth quietly. The rough, gruff façade of this man could easily be softened with a smile, a joke or a word of kindness. His generosity toward individuals unable to pay for his services, college students needing some assistance, full-time workers in the church, family in Germany, brothers and sisters who fell into hard times – all were helped without the fanfare of publicity. He did not want plaudits and would probably reprimand his family for mentioning it.

The oath he took to serve was taken seriously. There was little time for civic service, but he was active in the Cub Scout program when it was in its infancy. He was a charter member of the Frankenmuth Rotary Club, served as its second president, and for many years was chairman of the Ambassador Exchange Program. Dr. Brender was awarded the Paul Harris Fellowship Award, posthumously.

Dr. "Fritz" Brender reluctantly was forced to retire in 1972, due to illness. He died November 9, 1974 and is buried in St. Lorenz Cemetery. Antonie "Tony" Brender is currently a resident of Independence Village in Frankenmuth.

