

Henry S. Haberman Family Story

The following accounting of the Henry S. Haberman family is derived from on-line genealogy sources, war records and family member remembrances. Sources are cited where known and appropriate.

Henry S. Haberman (middle name not known) was born 17 June 1888 in Kolb, Saratov, Volga Region, Russia.¹ He immigrated to the United States in either 1908 or 1909² and like many Germans from Russia, he initially settled in the farming community of Sutton, Nebraska.³ He married Wilhelmina “Minnie” Hofmann on 18 January 1912 in Clay County near Sutton, Nebraska. Together they had four children: Lenora “Lenore” born about 1913 in York County, Nebraska; Theodore “Ted” Henry born 15 October 1917 in Keene, Nebraska; Wilbert “Willie” in 1920 in York County, Nebraska; and Edward A. “Eddie” born in 1921 in Nebraska. Actual birth dates of Lenore, Willie and Eddie are not present in on-line references but their birth order has been confirmed by a living (2015) family member.⁴ Ted’s birth date was confirmed in person to the author prior to Ted’s death and is documented in Ted’s obituary.

Wilhelmina Hofmann is the daughter of Jakob Hofmann and Rosina Griess who were among the original Germans from Russia settlers in Sutton. Wilhelmina was born 1 January 1887 in Sutton⁵ and as noted above married Henry Haberman in January 1912.

Jakob was brother to Christina Hofmann. Christina married John Michael Klein and was mother to Margaretha (Margaret or “Mike”) Klein. Margaret married George Meyer and were the parents of Bernice, Marvin, Verlin and Wilma Meyer. Wilhelmina’s eldest sister, Rossine, married Balthaser Bitterman who were the parents of Joseph Bitterman (and others). Joseph married Bernice Meyer.

These marriages are collections of Germans from Russia. The Haberman, Bitterman and Meyer (Meier⁶) families originated in the Volga Region; whereas the Klein, Hofmann and Griess families originated in the Black Sea Region of Russia. They all settled in and around Sutton and obviously interacted with each other probably through their Evangelical Lutheran church.

¹ 1910 US census record and various other records, ancestry.com

² *ibid*

³ *ibid*

⁴ Wilma Esther (Meyer) Boyer, adopted sister.

⁵ 1920 US census record

⁶ Modified Register for Johannes Meier, AHSGR.

Wilhelmina Haberman died 25 June 1921 at the age of 36 in Sutton⁷. According to family legend, she died in childbirth⁸ and Ted was known to have said his mother died because his father “always kept his mother pregnant.” Not much is known about Henry S. Haberman after Minnie died. The family is together in York, Nebraska in 1920 but the 1930 US census shows him living as a lodger to Louie and Alta Bruggman in Portland, Oregon. The 1940 US census shows Henry married to Blanche Haberman living in Signal Hill, Los Angeles County, California. This same census indicates Henry was living in York, Nebraska in 1935. He was also a naturalized citizen by the 1940 census. Willie as well as several other people (no obvious family connection) were living with Henry and Blanche⁹ in the 1940 census.

Lenore was 10 years old when her mother died. The 1920 US census records show Lenore living at home with her parents and siblings in York County. In the 1930 US census she is married (age 17) and living with her husband, Oliver Ralph Burnham in York County. It is not known where she lived in the nine years after her mother’s death in 1921 and before her marriage in 1930.

There is no record found showing where Theodore, Wilbert and Edward lived after their mother’s death in 1923. Apparently, Henry either abandoned his sons or “farmed” them out to other families who could take better care of them. This happened sometime before 1930 because the 1930 census shows all three boys had moved into the household of David and Marie Becker in Sheridan, Nebraska. Ted was 13, Willie 10 and Eddie 9 when they moved in with the Becker family. The Great Depression had started with the crash of the stock market in October 1929 and the Dust Bowl drought was underway by 1934.

George and Margaret (Klein) Meyer were living in Arriba, Colorado in 1930 but had moved back to Sutton around 1932. Work was scarce and times were tough. The Becker family lived on the farm next to where George and Margaret were living. Because of the lack of farm work and work in general, George and Margaret were considering moving back to Colorado. The sugar beet industry in Colorado attracted many German-Russian families to the Colorado area. According to family legend, Ted asked “Mike” (Margaret) if he could live with them and move to Colorado. He was about 15 years old. Mike told him it was ok with her if it was ok with George who said yes as well. They then made sure Ted’s father in York was ok with Ted crossing state lines and moving away. By 1932 or 1933, Ted had moved in with the Meyer family and from then on was always considered as an adopted son¹⁰. (The term “adopted” does not mean legal adoption but rather acceptance as one of the family.) The Meyer family came to Loveland, Colorado about 1936 (Bernice was married in Loveland in 1937 to Ted’s first cousin Joseph Bitterman).

The records do not show where Eddie lived between the 1930 and 1940 census. The 1940 census shows David and Marie Becker still living in Sheridan but neither Ted nor Eddie are shown as living in the household. It’s probable that Eddie was one of the many homeless drifters in the

⁷ US Find a Grave Index, [ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com)

⁸ Wilma Esther (Meyer) Boyer, adopted sister.

⁹ 1940 US census record and other records, [ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com)

¹⁰ Wilma Esther (Meyer) Boyer, adopted sister.

mid-west living from household to household. He had enlisted in the US Army on 6 February 1941 and was sent to Ft. Macarthur, California.¹¹ His enlistment record indicates he was born in 1919 which normally would mean he was underage and lied about his age to join the army. This does not make much sense since he would have been 20 years old when he enlisted and would not need to have lied about his age to join the Army. Maybe he did not know his actual birth year. The enlistment record also indicates he had four years of high school (no indication of high school graduation), that he was a “sales clerk” as a civilian, and his enlistment was for the “Philippine Department.”

Ted joined the US Navy on 5 April 1941 and was sent to boot camp in San Diego, California. Following boot camp, he was sent straight to the USS MARYLAND (BB46) home ported in Pearl Harbor, Territory of Hawaii. As a fresh recruit, he no doubt was assigned to the “deck crew” to do ordinary seaman duties. He later became a Boatsman Mate which at that time was a “right arm rate” one of the select ratings in the 1940 Navy. (All other job ratings were on the left arm.)¹²

Willie enlisted in the US Army as well but on 26 March 1942. He too went to Ft. Macarthur, California and his enlistment was “for the duration of the War or other emergency, plus six months, subject to the discretion of the President or otherwise according to law.” He had one year of high school and had worked as a kitchen helper.¹³ There are no records that show Willie’s involvement or assignments during World War II.



Eddie was the first to join the military. This was before the outbreak of World War II. Family story tells of Eddie’s need to join the military because he had “gotten a girl in trouble” and a judge said he had to either marry her or join the Army.¹⁴ Ironically, the better choice would have been marriage. Sgt. Eddie A. Haberman was assigned to a Service Support Company, 31st Infantry on the Philippine Islands when the Japanese attacked on 6/7 December 1941. He was captured by the Japanese Army and endured the Bataan Death March across the island to Camp O'Donnell located at Capas, in North Central

Luzon where he was interned as a prisoner of war. Nearly three years later, on 21 October 1944, just before the Battle of Leyte Gulf and liberation of the Philippine Islands by US forces, he along with some 1,780 other POW’s were loaded onto the prisoner transport ship *Arisan Maru* destined for Formosa. The US submarine *Shark* (SS-314) sank the *Arisan Maru* just off the coast of China on 24 October 1944¹⁵ with only a few surviving POW’s. Eddie was not among the survivors. He was 23 years old. He is buried in Manila, Philippines.

¹¹ U.S. World War II Army Enlistment Records, 1938-1946

¹² DD214, Theodore Haberman

¹³ U.S. World War II Army Enlistment Records, 1938-1946

¹⁴ Wilma Esther (Meyer) Boyer, adopted sister.

¹⁵ *Arisan Maru* was not marked or flying flags to indicate she was other than a Japanese transport ship. Japan POW web site.



Ted survived the attack on Pearl Harbor, 7 December 1941. According to Wikipedia: “*Maryland* was moored inboard to USS *Oklahoma* to port, connected by lines and a gangway. Forward was USS *California*; USS *Tennessee* and USS *West Virginia* were astern. Further aft were USS *Nevada* and USS *Arizona*. The seven battleships, in what is now known as “Battleship Row.” *Maryland* was struck by two armor-piercing bombs which detonated low on her hull. The first struck the forecandle awning and made a hole about 12 ft by 20 ft. The second exploded after entering the hull at the 22 ft water level at Frame 10. The latter hit caused flooding and increased the draft forward by 5 ft. *Maryland*

continued to fire and, after the attack, sent firefighting parties to assist her compatriots, especially attempting to rescue survivors from the capsized *Oklahoma*. The men continued to muster the AA defenses in case the Japanese returned to attack. In all, two officers and two men were killed in the attack.”¹⁶ In an ironic twist, Ted was on *Maryland* as she provided naval gunfire support during the Battle for Leyte Gulf for the returning US Army forces just as his brother Eddie was being loaded onto the *Arisan Maru*. They were probably within 100 miles of each other at the time.

Ted remained on *Maryland* throughout much of World War II and served as a coxman. While he never talked of his war time service, he did relay to me his efforts as a coxman to ferry soldiers to the beach and to retrieve bodies and body parts from the water on his return trip to *Maryland*. Ted also had an aversion towards officers, calling them “socks of shit,” largely because a female officer forced him to be discharged at the end of the war against Ted’s desire to stay in the Navy. Even though I was a commissioned Naval officer, Ted still referred to me as a sock of shit, but as he often added: I was his favorite sock of shit.¹⁷

Ted married Esther May Walker in May 1951 in Colorado. At one time, Ted tried to open a gasoline service station on Main Street in Loveland, Colorado. That endeavor did not work out, so Ted became a mechanic and equipment operator for various construction companies throughout the west. He worked for some time on the irrigation canal systems in the Fresno Valley in California that supplies water to a vast number of farms and orchards. Ted and Esther had no children, largely because Esther did not want children. None the less, they were quite involved in the lives of their many nieces and nephews, all of us having very fond memories of Uncle Ted and Aunt Esther. They eventually settled on a lot on Macintosh Lake near Tenino, Washington, just down the lake from the home of Bob and Wilma (Meyer) Boyer.

Wilhelmina is buried in Sutton, Nebraska. Henry is buried in Westminster, California. It is unclear where Lenora is buried or where she died. Presumably in York, Nebraska. Records indicate Eddie is buried in the Philippine Islands. Willie died in Vista, California in 2004 and is buried in Sutton, Nebraska. Ted died in Tumwater, Washington in 2002 and his and Esther’s ashes are buried in two places: next to adopted sister Wilma in Tenino, Washington and in the family plot in Loveland, Colorado.

¹⁶ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/USS_Maryland_\(BB-46\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/USS_Maryland_(BB-46))

¹⁷ Story told by Ted Haberman to Tom Boyer just months before Ted passed away.