

The TOEWS Families of Kremlin, North Enid, and Enid, Oklahoma

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It was interesting to me to finally sort out the connections among the multiple Toews “clans” in the Kremlin-Enid area for my own benefit, so I have written up what I hope is a useful reminder for me and a guide for others. Our Grandpa Toews (George P. Toews) was the only one from his family to move from the Henderson-Hampton, NE, area to the Kremlin-Enid, OK, area, the rest of his family having moved north to North Dakota and on to Canada the same year that he got married, about 6 years before he came to Oklahoma. So, the other Toews families in the Kremlin-Enid, OK, area, and there were a bunch of them, were in fact all “other” Toews families. All of us in our generation shared the same great-great-grandparents, Gerhard Isaak Toews and his wife Aganetha nee Warkentin; but each of the three Toews clans in our area came from a different son of these two. In some ways it is remarkable how close we all were to each other, and our parents also, most of us having gone to both church and school together. All of these families were of German-Russian Mennonite heritage and descent.

Before launching into the Toews families, it seems appropriate to mention some of the other German-Russian Mennonite families in the area, most of whom have one or more ties to one or more of the Toews families. These include the Voths, Thesmans, Edigers, Janzens, Bullers, Rempels, and Sieberts, with several from each of these other families being classmates of mine at Kremlin School and at the North Enid "Country" Mennonite Brethren Church. Following are the stories of the three distinct Toews lineages.

The GEORGE P. TOEWS FAMILY:

David A. and Rosa M. (Voth) Toews were my parents, so that is where I will start. Dave was the youngest of George P. Toews and Anna (Buller) Toews’s children. Dave inherited his childhood home and farm on the half-section road between US 81 and the south end of Kremlin, and Dave and Rosa lived there until a tornado destroyed that homestead and they built a new house on the Kremlin blacktop, now Keowee Road, ¾ mile east of US 81. In addition to farming, Dave also drove bus for Kremlin Schools for many years, and Rosa was legal secretary for Belcher Belcher and Collins attorneys in Enid for many years.

Their children were **Galen, Arrel, and Myron**, arguably all pretty bright science-minded boys, who all three ended up being medical school professors, Galen as an MD and Arrel and Myron as PhDs. **Galen married Anita (Regehr)** from San Jose, who became an architect, and they ended up in Ann Arbor, Michigan; **Arrel married Kathy (Neufeld)** from Balko, OK, who worked as a secretary in finance offices, spending their adult lives in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. **Myron married Barbara (Franz)**, from Wichita, who taught 5th grade, and they ended up in Omaha, Nebraska. The three Toews Brothers raised Hampshire sheep as their main 4-H Club project.

Anna Toews, widely known as “Bush”, was the child before Dave. She had been to college and was a teacher at the Columbia one-room school house not far from our home. Sadly, she died far too young, at the age of 26, with a steady boy-friend but not yet married or perhaps even engaged. Most who are still alive now will not remember her.

Jake and Anna (Bergen) Toews, Anna from Corn, lived and farmed a few miles north and east of North Enid. Their only child was **Richard, whose wife is Ruth Ann (Detweiler)** from Hesston. It is safe to state that Ann had some mental health issues; whether because of these, or other issues, Ann did not like the Toews family, and Jake went along with her wishes, so we really did not see much of Jake and Ann growing up, but occasionally. We are now in good relations and close contact with Richard and his family.

Pete and Thelma (Malter) Toews, Thelma from Wichita, were the only ones to live in town in Enid, after some years on two farms about 5 miles east of US 81 and halfway between Kremlin and Enid. David A. Toews and his boys rented and farmed those farms for many years after Pete and Thelma moved to town. Pete was widely known in the area as “Texaco Pete”, because he drove the Texaco truck that delivered gasoline and diesel fuel to each of the many farms, at least in the area north of Enid. Thelma taught school in Enid. They had only one son, **Curtis, commonly called “Chip”, who married Rosa (Gonzalez)**, Rosa from Texas, where Curtis worked as a finance manager for the State of Texas.

Henry and Elsie (Schmidt) Toews, Elsie from Saskatchewan, lived in the town of Kremlin and are almost certainly best known for The Bank of Kremlin, which Henry owned and managed together with John Eger for much of our childhood. Elsie worked in the bank also. Their house was on the opposite corner of the same block as the bank. They had two daughters. **Gerry, the older, who married Delmer Reimer**, Del from Buhler, who was the basketball coach at Tabor College in Hillsboro, Kansas; and **Rene, who married Jim Pauls**, Jim from Inman, who was a pianist and choir director in Wichita and then in McPherson, Kansas. Henry owned most of the farm directly east of Dave and Rosa, and Dave and his boys rented and farmed that farm also.

Pete and Clara (Toews) Voth and their children were also Toewses. Clara was the oldest child of George P. and Anna, having been born while they still lived in Nebraska. Pete and Clara lived in the house with the big bright red barn just west of Kremlin on the “blacktop”, now Keowee Road, where Johnny and Mary Ann Voth would later raise their children. Pete and Clara’s children were the three boys widely known as “the Voth Boys”. **Ernie was married to Virgie (Dezort)**, Virgie from Moorland, OK, and they lived and farmed at Hunter for many years before building a house in Kremlin across from the school. Ernie farmed, and Virgie was a nurse in Enid. **Bob Voth married Carol (Epp)**, Carol from Fairveiw, OK, and they lived on “the coke plant road” just a bit east of US 81. Bob farmed, and Carol taught school in Enid. **Johnny married Mary Ann (Sherley)**, Mary Ann from Tulsa, and lived on his parents’ former homeplace. Johnny farmed there and elsewhere, and Mary Ann was a kindergarten teacher in Kremlin for some of her years. **Dorothy married Gene Gray**, Gene from Tulsa, and they lived and worked in Tulsa, I believe both for large oil companies.

The Pete and Clara Voth family was doubly related to the David and Rosa Toews family – Pete was the brother to Rosa’s father Jacob A. Voth, Sr., and Clara was the sister to David. So Clara was Dad’s sister and Mom’s aunt; Pete was Mom’s uncle but also brother-in-law. A final note is that Ernie, Bob, and John farmed extensively together as “the Voth Boys” or “Voth Brothers” for much of my childhood.

The ABRAHAM G. TOEWS FAMILY:

One large family group was the children of **Abraham G. Toews (known as “A. G.”) and his wife Susanna (nee Regier)**. AG’s father was Gerhard, whose father was Gerhard Isaak. We knew nearly all of the AG Toews children, who were friends (and/or relatives through marriage) of our parents, as well as all of

their children. Three of AG Toews's children married Voth family cousins of our mother's; we were more closely related to these Toews families through our Voth mother than through our Toews father.

Anna ELLA Toews married Frank Wiens, and my brothers and I did not know them at all, primarily because they lived in California. This is an interesting marriage, because this Frank Wiens had previously been married to an Anne Toews (below), who was the daughter of Abraham A. Toews and a sister to Bill and Abe Toews, whose families we all knew well. Anne lived in California while married to Frank and stayed there the rest of her life, so, again, we did not really know about her either. Both of these wives of Frank Wiens are parts of these "other" two Toews families that I knew nothing about until I started digging deeper to write up this little "chapter" of our lives. Ella and Frank did not have children of their own together. Frank Wiens retained custody of the only child he had with Anne Toews (below), Jerry, who seems to have ended up much closer to his father and step-mother than to his birth mother. They then fostered and eventually adopted Denise and Dennis and seem to have become a tidy family with complicated origins.

George and Mabel (Wiebe) Toews, Mabel born in Hillsboro, KS, lived SE of Kremlin and NE of Enid, more or less east of the North Enid MB Church. Their son Wilfred was older than Galen, and their son Ronnie was Galen's age and a good friend growing up. George was a cowboy and cattleman, proud of his horses and saddles and roping abilities, who became a good friend of Myron's during his last years at their house and while at Golden Oaks. Myron is proud to own one of Georgie's cowboy hats, and Galen bought one of his fanciest saddles.

Johnny R. and Sarah (Wiebe) Toews, Sarah born in Hillsboro and a sister to Mabel Wiebe Toews, George Toews's wife above, lived a few miles north from our house, about 2 miles north of the substation on our homeplace. Their daughter Diana Mae was a year or two older than Galen, and their daughter JoAnn was a year younger than Galen and a good friend through Kremlin School years. Johnny R. drove the FarGas propane truck for many years, delivering heating fuel to our house and many others in the area. Sarah was one of our cooks at Kremlin Schools. They moved off the farm to Kremlin, lived across from Henry and Elsie Toews, then built a house a block north, and then later moved to Enid; Johnny R. died somewhat young, with Sarah living much longer.

Sophia (really Sarah) Toews married Ruben Thesman, from Kremlin, and they are probably the AG Toews family we knew best. Ruben was the son of Jacob J. Thesman and his wife Anna (Voth), who was our Grandpa Voth's sister, making Ruben one of our mom's cousins. They lived only about a mile from our house, a half mile north of the substation, for most of our childhoods. Their daughter Rita Sue was between Galen and Arrel, Jeri was Arrel's age and close friend, Carol was one year younger than Myron, and Terry and Tim were younger yet. We remember Ruben best as running the feed mill and other functions at the "Co-op", Farmers Grain Company, in Kremlin, but he also farmed and had other odd jobs at times, including moving houses. Sophia as well as Rita and Jeri are remembered for being cooks and waitresses at Faye Beavers's café in Kremlin. Ruben and Sophia eventually moved off of their farm and into the house that Johnny R. and Sarah Toews originally built and lived in in Kremlin, and then later to a new house that they built on the east edge of Kremlin on the blacktop.

Joel and Anna Lula (Voth) Toews lived in the old A.G. Toews house adjacent to the North Enid MB Church to the west. Anna Lula was a Voth cousin of our mother's, her father being our Grandpa Voth's brother Cornelius (Chris) Voth. Their oldest son Doug was a year ahead of Myron and a close friend of his, and their son Darryl was a year or two younger than Myron. Their next son Randy was 6 when he

died after being hit by a car on the paved road in front of their place, a tragic event all of us remember. They had two younger daughters, Sandra and Lori. Joel was mostly a farmer, rancher, cattleman, as Myron remembers; and he also loved to play his "bass fiddle" and sing in country-western bands with his family and friends. Anna Lula was the school secretary at Kremlin-Hillsdale Schools for a while, until her untimely early death.

Calvin and Bertha Ann (Thesman) Toews (really always "Bert and Calvin") lived in town in North Enid when we remember them. Bertha Ann was our mom's cousin also, the daughter of Jacob J. and Anna (Voth) Thesman, Anna being our Grandpa Voth's sister. Their children Jason and Jimmy were both a little younger than Myron. Calvin was a cowboy and cattleman and a cattle truck driver; Bertha Ann worked as a nurse, at St. Mary's Hospital in Enid at least part of the time.

A. G. Toews siblings: These were often sisters, so they were not known as Toewses, but many of them ended up as friends and/or relatives of ours in the Kremlin-Enid area also; these are mentioned only briefly here. A.G.'s oldest surviving sister **Helena Toews married Heinrich Janzen**, the father to George Janzen and many of the other Janzens we knew well. A. G.'s next sister **Sarah Toews married Jacob Rempel**, father to "our" Jake Rempel and grandfather to Jakie Lee, Vic, Ben, etc. **Katharina Toews married Heinrich Ediger**, the parents of the many Edigers that we knew and who lived near us. This is also how we are connected with John Quiring, a Henderson, Nebraska, friend and classmate of Arrel's from Tabor. This also connects Myron with his UNMC MD/PhD student Tracy Ediger, whose grandfather was Tracy Ediger's grandfather Ed Ediger's cousin. A. G.'s brother **Gerhard Toews married Eva Huebert**; they did not come to Oklahoma but ended up in California, with this Gerhard as the grandfather of NFL football players Loren Toews (Pittsburgh Steelers) and his brother Jeff Toews (Miami Dolphins). They also connect us with Galen and Carleen Buller, Galen being a Tabor friend of Arrel and Myron and Carleen being Myron's sister-in-law, married to Barbara's brother Bob. A. G.'s sister **Anna Toews married Heinrich L. Buller**, and they also moved to California. Finally, A. G.'s youngest sister **Maria Toews married Johann L. Friesen**, with no further information available to me on where they ended up.

The ABRAHAM A. TOEWS FAMILY:

Another group of Toews families in our area were the children of **Abraham A. Toews and his wife Aganetha nee Benke**. Abraham A. Toews was the son of Abraham Toews who was the son of Gerhard Isaak. So, this Abraham A. Toews was a cousin to A.G. Toews and both were also cousins to our Grandpa George P. Toews. Their children were Elizabeth who married Pete Sawatzky, Abe Toews who married Gladys Thesman, an adopted cousin to our mother, Bill Toews who married Helena Janzen, and a sister Anne who married Frank Wiens. We did not know the Sawatzky family well, and I think none of us even knew there was a sister Anne until I began digging into this. But our parents were quite close with both Abe and Gladys and Bill and Helena and we boys went to both church and school with their children.

Elizabeth Toews married Pete Sawatzky, Pete from Corn, OK, and they lived and farmed just south of Bill and Helena Toews place just north and east of North Enid, but at Corn earlier in their lives. Their children were Donald, Clarice, and Ruth Ann, and at least Myron does not remember any of them.

Abe and Gladys (Thesman) Toews are again connected to our family, Gladys being the adopted daughter of Jacob J. and Anna Voth Thesman, so again our mother's cousin. Gladys was born a Thesman, I believe in Hillsboro, but was taken in by the Jacob J. Thesman family, her relatives, when her mother died and her father could not take care of her. They lived at various places around the area, Myron

mostly remembering them living in a new modern house in North Enid; but their children Larry and Ricky also went to grade school for their early years at Pleasant Vale School, so they must have lived near there at one time also. Their oldest child was their daughter Doris Kay (never Doris, always “Doriskay”, almost one word); then Larry, who was Myron’s age and a good friend of Myron’s during his high school years at Kremlin and from church; and Ricky, a few years younger than Myron. I (Myron) do not remember much about what Abe or Gladys did.

Bill and Helena (Janzen) Toews and their children were the family of this lineage that we knew best, very close friends of our parents and equally close friends of we Toews Brothers. Helena was the daughter of George and Anna (Franz) Janzen, from Kremlin, and she grew up only about ¼ mile west of our dad on the half-section road from Kremlin to Highway 81. Rumor has it that our dad and Helena may have dated or at least “been sweet on each other” at some point. We also knew George Janzen and his wife Anna, them being our closest neighbors growing up on our home place. Bill and Helena’s son Dennis was between Galen and Arrel; their son Ellis was Arrel’s age and best friend from both church and school and continuing through Tabor College and on; their daughter Janice was Myron’s age and classmate and close friend, again through church and school and Tabor and on; and their youngest son Eldon was two years younger than Myron.

Anne Toews married Frank Wiens, Frank from Hooker, OK, and they had one child together, Jerry. They divorced around 1948 when Jerry was about 7, and Frank then married Anna Ella Toews from the A.G. Toews family (above). Around the same time, Anne Toews Wiens married Jim Summons, her being pregnant with their shared child Bob. Their other child was daughter Linda. Though we did not know these folks as children, they remained in reasonably close contact with Bill and Abe and Elizabeth in spite of them living in California.

Abraham A. Toews siblings: Several of these came to the Kremlin-Enid area, and though we did not know them as well as most of the other families above, they explain several of the other Toews families that we knew but really did not interact with all that much or know that much about. His oldest sister **Maria Toews married Jacob Brown** and they ended up in California. Very important, his next younger brother was the **Gerhard/George Toews who married Mary Neumann, known to us as Aunt Mary**, an orphan girl who helped our Grandma and Grandpa Toews raise their children. We knew several of their children also, particularly **Martha Thesman, Lydia Warkentin, and Louisa Mae**, though we did not understand all of the connections when we were young. His sister **Aganetha Toews married Abraham Heinrichs** and they appear to have ended up in Oregon. His brother **John A. Toews married Anna Kroeker**, and though they appear to have lived in Enid until they died, I do not remember them at all. One of their daughters was Sarah Toews, “Susha”, the mother of Earl and Roy Dyck who went to school with Myron. His next brother **Heinrich A. Toews married Helena Kroeker**; I believe this is the man we knew as “HAT” as children, and they seem to have moved to Fairview at some point; I do not know any of their children. His sister **Katharina married Henry Suderman**, and I do not remember any Sudermans in our area. Next is **Daniel A. Toews, who married Emma Harms**. This is the Toews family that lived across from Jimmy Hays on Highway 81 about halfway between Kremlin and Enid, and there are several important connections for us. This Daniel Toews’s son Edwin was the father of **Myra Toews**, who was born a few days after Myron and was a church classmate of his. He was also the father of the “other” **David Toews**, who wrote bad checks and caused our dad grief and became the reason for our dad always being “David A. Toews”, to clarify that he was not the “other” David Toews. Their younger children were all girls, Bert and Beanie and Alice Mae. **Anna Toews married Herman “Harry” Neufeld**,

and they also appear to have lived in Fairview. Finally, his youngest sister was **Gertruda Toews, who married Abraham Braun**; Gertruda is the woman we knew as “Gertie Braun”, a widow who drove an old-time car, Abraham having died fairly young. Their children included Dorothy, who married Marion Balzer, people we knew from the North Church. Marion Balzer was NOT the father of Gloria Baltzer Janzen; her father was Loyal Baltzer, listed here just to avoid confusion.

Gerhard Isaak	Gerhard Isaak	Gerhard Isaak
Isaak	Gerhard	Abraham
George P	Abraham (AG)	Abraham A
David A	Sophie Joel George	Bill, Abe
Galen, Arrel, Myron	Rita Sue, Doug, etc	Ellis, Dennis, Larry, etc