

Melanie Zwang Davis (Mrs. Sol)

in 1891
Melanie was born in Sennfeld, Germany near Mannheim. In Germany Jews did not have surnames. The government said that Melanie's grandfather had to have a surname; so, he chose Zwang which means force. Her grandfather said, "If you force you are Zwang."

Melanie's father was Herman Zwang (1854-1931) His uncle on his mother's side, Marcus Oppenheimer, had gone to Marcus when there was no Marcus, just an Indian reservation. Her father went to Marcus in 1871. He lived in a log cabin in Marcus with his uncle Marcus who never married. All of his Uncle Marcus's brothers and his sister stayed in Portland. Marcus was named for his uncle Marcus. His Uncle Marcus had a general store in Marcus. Marcus was near an Indian reservation. Marcus was filled with Chinese. They washed up gold in the Columbia River. Melanie still has a little scale her father used to weigh gold.

Her father returned to Sennfeld and married Melanie's mother in 1888. Melanie's brother Saul was a year older than Melanie. Her sister Clara was 1½ years older.

Her family came to Colville in 1897 when Melanie was 6. Colville was 12 miles from Marcus.

The family returned to Marcus in 1900 when Melanie was 9 because her father had been in business there before with his uncle Marcus who had now retired. Her father opened a general mercantile store in Marcus-Herman Zwang, General Merchandise.

Melanie says there was a good school in Marcus. She graduated from highschool there and worked in her father's store for a few years. There were about 300 people in Marcus. There was one other Jewish family, the Werzbergs. The 2 Jewish families became very close. "My mother and her mother were good friends. My brother and his brother went into the furniture business in Spokane. It became a big business, it is still there, run by the sons." It got very cold in Marcus. As kids we went down and made fires on the banks of the Columbia River. We lived on the banks of the river.

2. My mother and father came from orthodox homes in Sennfeld. "In Marcus, we had to live different."

" My father closed his store on the High Holy Days. He conducted services in our home on the High Holy Days. He conducted the Sedars. The Werzbergs did not participate. They were not religious; although, as I have said, they were very congenial. My mother lit the candles on Friday night and my father made kiddush. "

Melanie still has the wine goblet her father used.

Melanie says, "I never ate pork in my life."

There was never any anti Semitism in Marcus. Melanie had lots of nice Indian friends. They were on the reservation. She does not remember that they attended the Marcus Public School. Melanie's mother died young, at age 50, of cancer. The Indians were very fond of Melanie's mother.

"When she passed away, they wanted some of her clothes and stuff, things to remember her by."

"It got so it didn't matter if friends were Catholics. The priest came to Marcus every Saturday and had church on Sunday. He did not stay all week. They built a nice little frame ^{house} ~~church~~ for a church. The priest liked my mother. The only place that he would eat was at my mother's house."

When her mother died, "They took over." Melanie had graduated from high school; so, she worked $\frac{1}{2}$ a day in the store and kept house $\frac{1}{2}$ the day. "I had quite a time of it." Her father never married again. Her sister married a gentile named Bill Grove. She met him in Marcus. Marcus was a railroad center and he was working for the railroad. Bill never knew the difference; but, Melanie's father was terribly upset when Clara married a gentile; but he couldn't talk her out of it. They were married by a justice of the peace in Spokane. They never had any children.

Melanie and her father stayed in Marcus until the ^{Town} ~~whole area~~ was flooded to build the Columbia River Dam in the administration of Franklin Delano Roosevelt. ^{EVERYBODY LEFT} the ~~Mar~~ Zwangs had a nice 2 story home. the government bought up the property. It was a wonderful thing for the area. Melanie has returned to Marcus since the dam was built.

3.

"Sometimes they lower the dam and we can walk because the river bed is there . We came to the place where we lived and the sidewalk is still under water."

Melanie's cousin, Ivan Zwang, her father's nephew, came to Republic, Wash. as a young man and went into business. He married a gentile woman, a teacher a very fine woman and had 2 sons. The children are not Jewish. Melanie visited them in Republic which is 80 miles from Marcus.

(This is Zwang and Yoder pictured in our article.)

Dearest Julie:

These are all my notes. Melanie married Sol Davis in 1923. They had no children. Her father and her sister lived with her in Seattle after her sister's husband died.

Marcus Oppenheimer was a cripple, a humpback, a good man, clean shaven.

I wish I had had one of those battery recorders like Cyril's.

I feel we should do more with Melanie, get her on tape. I'll talk it over with you and maybe you can come/.....I feel she is a valuable resource person and more should be done. I'll call you.

Best love,

Mets

*I asked about the picture of the 3 children in
Sennfeld. She is still thinking.*