

The life of my ancestors during World War I

I talked to my grandparents on my father's side. They did not have any documents about that time, because their parents had to flee from Berlin and Pomerania during WWII, but they told me what they knew about their grandparents.

Elise Beckmann is my great-great-grandmother on my father's side, she's the mother of my grandmother's mother. She lived in Berlin and was married to Eugen Kähler, who is the father of her children (one of them is my great-grandmother Liselotte, who was born in 1912, the other one is her brother). He was originally a business person, but had to fight in WWI. Elise and Kurt were divorced in 1916, what was kind of uncommon and scandalous.

Elise struck up a relationship with Kurt Beckmann shortly after the divorce. Kurt was a banker in a high position at a Jewish bank, had a high income and seemed to be without any risks of losing his job. He did not fight in WWI. The family was wealthy, they lived in an apartment with seven rooms in the Burgstraße in Berlin, one of the oldest streets in Berlin, located next to the Spree and next to Berlin's castle. My great-grandmother Liselotte attended a girls' school, even during the war. Later on the family lost everything with the closure of the bank and the death of Kurt.

Paul Küller, my great-great-grandfather on my father's side, is the father of my grandmother's father and was born in Wuppertal, but lived mainly in eastern Africa. He had a big silkworm farm there, because he had developed and patented a cure, made out of the juice of silkworms. The administrative work was done in Berlin, where his wife Helene Sophie with their children lived. Paul always preferred living in Africa, so he was not inducted into the army, even if he had to come back to Germany. The British took the farm and the patent during war and the Küller's lost their basis of life. They were wealthy before, but had to ask for benefits later. These were denied, so Paul Küller died in poverty, after not being able to develop a new cure.

My great-great-grandfather on my father's side is Paul Brockhoff, he's the father of my grandfathers' mother. He lived in Pomerania (Pommern), began his career as an administrative head and ended up as the director of the administrative court of Köslin (today Koszalin), which was the highest possible position in Pomerania in this field.

His family was wealthy, owned a big house and Paul did not even have to fight in WWI because of his position. But the family lost their assets. They were pushed to invest in war loans, being promised that all the money would be given back with a high interest rate. The war was lost, the money too.

Helmut Brockhoff, Paul's first brother was a soldier in WWI. Even if he was not wounded, he was damaged by the war. Helmut was heavily traumatized, was never able to live a regular life after the war. Furthermore he was homosexual, something that he always tried to hide, but when it came out, his family and friends did not accept it, but tried to talk him this "illness" out or turned away from him. Helmut committed suicide in 1924.

Paul's and Helmut's brother Walter Brockhoff fought in WWI as well, he fought in France and was badly wounded there. Paul, who visited Walter on Christmas, even told their family, that they should prepare not to see him again. Walter made a miraculous recovery, did not have to go back to the front line, moved to Mühlheim and lived there until he died.

Bob Brockhoff, the last brother of my great-great-grandfather, was in WWI as a soldier as well. He fought in France like Walter but he never came home.