

COLLEGE ALUMNI CLUB SPEECH, October 27, 2006

A Blue and Scarlet Skeleton

** SLIDE 1 A Blue And Scarlet Skeleton*

I. Introduction

It's a pleasure to speak to you tonight, and I sincerely hope that by now maybe a few of you are still wondering what a talk entitled "A Blue and Scarlet Skeleton" might possibly be about! (I know it's kinda weird- *could* it involve Halloween?) With your indulgence, I want to "milk what mystery is left" just a little- to obfuscate, so to speak- and hold off coming clean for a few minutes.

So with this goal in mind, this talk will center around four short stories, interspersed with a few historical interludes, and ending with an epilogue...the "rest of the story," if you will.

**SLIDE 2 A Story, Setting the Stage*

II. STORY 1- Setting the Stage

It is the early fall of 1777, and a young man, Johann Wolfgang by name, trudges, with shoulders slumped, along a dark street in Ansbach, Germany. His guardian angel, if he had one, would have been overjoyed that her "behind the scenes" work had born fruit, because the young man appeared to be approaching the St. Johannis church. It was the church he had attended, often reluctantly, with his parents, Marcus and Anna, when he was a child. But with not even a brief, sideways glance at the church, he made his way on down the narrow street, and around the corner to his favorite hangout, the Black Forrest Pub.

As Wolfgang sat alone on the bar stool that knew him so well, he was stung by the awareness that, at age 30, he had reached the lowpoint of his life. Thirteen years ago, both his parents had died, one two months after the other. The plague had not been respectful of these 50 and 40 year olds. Wolfgang was 17 years old at the time, and he had not been ready for the responsibility that was heaped upon him. He wondered if it had been in response to the loss of his parents, that he married Maria Margareta so soon after they died- less one year later. And the children came so quickly. As he drank his third beer, he thought of his wife, his nine year old

Georg, and 11 year old Maria Madgalena Even in his very tired , frustrated. and now slightly inebriated state, he knew that it was his drinking and his reckless bets, that had caused him to totally let them down.

Now he had mortgaged and lost the family property, lost his job at the mill, and if he paid all of his debts, would have no money left to care for his precious family. Wolfgang felt the emptiness that comes when the orbits of failure and fatigue suddenly mesh. And he didn't know what to do. "Vas ist los, Wolfie," hailed his friend, Karl, "Why so sad?" Wolfgang looked up, and, with a halfhearted greeting, asked the barkeep for another beer. He had always envied Karl's devil may care attitude, as well as his nose and love for adventure. Karl, being no stranger to poverty and adversity, was sympathetic to Wolfgang's plight,. As the drinks flowed , the words got looser,

Karl suddenly said "I've decided to do it. I'm joining the Ansbach Regiment!" "You've what !?" exclaimed Wolfgang incredulously. "I'm going to fight in America, for the British against the Colonists," Karl exclaimed, " Those rebels have no sense about fighting. It'll be a one-sided battle, and I'll probably not be gone more than a year or so."

Wolfgang would not have been any more surprised if Karl had said he was to be a prince. He had heard that the Margrave of Anspach, the Crown Prince Charles Alexander, was deeply in debt, and that hiring out regiments to fight for the British would bring much money to his coffers. And Wolfgang, too, had felt the hot breath of the Margrave's recruiting officers on that very day. He knew that forcible recruiting was supposed to be forbidden, but he also knew that anyone who had debts or who had fallen onto bad times was a personal target of the Margrave to enlist.

And he had thought about it, and how it might keep his family in food and shelter while he was gone. But now, with Karl taking the leap--- maybe it was a way out of his mess. Wolfgang wandered home, and wondered.

On October 25, 1777, when English Colonel William Faucitt mustered Hessian recruits at Frisdorf, in Ansbach, Wolfgang was among them. His parting from his family had been a sorrowful event, but he was convinced that this was the only way he could regain his honor, and

put his and his families life back together. And the recruiters had made him feel that he had little choice. His wife, Maria Margareta, cried, and wondered if she would ever see him again.

**SLIDE 3 A Bit of History 1 Mercenary Soldiers*

III. A BIT OF HISTORY 1- Mercenary Soldiers

Mercenary Soldiers?

I'm sure many of us, hearing the words "mercenary soldiers," think of soldiers paid to fight for a foreign country and think "shame on you!"

In the eighteenth Century, the person on the street might have thought "We'll miss you, but congratulations on getting a good paying job."

With little or no stigma attached, most governments relied on help from foreign troops--- For example, at one time, the French hired German, Italian, Irish, Polish, and Swiss regiments.

But before you begin to feel too self righteous and civilized, recall that we hired Thai and Philipino troops to fight for us in the Vietnam war, and today hire soldiers from for-profit private military companies, like Blackwater, to augment our troops in Iraq.

The Arrangements

It is facinating to try to imagine how it all got arranged. Sure, the British needed more troupes to fight the war. But can you imagine a proper British Commissioner sending an offer to the German Crown Princes to buy 30,000 soldiers, knowing that many would be shot on sight? And you have to wonder if any dickering went on. We'll never know, but the fact is that the British paid \$150,000 to buy the soldier's services. And, perhaps to sweeten the pot, they agreed that "three wounded men shall be reckoned as one killed." That's \$11.66 for every soldier injured! What a deal! It is reported that these payments were not entered under their proper heading in the British Parliment bills, since " the cabinet did not care to meet the criticism which this item in the accounts would have raised."

**SLIDE 4 Photo of the Recruits, Lined Up*

The Recruitment

Charles Alexander, the Margrave of both Anspach and Bayreuth was really happy to sell two

regiments for foreign service. His government owed a lot of money, and this would help fill his coffers. He sent his officers all over Germany to recruit the soldiers. Edward Lowell in his book, *The Hessians*, said “Spendthrifts, loose livers, drunkards, arguers, restless people, and such as made political trouble, if not more than 60 years and of fair health and stature were forced into the ranks. No one was safe from the grip of the seller of souls. Persuasion, cunning, deception, force-all served.”

****BACK TO SLIDE 3***

The Guilt?

Not everyone felt guilt free about selling men to fight. Frederick the Great, in a letter to Voltaire (June 8, 1776) expressed his contempt for the men-selling Crown Princess...”Had the Landgrave come out of my school, he would not have sold his subjects to the English as one sells cattle to be dragged to the shambles. This is an unbecoming trait in the character of a prince who sets himself up as a teacher of rulers. Such conduct is caused by nothing but dirty selfishness. I pity the poor Hessians who end their lives unhappily and uselessly in America.”

****SLIDE 5 The Story – Arriving in America (Running the Gauntlet.. Explain fuzzines)***

IV. STORY 2 Arriving in America

“Whack, smack, swish, crack! Wolfgang was sweating and bleeding profusely as he ran the gauntlet for the eighth time. “Only two more to go, he thought,” as he forced his weary and flogged body to the head of the line, and began to run again. He tried not to show the pain, and to show them he could take it, but it was almost unbearable. There must have been 100 men on each side with strong sticks, switches, and clubs. The officer in charge made sure they didn’t slack off, and urged them to hit Wolfgang hard and often- which many seemed to enjoy. After the tenth time through the gauntlet, Wolfgang fell to the ground exhausted, and had to be thrown onto his bunk to nurse his wounds.

As he lay there, his first thought was “Damn, why did I let that big-boss sargeant get under my skin. Why couldn’t I control my temper and my mouth? He knew it was his inherited temper that had done him in. His father had it. So did his grandfather. “Won’t I ever learn to control it?” he seemed to ask God in Heaven, as he winced with pain.

He knew that it was all he had been through since leaving Ansbach that had worn him thin, and made him on edge. It had taken them over 11 months, including 22 weeks at sea, to get from Ansbach, Germany to their first camp in America on Long Island, New York. They had been delayed by fog, low water, headwinds, Kings who wouldn't let them pass through their territories, desertions, ill equipment for marching, difficulties finding march routes, cold winter weather--- and all this was only on the way from Ansbach to Bremerlehe, in Lower Saxony, Germany, where they ultimately set sail for the colonies on April 5th, 1778.

At sea they had dealt with waves as high a mountains, lack of food, and much sickness. And Wolfgang's friend Karl was stricken with Yellow Fever and died at sea. It was a terrible ordeal, and seeing the sharks eat his body immediately after it fell into the water left a permanent mark on Wolfgang's memory. Also, the thought of the bad water they had to drink, and the cheap chewing tobacco he had chewed to prevent scurvy from destroying his teeth and gums did make him temporarily forget his badly bruised body, and fall into a deep sleep..

"Hey Wolfgang," shouted Conrad, a fellow recruit he had puked with many a time on the ship, "I think we are going to like this Rhode Island. I hear we'll be in a place called Newport all winter." "Don't be so all-fired happy, Conrad," Wolfgang retorted sleepily, "I'm still hurting from getting the hell beat out of me today." "Oh, you'll live," Conrad said reassuringly, as he grinned at his friend. "A little fun with a Newport wench is all you need." Wolfgang gave him a friendly push, and began to get his uniform and his weapon ready. Who knew when the first fight with the Colonists will begin? But little did he know that it would be eleven months, and only one major skirmish with those "pushover" Colonists before Wolfgang and his Regiment would muster out of Rhode Island.

**SLIDE 6 A Bit of History 2 – Hessian Soldiers*

V. A BIT OF HISTORY 2-The Hessian Soldiers

Fortunately, several Hessian soldiers have written diaries of their experiences in the Revolutionary War. Johann Conrad Dohla and Johann Prectal were with the Ansbach-Bayrueth Regiments, and their diaries are an invaluable source. I have them on the table for your perusal. I use material from them, and will refer to them as "the diaries."

** SLIDE 7 – Drawing of Ship to America*

Getting There

The 22 weeks it took the Hessians to sail to America must have been fraught with problems. As stated in the diaries, “To every berth (*on the ship to America*) six men were allotted, but as there was room for only four. The last two had to squeeze in the best they might...thus the men lay in “spoon fashion,” and when they were tired on one side, the man on the right would call out “about face” and the whole file would turn over at once...Thus crowded together, with close air, bad food, foul water, many of them insufficiently clothed, these boys and old men, students, shopkeepers, and peasants tossed for months on the Atlantic...”

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How Many?

Historians estimate that the British Army had about 50,000 men, in all, fit for service, and with some of these needed in the West Indies and at home, the number in America at any given time may have been not much more than 35,000, plus loyalists who fought with them. From 1776 to 1783, an average of over 20,000 Hessians were maintained by the British in America, making up a significant part of the total British fighting force. A total of 30,067 Hessians came to fight from 1776 to 1783; 12,562 did not return. 7,754 of these soldiers died and 4,808 remained in America...

What were They Like?

What were They Like?

The English Commissioner Faucitt examined the Hessian soldiers to decide if they were fit to fight, but with 30,000 to screen, he probably had very little real knowledge of what kind of people they really were.

Lowell, in his book, *The Hessians*, says “There are signs that many of these involuntary volunteers were not such bad fellows. .. They had their fair share of those virtues every nation is fond of claiming: honesty, courage, kindness... and they had been shaped by a rigorous, if not cruel discipline.”

The Hessians in America were indeed disciplined. The diaries tell of men running the gauntlet of 200-300 men eight to sixteen times for, among other things: planning to desert, being drunk on watch, stealing white English linen from a merchant, arguing with an officer, consorting with a local woman, and taking a tub of butter from the storehouse,

On the positive side, there is evidence that religion played an important role in the regiments, as illustrated by these comments: “We held a church parade, and a field sermon was preached... We held a prayer meeting in the camp... It being the seventeenth Sunday after Trinity, I partook of confession and communion, under God’s gracious hand.”

What History Reports

In many ways, when you consult historians to find out what the Hessian soldiers were really like, it is reminiscent of the political squabbles and spins in Washington. You’re not sure who to believe.

But my distilled spin from the historians I read is that the Hessians were a mixed bag of troops-some well trained, others green as crab apples- who were well equipped, harshly disciplined, courageous, sometimes sterling in battle, but just as often not quite up to the British expectations- and who deserted raped, and pillaged somewhat on a par with the British and Americans.. On a more positive note,

General George Washington, of Feb 5 1777 wrote, “One thing I must remark in favor of the Hessians, and that is, that our people who have been prisoners generally agree that they received much kinder treatment from them than from the British officers and soldiers.”

****SLIDE 8 - The Story – Hell in Virginia***

VI. STORY 3 - Hell in Virginia

“Move along, now!” “Laggards will be punished- and you know what that means. We won’t put up with it.” shouted Colonel Phillip Van Courtland, the American Continental army officer who were leading a large band of British and Hessian prisoners from the Yorktown defeat on a march up through Virginia to imprisonment in Winchester. Wolfgang had already marched 19 miles that day, with a heavy pack and very sore feet. This was their 12th day of marching,

and, even though they had had a day of rest a couple days ago, Wolfgang was dead tired. And he'd heard that even after today, they would still be three days away from their destination, the New Fredrich Barracks at Winchester, a place 240 miles from Yorktown. As the prisoners struggled to keep going, a local beside the trail shouted, "You'll get what you deserve, you mercenary bastards." It wasn't the first time they had been heckled, and it probably wouldn't be the last.

As weariness set in a little more, which hardly seemed possible, it fell quiet as the march continued, and it gave Wolfgang time to think about the ordeals he had been recently been through. From October 1778 to May 1781- almost 2 1/2 years- his regiment's duties had been garrison work, skirmishes, and one bigger with the colonists, led by General John Sullivan. He had had almost too much time to get into trouble. Guilt rose within him as he thought of how much he had treasured the letters from Margaretta and his children, but how he had fallen in the trap of being with a woman---just a couple of times, he rationalized--- during their wintering in New York.

He remembered being relieved to be involved in a raid into New Jersey, as well as when his regiment sailed south in the early summer of 1781, and finally anchored at Yorktown.

The battle of Yorktown was the most horrendous experience of his life. Fighting in the trenches at Yorktown against a superior French and American force was a matter of life and death. As the cannon balls kept whizzing by his head ,and the deafening noise of the constant explosions made him feel crazy, the French and American forces pushed the British and Hessians back to the sea. Many of his fellow Ansbach hessians had been killed, and when word came that the British Commander, Cornwallis was planning to escape by the York river, leaving the Anspach regiments as a sacrificial rear guard, Wolfgang knew his last hope of making it out of the battle of Yorktown alive was shattered. He considered it an act of God when the seas were too rough for Cornwallis to sail, and he returned to surrender to the Americans. The sad and angry memories of the recent surrender ceremonies were still fresh in his mind, as he marched wearily toward incarceration.

" I can't take much more of this, whispered his friend Conrad, marching next to him, "I can't wait to get to that barracks, no matter how bad it will be." Yeah, agreed Wolfgang, "we've come a long way from Yorktown, and we've got more to go. But it sure is pretty around here,

and I damn-well don't miss those cannon balls.”

Little did Wolfgang know what would be in store for him for the next year as a prisoner in the New Frederick(Hessian) Barracks in Winchester, Virginia. But he now he regularly read his Bible, and his close encounter with death at Yorktown had changed his way of looking at life. Chock one up for that guardian angel!

****SLIDE 9 – A Bit of History 3 – The Battle of Yorktown***

VII. A BIT OF HISTORY 3– The Battle of Yorktown and Beyond.

The Significance

The battle of Yorktown, culminating in the surrender of the British Commander Cornwallis to the American and French Commanders, Washington and Rochambeau, on October 19,1781 turned the tide decisively toward the Americans in the Revolutionary War. There were skirmishes, but few other major battles prior to a peace treaty being signed on September 3, 1783. The strategy of bringing a major body of French and American troops overland, through Virginia, to Yorktown to surprise the British was key to this decisive win. This strategy is often attributed to the French Commander Rochambeau, and implementation accomplished by Washington.

****SLIDE 10 – Painting of the Battle of Yorktown***

The Battle (From Prechtal, p. 221)

October 12-13, 1781 The enemy cannonade was so strong and so many bombs landed in our camp that it was completely impossible to describe... The enemy fired mostly 200 pound bombs and 42,36,and 24 pound cannonballs into our camp... (*one private*) had his foot shot off, and a corporal had his right arm shot off.

****BACK TO SLIDE 9***

The Surrender (From (Dohla, p.172-174)

17-18 October, 1781 ...a *flag of truce* with a white flag (*was sent*) to the enemy... Now the capitulation was final... We were, on both sides, happy that finally this siege was ended... Oh! How many thousand bullets and deathly situations have I encountered face to face!

The Prisoners

It is interesting to note that the trail the American and French troops took to Yorktown is the same trail used by the Hessian prisoners in their long march to the prisoner barracks near Winchester, Virginia, following the battle of Yorktown (Harriet and I drove up through Virginia on that trail in 2001)

SLIDE 11 – The Washington-Rochambeau Trail

Dohla, in his diary described the barracks :

“If this is to be our winter quarters, may God have mercy upon us. Numerous wretched huts built of wood and clay, most of which either have no roofs or poor roofs, no cots, only poor fireplaces, neither windows or doors, and lie in the middle of a forest. We already have many sick and fatigued people, which is not surprising.”

****SLIDE 12- The Story-A New Adventure***

VIII. Story 4- A New Adventure

What a wonderful day! John-that’s what Johann Wolfgang called himself now that he had been with the American forces for over a year- was dressed in his finest uniform. As he took his position as Colonel Armands forces lined up on the parade field in York, Pennsylvania, he couldn’t help but think of how far he had come from that terrible Winchester prisoner barracks last October. It had’nt been a difficult decision to join the American forces. Colonel Armand, of the Light Horse division, was very persuasive, and the promise of land for his service was something he could never have dreamed of. And it was a way out of those God-awful barracks. Besides that, he had never felt really good about fighting the Americans, especially since so many of them were people like him, even from his own area of Germany. It had been a year of change and a devastatingly sad one. While in the prisoners barracks in Winchester, he had received word that his daughter had died of influenza. And only a few weeks later that his wife, who he so longed to rejoin in Germany, had also died of that terrible disease. John had been anguished and depressed for several months. But gradually he had come to grips with his grief, and gained the fortitude to look to the future.

So here he was, on the day Armand’s troops would be officially discharged, and his fighting days would be over. Not that he had done much fighting during the past year. It was

mostly maneuvers, and being ready for a battle than never came. “Attention in the Ranks!” shouted the general in charge. And as Colonel Armand, riding his magnificent horse, thanked the troops, and officially discharged them, John, and his trusted friend Conrad threw their hats into the air and John shouted “Hallelouja! The Lord be praised!” They had talked about their plans, and knew that they both wanted to stay in America. And John wanted to bring his son Georg here as soon as he could.

They had received some discharge money, and John had saved some of the money that had come his way as a soldier. John had heard that German farmers in Franklin County, Pennsylvania, were anxious to hire discharged soldiers, and he would be on his way there the next day, after a grand night of celebration. John was excited about embarking on this new adventure, but little did he know what lie in store for him in this new land, nor could he possibly have predicted it.

**SLIDE 13- Clearing up the Obfuscation*

IX. Clearing up the Obfuscation

The dictionary defines “obfuscate” as making something obscure or unclear .. making somebody confused. My apologies for any undue obfuscation, and I now want to clear it all up.

Many of you may have heard a grandmother or grandfather say, when thinking about the family ancestors, “we have a few skeletons in our closet” Usually this mean’t that there is an ancestor that may have done a few unsavory things that did not endear him or her to the family, or perhaps even to that day’s society.

As all of you have probably figured out long ago, Wolfgang, mercenary soldier from Ansbach, Germany, is a “skeleton in my ancestral closet,” and, in fact, was my great, great, great grandfather, Johann Wolfgang Odoerfer! So the delayed confusion, this revelation, and this blue and scarlet uniform of the Ansbach Hessian soldiers, now, I hope, makes the title of this talk totally clear.

**SLIDE14- Ansbach 1st Regiment.. Johann Wolfgang Odoerfer*

**SLIDE 15- The Soldiers Personal Equipment (OPTIONAL)*

So now, with a clear, non-obfuscating conscience, the “rest of the story” about my “blue and scarlet skeleton,” unfolds.

**SLIDE 16- How I Met My Skeleton*

X. How I “met” my “Skeleton.”

An Ancestor from Germany?

My elderly Aunt Grace said the Odaffers had come from Germany, and in the national archive census records, I had seen the name of ancestors from Washington Co, Md, spelled “Odoerfer” so Germany seemed plausible. I had searched boat lists for all ports of entry, and there were no signs of Odaffers or Odoerfers entering the country. In searching for my ancestors came from, there simply didn’t seem to be much to go on.

The Meeting

It was on a Mathematics Meeting trip to Washington D.C. in 1980 that my big breakthrough in Odaffer genealogy--- meeting my “skeleton” for the first time--- took place. I had some extra time in the evening after the meeting, so I took a taxi to the Daughters of American Revolution Genealogy Library. I spent a couple hours in the library, but didn’t find a thing about the Odaffer family. “What a waste of time,” I thought, and prepared to leave. As usual, I glanced at the books on the shelves as I was walking down the aisle to leave the Library. For some reason- I have no idea why- a book entitled “German Mercenary Soldiers who Fought for the British in the Revolutionary War” seemed to jump off the shelf at me, and and I picked it up!

**SLIDE 17- Book- Mercenaries from Ansbach... Who Remained in America After the Revolution*

As I was thumbing through the book, I was thrilled and excited to see what I later came to call “the first missing link.” It read as follows:

**SLIDE 18- Odoerfer, Johann Wolfgang, private A/5 Deserted 12 October 1782*

ODOERFER, Johann Wolfgang, private A/5 Deserted 12 October 1782. According to Stadtarchiv Ansbach Am 1041, " he had spent all of his estate and, therefore, had to enter military service. He has a wife, a 15 year old son, and a 12 year old daughter who are in very straitened circumstances."

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Serendipity!

It almost seemed that the finding of this link was a result of Divine Guidance, given how easy it would have been not to encounter and look at that particular book, but it was the beginning of a truly exciting genealogical adventure which has taken me to places I never thought I'd go, to find out more about the history of one Johann Wolfgang Odoerfer. It was, in the hands of perhaps a "Stumbologist" rather than a "Geneologist," truly serendipity at work!

****SLIDE 19 – The Rest of Wolfgang's Story***

XI. And Now, The Rest of Wolfgang's Story

Becoming an American

After being honorably discharged from the America army in York, Pennsylvania in 1783, Johann Wolfgang Odoerfer, using his Americanized name, John Odorfer, was a free man in America.

Starting a New Life

Not long after his discharge, he began to work for farmers in south central Pennsylvania, In 1788, at age 41, He married his second wife, Elizabeth Rowe, from Franklin County, Pennsylvania. Between 1789 and 1808, John and Elizabeth had 8 children, 2 male and 6 female. John worked during this time as the director of a mill operation on the Montpielier Estate near Clear Spring, Maryland., and attended the St. Johns Lutheran and Reformed Church.

A Questionable Reward

Amazingly, as an American soldier from Virginia, John was entitled to to 200 acres of land from Virginia(Ohio) and 100 acres from the later to be United States

****SLIDE 20- Revolutionary War Records from State of Virginia***

I have no documentation that John Odorfer was ever actually given the land granted him in Ohio. However, after he died, his oldest son Henry, my great great grandfather, migrated to Ohio, and Henry's son David (My great grandfather) farmed land which he and Henry owned in Ohio before coming to Illinois.

***BACK TO SLIDE 18**

The Final Chapter

John died in 1816, at the age of 71, when his youngest child was 8 years old. Even though I know a lot about my "skeleton," I have yet to locate where he is buried. I did find his will, and an inventory of his personal property, a part of which I show now.

****SLIDE 21- A Portion of the Final Inventory of the Estate of John Odoerfer***

****SLIDE 22- Epilogue***

XII. Epilogue

Finally, there are two dimensions of what I've said up to now that I want to comment on

Historical Impact of the Hessians

Unfortunately, the Hessian Soldiers were to the Revolutionary War as a refrigerator is to fresh milk. They made it last longer, and taste better before it spoiled, at least in the eyes of the British. The British could not have placed sufficient men in arms to fight the colonists without the 30,000 Hessians, who amounted to well over 1/3 of all the troops the British had in America from 1776-1783, and who played a key role in several battles.

Fortunately, on the other hand, the Hessian Soldiers were to the Colonists as a stirring stick is to a hornet's nest. The hiring of the Hessians by Great Britain, greatly angered the Colonists. They felt that Britain was treating them as alien strangers to the British state-sicking those foreigners, who would undoubtedly mistreat civilians, on them.

This intense anger was instrumental in giving the Colonists the motivation and courage to throw off their allegiance to the British Crown, and to seek the allegiance of the French.

Personal Impact of Johann Wolfgang Odoerfer

My thought is that everyone has what I call a “life hassle factor.” Some people’s hassle factor is a 0 or 1, with a pretty trouble free life, while others, with troubles around every corner, have a hassle factor of 10.

I think my great³ grandfather, Johann Wolfgang Odoerfer, had the Mother of all hassle factors! Parent early deaths, no money, forced to be a hessian soldier, raging seas, disease, cannon balls and musket fire, left by Cornwallis to be slaughtered at Yorktown, a terrible year in prison, wife and daughter deaths, and many other life threatening situations. But, somehow, he survived! Had he not, this tale, I’m sad to ponder, would never have been told.

. So I consider myself fortunate indeed that my Blue and Scarlet Skeleton’s life, with an extremely high hassle factor, was somehow spared.

And I also consider myself fortunate that I was able to experience the pure thrill of discovering my skeleton, and finding out so much about him.

May his spirit, and yes, his bones, rest in peace.

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