



**Diaz-Moellenberg Family
History**

By Ken Zimmerman Jr.

Diaz-Moellenberg Family History

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Published by Ken Zimmerman Jr.

Enterprises www.kenzimmermanjr.com

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Published in St. Louis, Missouri
by Ken Zimmerman Jr. Enterprises.

First Edition: October 2021

Dedication

This book is dedicated to my dad,
Ernest Charles Diaz, who was not my
biological father but was the best dad we
could have ever asked for. We miss you,
Dad.

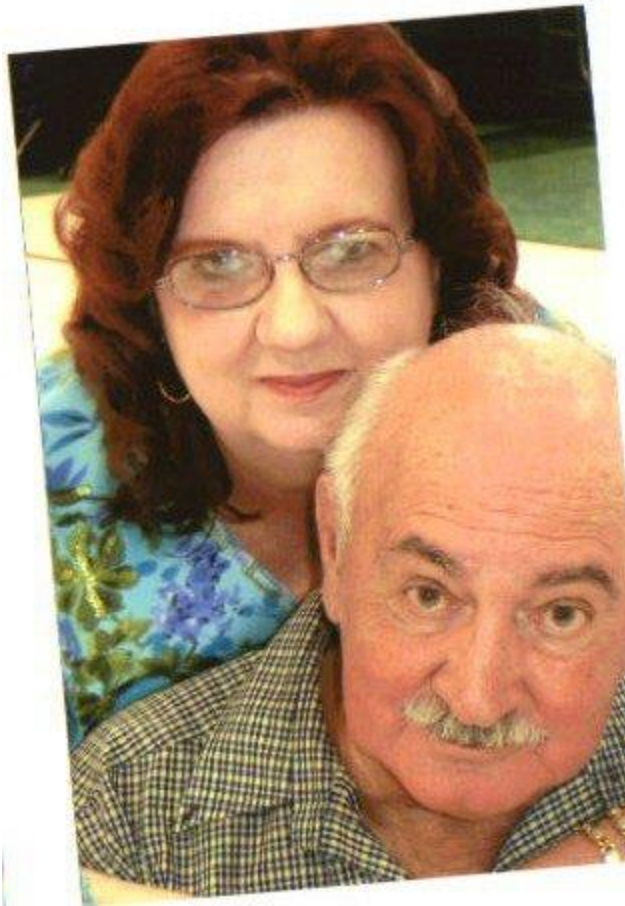


Figure 1-Mom and Dad at Mom's 60th Birthday party in 2005

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Introduction

This book is a compilation of posts from my website about Dad's family. Because Dad's father Joseph came from Mexico in 1917, we have limited information about Joseph's family. We have more information about the Moellenberg branch but Dad had limited interactions with his mother's side of the family.

I hope you enjoy this short family history.

Chapter 1 – Diaz Family

Joseph Diaz immigrated to the United States in 1917. I believe he moved to St. Louis almost immediately but I don't know his connection to the city.

Joseph Diaz Comes to St. Louis in 1917

Joseph (Josef) Diaz was my stepfather, Ernest C. Diaz's father. Ernie or Dad was the son of Joseph and Marie Diaz nee Moellenberg. Joseph was a first generation immigrant from San Miguel de Allende, Mexico.

Joseph was born on May 12, 1893. According to his death certificate, his parents were Ulalio (Eulalio) Diaz and Betty Diaz nee Ramiro. I have not been able to trace either of Joseph's parents.

Joseph immigrated to the United States in 1917. He came to St. Louis soon after coming to the United States because he was married to Marie at the time of the 1920 census. They lived at 602 Loughborough Avenue, which is the site of the current Carondolet YMCA.

According to the 1930 census, the growing family lived at 528 W. Poepping Street. It is owned by the LRA today. I

can't tell if the actual house is still standing or if it has already been knocked down.

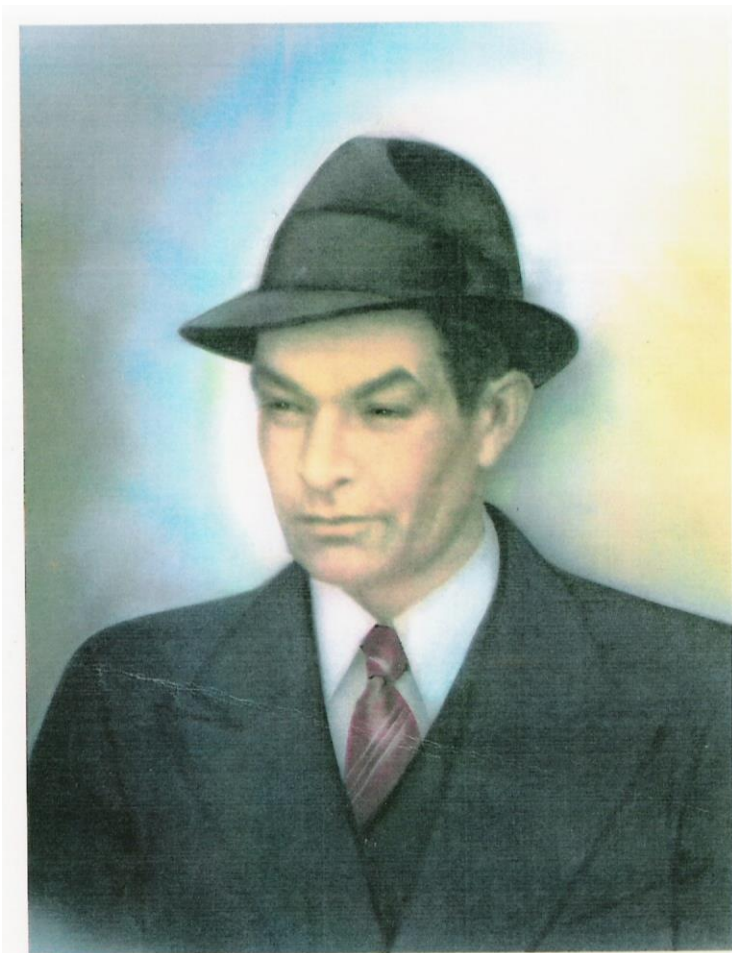


Figure 2-Joseph (Josef) Diaz - Date Unknown

Dad did not remember this house, when I asked him about it. He only remembered them living at 2426 S. 3rd

Street. When the 1940 census came out, I discovered they moved to the S. 3rd Street address in 1935.

Dad's friends from the neighborhood remembered Joseph being a "mean" man. If people upset him, he would chase them down the block. People avoided confronting him.

I was not particularly shocked. As a first generation immigrant, he probably suffered plenty of discrimination. Joseph dealt with this threat by being a hard man. Dad did not see him as hard and spoke glowingly of him.

Dad was the baby of the family. Joseph's and Marie's oldest child was Quinton, who was born in 1920. Rita would be born in 1922, followed by Marie in 1924, Adele in 1925 and Dad in 1932, when Joseph was 39 and Marie was 37.

Joseph worked as a general laborer and was a crane operator at the time of his death in 1951. He contracted stomach cancer in February 1951. He passed away due to complications from the cancer on April 24, 1951, a few weeks shy of his 58th birthday. He is buried at Mount Olive Cemetery.

Quinton married and moved to Flint, Michigan. Rita married James Brooks and became a school teacher. Marie married James Walker. Adele married a man that was killed in World War II. She later married a man named Burgess and then Charles "Chuck" Romich, who died in 1973. Marie is the only sibling still living.

Ernest C. Diaz (1932 - 2008)

My stepfather, Ernest C. Diaz, was born in St. Louis, MO on Saturday, May 21, 1932. It was the same day Amelia Earhart became the first woman to cross the Atlantic Ocean in an airplane. Dad was the youngest of five children born to Joseph (Josef) Diaz and Marie Moellenberg Diaz.

Dad said the family did not have a lot of money, so he and his buddies used to steal doughnuts off the trays the local baker put out to load on to his truck. You would think after the first few times the doughnuts were taken the man would watch the pastries or not leave them on the rack. I think the baker probably knew and was helping out some of the neighborhood kids.

The Soulard neighborhood Dad grew up in does not really exist today. All the houses were torn down around S. 3rd Street and replaced with warehouses and

parking lots. His church, St. Peter and Paul, is still a landmark though.



Figure 3-Mom and Dad on their wedding day in June 1981

Dad would serve in the U.S. Army during the Korean War. He made Sergeant twice but got busted back to Corporal both times.

The first time he got into a fight with a bunch of Marines, when he was on leave in Seoul. The second time he knocked out a new 2nd Lieutenant, who critiqued Dad's gun crew. While Dad was in Korea, his father Joseph died of stomach cancer.

He married his first wife Shirley around this time. They would have five

daughters together: Vicki, Gail, Janie, Tracey and Kelly. Dad was married to a woman named Evelyn for about 7 years in the 1970s. He married my mother, who had three young kids, on June 8, 1981.

It took a lot of character for Dad, who was 49 years old, to marry a woman with three children, who were not even in their teens yet. When my father struggled with alcoholism, Dad stepped in and filled the role of father during our childhood and adulthood. He was present at our graduations, weddings and the birth of our children.

Dad had a unique sense of humor. You never quite knew what he was going to say. When we would get on his nerves, he would always say, "Why don't you go play in traffic on Hampton Avenue?" He would tease people but he never said anything bad about anyone. He did not want to hurt people's feelings. I could count on one hand the number of times we saw him get mad.

One of his more humorous quips resulted in the naming of one of Mom's dishes. Mom made a new chicken soup, which had a lot of dumplings and vegetables. We really liked it but Dad was feeling his oats. He asked Mom, "Is this the kind of soup, where you run the chicken through the pot and then wrap it up to have it another night?"

When he saw the fire come from her eyes, he realized she did not get his funny, so he replied, "You did manage to get some chicken in it." At which point, the three of us busted up laughing.

Mom made one or two off-color comments and threatened to never make it again. We begged her to keep making it because the four of us really liked it. Later, she saw the humor in the situation and named the soup, "Wave the Chicken Over the Pot Soup".

Dad taught us how to love in the way he treated our mother and how he interacted with people. He would literally give someone the shirt off his back. He was taken from us far too soon on Thursday, November 20, 2008. It has been almost five years but he is still greatly missed by Mom, his children, grandchildren and great grandchildren.

Dad does not have any statutes dedicated to him but he left a lasting legacy of 8 children, numerous grandchildren, great grandchildren and two great-great grandchildren plus tons of wonderful memories. Godspeed, Dad.

Camping With Dad

After my mother married my stepfather, Ernest Diaz, in 1981, he was looking for a way for us to spend some

time together. I was camping with the Boy Scouts, so Dad decided that camping would be a good way for us to get to know each other.

A friend of Dad's owned some property and a cabin in Greenville, MO. We did not stay at the cabin or in a tent for that matter. Dad liked to camp "under the stars" so we slept on cots by the fire. Actually, he normally slept in his chair.

On our first trip down, someone had parked their car on the small gravel road that we used to get to the campsite by the pond. Dad drove around it in his 1981 Ford Thunderbird using a small incline by the road.

When we came off the hill, we were still driving at a slant on two wheels just like in one of my favorite shows, the Dukes of Hazzard. The car tilted back down and we arrived at the site. I thought it was cool but I don't think Mom was so crazy about our adventure.

The fishing was as good. We came home with 40 to 50 blue gill, which Grandpa Ellis grilled up a few weeks later with some more that he and Dad caught out of Lake Tishomingo. It was one of the few times that I enjoyed fishing.

The best part of camping was always the fire we built, which we would cook hot dogs and marshmallows. We would put a large log in the middle and once the center burned down, we would push the sides into the fire. It kept the fire burning all night. One year we got it so hot, it melted the cuffs on Dad's pants.

After the first couple of years, Dad's friend sold his place but the camping trips helped us bond and are some of my favorite memories of Dad.

Dad Makes a Fateful Decision

A couple of years before he passed away in 2008, my stepfather Ernest C. Diaz shared with me something that I never knew about him. After the Korean War, Dad was demobilized from the U.S. Army. He returned to civilian life in St. Louis, Missouri and began looking for a job. Within a few weeks, Dad was working at one of the garment cutting shops on Washington Avenue in Downtown St. Louis.

What I didn't know was that Dad had applied with Anheuser-Busch Brewing Company after leaving the Army. A-B as they are known locally called Dad a few months after he had been working in the garment industry as a garment cutter. Dad decided to stay in the garment industry and turned down

Anheuser-Busch's job offer. Dad told me in hindsight he would have been better off working for A-B.



Figure 4-Diaz Siblings - Adele, Ernie, Rita, Quentin and Marie

However, at the time that he made the decision, it did not look like a bad decision. At the turn of the Twentieth Century, St. Louis was "first in shoes, first in booze and last in the American League." Prohibition forced many of St. Louis' breweries out of business. A-B was the last brewery standing.

St. Louis was the largest garment manufacturer outside of New York City. When Dad started working in the garment industry, Washington Avenue was almost completely populated by garment manufacturers.

In the 1970s, things began to change. Garment making moved overseas and many of the U.S. businesses became importers. The last Downtown garment manufacturer closed in the early 1980s. Dad was in his early 50s and would work a series of odd jobs until his retirement at 68 years old.

Dad's experience proves that hindsight is 20/20. I'm sure that not many Americans in the 1950s could predict the state of American manufacturing in the 1980s. While his decision seems like a mistake today, it was a good decision at the time. Staying in the garment industry gave him more options then and importantly he enjoyed it. Everything worked out in the end.

San Miguel de Allende, Mexico

My step grandfather, Joseph Diaz, immigrated from San Miguel de Allende, Guanajuato, Mexico in 1917. Today, it is the home to over 139,000 residents but in the early 1900s things were different. The town was on its way to becoming a ghost town.

San Miguel de Allende is located in Central Mexico. During the Mexican War of Independence (1810 -1821), it was the first town to declare its independence. However, the town is very old and most of the young people began to

leave. San Miguel de Allende was considered a place to move away from, not to.

Joseph probably joined many others in leaving San Miguel de Allende. Joseph was only 23 years old, when he immigrated to the United States and settled in St. Louis, MO. He would start a family and never return to Mexico.

San Miguel de Allende's fortunes began to change due to its historic center, many of the buildings were built between 1600 and 1800. David Alfaro Siqueiros, a Mexican artist discovered the town and began giving painting lessons. Other artists soon followed.

American soldiers studying art on the G.I. Bill began to move to the town after World War II. They often came back to retire to the town. Today, foreign retirees from many nations have settled in San Miguel de Allende making it a very cosmopolitan town.

The historic center of the town has been declared a World Heritage Site. The town is also famous for being the birthplace of Ignacio Allende, an important Mexican soldier during the Mexican War of Independence.

Today, the city is still a cosmopolitan artist and writers colony

with numerous foreign residents. Crime and the economy have taken a toll on the city but it still remains one of Mexico's more cosmopolitan towns.

Chapter 2 – The Moellenberg Family

Dad's mom, Marie Moellenberg, was born on October 30, 1896 in St. Louis, MO. She was born to John Moellenberg and Adele Barmann. Marie had two older brothers, Frank and Henry. Marie's mother Adele passed away in 1904 at age 40. Her father would marry Wilhelmina Lansing in 1905. John and Wilhelmina had a daughter Johanna in 1907.

John Moellenberg was born on March 30, 1861 in Germany. He and Adele arrived in the United States in 1893. Oldest son Frank was born in Germany but all the rest of the children were U.S. citizens. John was a merchant. He died at 81 years of age on August 15, 1942 due to heart disease and gall stones.

Adele Barmann was born April 2, 1864 in Germany. She died on November 22, 1904 of unknown causes at 40 years old. At the time, her children were 13, 9 and 8 years old.

Wilhelmina Lansing was born on August 16, 1868 in Germany. She married John Moellenberg at the age of 37 in 1905.

Dad did not know much about the Moellenbergs. They did not approve of Marie's marriage to Joseph, so they did not see them very often even though they lived in the same neighborhood. Dad said he thought the Moellenbergs were stuck up. They tended to look down on Dad and his siblings.

Marie Moellenberg married Joseph Diaz sometime between 1917 and 1920. They would have five children. Marie was widowed in 1951, when Joseph died of stomach cancer. Dad was serving in the Korean War, when Joseph died.

My older sisters were close to their grandmother Marie because she helped Dad take care of them when they were young. She helped raise all five of the girls. Dad said he could not have raised them without his mother's help.

Marie passed away on February 2, 1979 at the age of 82. She passed away before my mother started dating my stepdad, so I never got to meet her. She must have been a very strong lady to help Dad with the girls in her 70s.

I was not able to trace the Moellenberg's history beyond Dad's grandparents either. It is a common experience with first generation Americans that it is difficult to trace

further generations back. It is easier in some countries such as England to find records but Germany did not unite until 1882, which was 11 years before they immigrated to the United States. The continental countries were also devastated by two world wars.

John Moellenberg (1861 - 1942)

John Moellenberg was born in Germany on March 30, 1861. Sometime prior to 1890, John Moellenberg married Adele Barmann. They welcomed their first son, Frank Moellenberg, on August 30, 1891. In 1893, John, Adele and Frank immigrated to the United States and settled in St. Louis.

John and Adele had several more children after coming to St. Louis. Henry Moellenberg was born on March 22, 1895. My stepfather Ernest Charles Diaz's mother, Marie Moellenberg, was born on October 30, 1896. Their last child Annie Moellenberg was born in February 1903. Tragically, she died only a few months later in August 1903.

Tragedy struck again on November 22, 1904 at 6 am, when Adele Moellenberg nee Barmann passed away at 40 years of age from an unknown disease. A year later, John married Wihlemina Lansing.

John and Wihlemina had one child, Johanna Moellenberg, who was born on March 30, 1907. Prior to his death in 1942, Johanna and her two young sons lived with John and Wihlemina.

John found himself fearing for young Marie's life in 1910. During a routine vaccination at the Carondelet School, a young boy named William Kunz died after receiving a vaccination. Several other children fell ill, some of them to the point of death. Marie was one of the children sickened by the vaccinations. She told authorities, who investigated the doctor, that all of the sick children were vaccinated by the same needle. Fortunately for the family and Dad, Marie pulled through.

On July 4, 1922, John was working in his Standard Oil filling station, when two gunmen entered, made him lie on the floor and took his safe key from him. The men then emptied the safe and fled. Although shaken up by the experience, John was unharmed.

In 1941, John also buried his son Frank, who served in World War I with distinction and had an American Legion Post named after him. A year later on August 15, 1942, John Moellenberg passed away at 81 years of age from heart disease and bowel obstruction. John was laid out in his beloved St. Boniface

Church in Carondolet before being interred at St. Peter and Paul Cemetery.

From Germany to St. Louis, John led a full life and left a large family.

The Down Side of Being Family Historian

Sometimes when you are researching the family history, you get an unpleasant shock. I was researching my stepdad Ernest C. Diaz's family history in the Library of Congress database. Dad did not know much about the Moellenburgs, so I have been trying to find more information on them. While the discovery was significant, it was also a bit depressing. Dad's aunt Annie Moellenburg died at 6 months old during August 1903.

I do not know the exact date of Annie's birth or death. Annie would have been born in January or February 1903. She died in August prior to August 13, 1903. Annie's burial notice was printed in the Thursday, August 13, 1903 edition of the St. Louis Republic. Annie died from infant cholera. Tragically, her mother Adele Moellenburg nee Barman would die in 1904.

The Moellenburgs lived at 7825 Pennsylvania Avenue at the time of Annie's death. The Moellenburg family emigrated from Germany to the United

States in 1895. Dad's mother Marie Moellenburg would be born in 1896 to John and Adele Moellenburg. Annie was Marie's younger sister.

While Annie died long before Dad or I were ever born, it was sad to see such a young life lost. John Moellenburg would suffer two significant losses in a very short time. You can't help but empathize with what he went through. It is easier to write about family members that you did not know. However, when you discover that a child died so young and what it meant to the family, it is tragic.

I have discovered several children who were died young and were not originally in the family records. Genealogy and history face the same challenges. If someone does not record it, it is lost within a generation or two. Rest in peace, little Annie.

Frank Moellenberg Serves New Country

My stepdad's uncle, Frank Moellenberg, served the United States in World War I despite being born in Collu, Germany on August 30, 1891. Frank Moellenberg enlisted in the United States Army on April 26, 1918. He served overseas with the Company L 354 Infantry from May 15, 1918 to March 20, 1919, when he was honorably discharged at the rank

of Private. Frank was 27 years old at the time of his service.

Dad did not know the Moellenbergs that well but he thought they were financially successful. According to his death certificate, Frank was a jewelry and optical seller. Frank was married to Johanna but I do not know if they were married before or after his service. At the time of his military induction in St. Louis, MO, he still lived at his father John Moellenberg's home in the 7900 block of Pennsylvania.

Frank and Johanna lived at a house in the 6900 block of Vermont Avenue. The house built in 1927 is still standing. It is a block or so from the Carondolet YMCA. When Frank suffered heart issues and nephritis on March 28, 1941, he checked into the VA Hospital. Unfortunately, Frank never came home. He passed away on April 14, 1941 at the age of 49. Frank's father John Moellenberg, Dad's grandfather, outlived his son by a year.

Frank Moellenberg was laid to rest at the St. Peter and Paul Cemetery. The eldest son of John Moellenberg and Adele Barman Moellenberg died at a very early age. Fortunately, his sister Marie Moellenberg would live into her 80s. Dad's mother passed away in 1979.

Frank Moellenberg (1891 - 1941)

I was raised by my stepfather, Ernest C. Diaz, so I included his family in my genealogical research. However, Dad's father, Joseph Diaz, emigrated from Mexico and his mother Marie Moellenberg was a first generation American born to German immigrants. Finding information on his family has not been easy.

We know Joseph's father was Ulalio Diaz and his mother's maiden name was Betty Ramiro but do not have any information about them or the generations before them. We have a little bit more information on the Moellenberg family. It turns out Dad's uncle, Frank Moellenberg, left a significant legacy in St. Louis.

Frank Moellenberg was born in Cologne, Germany on August 30, 1891 to John Moellenberg and Adele Moellenberg nee Borman. In 1893, John and Adele immigrated with their family to St. Louis, MO, where Dad's mom, Marie Moellenberg, was born in 1896.

The Moellenbergs tended to be entrepreneurs. John owned a grocery store, brother Henry owned a gas station and Frank would become own a jewelry and optical shop in Carondolet.

In 1917, 26-year-old Frank Moellenberg joined the Army and saw action in France, where he was wounded at Argonne. When he returned from World War I, Frank Moellenberg joined American Legion Post 162, which met at his local parish, St. Boniface Catholic Church. Frank would remain an active supporter of St. Boniface until his death.

Frank also served a Republican election judge in St. Louis City, Missouri. In 1923, 32-year-old Frank Moellenberg married 29-year-old Johanna Mueller. Frank and Johanna would have two sons, Richard and John.

Frank continued to run his successful jewelry and optical business, while leading American Legion Post 162. On March 28, 1941, 49-year-old Frank Moellenberg started feeling poorly, so he went to the Veteran's Hospital at Jefferson Barracks. Frank suffered from chronic kidney trouble but heart disease was making him feel ill. A little over two weeks later, Frank Moellenberg passed away on April 14, 1941.

His funeral would be at his beloved St. Boniface Church before he was interred at St. Peter and Paul Cemetery. The other members of American Legion Post 162 voted to name the post in

honor of Frank. From that day until it closed, it was called the Frank Moellenberg American Legion Post 162.

St. Boniface Church lasted a little longer than the post but it closed in 2005 due to a shrinking congregation. Today, it is the Ivory Theater.

Frank Moellenberg may not be well known in St. Louis today but in the 1920s and 1930s he was an important part of the city's fabric.



Figure 5-The former St. Boniface Catholic Church circa 2005 - Courtesy of Geo St. Louis

Conclusion

This family history is relatively short but it contains most of the information I've been able to find on the Diaz-Moellenberg family. Since both sides were first generation immigrants, it isn't surprising to have limited information available. As new resources become available on-line, this history may grow. Any additions will be added to this document and posted on the website in an updated PDF.

About the Author

Ken Zimmerman Jr. is a married father and grandfather, who lives outside of St. Louis, Missouri. Ken has been interested in combat sports since watching professional wrestling from St. Louis in the late 1970s and being introduced to boxing by his stepdad, Ernest Charles Diaz, who raised him. A lifelong martial artist, Ken holds rank in three martial arts including a 4th Degree black belt in Taekwondo.