

*My Father's
Guiding Hand*

A True Story of God's Grace and Faithfulness

My Father's Guiding Hand

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M. Gloria Meiusi



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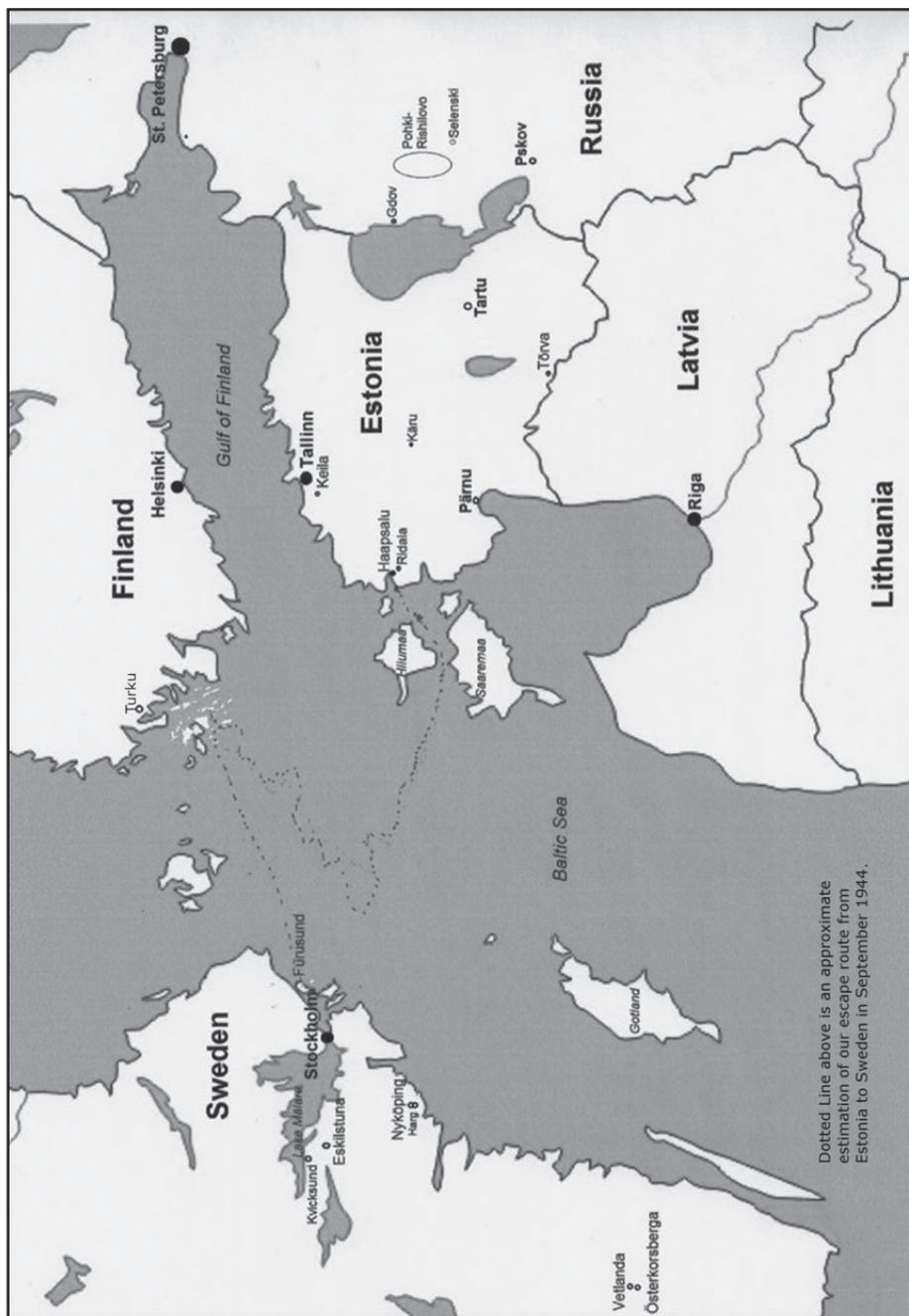
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Dedication



I dedicate this book with a grateful and humble heart in memory of my parents, but especially to my father, Victor Konsa. While writing this, I came to a new realization of how my father's guiding hand has had such a loving and positive impact on my life in showing me the clear way to my heavenly Father.

I also dedicate this to our eight grandchildren: (in the order of their ages) Elizabeth Mairi, Peter Jacob, Katrin Ruth, Jonathan Abel, Anna Grace, Molly Adele, Monica Kirsten, and Caroline Joy.

It was when I used to speak and give my testimony in many Christian Women's Clubs and to different organizations and churches that people asked me over and over, "Have you written a book about your life?"

I would reply, "Maybe someday when I'm a grandmother I'll have more time to do that . . ."

As our grandchildren were growing, they begged me to tell them bedtime stories, and I told them stories of “when I was a little girl.” Later they started saying, “Mamma, you need to write these stories down!”

Years passed and, finally, here is the first part of my life story written so that children could read some of the personal experiences that God allowed me to go through—some happy and funny—others rather hard and painful. It covers my life up to the time I met and married by dear husband, Endel Meiusi. I am now in the process of writing a follow-up to this book about our life together.

I thank my sisters, Hulda Eistrat and Esther Kaups, for helping me recall some of the events from our childhood and Esther’s husband, Taavi Kaups, for some of the political facts and other information. Many thanks also to our daughter, Lillian Tamm, for doing some of the editing and helping to choose the pictures. She gave the final push through her college friend, Valerie Jones-McKay of Redemption Press, Inc. to actually get this into print.

My prayer is that my story will bring glory to God and will impress on your heart the value of both physical and spiritual freedom. I hope it will be a blessing to each one who reads it.

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Preface



To help readers understand the names of my brother, sister, and myself used in the book, I'd like to explain that in America my brother and sister are known as Dave and Esther, and I by my given middle name, Gloria. But before we came to America and even today when we are with Estonians and at home, we use our given first names: Kaljo, Ester, and Mairy.

Looking Back

The sun is shining brightly on this clear Friday afternoon. It is the sixth of June, 1986. Standing on the deck of the ferry *Georg Ots* on the Baltic Sea with the wind blowing through my hair, I can barely see the coastline of Estonia way out in the distance. Estonia. The land of my birth that I had to leave as a child so many years ago. Tears well up in my eyes; I have thought I would never return and even now I have such mixed emotions since the Russians are still occupying my little nation. My thoughts cannot help but drift back to my childhood . . .

I was born at home in Ridala, Estonia, nine kilometers from the town of Haapsalu on a cold snowy winter Wednesday, the twenty-fourth of January, 1934. Since both of my older siblings, Hulda Marie and Ester Elisabeth, were girls, my mother had longed

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for a boy. "Papa," as we always called my father, who along with a mid-wife assisted with my birth, later told me that as he held me up and announced the birth of another girl, Mamma turned her head in disappointment.

Later when the rush of my birth was over and everything had settled down, Papa had opened the Bible on the nightstand and the verse popped open where God says He is not a respecter of persons but loves us all (paraphrased from Romans 2:11). Mamma had turned her head back to Papa with a big smile and they both thanked the Creator of all life, especially for this new little girl whom they named Mairy Marta Gloria Konsa (Konsa was our family name).

Ours was a happy home, filled with love, joy, and peace. We lived in the parsonage of the Ridala Baptist Church, which was housed at the back of the church building. There were two rooms on the main floor, a kitchen, hallway, pantry, and a dry-closet ("bathroom," which was occasionally cleaned out from the outside cellar). Across the hall one could step right into the big sanctuary which, including the balcony in the back, could hold many hundreds of people.

The large front room of our home was partitioned off by a tall closet on one side and Papa's desk with a bookcase that reached almost to the ceiling on the other side with a curtain between that "closed" this area as a

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“doorway.” The bookcase was filled with all kinds of theological, religious and medical books, encyclopedias, dictionaries, etc. This front part of the room formed Papa’s office but was actually called the “*vendade tuba*” or brethren’s room.

Every Sunday morning the elders and pastor (our Papa) met in this room for prayer and used it at other times for board meetings or discussions, interviews with new members-to-be, counseling, and so on. Papa’s medicine cabinet was also in this room. People would come to seek medical help instead of going to a doctor in Haapsalu since Papa had studied medicine in Germany before studying at seminary and going into the ministry. With his medical background and compassionate heart, coming to him for medical care often seemed natural for the people.

Behind the tall closet in the other part of this front room was a double bed that we called “*kuld voodi*” or the “golden bed,” made of shiny gold-colored brass where my sisters slept. There was also enough room here for a wardrobe.

In the second room slept Papa, Mamma, and I, and this is where I was born! Besides the beds, dresser, table, chairs, and nightstand, on the other side of this room stood a huge oven heated by wood. Even now I can almost smell the fresh loaves of bread as Mamma would take them out of the oven on baking days! Since during cold weather and winter months the huge oven

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had to be heated anyway, besides baking bread, Mamma roasted potatoes, meats, and many different dishes, some in clay pots, like barley or bread puddings. The food preparation, however, was done right next door in the kitchen.

The kitchen consisted of a wood-heated stove for cooking and heating water, a table, chairs, some cupboards, and a side table with a dishpan for doing the dishes that was replaced with a washbowl where we could wash ourselves. During the winter, this is where we also took our baths when a tub was brought in on the floor, or sometimes we went to a neighbor's sauna. In warmer weather, we washed outside in a private area near the well. Water for the house had to be hand pumped from the outside well before being carried several meters to the building, up the eight stone steps, and down the hall by the kitchen door where it was kept for use in buckets on a covered shelf (and all wastewater was carried out the same way). Of course, this was no luxury living, but we never heard our parents complain about all the disadvantages of living in a "fishbowl." People from our church could walk in at any time and feel that they were always welcome. Strangers could find rest and encouragement here, and Mamma always had some hot tea or coffee to offer to anyone who came by.

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Backside of the Ridala Baptist Church where we lived 1933-1944



Front side of the Ridala Baptist Church and main entrance



Our family 1935: Ester, Papa, Mamma, Mairy, Hulda

On Sunday mornings, especially during the winter months, the ladies gathered in the warm kitchen by

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the stove to dry out their long skirts, coats, and boots after walking through the snow on their way to church. So we all had to be dressed, finished with breakfast, and ready for the day before the whole place was “invaded.” This was just part of the routine. We had lots of “routines.”

Each morning we would sing our “morning song:” *“Kui unest üles ärkan ja silmad lahti teen, Siis laulan sulle Looja ja kiidan Isa Sind. Et oled öösel hoidnud, mind kõige kahju eest, Sa ise oled valvan’d, kui mina magasin.”* (Loose translation: When I awake in the morning and open wide my eyes, I’ll sing to you, Creator, and praise You, God Most High; that through the night You’ve held me and kept me from all harm. So lovingly You watched me, when I was sleeping still.)

At mealtimes we had several songs and prayers, such as, *“Oh, Issand Jeesus tule, Meil ise võõraks ole, Sa meile lauda kata, Kõik õnnistada võta, Amen.”* Oh, come Lord Jesus, and be our guest, supply our table and make it blessed!” We also said a similar prayer in German, *“Komm Herr Jesus, sei unser Gast und segne was Du uns gegeben hast, Amen.”* In fact, quite often we had a “rule” that we could only speak German during mealtime, so to this day I would never go hungry in Germany for lack of knowing how to ask, *“Bitte gib mir Brot, Bitte gib mir Kartoffeln, Bitte gib mir Butter, etc.”* (Please give me bread, potatoes, butter), but for each thing, we always said “please” and of course “dankeshön” (thank you).

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Discipline was very consistently and lovingly practiced in our home. Papa had lived in Germany for ten years and studied at a Christian medical school, where each part of the day and each chore was done properly and distinctly. More later about Papa, whose name was Victor Konsa and Mamma, named Adele Sünd.

Most evenings when Papa was home we would gather around the harmonium as he played and led in singing. Papa taught all of us girls how to play chords on the harmonium, a little organ pumped with your feet. As we grew older, Mamma taught us to play chords on the zither, so we would often play along with instruments as we sang. After our singing time, we read the Bible and then we always knelt, each of us praying out loud. This was followed by the final evening prayer-song (which we've passed down to our children and grandchildren), "*Mind tiiva alla võta, Oh Jeesus hästi kata, Su kanapojukest. Kui kuri tahab neelda, siis lase inglid keelda. See laps peab jääma rahule, Amen.*" ("Take me under your wing, and cover me, oh Jesus, Your little baby-chick. Lest harm would me now swallow, bid angels to protect me. This child shall go to sleep in peace.") There were many other evening songs as well. One favorite, especially during summer evenings as we watched the sun go down, was "*Õhtupäike veereb metsa taha*" ("The evening sun is sinking down behind the forest"), or when there was lightning and thunder, we would sing "How Great Thou Art" ("*Suur oled Sa*"),

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since one verse speaks of the greatness of God in thunder and lightning. (*"Kui kõue mürin minu kõrvu kostub ja pikse nooled õhus lendavad . . ."*)

My earliest childhood memories are of how I would wake up and start singing in my bed. Mamma told me many times that I brought her so much joy, as I was always happy, laughing, and singing.

I really looked up to Hulda and Ester—they were my big sisters, and especially if Hulda said anything, it *had* to be right.

The whole family had great times singing together, and if I didn't know a certain song well enough, I would "direct" our family "choir," making them sing it over and over while waving my hands rhythmically until I, too, had the song memorized. God had given each of us a natural ability to harmonize. Ester sang the alto part, Hulda and Mamma sang the melody, I usually sang an octave higher or sang the descant (or tenor two octaves higher), and Papa sang bass.

While the church choir was practicing either in the sanctuary or during colder weather upstairs, since during the week the sanctuary was usually not heated, we heard all the different parts being taught separately as well as together. We sang the men's parts an octave or two higher, making it easy for us to just follow along. To this day, whenever we three girls are together, we spontaneously break into some great choir anthem and sing in different parts. Most of the time while Mamma

Looking Back

was doing her daily chores she also hummed a tune or joyfully sang out loud, so how else could we even live a day except with a song in our hearts?

If the sun was shining in the morning, Papa would open the drapes and say, “We’re not the children of darkness, but children of Light! – so let the sun shine in!” Right away, one of us would strike up a song either about letting our light shine, being sunbeams for Jesus, having sunlight in our souls today, or some other happy song, and so the day began with praises to our heavenly Father! The abundance of praise for every little thing was taught and practiced in our home. What a heritage!

