

Prisoners of War – Fritz & Frida Schwille

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Western Europe – Germany

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Friedrich "Fritz" Schwille
and
Frida/Freida Schwille
Prisoners of War in WW2
Died in 1943 & 1944

Friedrich "Fritz" Schwille

The Schwille family professed in 1921, among early families in Germany. **Friedrich "Fritz" Schwille** was born in 1907 and went in the work in 1927. He labored in Germany, Switzerland, Bohemia (now Czech Rep.), and maybe for a short time in Austria. He died January 1943.

He was first sentenced to death for refusing to bear arms, but then the sentence was commuted to military service on the Russian front as a stretcher bearer. For years it was believed that he had been executed. However, it came to light after the fall of the Soviet Union and many records were released from that era that he actually was not killed, but was captured by the Soviet Army on the Eastern Front in 1942. He was sent to a POW hard labor camp in Siberia, where he died in 1943. Sister workers have visited the site of the camp where he died and examined the records regarding his death there.

Another account stated: "In order to make a stand against the war out of religious conviction...refused military service. As a result, he was pardoned and sentenced to death by the Reich Military Court in Berlin. After three months on death row, he was pardoned and send to the Eastern Front, where, as was only learned many years after the war, he died in Russian captivity in January 1943."

His sister, **Freida/Frida Schwille**, also a worker, was killed at Dachau on Nov. 30, 1944, aged 34. While others were persecuted to varying degrees, they are the only two known friends/workers that actually died in the war and the German persecutions.

Here are copies of what is believed to be the last two letters he wrote when he was in prison awaiting execution, both on the same date (Sept. 22, 1941), one written to family and another to friends, and also a poem he wrote. All these are translations from German. It turned out he wasn't executed after all in 1941, as he was expecting when he wrote these letters, but rather, he died in 1943 when he was 36 years old.

Alt Moabit
12a Brandenburg Prison
Berlin [Germany]
September 22, 1941

All you dear Ones!

You were worried about my state of health. That is not necessary for I was always well. You should not worry so much about me.

My case has come up. On Thursday Sept 18, 1941 I was tried before the Reich's Court Martial. The sentence was no surprise to me. I could not expect anything else and I was prepared for it. At one time I thought some another way would open up, but it was not to be. The sentence is only verbal and not yet binding. It may take weeks before it is legal. I may be in Brandenburg prison for some time yet, so this will hardly be my last letter to you.

Now I have one wish. That you, for my sake, be quite resigned and at rest. Even if it is sad, all sadness can be overcome. I have struggled with His help—and I have overcome. I have rest of heart in what now is and what is yet to come. For a little while I felt forsaken, but the weeks and months were not all without joy. Even now I wish I had the opportunity to get out. But: "I cannot now go back" I have put my house in order. I am not very afraid if it takes me nearer Jordan. It will only be a moment when I go down into it's waves. Then the sorrow and pain is past.

Sometimes in my life I have thought about that hour and longed for that rest. Father, Mother, Karl and Hans went before and I did not wish them back from the place where the faithful are resting.

Gladly I would have liked to have stood by you dear ones in the years ahead in the battle of life. The Lord will not forsake you. Be strong and of good courage, because you still have work to do—and through God's goodness you will have happier days in life than what you experience right now.

I look back over my life. It brought me enough sorrow, but also not a little of the most beautiful JOY!
 Many times in life one has learned to die and it imparts strength which is stronger than death.
 Before men I leave this world without honor. You will be able to bear this, my disgrace. It will not be in vain for you.
 I believe the friends will gladly stand by you. Be strong and prepared. I hope later to write to you again.
 Many greetings to both of you and all the Loved Ones in the Lord. Greetings to the relatives!
 From your brother, Fritz

From: Fritz Schwillie – Berlin Sept 22, 1941

My dear sister Frida! My dear brother Wilhelm! All dear ones!

It is my turn to write a few lines. Many thanks, Frida, for your letter which I received the week before last. You worried about my health, but that was not necessary, because I am well. The information that Hilde received, did not happen. The mother of Werner (Gebhard) and Susi (Werner's sister) will have written to you, too; I rejoiced to be able to see them briefly. I submitted (asked permission) for Marie S and Hilde this week; I will be glad to hear about you through them. It is better, if you, Frida, don't make such a great journey, because of your health. Pauline (Schnitzer) looked very poorly, you must not worry so much about me. You will see Marie sooner than these lines reach you.

In my case, there was only one step forward. Thursday, September 18, I was at the Federal Military Court of Justice to stand trial. The verdict was no surprise for me, I could not expect differently, and I was prepared for it. Earlier, I thought that another way would open up, yet it happened differently. The sentence is pronounced, but not yet confirmed. Still weeks will pass until it becomes legal by law. The last word has not been spoken yet. When the verdict is confirmed, I shall go to a prison in Brandenburg, I was informed, where also some more time may pass. So this may not be my last letter yet.

Now I have only this one wish, that you be calm and trusting for my sake. Although it may be painful, all can be overcome. I myself have struggled, and with His help I have overcome. I am now resigned for what is yet to come. For a little while I felt forsaken, although the weeks and months were not all without joy.

Even now, at this point, I could have the opportunity to turn back, but: "I cannot now go back!" (Hymn 346 in the present English Hymnbook). I have put my house in order, I don't worry too much when it gets closer to Jordan, it will be only like a moment when I dive under its waves, and then, all pain and sorrow will be over. Sometimes in my life, I have thought about this hour, and longed for that rest. Father, mother, Karl and Hans went ahead of us, and I would not wish them back from the land where the faithful ones are at rest.

I would have gladly stood by you both and other dear ones in life's struggle; but the Lord will not abandon you. Just be brave and strong, you still have work to do, and with the mercy of God, life shall bring yet more joyful days than the present ones.

I look back over my life which has brought me enough sorrow, but also, not few of the greatest joys. In some occasions, one has learned in life, about dying, and it gives a power that is stronger than death. Before men I leave this world without honor. You will overcome this, my disgrace, it will not be in vain in your life.

I wonder, if you, dear Wilhelm, are far away? I hope you return in health, and that you are able to rejoice in many good things in life.

Salute Lina for me, dear Frida, may more joys return for you. I believe that the friends stand by you gladly. Be strong and composed. I was glad that Ricketante showed so much interest for me. Many greetings to her, too. Pauline will be staying with you for a while. Julie and the other friends are nearby, too. Maybe you can recuperate some, at the friends, and on the mountain, greet them all from me, from all my heart. I hope to write to you again later on.

To you both, and to all the dear ones in the Lord, many greetings from your brother, Fritz.

Greetings to the relatives.

This poem was enclosed with the last letter he sent to his family before being sent to the Russian front and his death.

Sept 22, 1941

Suffering cannot be separated from Loving on this earth
 If you practice Loving, then you will learn suffering.
 Loving and suffering must walk together on earth.
 A life of sacrifice is the true substance of Love.
 Who gives not of himself, can never free another.
 Love is feeling the pain of another's suffering.
 Love cannot separate from her heart another's grief.
 Love must, while travelling along, bear the burden of brethren
 She is patient with others and is prepared to be hurt by others
 With deep agony she sees corruption all around her.
 She dies many deaths as she watches others die.

And may my poor life—bleeding from the wounds of strangers
 Keep seeking the lost—to rescue from the floods.
 What matters? If only Love can keep loving until death.
 When one has stayed true to the holy calling
 So it is better to suffer in the heart than to be without Love.
 Someday the hour will come...
 Then Love is separated from sorrow!
 And when we have escaped from all pain
 We will Love in eternal Joy.

by Fritz Schwille (translated from German)

There is a historical document about him and his family online at <http://geschichtsverein-pfullingen.de/shop/193005/0/0/friedrich-und-frida-schwille>. There is a 34-page booklet available for purchase there, written in German.

Frida/Freida Schwille

On Remembrance Day, Sunday, November 17th, the victims of war and tyranny are remembered.

Commemorative speech in memory of the murder of **Frida Schwille**.

Author: Prof. Waltraud Pust, November 17, 2024

Translated from: <https://www.geschichtsverein-pfullingen.de/gedenkansprache-frida-schwille/>

View photo of Frida Schwille

November 30, 2024, marks the 80th anniversary of the death of Frida Schwille, then 34 years old, from Pfullingen. After five and a half months of imprisonment, interrogation, and torture in the Stuttgart Gestapo prison, she was "executed by the National Socialists" (according to the handwritten note in the Pfullingen Protestant church register) in the Dachau concentration camp along with nine other prisoners from a group of opponents of the Nazi regime, led by the Schlotterbeck family from Untertürkheim.

What happened then, and what do we know today?

The Pfullingen farming family of siblings **Frida and Friedrich Schwille** were active members of a biblical community (allegedly **Grefe-Hanowell***) outside the Protestant church. The brother, three years older than **Frida** and dearly loved by **Frida**, worked as an itinerant preacher for the community, primarily in Central and Eastern Germany. From 1933 onward, he was in the Vogtland/Erzgebirge region and, from 1940 onward, was conscripted into labor service at a steel mill in Aue. Although he could have helped his sister **Frida** on the farm, he volunteered for military service in 1941 in order to make a stand against the war out of **religious conviction**, and subsequently refused military service. As a result, he was sentenced to death by the Reich Military Court in Berlin. After three months on death row, he was pardoned and sent to the Eastern Front, where, as was only learned many years after the war, he died in Russian captivity in January 1943.

In June 1944, **Frida** was visited here in Pfullingen by a man who claimed to be sending greetings from her brother **Friedrich**, who was a Russian prisoner of war. **Frida**, who had been the head of the milk collection point since February 1, took in the stranger, sheltered him, and gave him letters to write to her brother. **He was Eugen Nesper, a double agent** who, after being exposed, returned to work for the Gestapo and had to betray others for his own survival. This is what happened to Frida.

A few days after the farewell to the alleged war comrade, on June 15, 1944, **Frida** was arrested at her workplace by a Mr. Kessler of the Gestapo in Stuttgart and taken to the Gestapo prison in Stuttgart.

In the following days and weeks, other friends of the religious community were arrested, interrogated, tortured, and imprisoned in Stuttgart. As a result, they occasionally had contact with Frida, who continued to be helpful, taking on heavy camp work for other prisoners.

The young women were not faring well, as one can still read their reports on the website of their Bible community. However, all the others were released in 1944 because, as we now know from the prosecution records of former Gestapo officers in the Ludwigsburg State Archives, they had no contact with Eugen Neper.

Homesick for her beloved brother **Friedrich**, Frida fell into the **perfidious clutches of the Gestapo secret agent Eugen Nesper**. He betrayed all those who considered him an anti-fascist resistance fighter to the Nazi henchmen.

Gestapo commissioners Alfred Hagenlocher and Otto Kessler did everything in their power to execute **Frida Schwille**, along with the nine other innocent people mentioned, without a trial in a summary trial approved by Himmler, on false charges. **Frida Schwille** was hastily transported by car to Dachau on November 27, 1944, where she was shot and burned in the crematorium on November 30.

Frida Schwille was a victim of the Nazi regime.

Now, on the eve of the 80th anniversary of the end of World War II, she serves as a representative reminder of this part of Pfullingen's history.

*Grefe-Hanowell refers to brother workers **Heinrich Grefe and Fred Hanowell** who labored in Germany after 1920.

More details about Fritz and Frida Schwillie are given in the following accounts:

Account of Luise and Sofie Laderer's Prison experiences in WWII

Werner Gebhard in German Concentration Camp
