

ABOUT MY GRANDFATHER VICTOR VON KLEMPERER

My grandfather, Victor von Klemperer, died and was buried in Bulawayo, in present-day Zimbabwe, in 1943. I was born in 1946 and thus never had the chance to meet him. However, judging from his memoirs, written towards the end of his shattered life, and from stories told me by my grandmother Fifi, and my father Gustav Victor, my perception of grandfather must be very close to the truth.



He demonstrated two really significant characteristics: 1) his great love of Germany, Dresden and the entire world of art, which intruded into everything he touched; 2) his great sadness and bitter disappointment towards the end of his life, about how badly and undignified Germany and especially the Dresdner Bank treated him.

I personally experienced this great sadness when a book about my grandfather and great grandfather was published by the bank and presented at the Leipzig branch in 2004. This happened to be the branch which my grandfather had founded and which was later used to stage a reception for Adolf Hitler. It was here that an actor quoting from my grandfather's memoirs said about his contribution to the Dresdner Bank: "nevertheless my work for and cooperation with the bank cannot be erased, and someday the bank will possibly bring out everything into the bright light of day". Those family members who were present could not hold back the tears.

I had a second very personal experience when in 1965 I met Dr. Rudolph Brandes, the famous director of Dresden's zoo. My grandfather lived on the Tiergartenstrasse, directly opposite the zoo, and was given a key by Brandes to a small private gate so that he could walk through the zoo each morning on his way to the bank. The chauffeur then drove the dog back to the house. Brandes lost his position as zoo director because he refused to join the NSDAP. My grandfather helped him find a job at the new Coca-Cola office which was opened in 1936 in time for the summer Olympic Games. On leaving Rhodesia, today's Zimbabwe, in 1965, Brandes' family took me in as an "orphan" and helped me through my first years in Germany. The circle was completed!

My grandfather was the executor of my great grandfather's Meissen porcelain collection until it was confiscated by the Nazis in 1938. It was an unbelievable experience for the family that parts of the collection were found and restituted in 1991 and 2010. Parts of the collection were donated to the Dresden Porcelain Collection in the Zwinger, with the remainder going to the family.

Our family thanks the staff of the porcelain collection at the Dresden Zwinger and we wish continued good luck on the remarkable journey these pieces have brought us all on together.

Victor Francis von Klemperer, Florida, March 2021