

What Horst said at the wake of  
Heidi Eidler-Kleinschmidt  
On  
25 May 2016 at the tasting rooms of Sno Road Winery in  
Echo, Oregon, USA.

Heidi.

I am Heidi's brother Horst. You who have spoken here this evening, spoke beautifully of Heidi's zest for life and of the tonic she was in your lives. It made me feel envious because Heidi and I had only short times together in adult life.

Allow me to add a different part of who Heidi was. There is more to Heidi than what we heard.

As you see from the picture show here behind me, Heidi's roots go back to Namibia, the country that was South West Africa and before that was once German South West Africa. Heidi's and thus my parents, were both born in the country that is that is known for the Namib and Kalahari deserts. On our father's side, our grandfather and our great grandfather and our great, great- grandmother and our great, great, great, grandmother, were all born in Africa. Part of our genetic composition is Khoi-Khoi, an ancient and first people of Southern Africa.

Therein lies part of Heidi's identity but also part of the complexity that shaped Heidi. You see, Heidi and I are not as lily-white in the way that German colonial, British colonial or Apartheid rule approved of. People of mixed race were (and often still are) looked down upon. In Southern Africa they used to be classified as 'Coloured' (as opposed to 'African') and you were denied the right to vote or right to own property. What would you do when your own heritage becomes the obstacle to your social standing and material well-being? - When Heidi's (thus my) father, in 1935, was offered six months training in a factory and six months political education in Nazi Germany, it seemed to him the biggest break he could ever hope for. Namibia then was a backwater economically and folks of German descent faced relative uphill in the face of the new South Africa (speak British) administration that replaced German rule in 1915. To qualify for his trip to Germany, Heidi's dad had to put in writing, for the first time in his life, who his ancestors were. To admit to black ancestors would dash his hopes and sink him into a quagmire even deeper than the one he thought he was in. So devastating seemed the implication, that, at first, he considered suicide; his alternative was to falsify the name of his great, great grandmother. In this way, he became 'white'. And, it seems, the Nazi's believed him.

Instead of leaving it at that, our father then wanted to make doubly sure that he gained full acceptance. Our father proceeded to become an enthusiastic supporter of Adolf Hitler. He even represented South West African 'German' youth at the Nuremberg rally where the infamous race laws were adopted, the edicts that spelt catastrophe for the Jewish people and potentially, the Khoi people.

Our father denied to us, his children that we had black ancestry. We passed the villages where our family hailed from, places like Steinkopf and Rehoboth and Bethanien without the slightest reference to the significant contribution our

forebears had made a century and two centuries before. Any evidence to the contrary our father put down to rumour and falsification. He disowned our past and our 'other' relatives.

So, - Heidi grew up in a home and environment laden with white racism, moulded in the shape of the apartheid ideology. Heidi, I'm proud to say, extricated herself from this; she turned her back on this hurtful and venomous social and cultural world. She was ferociously non-racial, and thus had to a social world very far removed from her roots. I respect Heidi immensely for breaking with this past.

The Heidi story, I want you to know came at considerable cost to her, in her younger days. She traversed the spectrum from a dark corner of worldview and poisonous social custom, toward the 'other' side. If Heidi, at times failed in her judgement, of where to end the journey from whence she came, she may be forgiven.

The Heidi we recall tonight, was fun and had a twinkle in her eye but she also played her small part in making the world a better place.

Hamba Gahle, Heidi, my sister. You will always be in my thoughts.

Horst Kleinschmidt.