

WILLIAM V. KASTLER
P.O. BOX 54064, TERMINAL ANNEX
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90054
1801 AVENUE OF THE STARS-SUITE 1402
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90067

October 25, 1973

Dear Dad: (*Joe Kastler - Raton, NM*)

After learning that Prof. Alfred Kastler was going to appear at a symposium of 11 Nobel Prize winners in Century City on October 14, 1973, I resolved to contact him to establish whether we were indeed related in some distant manner. I wrote a letter to Prof. Kastler (copy enclosed) in which I attempted to set up a personal meeting and to my great surprise on Sunday morning, October 14, he called me to tell me that he was extremely busy that day but would be glad to make my acquaintance on the next day between 9:00 and 10:00 A.M. as he had to catch an airplane for Montreal just before noon. I called on him at about 9:05, Monday, October 15th, and was thoroughly delighted for the hour during our visit. At the very outset, he asked about my ancestry and I displayed my xerox copies showing the Washington County history excerpts, a genealogy that Bud had prepared, a list of graveyard burials in Madison, Wisconsin and a letter from you reporting of your efforts to trace our heritage back around the turn of the 18th century to a Nicholas or Nicklaus Kastler. Prof. Kastler was apparently pleased to review these matters and delighted when I presented him with copies I had made for him. In fact, before we parted I made another complete set of copies for him to give to a correspondent with whom he has established relationship, Norman Kastler, a professor at the University of Wisconsin.

Prof. Kastler showed a kind and personal interest in my family, asking about Jorie and each child and looking with some interest at their photographs. He stated that he is a Christian, not a Jew, that his background has always been Protestant and that his heritage has been idly traced back to the French Revolution. It seems they were always French even though his homeland, Alsace-Lorraine, was at times German territory. He did not know anything of any Kastlers from Heidenheim, Germany, but he said one of his ancestors around the 1840's was a missionary who went to China and there sired 14 children, five or six of whom migrated to the United States and established family lines here. Alfred Kastler was born May 3, 1902 in Guebwiller, a small village in Alsace. He stated that his ancestors were from Westhoffen, a village near Strasborg. His father was Frederic Michel Kastler, born in a village in Alsace in 1876. His mother was Anna Frey from Alsace.

In fact, he said a cousin of his mother's emigrated to the United States (in the Chicago area) in the 19th Century but he has been unable to trace the family name of Frey at any time.

Prof. Kastler stated that he has struck up a close acquaintance with Norman Kastler, mentioned above, whom he believes to be a distant cousin. Prof. Kastler appears about 6 feet tall, apparently in excellent health. He does not wear eye glasses. I would judge him to weigh about 165 pounds. He was dressed extremely well; wore an exquisitely tailored suit. He is 71 years old and is now retired. However, he still has an office at the University of Paris and his present life seems to be as a senior academician. He was travelling alone, in fact, he was en route to Ottawa where he was to deliver a scholarship lecture on optometrics at the University there. His wife was also a University teacher when he met her and for some years after their marriage. She is still living. He has three children, also all living. The oldest son, aged 43, is also a Professor of Physics at the University of Paris. The second son is also a Professor as is his daughter, who in addition to being a University Professor, is a practicing ophthalmologist. Prof. Kastler stated that he has visited the United States about six or seven times and that he especially enjoys his visits to Southern California. He particularly likes Santa Monica for its climate and its setting. He has visited also extensively in Canada and Mexico. His visits generally involve dropping in on colleagues at various Universities. I was rather surprised to have someone so highly intellectual appear so indulgent in listening to my chatter about my background, my job, my recent cataract operation and my family.

At the close of our meeting he gave me a glossy picture of himself, which I am having reprinted and will mail soon, together with a picture I took with my own camera. He also gave me his card and indicated that he would appreciate corresponding, particularly if he could be of any use in establishing a common ancestry or exploring the history of the Kastlers in the United States. I told him I would appreciate having a photograph of him and his family, including his grandchildren and he indicated he would be interested in seeing the same from me. I indicated that I would be sending him a Christmas card and perhaps at that time enclosing a photograph.

Finally, he offered to put copies of my material in the hands of Norman Kastler in the event that it might be instrumental in establishing a common bond. My meager efforts to contact him had paid off handsomely and I was extremely happy to have become acquainted with such a charming person.

As ever,
Bill