GEBORENER DEUTSCHER™

A Newsletter For German-born Adoptees & Birth/Adoptive Families

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THE INTERNATIONAL SCENE NORCAP

The National Organisation for the Counseling of Adoptees and Parents (NORCAP) is a registered charitable organization in Great Britain which offers advice and assistance to adoptees seeking to become reunited with their birth families, and birth parents searching for their relinquished children in the United Kingdom (UK).

NORCAP was founded in 1982 by Pam Hodgkins as a result of the realization that the need for such an organization existed. A previous group, JIGSAW, which had been founded with the passage of the 1975 Children Act, had long since ceased to exist despite the fact that many adoptees were still in desperate need of the moral, emotional and logistical support of a self-help group.

Among the services offered by NORCAP to its over 2,500 members are:

—> NORCAP News, a quarterly newsletter, in which the search and reunion experiences of members are recounted, as well as other events of interest to the group's members, such as reports on media exposure, legislative updates and regional group news.

—> Recordscan, a records research service available to overseas and other members who cannot conduct records research themselves. Data obtainable through Recordscan concern births, marriages and deaths in England and Wales from the indexes of St. Catherines House in London. A £5/hour charge for the service is assessed of members utilizing it, and copies of certificates are obtainable for £10 each. The amount of time needed to locate a certificate will largely depend upon how much data are available when the search is begun. (One hour's work will usually entail searching through 5 years' worth of records for any one of the aforesaid certificates [birth, marriage or death].)

—> Intermediary Service. NORCAP offers its members who have located a birth relative the services of intermediaries for the **cont. on pg. 6, col. 2**

IN THIS ISSUE

THE INTERNATIONAL SCENE: a new feature dedicated to reporting on adoption and search topics from outside of North America, e.g., Great Britain, etc. (see above).

PROFILE: Jenny Jansen, a mixed-race German-born adoptee who searched for and found both of her birth parents in the U.S. and who has had her story publicized quite extensively in Germany (see page 5).

Plus: A **SEARCH JOURNAL** BY Norman L. Baker; and another **SEARCH WORKSHOP**!

"Issues"

I want to address the subject of issues, particularly since it is my desire, as stated in the initial issue hereof, to "provide a forum for discussion of topics of concern to German-born adoptees and birth parents." Just what are these topics with which we should concern ourselves? What issues must a German-born adoptee address that other, e.g. American-born adoptees do not?

Primary among such issues, as I see it, is that of language. As German-born adoptees, we face the almost certain prospect that one or the other or both of our birth parents, as well as many, if not all, of our other birth relatives, will not speak English. This makes it almost imperative that a German-born adoptee, once s/he has decided to pursue a search, wrestle with the question of learning German. (Not to mention the actual search itself, which will, in all likelihood, need to be conducted in German as well.)

Another significant issue, it seems to me, is that of identity. German-born adoptees who were adopted by Americans were, in essence, adopted by foreigners. This means that a piece of our heritage is thus rendered foreign to our adopted selves once we reach maturity. (The same could be said for German-born adoptees adopted by Germans, but who were the products of German-American relations [excuse the pun].) Neither truly German nor truly American, some may find themselves questioning the role they've been assigned to play. (It is, for example, a fairly safe bet that something such as GD comes not from a perfect sense of integration!)

I try to address this latter topic on page 2, and I welcome readers' comments on these or any other matters raised herein. **Ende**

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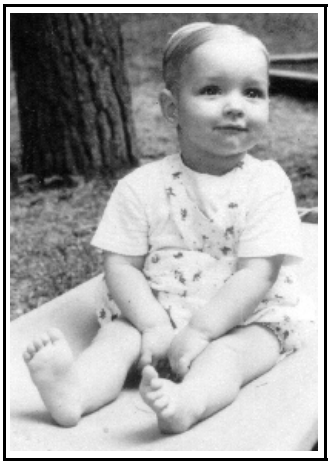
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The Editor's Page

A Few Thoughts on Intercountry Adoption

As a rule, when one speaks of intercountry adoption today, and/or the problems or concerns associated therewith, one usually refers to the practice of Western white couples obtaining infants and/or children from so-called Third World countries, in particular countries in Asia, Southeast Asia and South America. Many such adoptions occur, and much discourse is given over to the topics of possible adverse effects that adoption by foreigners may cause such children, e.g. "cultural dislocation," or feelings of "alienation" from their "native" lands or peoples.

We tend, however, it seems to me, to forget or to overlook the fact that many thousands of German-born children (many of whom were admittedly the products of sexual relations between American Occupation Forces and German nationals following the end of World War II) were adopted by Americans or other foreigners, both in-country and through the offices of religious or other charitable institutions with European-American connections. Such adoptees are ignored, I suspect, because we do not evidence any "obvious" racial/cultural differences, e.g. skin color, eye shape, or other genetically determined distinguishing features or characteristics.



Leon Butzke

It occurs to me, in fact, that German-born adoptees who were adopted by Americans, or other foreigners, are no less "culturally deprived," nor less likely to suffer from feelings of alienation from their "natural" heritage, than their Asian or South American counterparts. But because we blend in; because we "look" like Americans (what does an American "look" like, anyway?), no thought is or was ever given to these matters in connection with such "white-on-white" intercountry adoptions. We grew up here and are considered by others, even if we do not so consider ourselves, no less American than anyone who was, in fact, born here. But we remain nonetheless, in essence, foreigners: one need only look at one's naturalization certificate to be graphically reminded that one's roots lie, at least in part, elsewhere.

America is a strange country. No one here, it seems, is truly American (American Indians notwithstanding). We are either Polish-American, or Russian-American, or Irish-American, or Italian-American, etc., even though it may have been 100 years or more since our grandfathers or great-grandfathers first came to this country. America is less a melting-pot than a racial/cultural "stew," with each constituent part contributing its own unique "flavor" to the whole.

Are we, then, as foreign-born adoptees, expected to trumpet the heritage of our (adoptive) parents? Or may we take some measure of pride in our own, our "natural" heritage? And for those of us who were born of "mixed" blood (e.g. German-American), which heritage is really "ours?"

These questions, or others like them, have plagued and troubled me ever since I can remember. They go to the heart of the process of identity formation, and they make it difficult, if not impossible, to form a coherent or fully integrated self-image. Being adopted, per se, never particularly bothered me, or caused me any trouble with my sense of self, but because I knew from my earliest memory that I was born in Frankfurt, West Germany, I often felt that I wasn't truly American, and that I never could/would be.

Perhaps at some time now long lost to the ravages of time, I may, in some naïve and innocent way, have actually wanted to become an American, in some way greater than was permitted by the process of naturalization; or I may once have wished that I had been born American; but if ever that were the case, it is no longer so, and has not been so for quite some time. In fact, I remember more often wishing that I had not been adopted by Americans. (Please Note: I say not that I wished I'd never been adopted, but rather, that I wished I'd never been adopted by Americans, i.e. that I'd been adopted by Germans instead).

From the day when, at the tender age of 12, I decided that pledging allegiance to the flag every morning in school was a colossal waste of time and energy, not to mention absurdly redundant (if allegiance needs to be reaffirmed on a daily basis, how sincere can it truly be?), to the day I began asking the German Consulate in New York if I had really lost my German nationality when I became a naturalized American citizen (they couldn't tell me), the matters of identity and alienation, of nationality and "loyalty," if you will, have concerned me deeply; yet the questions I have most often asked have remained tantalizingly unanswered.

One starts, I suppose, by asking, "What does it mean to be American; to be German; to be human?" Is it just a question of nationality, or does it go deeper, to the core of identity and self-image. I expect it has a lot to do with one's need to feel a sense of belonging: to a group; to a family; to a nation. It is unfortunate that such matters tend more to divide than unite. (Quick, name a war fought solely based upon religious, nationalistic or ethnic pride!)

I freely confess (as if it were a sin, or a dirty little secret) that I don't much like Americans, nor do I much care for being American. My several trips to the "Fatherland," however, have convinced me that, no matter how much I might try, nor how much I might wish it were otherwise, I shall never be or be able to become German (again). Twenty-nine years of living in this country since the age of two have seen to that. And so anything I might say or do in this regard will be solely symbolic; but symbols can be very powerful things (like flags).

I have one hanging in my living room, by the way: a 3x5-foot West German flag. I repudiate the Russian/-American treachery which resulted in the partition of Germany following the war, and I fantasize about the day when the two Germanies can be reunited. And I feel that in ways both great and small, I am really more German than American.

(When I met my half-brother for the first time, for example, I saw a lot of myself in him; I sense that we are far more alike than we are different. And the degree to which my nephew (my younger sister's son) and I resemble one another seems at times uncanny. I have, to some degree, obtained that sense of "connectedness" I was seeking when I first embarked upon my search. My self-image and identity are, I feel, ever more complete and integrated for having searched and found at least some of my birth family members.)

In cases of intercountry adoption, many questions present themselves for our consideration. When a child is adopted by a foreign couple or family, what (if anything) is owed to that child with respect to its "native" culture/race? Can white parents effectively raise a non-white child, and, if so, what effect will such an upbringing have on the child's self-image and identity formation? And, if we are to make allowances for a foreign adopted child's "native" culture/race, what and how extensive should such allowances be? And is it not the height of egoism to presume that, simply because a foreign child doesn't appear so to the naked eye, allowances are unnecessary...?

The process of adoption is destructive and hurtful enough without compounding the problem by ignoring such significant issues when the subject of the adoption is a foreign-born child.

William L. Haze

SEARCH JOURNAL

by Norman L. Baker

On July 6, 1952, I was born in the city of Stuttgart-Hedelfingen, West Germany. My given name at birth was Helmut Kärcher, and I was the illegitimate son of Maria Emilie Kärcher. According to my birth certificate, my mother was an unmarried "Putzfrau," or "cleaning lady," living in Esslingen-am-Neckar. No mention was made of my natural father and, as fate would have it, that turned out to be a blessing. Possibly, if my mother's name had been changed by marriage, I would have had a more difficult time finding her. The chances are that if she had gotten married after I was given up for adoption, I would have had to spend much more time to find her. Under the time constraints and financial considerations, I was very fortunate to locate my birth mother very quickly.

I have known for as long as I can remember that I was adopted. That fact never really bothered me, but served to fuel my curiosity as to what my true heritage was. As so many in post-war Germany were, I was adopted by an American Army couple. My adoptive mother had had a daughter by her first marriage, but then had experienced complications such that she could have no more children. Therefore, since it was easiest to adopt overseas, my mom and dad decided they wanted to have a son. I had been ten weeks old when my real mother decided that, with the financial hardship I would probably create, in addition to her poor health at the time, she was doing me and the family a favor. I mentioned "family," and will go into that later. On November 6, 1952, my mother gave irrevocable consent to my being adopted by some married couple whose names she waived to learn.

That couple was then stationed in Stuttgart-Sonnenberg, where I spent the next two years of my life in Germany before my adoptive father was reassigned to Camp Hale in Leadville, Colorado in 1954. I find it somewhat interesting that my life so far has gone in a complete circle, considering that my first American home was in Colorado, and it was also my home when I decided to search for my birth mother. As I stated earlier, I have always known that I was adopted, but I had always been curious as to who my birth mother was.

My adoptive mother had told me as much as she knew about the circumstances of my adoption and who my real father was, based upon information given to her by the Jugendamt in Ludwigsburg, where my adoption was finalized on July 10, 1953. She had always told me that my mother had been too sick to take care of me and that it was best to give me up to some family that could provide for me better than she could have. The only accurate information about my real father she had was that he was Lithuanian. Other information about him was obscure.

I am not sure about German adoption law, but I feel that I was very fortunate that the authorities gave my parents my birth certificate with my birth mother's name on it. If I'm not mistaken, that information is sealed against inspection in the United States. Anyway, I have always had the information to begin my search, but, as in most cases, it was very difficult to be capable financially of beginning such a search at an early age. However, I had always known that I was going to make a sincere attempt to find my birth mother someday. As time went by, I continued to struggle with the idea of searching and thought, "What a waste of money it would be to go so far and not find anything!"

Interestingly though, I was able to read two different family genealogy books which were in my adoptive family's possession, and it whet my appetite for family research. I was fascinated with the past history of my adoptive family on my mother's side, but I knew the only family history I would really be interested in was my own. That was all it took to convince me to make a trip to Germany. (Besides, airline deregulation had made it more feasible to fly overseas.) Finally, my wife had finally tired of hearing me debate with myself on whether I should go to Germany or not and she simply said, "GO, GO, GO!" Well, that was all I needed to hear, so I made plans to fly to Stuttgart in April of 1986. I further convinced myself by deciding that if my search was not fruitful, I would at least enjoy touring around Germany, and that I might make some good contacts with which to work from the United States.

I finally made arrangements to fly to Stuttgart from Steamboat Springs, Colorado, my current place of residence, via Denver, Dallas, Atlanta and Frankfurt. I left on Friday, April 4, 1986, after a typical spring blizzard had hit Denver the night before. The snow caused a delay in my departure from Denver, so I missed my connection from Dallas to Frankfurt, but by only 15 minutes! United Airlines put me up for the night and I was rerouted through Atlanta on Lufthansa. It seemed almost fitting that I should fly into Germany on the German airline on a quest for my German roots!

When I arrived in Stuttgart, the weather was rainy and cold, and with the jet lag included, I wasn't in a very good mood. It seemed to me that the trip thus far was going every other way than I had planned. First, there was the delay in Denver, which caused me to miss my flight in Dallas; then the wait to re-book my flights; the lousy weather in Germany; and finally, a four-hour wait in the airport for my luggage. I was beginning to feel that I may have made a mistake going to Germany with little more than a piece of paper in my hand, thinking that I would find something. I briefly considered touring around and flying home without even looking, but only "briefly." After I got my luggage, I went to rent a car for the two weeks of my stay and drove immediately towards Esslingen-am-Neckar. I figured all I needed was a good night's sleep and I would feel better about proceeding on my mission.

I drove for about half an hour, looking for a Gasthaus and found the "Germania" in Nellingen. At this point, I was ready to stop just about anywhere just so I could get some rest. I went to bed at about 4:00 p.m. and slept straight through until 7 the next morning. (Now I know what people mean about "jet lag!") Needless to say, I felt totally renewed after I had rested. I had breakfast and felt I was going to approach this day with even more energy. It was Monday, April 7, 1988, and I wasn't going to let any setbacks discourage me this day as I set out for Esslingen. I felt an inner confidence and I thought to myself, "This day couldn't possibly be worse than the three days before."

For some reason, perhaps Divine Providence, everything I did seemed to follow a logical order. When I left the airport the day before, for example, I drove almost directly toward Esslingen without getting lost. (German road maps are a little bit harder to follow than U.S. maps.) Therefore, when I left the inn that morning, I found Esslingen very easily and, without knowing it, had driven within 100 meters of the Esslingen Rathaus (City Hall).

At this point, I began to feel a little nervous. I approached the Rathaus and, without being able to read German very well, I knocked on the first door I saw. I heard no response, so I slowly opened the door and peered inside, where I saw a man sitting at a desk. "Sprechen Sie Englisch," I asked. He said that he could, a little. I had expected that language might be a barrier, so I had prepared my self with a German-English phrasebook during the flight over. I wasn't very good, but I did know some of the younger Germans learned English in school, and I wasn't going to let language stand in the way.

I took out my German birth certificate and asked the man if he could tell me where "Maria Kärcher" lived, if she lived at all, that is. He pulled an address book off of the shelf and began to look up her name. Oh, yes; I forgot to mention that the door upon which I had knocked was that of the office which maintains current residence data on the inhabitants of Esslingen-am-Neckar ["Einwohnermeldeamt" --Ed.]. I had by chance gone directly to the office where I needed to go first!

The man found a Maria Kärcher residing only two blocks from where she had lived when I was born. My first thought, however, was, "This is too easy," so I asked him what this Maria Kärcher's middle name was. On my birth certificate, it gave my mother's middle name as

"Emilie." So, when the man said, "Emilie," I began to get excited. I wanted to be as certain as I could be that I had found the "right" Maria Kärcher; even though finding this much excited me very much, I didn't want to set myself up for a big let-down. "After all," I reasoned, "there's a good possibility that she's dead, especially if she gave me up because of her poor health." Besides, she was nearing 67 years of age, and the possibility of death seemed to me very strong.

By the time I arrived at the address the man had given me, which turned out to be an "Eldesheim," or "old folks home," it was 10:00 a.m. I went inside and looked at the list of tenants, looking for Maria's name, and found it! I was really beginning to feel that I was close. If her name was still here, then probably she was, too, alive at least, if not completely well.

I went to the administrator's office and told him about my search. He couldn't speak English, so he had a couple of his English-speaking employees speak to me. When I told them my story, they became almost as excited as I was. I asked if Maria had ever mentioned having had a baby boy that she'd given up 34 years ago, but they said that she never had. I had hoped thereby to further confirm her identity.

The girls with whom I spoke started directing me to a table where Maria was sitting with some other elderly residents with whom she socialized. One of the girls said, "Maria, you have a visitor!" When she turned to look up at me, I turned back to the girls and said that I was concerned for Maria's health -- what if she had a heart attack? They told me that Maria's daughter often came to visit her mother and that the daughter's address was on file. I decided that I had perhaps better contact my sister first, to see if a reunion would be desirable. I saw this also as yet another way of confirming the identification. (Imagine, I had come seeking a mother and had found a sister as well!)

The administrator gave me my sister's address which, fortunately, was not very far away. When I arrived at her address, in a town called Mettingen, I found that she lived in an apartment building. I sat for a few minutes in a nearby park, studying my German phrase book to figure out how to ask her if she knew a Maria Kärcher, and if she was her daughter.

I rang the buzzer next to my sister's name, Hannelore Schaaf. In response to my call, a little girl of about 10 years of age poked her head out a window and said, "Schaaf!" I discovered thereby that the custom in Germany is to greet strangers by announcing one's family name. [It's also the custom when answering the telephone. --Ed.] I asked her in my best German if her mother was at home, to which she replied that her mother wouldn't be home until about 6:00 o'clock that evening. Deeming it best not to confuse this little girl (my niece!), or myself, any further, I decided to came back when my sister was home.

I felt as if I'd done quite a bit of searching for such a short period of time. Only four hours had passed since I arrived in Esslingen that morning, and I was beginning to get hungry. I returned to Esslingen and ate lunch before killing some time touring the city. Six o'clock couldn't come fast enough. I was feeling pretty proud of myself and was hoping to finish off a good day with the attainment of my goal.

When I arrived at my sister's apartment that evening, I was greeted at the window by the customary "Schaaf!" Again, in my best German, I asked the mother if her name was Hannelore Schaaf. She replied, "Ja." I then asked, "Is your mother Maria Kärcher?" To which she again responded, "Ja." My excitement was mounting as I said, "Ich bin dein Bruder. Mein Name ist Helmut Kärcher." (I am your brother. My name is Helmut Kärcher.) Whereupon she came downstairs so quickly, I thought she was going to hurt herself. She kept repeating my name over and over, "Helmut. Helmut." I was clearly excited, but my sister was going crazy; but it was a "good" kind of crazy. Once inside her apartment, she pulled out a copy of my birth certificate, which she compared with the one I had brought with me. They were, of course, identical, except that hers was in almost mint condition. She explained that since her (our) mother was in the Eldesheim, she took care of all of her mother's personal papers. I was glad that I had gone to my sister's house first.

Hannelore said that she had suspected that I might be her brother when she first saw me because, in part, of the way I was dressed. I was wearing Western-style boots and a flat corduroy hat, which, I learned later, made me look like an "Amerikaner." She had known for a long time that she had a brother, but had known nothing of the circumstances of my adoption. Therefore, when I appeared at her door, she began to feel as if a dream were coming true. Hannelore soon made arrangements for us to go see our mother together at the Eldesheim.

We arrived at the Eldesheim and went to our mother's room. Words cannot describe what we felt at that moment; my head was spinning from the day's events. We held each other for what seemed like a long time while she simply kept saying, "My son, my son." During the course of our visit, she related, through my nephew, Roland, that she had given me up because she loved me; that if I had stayed, it would have been too much of an economic burden. The welfare system was in disarray after the war, she said, and it had been hard for her to provide for her family following some sort of intestinal surgery. While she was recovering, her father, Johann, tried but couldn't care for her two children and me, then a ten-week-old infant. Maria said she knew that I would have a better chance at life if I were adopted. She said too how glad she was to see that her son turned out all right and was healthy, and I told her how much having me had meant to my adopted parents, which she seemed happy to hear. I felt that she feared I might be angry with her for what she had done, and tried to assure her that what she had done was right and that what mattered most of all was that we were together again.

Later that evening I learned of another sibling, an older brother named Willi, who was out of town on a business trip, but who would be back the following evening. I found it hard to believe: with 24 hours of arriving in Germany, I had found my mother, alive, and learned that I had a brother, a sister, three nephews, two nieces and two aunts! I could hardly sleep that night anticipating meeting Willi the next day.

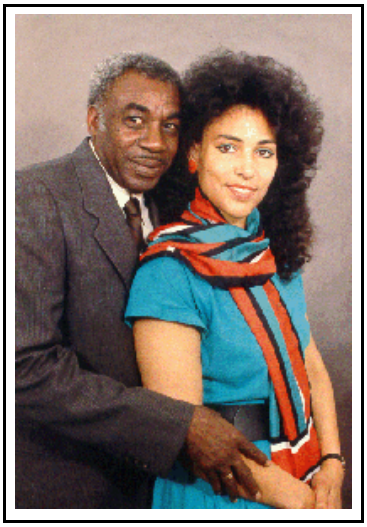
In the morning, Hannelore and I went to visit with Willi's wife, Brigitte. As we waited for Willi to return, I learned that Willi had never told his wife about me. I found out later that Willi had been angry with our mother for giving me away. He had thought he would never see me again, so why bring me up with his family? I could see his point, and I hoped that my being there wasn't going to cause him and his wife a problem. As it turned out, there was no problem at all. People must go on with their lives, and, from their standpoint, looking for me would have been very costly, if not impossible.

When Willi finally returned, we were both very nervous. We hugged, and cried, and he said, as far as he was concerned, he didn't need a piece of paper to prove I was his brother: he could tell just by looking at me, I was a Kärcher! I looked just like his sister. We stayed up that night 'til past midnight sharing stories of our respective pasts and drinking Stuttgarter Hofbrau. During the next two weeks, I stayed with my brother and sister, who hardly allowed me to spend even one Pfennig!

Among other things,I noted the curious coincidence that both I and my sister work for the post office in our respective countries. I also discovered that my tendency to be overweight and borderline diabetic is a genetic legacy from my mother. I learned that our father, Arthur Wagner, had emigrated to the U.S. with promises to send for the family at a later date, but, except for $20 he sent in 1955, the family never heard from him again. I have since learned that he settled in the Chicago area, where he ultimately died 14 years ago. I hope to be able to visit his grave this summer, and perhaps learn more of this man who was my father.

Less than two weeks after I returned to Colorado, my birth mother died, on April 29, 1986. Willi told me that, just before I **cont. on pg. 6, col. 1**

PROFILE — Jenny Jansen



Willie Booth & Jenny

Jenny Jansen is a German-born adoptee who, as it happened, remained in Germany, but who has links to the U.S. by virtue of her birth father having been an American serviceman, and her birth mother having emigrated to the U.S. in the intervening years. She currently resides in München, where she is completing study in the field of law. The following is based upon newspaper and magazine articles published in Germany since Jenny successfully completed her search one year ago.

Jenny Jansen was born on the 4th of January, 1959, in the city of Frankenthal, in the German state of Rheinland-Pfalz. Her mother, Alma Hertha Haas, was German; her father, Willie O. Booth, a black American soldier; and her fate lay in large part in the fact of her being a "Mischling" -- a half-breed. Her mother was unmarried and had already borne a son at the age of 16. A second illegitimate child proved too much for the family to accept.

Initially given the name Melitta, Jenny was first placed in the care of an American military family by the name of Moore then living in Mannheim. After about a year, she found herself in an orphanage in Worms for a couple of months, following which she was taken in by a Priest in a nearby, extremely tiny village. The priest decided that the name "Melitta," having as it did such a strong similarity to that of a popular coffee filter, was unsuitable for a brown-skinned child. Thus did Melitta Moore come to be called "Eugenie Haas," and later, after being adopted by the Priest's housekeeper at the age of 8, "Eugenie Jansen" -- Jenny, for short.

The priest -- "Onkel Emil," as he had been known to Jenny -- died when she was 13, after which she came under the exclusive care of her adoptive mother. At 15, Jenny had her first boyfriend, and ever afterward, things between her and her adoptive mother were difficult: "Just don't become like your mother," she was admonished; "Be careful not to repeat her story." Jenny describes these warnings as "the worst part," because it was through them that she first heard her mother spoken of. When she asked for more information, however, her adoptive mother and the other adults counseled her not to ask, saying that she had been cared for; had had everything she needed; and to not be "ungrateful."

Jenny began searching when she was 18. She was then living in Cologne (Köln) and working in a bank. She wrote to the Jugendamt in Frankenthal asking for access to her file. Permission was, however, at first refused, the reason given being that she had no right to see it. An inquiry at the orphanage in Worms proved equally futile, as did an inquiry after the midwife who had attended her birth (the woman had died some years earlier). She even tried calling all the Moores listed in the Mannheim telephone book, in the all but vain hope that the family that had cared for her in her first year of life might still be in the area. Finally, upon learning that she did indeed have a right to access to her adoption file, she wrote again to the Frankenthaler Jugendamt, but was this time informed that her file had been destroyed in a fire some years earlier.

The entire process had taken almost three years. In the meantime, Jenny had moved to München. She telephoned the Jugendamt in Frankenthal and spoke with a young man who, after much hemming and hawing, informed her that her grandmother -- **cont. on pg. 6, col. 1**

SEARCH WORKSHOP — Sources of Information

The INS: The U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) can be an invaluable source of relevant data regarding German-born adoptees. Under the laws of the United States, specifically 5 U.S.C. §552a-(d)(1), information in the files of any federal agency which maintains files on individual citizens is required to be made available to any such citizen upon that citizen's written request. (Another section of this same law requires that federal agencies establish specific guidelines for the purpose of making information in their files available to the general public.)

Under Title V, a German-born adoptee may write to the INS and request that the papers and documents in his/her file, or copies thereof, be sent to him/her. This can provide the German-born adoptee a valuable alternative method for obtaining copies of his/her adoption and birth papers. This can be particularly useful when, as in one case of which I have heard recently, the original documents in the possession of the adoptive parents have been lost or destroyed; if the adoptee cannot or will not apply to his/her adoptive parents for help in searching; or if the adoptee does not wish for his/her adoptive parents to know of his/her search activity.

A document request of the INS can also significantly shorten the "start-up" time in cases where the foregoing circumstances prevail. I wrote to the INS District Office in Austin, Texas, the nearest INS District Office to where my naturalization took place, on May 23, 1988. I received their response on June 9, 1988, a turnaround time of just 17 days -- less than three weeks! What I received from the INS was as follows (unless otherwise indicated, documents received are photocopies of original documents):

1. A hand-written cover "letter," which was written on the back of a copy of my original request;
2. Petition for Naturalization (2 pages);
3. Statement of Facts for Petition for Naturalization (2 pages);
4. Affidavit of Witnesses;
5. Application to File Petition for Naturalization on Behalf of Child;
6. Application for Immigrant Visa and Alien Registration (2 pages; two copies were included because the original form could not be completely reproduced using one set of copies);
7. Original copy of Adoption Contract;
8. Original copy of original birth certificate;
9. Certificate of Change of Christian Name ("Urkunde über die Änderung eines Vornames");
10. Original copy of amended birth certificate;
11. Original copy of Medical Examination of Visa Applicants;
12. Original copy of Adoption Decree; and
13. Affidavit of Support.

The documents of most interest to a searching adoptee are indicated above by underlining. The original adoption contract and original birth certificate will tell the adoptee his/her original birth name, as well as the birth mother's name and address at the time of the birth -- a critical first step, especially if this information is otherwise unavailable. Not all requests will yield exactly the same kinds of documents, however. Document No. 9, for example, applies only if a name change name was effected prior to entry into the U.S.

You probably won't need to cite the specific section of the U.S. Code when making a document request, but it couldn't Hurt. You needn't go into very great detail, either; a simple one-page letter will likely be sufficient To obtain all the documents required to be made Available to you **cont. on pg. 6, col. 2**

SEARCH JOURNAL

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came to visit in early April, our mother had reported having had dreams about me, and about the U.S. It almost seems to me now that God had seen to it that she remained alive just long enough for me to see her once before she died. On the last night I spent in Germany, we had a farewell party at Willi's. Everyone was there, including Maria. Afterwards, we carried her down to the car in her wheelchair, and as we bid one another goodbye, I said that I felt as if I would never see Maria alive again. I thank God that I went to Germany when I did, and for His allowing me to know my mother, if only for a few days and weeks.

In the interim, I have visited my German family once more, in April of 1987, this time for a whole month, splitting my time equally between my brother and sister. All in all, it's been quite an experience! **Ende**

PROFILE

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her mother's mother -- was still alive. Jenny found "Oma" in Aschaffenburg, who, upon seeing Jenny standing on her doorstep, said, "Somehow I have always known that someday you would come." Jenny's mother, however, had already emigrated to the United States early in the sixties. The grandmother wrote to her daughter, giving her Jenny's address. Jenny then received her first communication from her mother, a letter from Huntsville, Alabama. Regular correspondence, and the occasional telephone call, followed, culminating in an in-person reunion in the summer of 1987.

From an old paternity certificate Jenny learned that her father, Willie O. Booth, had come supposedly from San Francisco, but neither the U.S. Army nor the German consulate in San Francisco could help her, however. Following her reunion with her mother last summer, Jenny flew to San Francisco, where, through a fortunate coincidence, she found a woman who purported to be the divorced wife of the man she sought. Jenny asked her to get in touch with her former husband and tell him that someone was waiting for him, and that he should call her hotel as soon as possible. A few hours later came the call. She stayed two months in San Francisco, getting to know her father and her father's family -- her family -- better.

But for all the peace that reunion with her past has brought her, questions remain for Jenny. Being half black and half white, half American and half German, she wonders where, exactly, she belongs. Jenny discovered a group of other black Germans in München -- Initiativ Schwarze Deutsche (ISD) -- many of whom are also adoptees. She wonders if she could live in America, in San Francisco, where she had felt comfortable with her father's family. She feels herself, however, to be more European -- more "white" -- with little more in common with American blacks than her outward resemblance to them.

Jenny thinks about forming a self-help group for adoptees in München, but reports that she has not yet found the inner strength to take that step, although she has already gathered together much in formation toward that goal. Yet she has already accomplished much, primarily through publicizing her story in the German press: a feature article in Tempo, a woman's magazine; articles in newspapers in both Frankenthal and München; as well as an appearance on a syndicated radio show, have all served to bring her story to public attention, and thus increase public awareness of the issues confronting all adoptees, not just those born in Germany.

Those wishing to write to Jenny personally may send letters to her at the following address: Frau Jenny Jansen, Hauzenberger Straße 20, App. 1216, 8000 München 21, West Germany. **Ende**

EDITOR'S NOTE: I want to acknowledge my brother, Frank, in Hannover, who heard the aforementioned radio broadcast and noted down Jenny's name and address, and who first told me about Jenny when I visited him in March, 1988. Thanks, Frank! -- **WLG**

NORCAP

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purposes of making the initial contact. NORCAP encourages its members to avail themselves of this service, and conservatism is the watchword in all cases where contact is attempted. Members and their intermediaries work closely together prior to an attempted contact to make sure that the adoptee/birth parent has indeed found the right person, and is indeed ready for the proposed reunion. No charge is assessed for intermediary services, but members are requested to pay any out-of-pocket expenses associated with the intermediary process, e.g. telephone calls, postage, travel expenses, etc.

NORCAP's mailing address is: NORCAP, 3 New High St., Headington, Oxford OX3 5AJ, U.K. Membership is required in order to obtain assistance. Annual membership costs vary, depending upon one's needs. **Ende**

SEARCH WORKSHOP

cont. from pg. 5

under the law. I have reproduced below the text of the letter I wrote as illustrative of what such a letter might look like, and to provide an example of what specific information should be included therein:

> Sirs:
>
> My name is William L. Gage and I was born on the 14th of April, 1957, in the city of Frankfurtam-Main in the Federal Republic of Germany. Approximately 18 months subsequent to my birth, I was adopted by William and Priscilla Gage, an American military couple then stationed in England, and was first brought into this country in August, 1959. My parents and I came to the U.S. via ship, and our port of entry was New York City.
>
> Subsequent to our entry into the U.S. in 1959, we settled in the city of San Angelo, Texas, where my adoptive father, then a Major in the U.S.A.F., was stationed. During our residency in San Angelo, I became a naturalized citizen of the United States. The naturalization process was completed on June 8, 1962 in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Texas in San Angelo. My naturalization Certificate No. is 8306768. [If available, a Petition No. may also be included.]
>
> Pursuant to 5 U.S.C. §552a(d)(1), I am writing to request that you send to me copies of any and all documents and/or information contained in your files with respect to my naturalization.
>
> If there are any costs associated with this request, such as photocopying, etc., please so advise, and I will forward a check in the appropriate amount to the appropriate authority.
>
> Your attention and considerations in this matter are greatly appreciated.
>
> Very truly yours, etc.

Needless to say, the data given in the first two paragraphs will vary from person to person; paragraph three should require no case-specific changes; and the penultimate paragraph is, for the most part, strictly pro forma, in that any costs as may exist are not usually assessed of the requesting party. You may also want to send the request via Certified Mail, Return Receipt Requested, although I myself did not.

For those with no other means of securing copies of their adoption/birth documents, the foregoing procedure is an excellent way of obtaining verification of much of the relevant data respecting the adoption and birth, and will guide the searching adoptee to the appropriate office in Germany for the purpose of proceeding to the next (i.e. the first) search step: writing to the German adoption placement office for further information and/or assistance (See SEARCH WORKSHOP, Vol. I, No. 1). **Ende**