GEBORENER DEUTSCHER™

A Newsletter For German-Born Adoptees & Their Birth/Adoptive Families

Volume II, Number 1 / Whole Number 3 *January 14, 1989*

The International Scene

Internationaler Sozialdienst

Internationaler Sozialdienst (Deutscher Zweig e.V.) (ISD) [International Social Services (German Branch)] is the German arm of a multi-nation social services organization headquartered in Genf (Switzerland). ISS has additional branch offices in Argentina, Australia, Canada, Finland, France, Great Britain, Greece, Hong Kong, Italy, Japan, The Netherlands, Spain, The United States of America and Venezuela; ISS also maintains "correspondent" offices in approximately 100 other countries around the world.

ISD was founded in Germany in 1924 and concerns itself with a variety of social services, focusing primarily on family-related matters which involve Germans and foreigners, and which result in the crossing of international borders. For example, in the case of a divorce between a German and a foreigner, whereby the foreign partner -- necessarily without the consent of the German partner -- removes the children of the marriage to his/her homeland. Or, in the case where a German couple is interested in adopting a foreign (i.e. so-called Third World) child. Or, in the case where a foreign couple living in Germany wishes to remove their children from a Home in their native land to live with them in Germany. The ISD also involves itself with locating and contacting relatives and others from whom people have become unexpectedly or involuntarily separated, as well as matters involving "political" and other types of refugees.

IN THIS ISSUE

THE INTERNATIONAL SCENE International Social Services (Germany), which has facilitated reunions between adoptees and birth parents (see above).

SEARCH JOURNAL In this issue, we present contributions from two of our readers, both of whom have found their birth mother (see pages 3 and 5).

SEARCH WORKSHOP In which we examine, in detail, the parts of an initial letter of inquiry of a German Adoptionsvermittlung, including a sample letter in German which you can use to get the search ball rolling (see page 5).

And, Featured Throughout This Issue: reunion & other photographs of the Editor and his birth family.

Besides helping German couples adopt children from other countries, ISD has also been instrumental in aiding searching adoptees in locating and contacting their biological relatives, particularly when such relatives reside in foreign lands. On November 12, 1987, ISD held a conference on the subject "Adoptees Seek Their Original Family." Subsequently, a report on this conference was printed in the *News Service of German Associations for Public and Private Welfare* (Issue #5/1988, p. 148, *et seq*.). In this report was included the chronological details of two specific cases where ISD had brought together adoptees with their biological relatives: in the first case, a birth mother sought to become reunited with her adult twin daughters; and in the second case,

cont. on pg. 6, col. 2

"Philosophy and Practice"

GEBORENER DEUTSCHER *is designed primarily as a self-help tool and source of information for German-born adoptees.* GD *advocates a "self-help" approach to the task of searching, emphasizing the adoptee's active participation in the search process as far as s/he is able to participate. Some, however, may find the prospect too daunting or feel inhibited about being so deeply involved with the "nuts-and-bolts" aspects of a search. In that case, we urge the utilization of search assistance, which is available both from the Publisher/Editor of this periodical, and from* **Ms. Leonie Boehmer,** *the subject of a profile in our premier issue.*

We also strongly recommend that any searching adoptee seek out and participate in the activities or other services offered by the existing network of search-and-support groups throughout the country. GD *maintains a list of such groups, and we will be glad to make referrals to groups in your area. While German-born adoptees do have their own unique set of concerns and problems, we share common interests and goals with all other adoptees. In addition, given the often lengthy periods of inactivity associated with a German search, it has been my experience that being able to channel one's "excess" energies into some interesting or intellectually stimulating activity, whether adoption-related or not, can help ease the burden of "waiting for something to happen."*

One might, for example, consider taking a conversational German course. If one lives near a college or university, I'm sure that an adult education or other similar course offering could be found. The option of private tutoring should also not be ruled out, particularly if one were to consider employing the services of a language student. There are also a variety of pre-recorded audio tape language primers available from a number of different sources. It should be remembered that one need not necessarily become fluent; the ability to converse on a simple and quite basic level will probably be sufficient in the event that a reunion does indeed take place. The point of such an exercise is more to familiarize yourself with the grammar and "sound" of the language, as well as to provide one with an "alternative" focus.

Volunteerism is also a very good means of employing one's free time in a manner designed to redirect one's energies is a constructive fashion. Many charitable groups need volunteers, and I'm sure that you could find such groups in your own community. (If you think contributing your time in support of a worthy cause would be something you might like to do, I can think of no worthier cause today than supporting the fight against the spread of AIDS and to help combat and alleviate the devastating effects of this cruel disease on the people who suffer from it, their families and loved ones.)

The point here is to view the process of searching and any potential reunion(s) in the context of one's existing life, and to realize that by searching one is not attempting to "recapture" the past, but rather to broaden and extend the potentialities of the future; to answer unanswered questions; and to resolve any existing internal conflicts regarding adoption, identity or other personal matters which can only be resolved through the search and reunion process. That, to get the most from the search and/or reunion experience, it is best to have as much personal involvement therewith as is possible or practical. And finally, that one should avoid becoming "obsessed" with or "obsessive" about searching; that becoming involved with other activities outside of searching -- whether directly or indirectly adoption-related or not -- will permit you to place the search process in an appropriate context, as well as serving to fill the inevitable periods of inactivity as the search progresses. -- WLG

GEBORENER DEUTSCHER is published periodically by William L. Gage, who is solely responsible for its content. Readers are encouraged to submit relevant material, including articles and letters, for publication herein. Material submitted for publication should be sent to William L. Gage, 2300 Ocean Ave., Brooklyn, N.Y. 11229 USA. All material submitted for publication becomes the property of GEBORENER DEUTSCHER and cannot be returned. The publisher assumes no responsibility for unsolicited manuscripts. Subscriptions are FREE: to individuals who submit a written request; and to adoptee/birth parent search-and-support groups, either upon written request or upon other notice of their existence.

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Corrections

As with all human endeavors, this newsletter is subject to the occasional misstep, misstatement, or other error. Thus it is that it will be necessary from time to time to apologize for or correct such errors as may occur, for whatever reason. In our last issue, e.g....

PROFILE/ Jenny Jansen

On the day before I picked up the last issue from the printer, I received a note from Jenny Jansen, in which she noted certain corrections and/or modifications to the profile of her published in the last issue, as follows: by way of explanation for her being called "Jenny," she notes that no one could pronounce "Eugénie;" "Onkel Emil," the priest who assumed custody of Jenny following her temporary placement with the Moores, died when Jenny was 12, not 13, as previously reported, at which time, Jenny further notes, she had to "stop school education and make a banking-education;" she first started searching when she was 18 because that is when a German is legally an adult [although, according to German law, the age at which one is entitled to access to one's birth and/or adoption records is 16]; the man with whom she spoke on the telephone at the Jugendamt in Frankenthal was an older man, not "young," as he was previously characterized, and had apparently known all about Jenny's birth family, which was why he knew Jenny's "Oma" was still alive; finally, Jenny notes that "I have been divorced now since April 19, 1988, because the problems of being black and adopted were too heavy to carry. I have to find my roots inside myself as I make my lonely way. Please, pray for me."

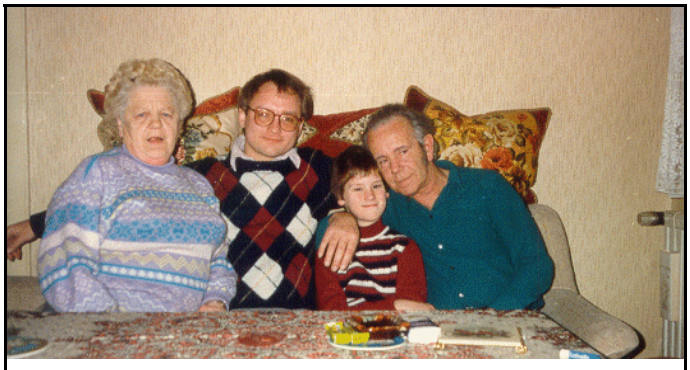
SEARCH JOURNAL/ Normal L. Baker

Owing to a typographical error undetectable by my spelling checker, on pg. 3, col. 2, the date on which Mr. Baker reports starting out upon his search is given as "April 7, 1988;" the correct date was "April 7, 1986." On pg. 4, col. 1, again due to an undetectable typo, a small grammatical glitch occurred in the 5th full paragraph from the top of the column. The last sentence in that paragraph should read as follows: "Deeming it best not to confuse this little girl (my niece!), or myself, any further, I decided to come back when my sister was home."

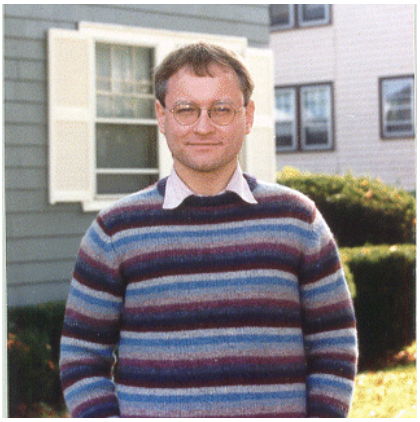
THE INTERNATIONAL SCENE/ NORCAP

The first paragraph of the article on NORCAP misstated that group's focus by saying that "The National Organisation for the Counseling of Adoptees and Parents ... offers advice and assistance to ... birth parents searching for their relinquished children in the United Kingdom (UK)." NORCAP's search and support services are available to adoptees only.

For these, as well as for any other, heretofore undetected errors, the editor apologizes. -- WLG



The Editor with his half-brother's adoptive parents and his nephew, Oliver



William L. Gage

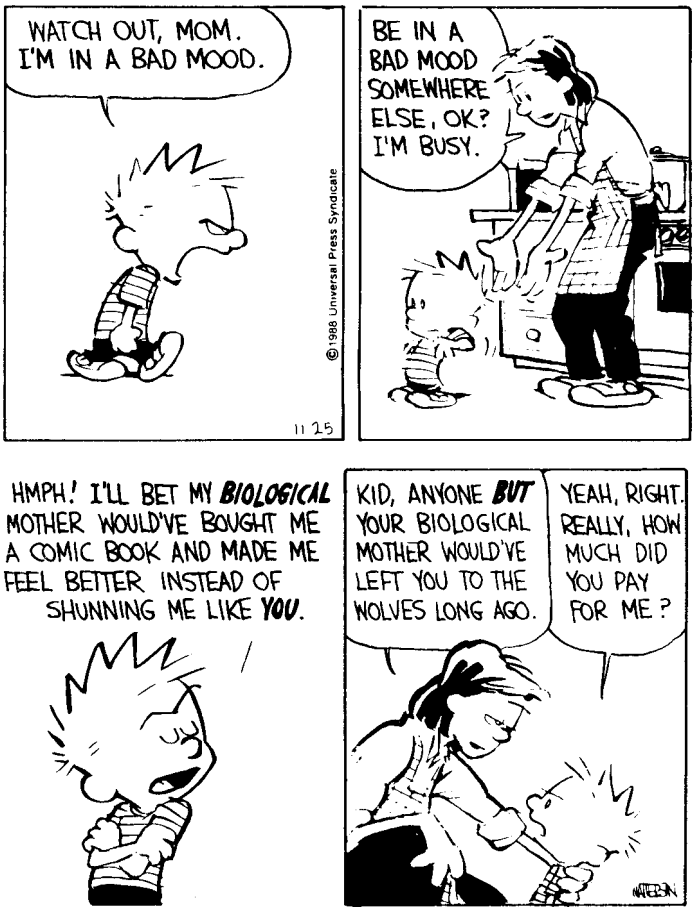
Issue No. 3, and I imagine that many of you are saying, "It's about time!" Keen observers of mastheads will already have noted that I make no representations with respect to the periodicity of this periodical, and, indeed, I cannot promise to put out issues on any regular basis. This is a constraint of both logistics and finances, and I can only beg your indulgence (and participation!).

The photographs of myself and my birth family members with whom I have heretofore had reunions (*below, and on page 4*) were taken on the occasion of my last trip to Germany in March, 1988. The photograph of me (*above*) was taken upon the occasion of a recent trip to Boston, MA. And the photograph of my birth mother (*page 5*) was provided to me by my half-brother's adoptive parents, who were friends of our birth mother at the times of our births.

The Calvin and Hobbes cartoon strip below was originally published on November 25, 1988, and, while not specifically related to German-born adoptees, I though it would be nice to share it with my readers. It is reproduced here with the kind permission of **Universal Press Syndicate**.

And, finally, to all of my readers, I extend my most sincere thanks for your ongoing support, and my most sincere wish for a very Happy New Year! Ende

Calvin and Hobbes



SEARCH JOURNAL by Arthur LaMelle

I was born on December 18, 1951 at 5:15 a.m. in a town named Auschaffenburg. This is my true birth date and place of birth, which I didn't always know. I grew up in an American military family. My father was a staff sergeant in the Army stationed in Wiesbaden. I had a brother 10 years older and a sister 18 months younger, both of whom came to our home through adoption. My brother was born in California and my sister was born in England. My adoptive mother had had polio at the age of 15, which left her unable to have children. There were always relatives asking many hurtful questions of her about the adoptions, since they had not chosen to tell us yet. We were all well matched to our adoptive parents: my brother and sister have the blue eyes and blond hair of my mom and I have the dark hair, olive skin and brown eyes like my father. In family pictures, there are similarities, and even as adults, those similarities remain.

One day, when I was 13, we were eating dinner on Thanksgiving Day with some relatives. Grandparents, an uncle and an aunt and a cousin were present. My cousin, Vicki, who babysat for our parents and was 15 years old at the time, and who didn't get along well with my mom, suddenly blurted out to me, "Arthur, did your parents ever tell you about being adopted, that you're really not a blood relative of my family?" Hot tears began running down my face. My parents immediately gathered us up and left. Later, they told us some story of a baby left on a doorstep with no record of identity. They told us never to ask them again or they would disinherit us. Of course, not knowing what any of these terms meant, it became simply a secret we never discussed. My sister and I started observing other children to see if we were any different from them. Our parents kept any records and papers locked up in a box out of sight, and threatened to punish us harshly if we ever looked in it. My sister finally got her birth certificate out when she was 21 and my parents were away on vacation.

Our family lived in Kaiserslautern, West Germany until about 1960. I played with many German children, spoke their language as a child, remember the merchants and the shops and the many sights and sounds. My brother graduated from high school there. My father was later transferred to "Checkpoint Charlie," a transit point in the Wall in West Berlin. I remember seeing that cruel wall dividing families, and East German soldiers stretching more wire across the top of the wall, and then conducting drills in search of tunnels. I was about 7 at the time.

Later, in 1960, my father was transferred to the U.S. We lived first in Albuquerque, NM for 2 years, then in Salt Lake City, UT, where my father was stationed at Fort Douglas after having been reposted to Kaiserslautern for a year-and-a-half. He had chosen SLC as being where he wanted to buy a house and retire, having been in the Army from 1935 until 1963. We came to the States on a passenger cruise liner, our household goods having been shipped ahead. The whole trip took about four weeks. I remember coming into New York Harbor and seeing the Statue of Liberty; I was very overwhelmed because it was so very new and unknown. We drove from New York to Washington, D.C., where I visited the White House. We drove across the country to Albuquerque, sightseeing along the way. My sister and I were naturalized in Albuquerque when I was 11 and she about 9 years old.

The years since then went by fast. There were fishing trips with my family. I was a Boy Scout. I worked for my father after school doing janitorial work for the school district. I was active in school with the Science Club, collecting stamps, school politics and the model United Nations. I wanted a career in math or science. I graduated in June, 1970, and was accepted at a college in Grand Junction, Colorado. I worked part time and went to school full time, graduating in 1974 with a Bachelor of Arts degree. Later, I got an Associate's degree in accounting and computer science and did some graduate work. I had gotten married in 1974 (see photo) and started in the field of accounting, in which field I have worked for the last 10 years.

In 1979, our first child was born, but not alive. Our doctor began asking questions about family medical history. I had none to give because I had no way of obtaining that information. I asked my parents, who immediately said they didn't know anything, nor could they get the information. The only piece of identification I had was my naturalization certificate, which I had had to use as proof of identity for selective service, driver's license, college registration and insurance. In 1982, our son was born, very healthy, but again our doctor and genetic counsellor wanted medical background information. I just had to leave it incomplete.

Then, one day in 1984, my wife saw a letter in Ann Landers' column about a family of children who were having the same difficulty in getting medical and genetic background information, which was needed in their case because of a hereditary disease in their family. Ann Landers answered their letter by giving the address of the International Soundex Reunion Registry (ISRR) in Carson City, Nevada. I wrote for an application and received, in addition to the ISRR's data form, a card with Leone Boehmer's name, address and telephone number on it.

I immediately wrote to her giving every shred of information I could think of. I told her I thought I'd been born in Wiesbaden. She then wrote letters to everyone she could think of to write to but they all wrote back to say that they had no such records in their files. Meanwhile, she started sending me the newsletter of Operation Identity, the group in Albuquerque to which she belonged, and I read several books on the subject of the adoption triangle. One day, while looking through records, I found my naturalization certificate. I sent this to Leonie, largely because I had been naturalized in Albuquerque, where she lived. They traced the number and found the original adoption decree and I immediately filed an application to acquire copies of the papers in my file under the Freedom of Information Act.

I was very excited the day the papers arrived, especially when I found an English translation that I could read for myself. My birth name was Dieter Moeller, born on December 18, 1951 in Auschaffenburg, West Germany. I made copies of the papers and sent them to Leonie. She then wrote letters to the appropriate offices in Auschaffenburg, in reply to which I received a copy of my original birth certificate, which I then sent to Leonie to translate. I had been born at 5:15 a.m. the week before Christmas in a private residence. My mother was one Gudren Elizabeth Moeller, born on August 8, 1926 in PlanenVogtland, in what is now East Germany. She had been 26 years old at my birth, Catholic, and had worked as a *Putzfrau* ("housekeeper" or "cleaning lady"). My birth was registered at the Auschaffenburg University Hospital on December 19, 1951. The adoption decree was dated June, 1952, and had been handled through the military legal office in Wiesbaden. I do not know how my adoptive parents knew I had been put up for adoption. My birth mother kept me for five months prior to my adoption. The next step for me now was to start the search for my mother.



Arthur & Anne LeMelle

Leonie wrote to my mother's most recent address, the response to which showed that she had moved to another city. It was later learned that she had married an American G.I. named Josef Poremba in 1956 and that they had come to the U.S. She had an Ameri can Social Security number and became a U.S. citizen. I wrote to the Social Security Administration, but never got a reply. Later, through a search of records, it was learned that my mother had divorced her husband and had returned to

Germany. Leonie and I then began searching for Mr. Poremba through motor vehicle records, based upon his date and place of birth, which were known. The motor vehicle record search revealed that he was then living near San Diego, California.

I wrote to the address given for Mr. Poremba and received in response a telephone call at about 10 p.m. three weeks later. Mr. Poremba had not known about my birth, but only that his wife (my mother) had had a child, a girl, my sister, prior to her marriage to him. He proved very helpful, giving a great deal of information. He said they had been divorced in 1963, and that he still cared for my mother. He told me she was very beautiful, with dark red hair, blue eyes and olive skin, like mine. He said she was a lovely person, and very talented, and suggested that she may have returned to Auschaffenburg, where she had relatives and friends. This information was, at the time, over 21 years old, since they'd been divorced in 1963, but Leonie wrote again to Auschaffenburg to see if they had any record of my mother's return; to see if she were still alive. We also wrote to Planen-Vogtland in East Germany to request a copy of my mother's birth certificate, which we did through the East German consulate, and for which service a fee was charged. The certificate which we received as a result of this inquiry revealed the names of my maternal grandparents: Franz Joseph Richter Moeller and Joanna Martha Moeller, both born around the turn of the century, and both now deceased. About a week later came the letter which gave me my mother's current address, and which told me that she was still alive. I wrote two drafts of that first letter to mail to her. I introduced myself, told her I cared for her very much and was happy to find her after a 3-year search.



The Editor and his half-brother, Frank Fasse

Within three weeks I got an answer. She said she'd read my letter many times and cried. She never thought she would ever see me again. I was her son, and she loved me. She asked about my adopted family, my career, my hobbies and my plans for the future. She also told me about herself. I sent this first letter to Leonie to share with others in Operation Identity through the newsletter, so that others could read it so they wouldn't be afraid. In subsequent letters, she wrote me about my family. My grandfather was a professor at Tübingen University during World War I. My great-grandfather had been an artist and painter. She had lost her father during World War II and her mother had died of diabetes. She'd come to West Germany just before the communist take-over in the East, leaving behind many friends and relatives whom she hasn't seen to this day. My birth father was a German citizen from a good family for whom she had worked and with whom she had been involved for over a year. When I was born, neither my father nor his family wished to assume responsibility for me. My mother was a newcomer in the West with very little income and few family connections, and she put me up for adoption as a last resort. She described my father as intelligent and well-educated, but she still won't tell me his name, or tell me anything about my sister, whom Josef, her ex-husband, said existed. She tells me that I am much like her in many ways.

I sent her pictures of my son as a baby and pictures of myself as a child; and she sent me pictures of herself: she is a lovely and gracious lady of 62. She lives in a lovely apartment and made a career for herself working in a large department store. She also sent me a book with pictures of the city where I was born, and after one year of writing, she lets me call her "Mom" and always sends her love. She remembers our son at Christmas, and we always remember her birthday, and Christmas as well. Through our letters, we have developed a close friendship and we share honest feelings. She hopes to be able to come to the States next year (1989) and we hope to be able to see her then. But because of the way they feel threatened and hurt by the word adoption, we have never told my adoptive parents about finding my mother. Maybe things will change with time. Searching has made me a more understanding person, and I hope that my sharing this experience will help others.

Ende

Search Journal (Splain) cont. from pg. 5

On Saturday, October 8, 1988, I was doing some work on my computer when the mail came. I had just sat down and I told my son, Zachary, I am not getting up. I will do at least ten more before checking the mail. Well, after two sheets I said, "That's it. I have got to get the mail." (This was at 11:00 a.m.) It was the strangest feeling. I went out and there was a letter. A letter from my mother! I think I woke the whole neighborhood up. I couldn't believe it. I can't even put into words the excitement and happiness I felt. I ran next door for my friend to call her mother to come and translate the letter. It was the longest 15 minutes of my life! I remember, my friend asked me if I want some Kool-aid!! I remember, I just looked at her, I was shaking so bad. We both laugh about it now. Well, her mother, Inge, finally arrived and the first thing she said was, "Where is she living?" I told her, the same address that was on my adoption papers. She said, "I told you they never leave and they never die." How right she was, and to think, I could have done this 10 years ago! The letter was very brief and still left a lot of unanswered questions. Something I'd never dreamed of was, she'd married my father and had two more daughters, so, not only did I find her, I also found him and two sisters! I'd never had sisters growing up. They are 29 and 19 years old now. She didn't mention my father's name or if he was still living, and said that she assumed that my half-brother had emigrated [to the U.S.], so my search is still not completely over.

She also sent me a picture that was about 20 years old. The resemblance is remarkable, same hair and same build. The two sisters were also in the picture, which made them 10 and 1 at the time, and the 10-year-old looks so much like my son, Zachary, and the one who is one looks like my other son, Noah, who is 6. We always wondered why Noah had such dark hair when he was born.

She speaks no English, so I send her letters written in German by Inge. She said in her letter that she never dreamed she would hear a sign of life after 33 years. She'd worked for a farmer for 33 years until she became ill and is now living on a pension. I just can't put into words how happy I am.

So now, after another two weeks I have mailed her a package, and the agony of waiting is very hard to bear. All my emotions are running away with me. The anticipation of being able to see her and my sisters is so strong, I can't put it into words. All I know is, I have to get there.

This really is a complete feeling. It's a good feeling. The only way I can come close to describing it is, there is some type of a bond there. It's very strong. For me, there is lots of love.

November 30, 1988. I have received another letter since I have written all of this and am very happy to report that the letter came from the little sister, Annaliese. She is nineteen. She says my father's name is Herbert and my other sister's name is Christa and she has two children. She says that my mother has had a very hard life. She never told my sisters about me because she didn't know if I was alive or where I lived. So this is a tremendous lift from her shoulders. They very much want to see me, either by my coming over there or their coming over here. They do not know where my half-brother is at this time but I am still trying to get some information from them on him, like if he came to the U.S.

My birthday is November 11th and I never mentioned it in any of the letters, so my birthday came and went and I was a little disappointed, but four days later I received a birthday card from my mother. Well, to me this is what borthdays are all about. I was so happy.

I know this has seemed like a very happy ending, but to me, it is a happy beginning. I hope in my heart that all of you searching will find whomever you seek someday. Then you will feel what I feel. Please do not give up hope. Always keep those letters out there, working for you.

This is where I stop for now. I will write again when I have my reunion.

Ende

SEARCH JOURNAL by Siglinda Splain

October 2, 1988. You know, this is awfully strange, writing this, because when I started this search, a friend of mine said I should keep a journal. It wasn't until I received copies of this newsletter that I thought maybe I should.

I was born out-of-wedlock on November 11, 1955 in a town called Klettham, West Germany, to Teresia Moser. I believe what is so unique about my story is that my [adoptive] mother and father both had to go meet Teresia several times and talk with her so that she could decide who were to be my adoptive parents. My mother says she wishes she had gotten a picture of her now. She said that my mother had reddish hair and lived with her mother (my biological grandmother) and she had a son (my half-brother), who is 6 to 8 years older than me. She tells me that the son I have now, who is 10, resembles him very much. Well, you can certainly understand my curiosity then!

I have always known I was adopted. This subject was always open and my mother often wondered why I never seemed to want to locate Teresia, seeing as how I had so much information, including a last known address. I suppose, until you have a family of your own, you never really give much thought to locating your mother. I thought of her often, though, but it wasn't until my husband had a family reunion in the summer of 1988 that I decided, this is something I am going to do.

So, in August of '88, I got started, and I am amazed at how far I have gotten, and all the responses to my letters. I haven't found her yet, but I believe so strongly that I will hear something. I have prepared myself that she may not respond when she knows I am trying to locate her. She may even have passed on, but I have a half-brother somewhere and I feel certain that he must want to know.

My identity is so hard to put into words. I love my [adoptive] mother and father very much, and I also have two older brothers, but through the course of 33 years, I wonder who I am really like. Why do I have such a strong personality, why are so many of my ways of thinking and so many of the things I do and say so different from my family. Who am I really like? This, I believe, is where your missing link comes in. You have to know.

I have no hard feelings towards my real mother for giving me up for adoption. I seriously have to believe that it was for the best. I was brought up in a very loving home, have had a good life and the best parents in the world!

So, my search began (on August 8, 1988) when I called an adoption agency in West Palm Beach, FL and they gave me the address of the American Adoption Congress in Washington, DC. The next day, my neighbor's mother, who is German, looked at all my papers and was amazed at what information I had. We looked at the German atlas and the village where my mother resided at the time of my birth (Oberneuchtung) wasn't even on the map, it was so small. She went on to tell me that these women never leave and they never die. She honestly believed that my mother still lived in Oberneuchtung after all these years.

Well, she gave me the number of the German consulate in Miami and I called the next day and was told how to address my envelopes (1) to her last known address and (2) to a place in Oberneuchtung (which seemed like some sort of a courthouse). (As of today, I have not yet received any replies to these letters, nor have they yet been returned to me.)

That same week, I saw the address of the Salvation Army's office in Atlanta in Dear Abby's column, and I received a letter from the AAC a few weeks later, which had been referred to the regional office here in Florida, who then gave me the address of Mr. Gage. I also received a reply from the Salvation Army telling me to fill out some forms and send them to their office in Germany. In the meantime, I wrote to Mr. Gage and was surprised at his prompt response. His letter and newsletters are so encouraging. I was so excited. So I have followed his instructions to write to Erding (which, by the way, is where all my adoption papers are filed and where my parents were stationed at the time of my adoption). So I am still waiting for replies to all my inquiries.

October 21, 1988. Well, I have to say, Mr. Gage was absolutely right in his newsletters about coming home to the mailbox every day!

cont. on pg. 4, col. 2

Search Workshop The First Step (II)

In Issue #1, I said that the first step in searching in Germany can be as simple as writing a letter to the adoption placement office (*Adoptionsvermittlung*) in the city or municipality in which the adoption occurred. I also said that it is my opinion that any and all correspondence with German officials should be conducted *in German*. With that in mind, I will now try to put together an all-purpose letter of inquiry of any "Adoptionsvermittlungsstelle" which could be used by a German-born adoptee to get the search ball rolling.

The first thing you want to do is date the letter. Now, this might seem a relatively simple and straightforward matter, but you should know, assuming that you don't already, that Europeans do not write their dates in the same fashion as we Americans -- and this has nothing whatever to do with language. Europeans -- including Germans -- write dates in the following format: Day, Month, Year (contrast that with the American way: Month, Day, Year). Thus, when read as an American date, 6/1/88 would be June 1, 1988; but as a European date, it would be January 6, 1988! (This difference must also be borne in mind when reading your adoption papers, etc.)

That out of the way, we come to the months of the year, as follows: **Januar**, **Februar**, **März**, **April**, **Mai**, **Juni**, **Juli**, **August**, **September**, **Oktober**, **November** and **Dezember**. As you can see, they differ very little from the English.

Another small digression, while I've got an example sitting there (März). The German alphabet is virtually identical to that of English, with the following additional characters: **ä**, **Ä**, **ö**, **Ö**, **ü**, **Ü** and **ß**. The "umlauted" letters can, if necessary, be rendered by writing the letter under the umlaut followed immediately by an "e," e.g. "ä" becomes "ae," etc. "ß" is alternatively rendered as "ss."

Getting back to dates... German shorthand uses periods (.) to separate elements of a date, e.g. 6.1.88, as opposed to the American custom of using virgules (/) or hyphens (-). If writing the month out in word form, "June 6, 1988" becomes "6. Juni 1988."

The form and content of the address was detailed in Vol. I, No. 1, so I won't go into it here.

The next element is the salutation. Since in this initial letter, you won't know who will receive your letter, the greeting will have to be a non-specific "Dear Sir/Madam:". In German, this is rendered as follows: "Sehr geehrte(r) Herr/-Dame:".

Housekeeping items out of the way, we can now address the subject of the letter's text. I have drafted a number of these letters for other searching adoptees already, and have thus come up with some fairly succinct and useful "boilerplate" text.

I usually begin with an introduction of the author, along the lines of (in English): "My name is [*adoptee's current name*] and I was born [*birth name*] on [*date of birth*] in the city of [*place of birth*]. Subsequent to my birth,

cont. on pg. 6, col. 1



The Editor's Birth Mother (2nd from r.)
(Elfriede Lucie Butzke)

Search Workshop cont. from pg. 5

my mother, [*birth mother's name*], surrendered me for adoption on [*date of surrender*]." (If, for example, the date of the surrender is not known, the second sentence would simply read: "Subsequent to my birth, my mother surrendered me for adoption.") Proceeding with the next logical thought: "I am interested now in finding my birth mother and have heard that I may obtain information and data from my adoption and birth records for this purpose."

Next paragraph: "I, therefore, hereby request that you locate and thoroughly examine any and all records in your files with respect to my adoption and inform me of any and all pertinent data contained therein. I am particularly interested in learning, among other things:" Then I would go on to list in numbered subparagraphs specific pieces of data, such as about the birth mother, birth father and birth siblings, if any, etc.

As a closing, I suggest something along the lines of the following: "I also request that the Adoption Placement Office make every possible effort to establish the present whereabouts (for example, living or dead, and/or current address) of all known biological relatives. If possible, I would like to attempt to contact such other biological relatives. To that end, I ask that you inform me of either the current or last known address of such known biological relatives; or, if that is not possible, (and in any case) give to them my name and address, so that they will be able to contact me, if they so desire."

The customary closing salutation in Germany is "Mit freundlichen Grüßen," or (in English): "With kind regards." Then you sign your name and, if not writing on pre-printed letterhead stationery, print or type your name and address under your signature. I also strongly recommend that photocopies of all correspondence conducted in connection with a search be made on an ongoing basis.

Below is the German text, based upon the foregoing example:

[*current date in European format*]

Stadt [*name of city*]
Jugendamt (Adoptionsvermittlung)
[*city postal code*] [*name of city*]
West Germany

Sehr geehrte(r) Herr/Dame:

Ich heiße [*adoptee's current name*] und ich wurde als [*birth name*] am [*date of birth*] in der Stadt [*place of birth*] geboren. Nach der Geburt gab meine Mutter, [*birth mother's name*], mich am [*date of surrender*] zur Adoption frei.

Ich interessiere mich jetzt dafür, meine leibliche Mutter herauszufinden, und habe kürzlich gehört, daß ich zu diesem Zweck Informationen aus meiner Adoptionsakte bekommen darf. Ich bitte deshalb hiermit darum, daß Sie so bald wie möglich meine Adoptionsakte herausholen und mir alle wichtige drinstehenden Informationen mitteilen. Ich interessiere mich besonders dafür zu erfahren:

(1) Name, Geburtsdatum und -ort, und letzte bekannte Adresse meiner leiblichen Mutter;
(2) Name, Geburtsdatum und -ort, und letzte bekannte Adresse meines leiblichen Vaters;
(3) Ob ich leibliche Geschwister habe, und, wenn ja, Name, Geburtsdatum und -ort, und letzte bekannte Adresse aller bekannten leiblichen Geschwister; und
(4) Alle andere Informationen über mich, meine Geburt und Adoption, usw.

Auch bitte ich höflichst darum, daß die Adoptionvermittlung sich alle Mühe gibt, den jetzigen Verbleib (z.B. lebendig oder tot, und/oder jetzige Adresse) aller bekannten leiblichen Verwandten festzustellen. Wenn möglich, möchte ich Kontaktaufnahme mit solchen anderen leiblichen Verwandten versuchen. Dazu bitte ich auch darum, daß Sie mir entweder die jetzige oder die letzte bekannte Adresse von solchen bekannten leiblichen Verwandten mitteilen; oder, wenn das nicht möglich ist, (und auf jeden Fall) ihnen meinen Namen und meine Adresse geben, so daß sie sich mit mir in Verbindung setzen können, wenn sie so wünschen.

Ich bedanke mich im Voraus für Ihre freundliche Aufmerksamkeit, und verbleibe

Mit freundlichen Grüßen,

/s/

[*adoptee's current name and return mailing address*]

ISD cont. from pg. 1

a young male adult adoptee sought to locate his birth mother in France. In both cases, ISD served as an intermediary between the seeker and the sought.

According to the report, the twins were located and advised of their mother's desire to meet them; letters were exchanged and resistance on the part of the adoptive parents was eventually overcome. As they closed their file on the case six years later, the ISD had been advised by the birth mother that in-person meetings were being planned. In the case of the male adoptee, ISD was advised that his birth mother had been found dead in 1978, a probable murder victim. However, ISD was also able to locate the adoptee's birth father, a Greek man who had subsequently married another German woman and who was planning to resettle in Germany. The birth father, while apparently uninterested in meeting his son, nevertheless gave ISD his anticipated German address to give to the adoptee.

Individuals wanting more information or wishing to seek ISD's assistance in any adoption-related matter may contact ISD at the following address:

Internationaler Sozialdienst
Deutscher Zweig e.V.
Am Stockborn 5-7
6000 Frankfurt-am-Main 50
West Germany.

The current Director of ISD is Frau Ingrid Baer. Ende

A copy of the report referenced in this article (in the original German text only) may be obtained from Geborener Deutscher *by sending a self-addressed, stamped (#10) envelope to our editorial office in Brooklyn. Please specify "ISD Adoption Conference Report" in your request.*