Geborener Deutscher

A Newsletter for German-Born Adoptees and Their Birth/Adoptive Families

Volume IV, Number 3 (Issue #12) Autumn 1991

Biracial Adoptees Can Expect a "Mixed" Reaction

by Leonie Boehmer, I.S.C.

When I grew up in Germany (before, during and after the Second World War) there were no Germans other than white-skinned ones, and all had similar facial features. There were some foreigners from neighboring countries employed as workers (*Gastarbeiter*) (see, e.g., the film *Bread and Chocolate*), but they were obviously non-Germanic. They looked different, they spoke a foreign language, they dressed differently, their habits were different, they liked different foods and had different manners. People stared at them! And, rather than acknowledging the human being and perhaps broaden their understanding about people from other countries, we Germans treated these foreigners as not up to the German standard. Following the end of the Second World War, the American occupation introduced large numbers of black soldiers as long-term temporary residents. The response of the German people was the same.

In some instances, however, "human nature" brought white Germans together with non-white foreigners, oftentimes resulting in the birth of a biracial child. It is difficult, socailly, to marry a non-white foreigner and continue to live in Germany, and it is even harder for the child of such a union to grow up under these circumstances. Therefore, it is also often difficult, if not impossible, for a German birth mother to acknowledge a biracial child whom she gave up for adoption, if only because of the general atmosphere of intolerance in Germany, in addition to the child's having been born illegitimately.

During the past 10 years, I have handled a few cases where the adoptee was biracial (in fact less than 10%). In many instances, the German birth mothers living in Germany have not wanted contact nor an ongoing relationship with their biracial child. Of the German birth mothers who emigrated to the USA, some fully acknowledged the adoptee and wanted contact, while some others did not. On the other hand, the black, American birth fathers are happy to be found and promote a relationship between themselves and their newly discovered offspring. Biracial German-born adoptees are, therefore, often not able to pursue a relationship with their German birth family, and I always try to prepare the searching biracial adoptee for the statistically likely outcome of the search.

> To this day, I, as a German-born birth mother, am ashamed to say that the attitude of Germans towards people with other-than-white skin has not changed.

My experience as a searcher, as well as my understanding of the German people, was largely substantiated by an article which appeared in the German women's magazine *Brigitte* (Issue No. 2/91). In this article, German children of varying ethnic backgrounds –some adopted and some not–recounted their experiences in schools, on public transportation, with prospective landlords, and even when trying to share in the jubilation at the destruction of the Wall which had separated the two Germanies for nearly 50 years! To this day, I, as a German-born birth mother, am ashamed to say that the attitude of Germans towards people with other-than-white skin has not changed. Despite the fact that Germany has become much more "multicultural"

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Search Journal
by Nancy Thomas

I gave a child up for adoption in 1958–in Geneva, Switzerland. I am an American, but my parents took me to Europe to have the baby. Things were a lot different in 1958. There was a terrible stigma attached to an illegitimate child.

I named the baby Kathy Jane. I had a choice of giving her up to an American couple or a Swiss couple. I chose American parents. I had to sign the adoption papers at the American Embassy in Geneva.

I wrote to the adoption agency when Kathy was 2 years old and asked for information about her. They would only tell me that her new parents kept the name Kathy.

I registered with ALMA when Kathy was 18 years old. I never actually searched for her, but wanted the information to be there for her if she ever wanted to search for me. I did not want to interfere in her life.

In July, 1989, my husband, who is Kathy's father, said, "She's old enough now [31], let's start looking for her." ALMA told me it takes about 6 months to "find" someone. My situation was different from most because of the European adoption. I wrote to the American Embassy in Geneva and asked for the paper I signed. They wrote back and said, no, they would not release any papers.

A friend in Washington D.C. gave me the name of a lawyer to write to in D.C., to see if he could help me. He wrote back and told me I had every right to request the papers. They had to release any papers I signed. I wrote again. They wrote back and gave me an address in D.C. to write to. I wrote and they sent me back the papers plus a birth certificate in the name of Kathy Jane Neuweiler (my maiden name).

By this time we had gone to Tucson, Arizona for a couple of months. I was listening to talk radio and they listed a help group in Arizona called TRIAD.

I called, and they gave me the name of **Operation Identity** (OI) in New Mexico. I wrote and was told that I needed to try and get the adoptive name.

In the meantime I had written to the passport services, writing for a passport search in the name of Kathy Jane Thomas (*nee* Neuweiler). They wrote back and said a passport had been issued on July 11, 1958, but could find no more paperwork on it. I also wrote to the hospitals and adoption agencies in Geneva, but never got any answers.

One day I pulled out the paperwork the Embassy has sent us and re-read everything. The Doctor's name was on it. I again wrote to him, but never heard back. Near the bottom of the

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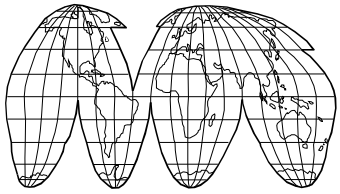
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Travel Log

First in an Ongoing Series

Things to Consider Before You Leave the Country

In order for most reunions between German-born adoptees and their German birth family members to occur, it is usually necessary for one party or the other to travel to the other's country-of-residence (those cases where the German birth parent or other birth family member has already emigrated to the U.S. notwithstanding). While it may be possible for the German birth family member to come to the U.S. to visit the American, German-born adoptee, still, the desire to visit one's country of birth, as well as one's German birth family, can prove a strong motivation for one's own first (or subsequent) trip to Germany.



The cost of traveling to Germany–or any other European country, for that matter–can vary widely, depending upon any number of factors, such as: the time of year (peak vs. off-peak season); the carrier used (U.S. or other foreign, such as Lufthansa); length of stay (obviously, it will cost less to stay one week than two, e.g.); itinerary (it generally costs less to remain in one place for the duration of one's stay than to travel around); etc. One should anticipate the need or desire to travel as far in advance as possible so as to enable one to set aside the necessary funds. Alternatively, one could take out a small vacation loan to pay for a trip taken on "short notice."

Traveling to a foreign country is, as one might imagine, a bit more involved than traveling within the U.S., e.g. For example, one must have or obtain a passport; and, in some cases, depending upon the country to which one wishes to travel, visas or other entry permits will be required. Although not required for travel to the majority of European countries, one may wish or need to obtain updated vaccinations for various diseases. You should consult the U.S. State Department office nearest you for specific travel advisories or restrictions in effect at the time of departure. In most cases, a passport may be obtained through your local post office. Write or call for details.



The amount of baggage one may need will depend, of course, on the length of one's stay. It is recommended that one pack no more than one week's worth of clothing changes; if you plan to stay longer than a week, you can have the clothes you bring laundered as necessary. If you're picky about such things, you may wish to bring you own, familiar brands of toiletries, such as shampoo, toothpaste, etc., but these items may also be obtained–or replenished–locally after you arrive. One item I have never failed to take with me whenever I travel is a good, sturdy umbrella.

If you plan to travel around once you arrive, you may want to consider renting a car, particularly if you intend to stay for one week or longer. Weekly car-rental rates are the most reasonable, and most travel agencies can reserve your car when they book your flight. For those who cannot afford to rent a car, or who do not drive, but who still wish to see something of the country, the German railroad (*Deutsche Bundesbahn*) is an extremely efficient means of transportation. In some localities, even the local subways, streetcars and busses will offer a wide range of opportunities to sightsee or travel locally (for example, commuter trains run on a regular schedule between such cities as Frankfurt/Main and Mainz, some 50 km. distant). As with all travel, costs vary depending upon mode of transport and distance travelled.

One may also have to reckon with the cost of hotels or other public accommodation, such as pensions or hostels. Cleanliness and economy are the primary watchwords in this area of foreign travel, but one should recognize that, except for the airfare, this is likely to be the greatest single cost of traveling anywhere. A German-born adoptee may be able to stay with friends (if one has friends in the country where one will be staying) or birth family members. In the context of a reunion experience, staying with the new-found relations may or may not be a good idea, but if the foreign host is willing to accommodate the traveler, it would be difficult to advise against such an arrangement in advance. If one anticipates using public accommodations, however, one should write ahead as far in advance as possible to advise of arrival and departure dates and to request information regarding rates and room availability.

Finally, if, in addition to the anticipated reunion with birth family members, one expects to sightsee or travel within Germany, one should also gather as much information as one can ahead of time to make the experience as enjoyable and trouble-free as possible. Establishing a specific, yet flexible, itinerary can go a long way towards making any trip hassle-free; and it is always a good idea to obtain maps and other tourist-related guides or brochures concenring the cities or regions one expects to visit. You might also consider reading the travel section of your local newspaper; subscribing to one or more travel-related periodicals; or consulting the local library for books or other informative materials concerning the country one plans to visit. ***Ende***

Biracial Adoptees

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since the end of the war, offering a variety of foods and international cuisine brought with them by resident foreigners, the children of such people still are not seen as "German," not even when they were born in Germany, have at least one German parent and speak only German!

It is very sad and seemingly unfair that a searching adoptee would have to face the fact that his/her German birth mother might not be able to bring him/her into her family because they would not see the beautiful human being, but would only see a person with a different skin color or ethnicity. Readers of *Geborener Deutscher* who desire to speak to this subject by drawing upon personal experience are encouraged to share their thoughts. ***Ende***

Leonie Boehmer, a German-born birth mother, is a certified Independent Search Consultant who specializes in offering search-related counsel and advice to adoptees and/or birth parents searching in Germany. She lives and works in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Readers desiring to obtain search assistance from Leonie should write to her at the address, or call her at the telephone number, listed below.

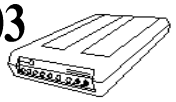


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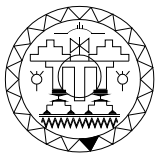
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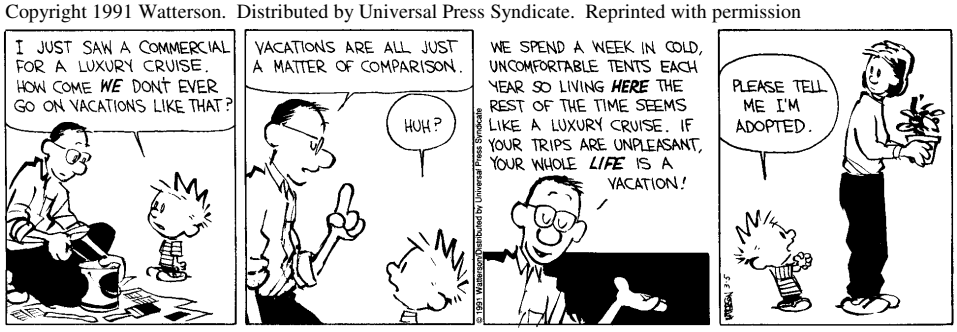
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Independent Search Consultant
Specialization: Germany

Calvin & Hobbes

by Bill Watterson

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A Letter To My Sister...



April 20, 1991

Dear Franziska,

Hello! I ask that you sit down in a comfortable chair, before you continue to read this letter, for you are going to go through a lot of hurling emotions before you have read this whole letter. Please read this letter before you open up the sealed envelope, or you will not understand the journey you are about to embark on. It is a journey about a child in which I would like you to follow in her footsteps, so you may understand why this letter is in front of you right now, being read.

A child was born in Würzburg, Germany in 1953. An emergency baptism took place August 14, 1953 in *Säuglingsheim am Mönchberg* by P. Ludwig Tremel, CMM, of St. Barbara's Church. The child was left in an orphanage within that church parish, were she cried and feared for her life. Her mother was ripped from her side and was left to deal with the cold fears of what was going on.

Three years later she was put on an airplane accompanied by a woman that she did not know, and sent to the United States. This child spoke no English and cried a lot, and feared women in long dresses. She also would have nightmares, where she dreamt of the war, the Zeppelin in the sky, and of crashed airplanes, in which she lived. The only comforting parts of her dreams were that she would be holding a hand of an older girl, and that is what would soothe her pain.

The people that took her to be raised, had open arms of love, but because of her traumatic three years in Germany, she did not know how to respond to them and her new life. She was crazyly in love with her dad and her grandmother, and deeply rejected her mother. No one knows why, except the child, which is locked up deep within her.

At an inquisitive age, she found some papers that deeply troubled her, and she became more depressive and alone. She carried a name in her vision for one year, and defended this name, until the book of partial truth was opened. There she was told that she was adopted from an orphanage in Germany, and it was downhill after that.

Her life continued to be alone and troubled inside with the desire not to give up her citizenship of Germay. Because of a very haunting experience of mental and physical cruelty, she left that house and ventured on her own. She desired to go to Germany and find the name that she remembered as a child off of a piece of paper that was documented, but because of financial difficulty she never made it.

So she began a 19-year search through letters of correspondence to the priest who baptized her, and other people and ended up with a dead end, except to find out that she had a ½-sister and a mother still in Germany. This child was so tormented and anguished that she hired a lady to do some probing into some legal documents in Germany. At that time she cracked

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Mother and Daughter Reunited

After 30 years, Hilde Brogan's family is together for Christmas

by Meredith Thompson

***Enterprise* Staff Writer**

From the Livingston Enterprise of Monday, October 24, 1990

Christmas is a time many families come together to celebrate the holidays, but usually they don't have to wait 30 years before being reunited.

Hilde Brogan of Wilsall [MT] was separated from her first child, Resi, who was then age 4, and until this summer [1990] had not seen her "lost daughter" since 1958 when she left Germany for the United States.

Thirty-two years ago, Mrs. Brogan was a young mother with two small children. When her second husband got his military orders to leave Germany, she was suddenly forced to make a hard decision, one that would haunt her for the next 30 years. She would be leaving behind not only her homeland, but her little Resi when she boarded the plane bound for America.

"I never thought I'd see her again," Mrs. Brogan said recently. "I tried, but the courthouse in Germany told me the file was sealed."

Then by fluke, she heard of "Operation Identity" on a Bozeman [MT] radio station and in a brief two-and-a-half weeks, she was put in touch with her daughter who was living in Bristol, CT, with her own little girl, Lara.

Leonie Boehmer, who is the president of "Operation Identity" headquartered in Albuquerque, N.M., called Brogan and informed her that Resi had been located but that she had an unlisted telephone number.

In the meantime, Mrs. Brogan had called her younger daughter, Iris, who immediately sent Resi a mail-o-gram saying, "Have news about your relatives in Germany. Please call collect."

After contacting Iris, Resi called her mother. When the call came through, Mrs. Brogan said to her daughter, "Resi, this is Mama."

"Mama, I love you," was the reply.

Mother and daughter spent the next three hours catching up on a lifetime spent apart.

They were reunited for the first time on June 6 [1990] in Bristol and now will be spending a long-awaited Christmas together at the Brogan home–complete with a traditional Yule log and German wiener schnitzel.

Mrs. Brogan remembers that first meeting in Bristol as if it were yesterday.

She said, "When I walked down the ramp at the airport in Bristol, there waiting for me were Resi and her daughter, Lara, each with a big red rose for 'Mama.' At first sight, both my eyes and my heart knew this was my lost daughter.

"I said to her at the airport, 'I know you're my baby,' and she said, 'I am,'" remembers Mrs. Brogan.

During her stay in Bristol, Brogan explained to her daughter how it was they came to be separated 32 years ago.

Brogan told her that after leaving her first husband in Paris, France, she had returned to her native home in West Germany. There she met an American soldier, Gary Cissel from Montana.

At the time, she was working as a seamstress and trying to support herself and two small children, Resi, who was then three years old, and Iris, who was only an infant.

"I was a woman with two children and I thought I'd never be able to support them on what I was making," she said. "I was alone and living in a one-room apartment."

In 1957, she and Cissel were married in Switzerland. When it came time to ship out to the United States, Brogan, who was only 23 years old, was faced with the difficult decision of having to give up her four-year-old child.

"My hands were tied," she said. "I talked to the rabbi, to the minister and to the base commander. They all said it would be better to have one child taken care of than none. And so I agreed to give Resi to a married couple living on the same military base."

She smuggled a copy of Resi's birth certificate out of the country inside the zipper compartment of a leather travel case and managed to keep a faded snapshot of Resi in a photograph album identifying her as her own baby sister. Later she hid the birth certificate with her dog registration files.

When her marriage failed after several years, her thoughts returned to the daughter she had given up. She knew she would not rest until she had found her.

In 1976, she met Tom Brogan and they were alter married. The day after they became husband and wife, he made a promise to his new bride.

"One man will put your life and your family back together, and I am that man," he vowed.

Tom proved true to his word, and it was actually he who placed the call to Operation Identity. The last thing he said to Boehmer was, "Whatever it takes, money is no object. Time is very, very important."

The birth certificate Brogan had kept concealed for so many years was brought out and now it would lead her to her missing daughter.

With the help of Operation Identity, they found that Resi's adoptive parents were living somewhere in Maryland and they subsequently located Resi in Connecticut. By contacting several courthouses in that state, the Brogans were finally able to pinpoint her in Bristol. It was then only a matter of time before they found Resi, who was now known as "Terri," a shortened version of her given name, Maria Theresia.

Mrs. Brogan called her relatives who are still living in Europe and told them she had located her daughter. They were skeptical and questioned, "How can you be so certain after 32 years?" But Mrs. Brogan was sure. In fact, she says the resemblance between Resi and her younger sister, Iris, is so remarkable they could pass as twins.

Resi arrived in Montana on Friday, December 21 [1990], and the day after Christmas will fly to San Francisco to see her sister and her brother, Greg, who was adopted by Mrs. Brogan in 1964.

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page it said the birth was registered in Register of Births, Office of Etat Civil, Geneva (Vol. ___, Page ___, No. ___). I thought, why not write, give them the page and numbers and see what happens? All I can figure out is that someone got my letter that didn't read English, but saw the page and volume numbers and they sent back a birth certificate with her new name: Kathryn Anne Walstrom.

I called OI and was told that with such information we could do a search that would take about two weeks. On May 8th, I got my daughter's adoptive parents' names and was told that they were probably in Hawaii.

Our oldest son, Chuck (29), said, "Let's call information and see if she is listed." There was no Kathryn Walstrom, or Milton (father's name), but there was an E.A. (mother's name was Elizabeth, Kathy's middle name was Ann). So we took a chance.

I called person-to-person to E.A. Walstrom asking for Kathryn. Her mother answered the phone and said "No, Kathy isn't here, she's my daughter. I'll give you her phone number." We all started to cry, my husband and son–Kathy's father and her brother.

I didn't know exactly how to handle the phone call to Kathy. I called ALMA. They told me what questions to ask and how to handle the call. You never say, I'm your mother, you're my daughter. Following ALMA's guidelines, I called and said:

"My name is Nancy Thomas. I'm calling from Anchorage, Alaska." (This piques their interest.) "I have something of a personal nature to talk to you about. Do you have a minute?" They say yes, so I continue...

"I want to give you our phone number in case we get cut off. In Alaska, that happens sometimes." (That way if she hangs up and wants some time to think about this, she can call you back).

"Were you born in Geneva, Switzerland on June 3, 1958?" (She said, "Yes.") "Does the name Kathy Jane Neuweiler sound familiar to you?" (She said, "Yes, very familiar.")

"I gave birth to a child in Geneva, Switzerland on June 3, 1958. I had to give her up for adoption. I have been searching for her and my search has lead to you. Are you receptive to this?" (She said, "Yes, very receptive.")

Then I broke down. She stayed pretty calm. It was the Thursday before Mother's Day and she had to get to a Brownie's Mother's day dinner her daughter was having and had to get off the phone, but would call me back in two hours, which she did. And we talked for 2½ hours.

She asked if she could call us Mom and Dad. She called on Mother's Day to wish me a happy Mother's Day–and again on Father's Day. Of course, she was excited to know I was married to her father and she had two brothers and a sister.

That was in May. We've talked and written and sent pictures. We have three grandchildren and have talked to the 6½-year-old. Chuck has talked to Kathy several times. Our middle son, David, is very quiet and hasn't called yet, says he's excited about finding her, but he'll call when he's ready.

Our daughter, Cindy, who's 21, was so excited, but had a hard time for a while. But her older brother got on the phone, told her to get her act together and call her sister, which she finally did in July. They had a great talk. Cindy said she was amazed how much they have in common and its like there are two Cindys running around! The three children have known Kathy has existed since they were each about 14-15 years old. They have always said, they wanted to find her. God has answered our prayers.

Kathy sounds like a very loving, caring person. We can hardly wait to meet her and her family, and hug and love her. She's very interested in knowing all about us, our background etc. What a void she has had in her life. Her grandmother (my husband's mother) is writing to her. Everyone is so excited, still can't believe it. She called on August 7th, to wish her dad a happy birthday.

In November, 1990, my husband and I flew to Hawaii to meet our daughter, her husband and our grandchildren. Everything went real well.

In June 1991, Kathy came to Alaska for a two-week visit. Chuck lives in Alaska, and David lives in Florida and came home for the summer. Our daughter Cindy also came home, so it was a great time for Kathy to visit and meet her brothers and sister. It was the first time in four years that we were all together.

Kathy's grandmother from Philadelphia (PA) also flew up and we all had a nice time. The kids all got along well and had fun "looking each other over" to see who Kathy looks most like. We were able to have a family portrait taken and it has been a very exciting time for us. ***Ende***

"Dear Franziska, ..." (A Letter To My Sister....)

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a comment because she always had a 6th sense towards vibes of people and the world around her and it was, "my luck, when my mother is found she will be dead," and sure enough, she was.

Well, she almost lost herself completely, with so many emotions running through her, she was going to crawl up into a cocoon an die, when all of a sudden a pair of wings scooped her up and told her that they had located the whereabouts of her ½-sister.

For days she pondered on how to write the letter to her, for she doesn't even know if she possibly remembers her childhood, or if she was left to be adopted too, or if she remembers seeing her mother pregnant when she was young. Was she ever told that she had a younger sister?

Well, she decided to continue the letter with all fragility, to confront the ½-sister with what she has and knows. Well, the child you have been journeying with, through only small prints of her life is me, Juliane, your ½-sister. I know, your heart just fell to the floor. I know, I can feel it. Take a deep breath, and please continue to read what I know about you and our mother.

Your name at birth was Franziska, and you were born on December 16, 1947 to Dorothea, and your dad died April 16, 1947, eight months before you were born. I was born when you were about 6 or 7 years old, and I do not know who is the man who got Mother pregnant; all I know is that she was registered in Straubing.

She also passed away, on October 10, 1989. She was only 67 years old, and I am 1½ years too late for her. Looking at a map, it looks like she travelled a good distance to have me in Würzburg.

I don't know how you feel at this time, but if it is at all like how I felt, it will take time to put your feelings into motion again. I want to know all about you and how your life was, what was Mother like, are there any aunts, uncles, grammas, grampas, nieces, nephews, who can tell you of what I have told you, and more. The Archives in Würzburg will tell you, and also in Straubing.

I also do not write German, and I speak very little, so this letter has been translated for me into German through Leonie Boehmer. She is the wings that lifted me up as referred to in the letter earlier.

I do not expect to hear from you right away. I'm sure you would like to do some investigating on your own through surviving members of the family, if any, or through Mother's paperwork, or through the St. Barbara's orphanage. I doubt very much if Father Tremel is still alive, he was 88 the last time I wrote him, and he was in a home for the retired priests in Würzburg, Germany, but all I can hope for is to hear from you.

I understand you are married. Do you have any pictures of yourself... Mother... family members... anything? Can you tell me how Mother died and where she is buried? Did she ever remarry, or speak of me?

Well, I leave you with this thought " Love is like a butterfly, graceful and free, you can't touch or own it, so release it, if it's meant to be, it will return." — *Juliane Cazenave*

Hilde Brogan

cont. from pg. 3

In the meantime, Resi and Lara, will be celebrating Christmas with Hilde and Tom.

We're going to have a big, big party on Christmas Day," Brogan said. "And my granddaughter wants to see our cabin and horses, so we're going to go on the snowmobile if there is snow."

The Brogan home is a happy one this year. The tree is up and decorated, the German Christmas bread is baked and the holly-and-pine centerpiece is arranged to perfection.

"God has brought us together," she said. "We will be separated no more by man, only by God." And yes, "It's going to be a good Christmas," she says.

Her nightmare is over. ***Ende***