Geborener Deutscher

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

Volume IV, Number 4 *(Issue #13)* *Winter 1992*

Englisch über Alles

by Enno von Lowenstern

The following article originally appeared in *The New York Times* of November 9, 1990.

Increasingly, the world's languages are subjected to Anglicisms. Enno von Lowenstern, deputy editor of the German newspaper Die Welt, *has discovered to his horror that he can write an article in German using hardly any German words.*

Unser Way of Life im Media Business ist hart, da muß man ein tougher Kerl sein. Morgens Warm-up und Stretching, dann ein Teller Corn Flakes und ein Soft Drink oder Darjeeling Tea, dann in das Office–und schon Brunch mit den Top-Leuten, Meeting zum Thema: Sollen wir die Zeitung pushen mit Snob Appeal oder auf Low Profile achten?

Ich habe den Managern ganz cool und businesslike mein Paper presentiert: Wir müssen News powern und erst dann den Akzent auf Layout und Design Legen, auf der Front Page die Headline mehr aufjazze. Für jede Story brauchen wir ein starkes Lead. Das Editorial muß Glamor und Style haben, unsere Top Priority bleibt: Action und Service.

Der Cartoon muß gut plaziert sein, die Korrespondenten müssen Features Kabeln, und sie müssen beim Handling ihrer Computer-Terminals fit sein, on-line und off-line, ihr Password nicht vergessen, mit dem Scanner umgehen können, das Register editieren, die Disks pflegen, sich mit Bits und Bytes auskennen, nicht Top News canceln. Und sie müssen auf ihre Connections achten, damit sie an Top-Secret-Informationen kommen; jeder Reporter muß ein veritabler Sherlock Holmes sein, dann gelingt das Comeback. Mein Conference-Report betonte den High Risk eines Conflict of Interest mit der PR-Abteilung; der Creativ-Director und der Designer verstanden die Message.

Nach der Conference aßen wir nur Fast Food und dann begann das Panel. Das Give-and-Take war super. Viele Youngsters sagten, der Boom gehe zu Ende, ein Crash komme. Manche taten so, als seien wir total out und müßten ein genuines Crisis Management starten statt business as usual.

No Problem, sagte ich, ich werde nach der Coffee-Break eine Marketing-Studie in meinem Studio anfertigen, dann machen wir einen Test, wie der Trend läuft. Noch funktioniert meine Pipeline zum Boss, noch habe ich einen Desk im Office. Dann hatten wir Happy Hour mit der Jury; Sherry und Cocktails für die Girls, Hard Drinks für die Boys, Whiskey and Soda, dazu Canapes.

Es war beim Dinner–Black-Tie, gegrillte Steaks mit Curry und Ketchup–da sagte der Old man, wir hätten eine faire Chance unser Image zu verbessern, denn Job Application führt zur Success Story, wer nicht up to date ist, wird gekillt, that's life. Wir sind Workaholics. Antwortete ich, wir kennen kein High-Life und wir sind keine Jetsetters, auch wenn ich die Bar und die VIP-Lounge in jedem Airport kenne und jeden Barmixer am Ton seines Cocktail-Shakers unterscheide.

Unser Outfit ist okay, der Cash Flow ist besser geworden, es gab einen Run auf unsere Aktien, nachdem die lange ziemlich down waren. Nach der Rush-hour wollten wir im Penthouse pokern, aber der Lift in der Lobby war kaputt, also joggten unsere Lobbyisten hinauf–jogging ist sowieso der Hit, und wir sind Sportsmen, Body Building ist unser Hobby, wir betreiben Badminton, Golf, Volleyball, Basketball, Windsurfing. Und wenn mal unser Peacenik einen Joint raucht und high ist –der Softie, der immer schreit: Make love not war!–dann hilft ihm ein workout im Fitness Center über dem Supermarket.

Mit Lotion und Shampoo gingen wir zum Shower, als Anticlimax. Dann Bluejeans und Jersey oder Sweatshirts angezogen, als Single wohne ich im Motel noch in der Kitchenette ein Orange-Juice getrunken, etwas Rock und Pop im Hi-Fi Stereo gehört, aber der Drummer war miserabel und der Sound–absolut absolet. Später Video eingeschaltet, dann TV, hey, man, der Talk-Master war ein Monster.

Nur eines macht mich total crazy: Diese schrecklichen Anglizismen in unserer schönen deutschen Sprache. ***Ende***

Copyright © 1991 The New York Times
Distributed by The New York Times Special Features

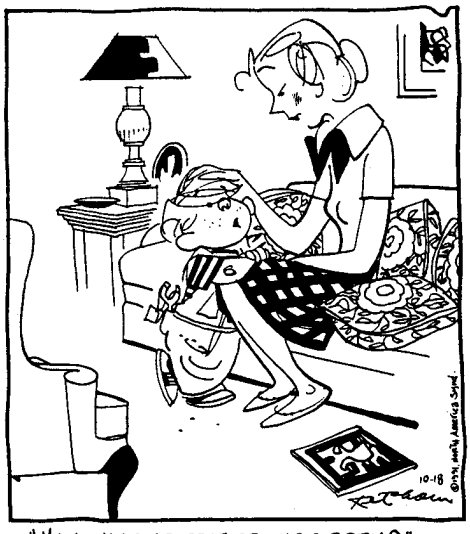
"Quotable Quotes"

Apart from the work with intercountry adoption itself, Terre des Hommes recognizes the necessity for placing this form of aid within a wider framework of measures in which intercountry adoption may be regarded as the lowest in a hierarchy of priorities after all attempts to care for the abandoned child by providing parents in his country of origin have failed. *In the long term the aim is to make intercountry adoption superfluous.* Thus the struggle to prevent the abandonment of children in the "third world" is of prime importance. Preventive measures, such as the strengthening of family ties within families threatened with breaking up, and aid and protection for single and/or unmarried mothers must be encouraged. Intercountry adoption can only be justified if it is embedded within a catalogue of such measures. Only then does it not run the risk of simply being a means of satisfying the requirements of childless marriages by unscrupulous dealers. This raises a further point which is of importance where Terre des Hommes is concerned: intercountry adoption cannot be allowed to offer financial advantage for any of the parties concerned. Terre des Hommes is more than concerned about the increasing international trade in children and takes every opportunity to denounce this both in public and in official circles [emphasis supplied].

From "Foreign Adoption in the Federal Republic of Germany" by Wolfgang Kühl & Annegret Winter-Stettin, which appeared as a chapter in Adoption in Worldwide Perspective, *edited by R.A.C. Hoksbergen, et al. (1986). Terre des Hommes' address is: Postfach 4126, W-4500 Osnabrück, Germany.*

DENNIS THE MENACE ®

Used by permission of Hank Ketchum and © 1991 by North American Syndicate



"MOM, WAS I ADOPTED OR WAS I BORN?"

Geborener Deutscher is published quarterly by William L. Gage, who is solely responsible for its content. Readers are encouraged to submit relevant material, including articles, letters and/or photographs, 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, except by written request. The publisher assumes no responsibility for unsolicited manuscripts. Subscriptions are FREE: to individuals upon written request; and to search-and-support groups, either upon written request or upon other notice of their existence.

Copyright © 1991 William L. Gage

ISSN 1052-3189

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

The following two articles, which appeared in separate, local Texas newspapers between May 21 and May 25, 1991, describe the same events concerning the reunion of Regina Shirley Buentello and her German brother, Richard Weise. Copies of the articles were provided by Mr. Weise to Leonie Boehmer, who, in turn, provided them to GD. My thanks to all who made both the reunion and these reports about it possible.

Long Search For Kin Has Happy Ending

by John Austin

From the Fort Worth (TX) Star Telegram of Tuesday, May 21, 1991

D/FW AIRPORT–When the passengers from Lufthansa flight 436 began filing into the waiting room at Dallas/Fort Worth Airport yester day afternoon, Regina Shirley Buentello broke into a run.

Seconds later she was hugging the brother she'd never seen before.

"I'm lost for words," said the Grand Prairie woman, clutching a well-used lace handkerchief. "I'm lost. I'm so happy. ... It's like a dream come true."

As they embraced, her newfound brother, Richard Weise, from a small town near Munich, Germany, did find a word.

"Good," he said in a thick German accent.

Weise's arrival in Texas is the happy ending to a story that began almost 45 years ago in the rubble of post-war Germany.

Buentello came to America from a German orphanage, where she was chosen for her red hair by an American Army officer and his wife and taken to the United States to be reared as an only child.

Although Buentello, 44, knew she was adopted, it was only recently that she began actively trying to piece together the puzzle of her identity, an activity she calls repairing a "hole in the soul."

Initially she searched for her mother, a woman whose identity she knew only from a handful of documents.

The pieces started falling into place last fall when she learned of a woman named Leonie Boehmer in Albuquerque, N.M., who works for an organization called **Operation Identity**.

Boehmer is an expert in tracking down the origin of German adoptees.

"It was just like 'boom, boom, boom,'" once Boehmer hit the trail, Buentello said.

Although she learned that her mother died in 1984, Boehmer did give Buentello another lead. Her mother had had a son–and that meant Buentello had a brother.

"That's when my heart opened up," she said. "That's when I realized that there was light at the end of the tunnel, that there was hope."

Buentello fought to find he past because, she said, "I don't have an identity."

But, she said, "When you've got someone who can tell you about your roots, you've got your life."

Through a series of trans-Atlantic phone calls and letters, Buentello established communication with Weise and learned as much as she could about her brother, who's 14 months younger, works for an American firm and has a 14-year-old son named Stefan.

But yesterday, holding hands and speaking through Stefan, the pair embraced for the first time.

Wearing a button that read, "I'm the big sister," Buentello stood in the midst of friends and co-workers who came to support her.

"It's been exciting," said Rosemary Haggerty, a fellow employee at Dallas-Fort Worth Suburban Newspapers. "She had her calendar circled. She started crying in the ladies room."

A co-worker hoisted a sign reading "When you believe, all things are possible," and Mary Best, who works with Buentello and has been through a similar experience herself, explained what finding a sibling can mean.

"I think it's a real healing process," she said. "It brings up a lot of issues, but it also settles a lot of issues."

Somebody asked Stefan what he wanted to do in the next two weeks.

"To be with my aunt," he said.

Gathering her daughters, granddaughters and well-wishers about her, Buentello herded the crew into a waiting Suburban.

"I have a ride for you," she said. "I can get you home."

Ende

Answered Questions

By finding her brother, woman finds missing pieces to her life

by Pennie Boyett

Grand Parairie News Staff Writer

From the Grand Prairie (TX) News of Thu-Sat, May 23-25, 1991

The Circle is almost complete. At age 44, Shirley Jean Cavener Buentello of Grand Prairie has returned to her beginnings, going back to her birth name and finding a brother she didn't remember.

Her name is about to legally include Regina, the name her birth mother, the late Ursula Weise, gave her before putting her up for adoption.

Best of all, Regina Shirley has been reunited with Richard Weise, 43, of Kempten, Germany, her younger brother whom she didn't know existed until last March.

Richard and his son, Stefan, 14, flew into Dallas-Fort Worth Airport on Monday for a two-week visit to Texas. On their first night, brother and sister talked until 3:30 in the morning.

"I feel like I've known this man all my life," Buentello said 10 minutes after she greeted Richard at the airport.

She wore a button given to her by a friend that said "I'm The Big Sister." Once it was translated for him, Weise said that he wanted a button to identify him as the little brother.



Regina Shirley Buentello and Richard Weise in Grand Parairie, Texas, May 31, 1991

The pair both have curly hair. There is something similar about their smiles.

In their telephone conversations, they've found other similarities. Both like to play practical jokes. Both like the same kinds of music.

Coincidentally, both were in Los Angeles during the same time in 1987. But then they didn't know of each other's existence.

Buentello had always known she was born in Germany and adopted at age 2 by an American couple. She became a naturalized citizen in August 1953.

As a child growing up in Virginia, she wondered about her family in Germany, about where she got her red hair and her blue eyes, about who she really was.

Those questions haunted her until two years ago when she started seeing a counselor. A picture she drew to describe her life was more like a scribble. With help from the counselor, she found out she had a neurological panic disorder that had distressed her since childhood. The disorder, which is now controlled by medication, is hereditary.

Controlling the disorder enabled her to focus more on her search for identity. She started be talking to her lawyer, Bill Mazur. He helped her get in touch with Leonie Boehmer of Albuquerque, N.M., an Independent Search Consultant who specializes in German-born adoptees. Her organization, **Operation Identity**, conducts searches for people like Buentello for a small fee.

With letters and telephone calls, Boehmer located a birth certificate for Regina Weise, a death certificate for her mother, Ursula Weise, who died in 1984, and the name of her only living relative, Richard Weise of Kempten, Germany. Since she had no address, Boehmer wrote to the town officials about the situation and they sent a representative to Weise's office with a letter.

He immediately wrote Boehmer that he was "surprised to his bones" at the existence of a sister.

The pair began corresponding, sending photographs across the Atlantic, and planning Richard and Stefan's visit. Buentello will go to Germany this fall to learn more about her roots.

Continued on next page...

Briefe (Letters From Readers)

February 8, 1991

Dear Mr. Gage:

Thank you very much for the back numbers of *Geborener Deutscher* which you sent me recently. I wrote to you a while ago after reading about your efforts in *Overseas Brats*, the magazine for American graduates of overseas high schools. I graduated from Kaiserslautern American School in 1955.

While I'm neither adopted nor of German ancestry, spending two adolescent years in the *Rheinpfalz* and then majoring in German in college left me with a lifelong attachment to Germany, the German language and the German people. I rejoiced over the recent reunification of the two Germanies, which I never dreamed any of us would live to see.

I would like to continue to receive *Geborener Deutscher*, since I really enjoy reading it. I particularly liked the bilingual article by Christa Hertgen, the cover story in your March 1990 number, and I would like to see more articles in both languages.

If I could give your German-born readers some advice: learn German! The German you learn in your search for your birth parents is a fine beginning, but go on to the *erhabene Rede* of the literary language to find your *deutsche Seele*: strive with Goethe's *Faust*, work on Hölderlin's great odes, dream with the romantics, hear Rilke's music, wander in Stefan George's strange world.

I hope all of you find your birth parents or children and successfully renew your relationships with them!

— Robert S. Richmond, M.D.
Knoxville, Tennessee

Answered Questions *from page 2*

The itinerary for the Weises' visit to Texas includes Six Flags Over Texas, Wet 'N Wild and other tourist attractions, as well as time for tlk, talk, talk. They will get acquainted with other relatives, Buentello's three children and three grandchildren.

Now, the picture Buentello draws of her life is a circle with one small space in it. She and her brother believe that their father was the same man, an American soldier, although their mother never would identify him to Richard. "An American G.I., that's all you need to know," she would tell him.

Finding him would complete the circle.

[**Editor's Note**: *According to a report written by Richard Weise for publication in* Das Adoptionsdreieck*, the German-language version of this newsletter, he and Regina have established, and Regina's family has confirmed, that Richard and Regina were both the children of Regina's "adoptive" father. Also according to Mr. Weise's report, their (birth) parents have, unfortunately, both died, the father on March 22, 1980, and the mother on March 4, 1984.*]

Meanwhile, Buentello is walking on air. She says that by finding her brother she has found herself. ***Ende***

After 33 Years, Brothers Are Reunited

by Earl Watson (Staff Writer)

From the October 20, 1991 edition of the (Wilkes Barre, PA) *Sunday Independent*

Karl Martin was tingling with excitement the other day.

The 40-year-old Bear Creek Village man had just booked flight to Germany for a reunion with his brother, Harry, whom he hadn't seen in 33 years and whose whereabouts he had only learned of two months ago.

Martin is the adopted son of Dr. and Mrs. Josef Martin, former Kingston residents now living in Silver City, N.M. The Martins adopted Karl in 1958 from an orphanage in Düsseldorf (Germany) when he was seven years of age. He grew up in Kingston and has never returned to Germany.

Sales manager for Giant Floor & Wall Covering, Inc., Route 315, Plains, Martin has spent the last 10 years or more trying to trace his older brother, Harry, or even his birth mother, if she was still living.

"I give all the credit to Leonie Boehmer, who runs a non-profit agency, 'Operation Identity,' in Albuquerque, New Mexico," Martin said Saturday. "She's an independent search consultant .... She does this sort of work out of the goodness of her heart. She asks for nothing; there are no strings attached," he added.



Karl Martin (r) and His Brother, Harry Brinkmeier, Reunited in Aachen, Germany, November 1991

Martin first contacted Ms. Boehmer last December and provided her with the limited information that he had.

"She called me in August to tell me she had found my brother, Harry. I was thrilled; shocked is more like it.

"I can't begin to describe how excited I was," Martin remarked.

Harry, who is eight years older than Karl, had run away from the orphanage in 1957 and went to work as an apprentice in a pastry shop. Now, 33 years later, Karl would learn that Harry is residing in Aachen (the city where allied forces first entered Germany in World War II) and is employed as a sales representative.

Since Harry doesn't speak English and Karl doesn't speak German, Ms. Boehmer arranged a three-way tele-conference call and served as interpreter for the two brothers, speaking to each other for the first time in 33 years.

"I was really surprised to learn from Harry that I also have a sister (step-sister) named Helga who lives in Manstricht, Holland," Martin beamed. "He also told me that my younger brother is residing near Aachen and that my mother is still alive."

"I told Harry that I would fly to Germany for a reunion next year," Martin continued. "But now I can't wait. So I've booked a flight in November."

Meanwhile, Martin has been deeply moved by a letter he has subsequently received from his brother, Harry.

"In the letter was a photograph of me when I was seven years old. He stated: 'All these years I kept your photo in hopes of getting a life sign from you or hearing about you,'" Martin said.

Karl Martin was born in Dresden, East Germany, in 1951. His parents were migrant farmers.

"Those were hard times," he recalls. "I guess it was financially impossible for them [his parents] to keep us. We were put in the orphanage, but told it would only be temporary," he observed.

It was in September, 1958, that he was adopted by Dr. and Mrs. Martin.

His life changed overnight. "My mother told me I was going on an airplane ride. She put me on the plane and that's the last I saw her. When it touched down in New York, I was met by the Martins," he reminisced.

"I guess I gave the Martins a difficult time on my arrival. I often wonder why they didn't send me right back," he added.

The Martins also have two older children (Joan, who now resides in Washington state, and Ernest, who lives in California). Dr. Martin was on the staff of Nesbitt Memorial Hospital for 35 years and also served as school doctor in Kingston. The family resided on Maple Street.

"My parents [the Martins] have been very supportive. I owe them everything," he added. "They even traveled to the orphanage in Düsseldorf in 1962 to try to learn the whereabouts of my brothers. But the orphanage wouldn't release any information," he noted.

Martin, by the way, became a naturalized citizen in 1978 and, looking back, of course, has no regrets about his being uprooted from Germany as a child. "This is the greatest country in the world," he grinned. ***Ende***

Father's Patient Search Turns Up Clues, But No Son

by Judy Bradford (Tribune Staff Writer)

From the South Bend (IN) Tribune of Sunday, May 21, 1989

SOUTH BEND, ABOUT 29 YEARS AGO–It was 1960.

Bill Mazeroski was destined to hit a home run in the bottom of the 9th inning of the 7th game to lead the Pirates to a World Series victory.

The Studebaker-Packard Corp., in its heyday, was virtually secreting cars at the rate of 80 per hour.

And G. Fred Gärtner, a 26-year-old West German who worked for Studebaker, was falling for a tall secretary with dark eyes, about three years younger than himself.

Both of them were involved with "The Mellow Larks," a group that sang hits from Broadway musicals and even travelled to Chicago to sing on a radio show.

Gärtner, whose real first name is Gotthold, an old Lutheran name, enjoyed her company and speaking in German again.

They had been dating for only a little while when Gärtner learned he was being transferred to New York City to handle overseas delivery for the Mercedez-Benz division of Studebaker.

He said goodbye and, over the next year, became too busy to think much about the young woman he had met in South Bend. When he eventually lost his job with Studebaker, he decided to turn a longtime hobby–flying–into a career, and went to aeronautics school.

It was about then that he found out he had had a son by this woman, a son he would discover, many years later, had been named Ralph Michael and was born on September 28, 1960.

The boy had been put up for adoption about a month after birth, so it was too late for Gärtner to have much say in the matter.

Through the years, Gärtner has tried to find out about the boy–while flying over the globe for commercial airlines such as TWA, marrying twice, divorcing twice and trying to raise another son who is now 15. But it hasn't been easy getting information.

"This is what I am upset about. In America, people are supposed to have rights. But an American boy doesn't have the right to meet his father," said Gärtner by telephone from his home in West Germany.

The adoption records are sealed because the mother sought help from a private adoption agency, Catholic Social Services. Gärtner tried to get a court order to open them.

"The judge said he could have ordered the records opened if she had gone through the welfare department, which is a public agency. But since she went through a private agency, there was no hope," explained Betty Heide, president of **Adoptees Identity Doorway**. Heide and her husband, Robert, of South Bend, have been trying to help Gärtner for the past three years. Gärtner has registered with the **Indiana Reunion Registry**, a free service that matches adoptees with their biological parents and which the Heides founded.

"A lot of fathers have been in this situation," says Mrs. Heide. "And (Gärtner) has spent a lot of money over the years, flying back and forth."

Gärtner found out the first and middle names of his son, and the birth date, just a year ago after the Heides placed a classified ad in *The Tribune*. The ad gave sketchy details, simply calling for a white male born in September of 1960, in South Bend.

The ad was answered by Merle Wogoman, a South Bend man who dated the young woman during and after her pregnancy. The day after the baby was born, Wogoman received a letter from Indianapolis where the child was born. In it, the young woman gave details of the birth. Wogoman shared the letter with Gärtner on one of the German man's visits here.

Gärtner says he knows he's the father because he ran into the woman in an airport in Germany, about 14 years ago.

"I was in my captain's uniform–I was flying at the time–and I recognized her. I went up to her and asked her if she was who I thought she was, and she replied, "Yes, and you're the one who got me in trouble."



G. Fred Gärtner (r) & His Son, John, in California (11/9/90)

The reunification of the two Germanies in 1990 has had an effect on many different aspects of everyday life in Germany and elsewhere, including, among other things, the way one addresses a letter. It is no longer accurate to address letters to "East" or "West" Germany, but simply using the word "Germany" is insufficient owing to the fact that the two Germanies had identical postal code systems in place prior to reunification.

Letters bound for cities in the former "West" Germany should now have a "W–" (for "West") preceding the old postal code; and for former "East" German localities, an "O–" (for "Ost"). A new postal code system is scheduled to be put into place in 1993.

Gärtner said he has also been told by sources in Indianapolis that he is listed as the father on the birth certificate. That much, they would tell him.

What he cannot find out is the boy's last name, or who adopted him.

Heide said a last name could prove to be no help at all, since his adoptive parents probably changed it to theirs. Moreover, his new parents may also have changed his first and middle names.

Gärtner says he doesn't want to bother his son or invade his privacy–he just wants someone to tell his son that his birth father loves him and is "there for him."

"My son will be 29 years old [in 1989]. For all I know he may be happy, and may have a family. I hope he had a happy childhood and wasn't abused or anything."

Chances are, the boy was placed with a kind, loving family. And chances are, he's been told that he's adopted.

"I would say there's probably a 95 percent chance that he's been told he's adopted," said Brother Thomas Shaughnessy, executive director of Catholic Social Services. Even 30 years ago, adoptive parents were instructed to tell their children the truth about their origins, he said.

But that's likely all that "Ralph Michael" knows. Catholic Social Services cannot notify him simply because of the existing contract between the agency and the adoptive parents.

"Mr. Gärtner is persistent, and I respect him for that," said Shaughnessy. "But all of a sudden, you'd be putting someone in a position they might not want to be put into."

If the son approached the agency wanting to meet Gärtner, the situation would change because both child and birth parent would be indicating a willingness to meet each other.

"Adoption is getting to be more of an open process, but we still have contracts that we have made and must keep," explained Shaughnessy. "We aren't hardhearted. We're following the law and there's not just one person to be concerned about. There's the adopted person, and the adoptive parents of that person," added Shaughnessy.

"I feel sorry for the gentleman but we have to stick by the laws. I have no means of opening up the records. It's a terrible hindrance for (Gärtner)."

Ende

Epilogue

In a letter dated July 7, 1991, Mr. Gärtner informed this publication that he had indeed found his son, in California, and had a reunion with him on November 9, 1990. As was observed in the foregoing article, the boy's name had been completely changed, and Mr. Gärtner laments the time lost to bureaucratic stubbornness, and the fact that, now that he no longer flies for a living, and lives 7,000 miles away from his son, there is little hope that they will have many opportunities to see one another in person and perhaps forge a closer relationship. — **Ed.**