11th Year

Geborener Deutscher®

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

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Detective, Stuttgart's Mayor Help Tennessee Woman Find Her Mother in Germany

By Cornell Christion

Reprinted from *The Commercial Appeal*

Memphis, TN (12/18/90)—Sheila Marino never thought she'd see her mother again.

Separated from her parents when she was two, Ms. Marino, 30, has lived almost all her life not knowing her mother's whereabouts or even if she was still alive.

However, the Oakland, TN, woman found her mother last week thanks to a Bartlett private investigator and German officials.

Ms. Marino's mother, a German who married an American soldier more than 30 years ago, was in Sumter, SC.

She spoke to her daughter by phone Tuesday for the first time in almost three decades.

"It's unbelievable," said Ms. Marino. "I didn't know what to say or anything. ... Millions of things were going through my head. I still can't believe it. I want to see her so badly."

Ms. Marino's mother, Trudy Browning, 51, married Memphian Billy Eugene Sidler while he was in the Army in West Germany in 1955.

The marriage fell apart soon after he was transferred back to the States. Two of the couple's three children were put up for adoption. Th third, Ms. Marino, the youngest and the only one born in the United States, was raised by her grandfather in Memphis.

Ms. Marino said she all but gave up hope that she would ever meet her mother. However, a friend who is a mail carrier began discussing her plight with a private investigator on his route. Soon David Sullivan was on the case.

He began contacting military, adoption and immigration officials. He called the German consulate in Washington and was told that officials in Germany could help because German cities keep excellent records.

Sullivan wrote to Stuttgart Mayor Manfred Rommel in July. Five months later, he learned that Rommel's office had found a relative of Ms. Marino's mother in Germany. The relative, a brother, put Sullivan in touch with Ms. Marino's mother.

Sullivan discovered that Ms. Marino's mother married a man who is with the military at Shaw Air Force Base in South Carolina.

Tears flowed when Ms. Marino and her mother were reunited by phone December 11.

"I don't mind telling you that this big old boy shed a few tears, too," said Sullivan, who says he was paid about enough to cover expenses. "It was just such a warm feeling."

Ms. Marino hopes to travel to South Carolina for Christmas.

"This is the best Christmas present I could ever have," she said, beaming.

Her mother's story about their separation differs from her father's. According to her mother, Ms. Marino, her sister and brother were left with their father for a weekend trip. She claims that she never saw them or him again.

"I'm glad that she's finally reunited with her mother, but her mother never should have left her 30 years ago," her father, Billy Eugene Sidler, said by phone from his home in Sunrise Beach, MO.

Although her Christmas is bound to be filled with joy, Ms. Marino still doesn't know the whereabouts of her brother, Joseph Eugene Sidler.

Sullivan said Joseph Sidler was adopted in Georgia. He believes that he may now live in Tennessee, Georgia or South Carolina. Ms. Marino met her sister, Audrey Kime, 34, of Belvedere, SC, for the first time about five years ago.

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Lexington, KY, Man Finds Mom After 47 Years

by Dick Burdette

Herald-Leader Columnist

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Lexington, KY (12/24/93)—Twelve days after Michael Kauppi was born in Ludwigsburg, Germany, his mother left the hospital. She was going out, she said, to get some food and money.

The date was June 30, 1946.

She never came back.

Two years later, Kauppi was adopted by a family in Midland, Mich.

His travels had only begun.

Kauppi attended high school in Connecticut and college in Arizona, joined the Navy and, in 1973, moved to Lexington.

Then in 1980, Kauppi decided to try to find his mother.

Letters, trips to Germany—no luck. Not even a trace.

Until this week.

On Tuesday, Kauppi received a call from a German official named Helmut Engel. After a relentless search, Engel had located her in Oxford, England, where she has lived for 40 years.

When Kauppi, a University of Kentucky graduate student, called, "She was so excited she could barely talk."

She left, she explained, because she was desperate and penniless.

They plan to reunite soon.

Reunion Makes News in Germany

Lexington, KY (2/21/94)—When Michael Kauppi received a copy of a newspaper recently, his photograph was in it.

It was published in German. But Kauppi didn't have to read the story to know what it was about.

On June 30, 1946, when he was 12 days old, his mother walked out of a hospital in Ludwigsburg, Germany. She was going to get some food and money, she told officials there.

She never returned.

Two years later, Kauppi was adopted by a family in Michigan. He never knew what happened to his natural mother.

Then in 1980, he tried to find her. No luck—until December, when an official in Germany found her in Oxford, England, where she had lived for 40 years. They were reunited recently.

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Wisconsin Woman Finally Reunited With German Family After 36 Years

By Peggy Ryan

Reprinted with permission from the
St. Paul Pioneer Press Dispatch

St. Paul, MN (12/25/89)—Christmas came early for Barb Mackyol this year.

Mackyol's gift was a hug from her mother, whom she had not seen for 36 years, a chance to sit at the kitchen table and chat with her father, and a two-week visit with seven sisters and three brothers she had never known.

Mackyol, 38, of Webster, was taken away from her mother in Germany at age two, placed in an orphanage and adopted by an American couple when she was four years old. Until last summer, that is about all she knew about her natural parents and her early childhood.

"All I can remember is I grew up wishing and hoping that I could find my real mom," Mackyol said.

During the summer of 1988, Mackyol shared that dream with a couple from England. Mackyol worked at the C and S Cafe in Webster on pizza nights, and Jack and Betty Males from Cheshire, England, who were visiting the area for a wedding, just happened to stop by.

"It was a slow night, and I noticed they had an accent, so we started talking," Mackyol said. "I said I was adopted and someday wanted to go to Europe and find my mother."

That evening, the Maleses said they would help her in her search, Mackyol said. While she thought it was a nice gesture, Mackyol said she doubted she would ever hear from them again, and she certainly doubted that they would ever find her mother.

"I thought the odds were real slim," Mackyol said.

But the Maleses wrote back to Mackyol, and meanwhile, they convinced a few people to help Mackyol find her mother. Samantha Dorer, an English foreign exchange student studying in Germany, responded to the Maleses' call for help.

Dorer searched for records, people and clues that might lead to Mackyol's mother. But her attempts seemed in vain, and as Dorer's semester in Germany came to an end, Mackyol said she had little hope.

"All she (Dorer) had to go on was a birth certificate and a baptismal certificate," Mackyol said, noting that she later learned the birth certificate had been altered and was inaccurate.

Before leaving Germany, Dorer sent one last letter to Nikolaus Schneider, whom she thought was perhaps Mackyol's father. Dorer returned to England without a response, thinking she had struck out, Mackyol said.

Several weeks later, Dorer learned her hunch had been correct. She received a letter forwarded from her address in Germany to England from Mackyol's mother.

That letter from Waltraut Schneider, Mackyol's natural mother, read: "Today I have just received the news that my daughter, Barbara, would like to find me. I am Barbara's natural mother. We have ten grown-up children, seven girls and three boys, who would also like to get to know Barbara. We have waited a very long time to hear from her."

For the past six years, one of Mackyol's sisters searched for her, Mackyol said.

"My mother said all these years, they were hoping," Mackyol said.

The news traveled from Dorer to Betty Males and finally back to Mackyol in a brief letter proclaiming that Mackyol's mother had been found, along with her father and seven sisters and three brothers.

Mackyol's daughter, Lisa, opened the letter and read it over the phone to Mackyol, who wasn't home at the time.

"We were ecstatic," Mackyol said.

In less than one year, virtual strangers had brought the eldest Schneider daughter in contact with her family. Mackyol said she finally felt complete.

Mackyol said her search did not stem from an unhappy upbringing with her adoptive parents.

"They (her adoptive parents) were very good to me, very protective," she said. "I think I'm about the luckiest person in the world. I have two moms."

Mackyol began corresponding with her parents through Dorer, who translated the letters. Eventually, Mackyol gave her letters to Mickey Schauer, a Siren woman who can communicate fluently in German. Schauer was another stranger who came into Mackyol's life just to help her become reunited with her natural parents.

The next step was getting to Germany.

"As soon as we knew, we decided to set the flight," Mackyol said.

For the first time in her married life, Mackyol, her daughter Lisa and her niece ventured off for two weeks into another world, leaving behind Mackyol's other daughter, three sons and a supportive husband.

"Without him, I wouldn't have made it over there," said Mackyol of her husband, Leslie "Doc" Mackyol.

Mackyol and her daughter had never ridden in an airplane before and could not speak German, but they were not going to Germany as tourists.

After 36 years apart, Mackyol and her mother were emotional as they reunited.

"First, she cried, and then she squeezed me," Mackyol said.

Any apprehension about how her siblings would accept her vanished as they celebrated the arrival of their long-lost sister.

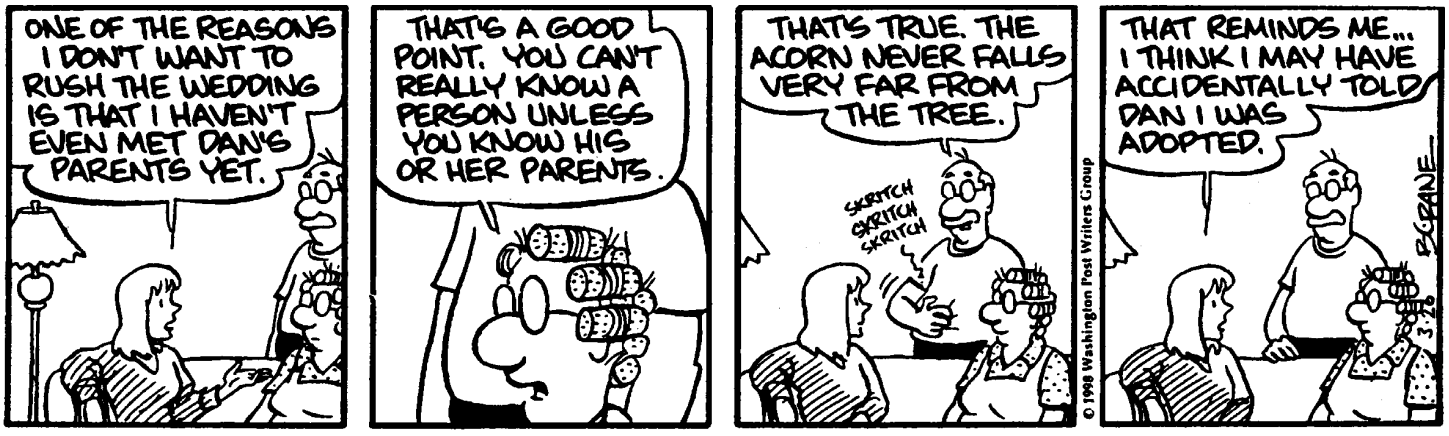
"They just took us right in," Mackyol said, noting that most of her ten siblings took vacations from work to get to know her.

Mackyol said the best memories from her trip were made sitting around the kitchen table, she thumbing through an English-German dictionary and they using a German-English one.

"Two weeks was not long enough," Mackyol said. "I feel like I missed a lot. I always wanted a sister, and now I have seven." Leaving was the hardest thing, Mackyol said. "Part of me stayed in Germany," she added.

Pickles *by Brian Crane*

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Briefe (Letters From Readers)

January 21, 1998

Dear Mr. Gage,

I would like to make a small contribution to your worthwhile endeavor of publishing *Geborener Deutscher*.

I also am born in Germany of German parents—though fortunately not adopted. After reading several issues you kindly sent me, I have come to realize it doesn't really apply to me—so ask that you remove me from your mailing list.

Many thanks for sending the past issues of your periodical—and keep up the good work!

— Tom Subirge
Eagar, AZ

Dear Mr. Subirge:

Thank you for your generous contribution. All such are gratefully accepted. I only wish I could offer tax-deductibility! I will of course remove your name from my list.

My only other reaction to your letter is to ask: why "fortunately not adopted"? My view may differ from some, but I have never really considered being adopted a particular misfortune, certainly not compared to some of the other "misfortunes" that can befall one in this life. And while it may be true that adoptees generally suffer early separation from their biological families, in whole or in part, that circumstance is certainly not unique to adoption.

I wouldn't want to make any broad or sweeping generalizations, but I believe that most adoptees' circumstances in their adoptive families are measurably better than if they had not been adopted. Which is not to say that I endorse or support adoption, per se*; quite the contrary. I believe that adoption should be a last resort, to which one turns only after all other alternative avenues have been exhausted or precluded.*

*In any event, I hope that your brief review of the newsletter brought some insight. — **WLG***

8/2/98 12:29:37 pm MDT

To the Editor:

Regarding the ***CONT'D ON PG 4, COL 3***

After Fifty Years of Hope, a Reunion for the Ages

She Last Saw Her Son in a Concentration Camp

by Seth Borenstein

Reprinted with permission from the Fort Lauderdale *Sun-Sentinel*

Fort Lauderdale, FL (3/15/94)—Nearly 50 years ago in a Nazi labor camp, 9-month-old Edward Konenko was ripped from his mother's arms.

Shipped to a German orphanage, he was adopted by a Los Angeles family six years later and became Ed Determan. His mother, Stephanie Konenko, was sent to a concentration camp and later returned to her native Ukraine.

Last week, Determan, a Fort Lauderdale apartment complex owner, and his mother talked for the first time. Konenko did not want to end the 40-minute conversation.

She wasn't going to lose her son again.

"Please, God, help us so I can meet you soon," Konenko, 71, said through an interpreter. "I cry every night. I pray every night for this day.

"I am suffering, my son," she said. "I have been searching for you for 49 years. I miss you. I need to see you. I can't see very well. I am worried that I am going to die."

Determan promised his mother he would visit, "hopefully, when the flowers bloom."

Monday's phone call ended a lifelong search for Konenko, who never gave up hope and who found her son through the American Red Cross's Holocaust victim tracking system.

From letters and the phone call, Determan has pieced together parts of his life. He doesn't yet have a complete picture.

In September 1943, Edward Cheskovich Konenko was born in a Nazi labor camp in Lumpertheim, Germany, to a Ukranian mother and a Polish father. Both were working in the camp after being taken from their home towns.

After nine months, the boy was taken from his mother. She was sent to Ravensbruck concentration camp, and the infant was sent to a German orphanage run by nuns. His father died in the camps, but Determan knows little else about him.

Nuns sent Stephanie Konenko photos of her son while she was at Ravensbruck. After the camp was liberated, she went to the orphanage to find her son, but the orphanage was gone. She returned to Nikopol, Ukraine, and had a daughter and two more sons.

When he was nearly 7, Edward was adopted by a family of German descent in California. He grew up as Ed Determan, remembering nothing about the first seven years of his life.

For years, Konenko wrote to social service agencies searching for her lost son. About 30 years ago, the Red Cross found him.

Determan's adoptive parents discouraged him from answering his birth mother's letter. They said they would send a reply. Konenko said all of her letters were returned, saying Determan had moved.

Still, she persisted.

Finally, in late 1992, using the Red Cross again, Konenko tracked Determan to Fort Lauderdale.

By now, Determan was a father and grandfather. He had assumed his mother was dead. A letter from the Red Cross said otherwise. She was still looking for him.

"I was elated," he said. He lost little time responding.

Mother and son exchanged a few letters and eventually set up the phone call from the Red Cross office.

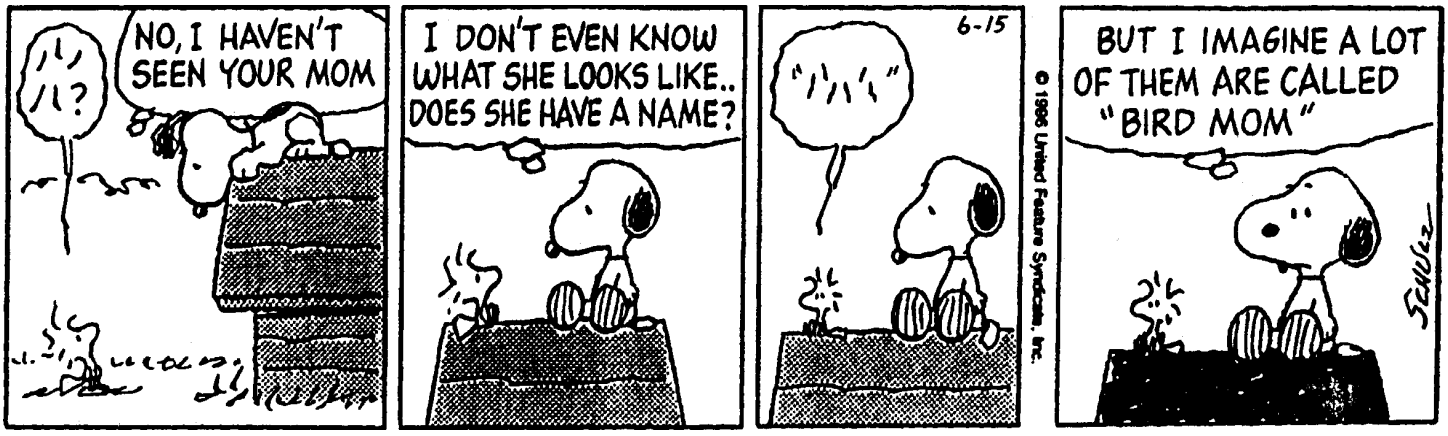
Determan doesn't speak Ukrainian, so he needed Red Cross translator Motriacq Kramarczuk. But Determan wanted to say something to his mother in her language, so on a sheet of paper he wrote down his first words in phonetic Ukrainian: "Daba Vat Cheer Ma mo."

It means: "Good evening mother."

She cried and asked when he could visit. He's planning a spring trip. "When I see her, I'll hug her," Determan said. "That hug is going to change my life."

Peanuts *by Charles Schultz*

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German Court Approves Language Overhaul

by Tony Czuczka
The Associated Press

BONN, Germany—The German language —notorious for its run-on words, thickets of commas and agonizing capitalization rules—is about to become simpler.

After years of debate, Germany's highest court cleared the way Tuesday for the first overhaul of written German in nearly a century.

Despite opposition from leading authors and many ordinary Germans, the new rules are to take effect August 1, in time for the new school year.

Supporters say the reform simplifies the language. Still, much of it won't be a big help to people who don't know German already. And other changes may seem rather small. The spelling "Ketschup" will be allowed alongside "Ketchup," for example, because some words will gain new, more phonetically German spellings.

The changes bring German closer to English and make writing simpler by eliminating many comma rules. Sentences such as "He's the man who came to dinner" needed a comma before "who" in the past but won't anymore.

Germans will no longer "cleanup" but "clean up." The reform separates many strung-together composite words, which could run up to 20 letters.

And the use of the time-honored German letter for "ss"—which looks roughly like a capital B [ß]—will be limited.

The Federal Constitutional Court in Karlsruhe decided the changes were relatively minor, but they will still go too far for traditionalists in this rule-loving country.

After German, Swiss and Austrian officials agreed on the changes in 1996, more than 100 prominent authors and academics signed an appeal urging politicians to scrap them.

The petition called the reform unnecessary and said parts of it actually made German worse. The objectors included Günter Grass, Germany's best-known writer and author of *The Tin Drum*.

But the constitutional court ruled against a couple who argued the new system unconstitutionally deprived them of parental control over their two school-aged sons.

The unanimous decision doomed several other challenges to the reform, and education officials said they expect all German schools to teach the new rules beginning this fall.

"The verdict creates clarity for many unsettled pupils, parents and teachers," said Wolfgang Lieb, chairman of the conference of state education ministers.

Children Were Sold, Adopted and Now Are Reunited

Madison, WI (2/22/90)—A woman adopted by a Milwaukee family in 1954 after she was sold by her mother in West Germany says she feels complete now that a long-lost brother has filled in the missing pieces of her past.

Kristi Sendner, 38, of Jackson plans to travel to Las Vegas Friday to meet one of two brothers she didn't know she had.

A Las Vegas private investigator contacted Sendner last weekend and asked if she would be willing to talk to her brother, Charles Spencer, 42.

"I don't really know what I said," Spencer said. "I was in awe, trying to find words for 37 years. Between her tears and my tears, there were some problems. I just told her, 'My name is Chuck, and I'm your brother.' "

Spencer said he had spent 17 years and more than $5,000 trying to reunite his family, which was dissolved when their mother sold Sendner and her brothers for about $200 each.

The children ended up with a Lutheran minister and were eventually adopted by separate families.

Sendner was adopted by Herman and Violet Schwengel of Milwaukee when she was three.

Herman Schwengel said he and his wife got a call from the private investigator in Las Vegas at their Clearwater, FL, home. They relayed the call to Sendner.

"He called me at 11 at night," Sendner said, "and told me I had a brother Charles Spencer and a brother Wolfgang Pause."

She learned Pause still lived in West Germany and a third brother had drowned at age 12. She also learned her name was Angelika Pause before she was adopted.

Spencer found their mother during his 17-year search, but she refused to have any contact with her grown children.

Pause was raised by the children's biological father, who apparently was in the Army when the children were sold and never gave his permission. The father, who apparently recovered custody of Pause later, died a month ago.

Sendner said she telephoned Pause and spoke with him while his son struggled to translate.

She said she and Spencer plan to arrange a reunion with Pause as soon as possible.

Sendner, who is married and has two children, said she now feels complete.

"I'm happy to know there's somebody else with my blood," she said.

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Briefe *Cont. From Pg. 3*

letter written to the Editor responding to my article titled "The Case Against International Adoption, " [*See* GD, *Vol. XI, No. 2, Summer 1998, pg. 3 — **Ed**.*] it is important readers understand that Ms. Woodward failed to address a single issue I raised about the problems associated with international adoption. For example, she choose to ignore the following facts:

- International adoption and corruption.
- The concerns of countries allowing foreigners to adopt their children.
- Americans abusing, beating and murdering children they have adopted from abroad.
- The hundreds of thousands of U.S. children who live on the streets or are in need of permanent families.
- International adoption does nothing to solve the problems of high birth rates nor poverty, two of the root causes of this system. There is little evidence international adoption significantly enhances the development of children welfare services in economically disadvantaged countries.
- The United States and Somalia are the only two countries in the world to yet ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Article 8 of the Convention ensures the child's right to preserve her or his identity, including nationality, name and family relations.
- The United Nations Children's Fund and World Vision are two organizations that do not uproot children through international adoption. Instead, they provide resources so families and communities can gain the means to care for their own children.

Bill Pierce supports international adoption along with Ms. Woodward. His involvement signals foreign born adoptees are likely to encounter identical obstacles when searching as domestic adoptees, plus the additional barriers of severed ties to country, language, culture and heritage. Birth mothers in the U.S. know the pain of closed records and can empathize with their sisters overseas, except the children of foreign birth mothers are exported to America.

In writing the paper I hoped to raise consciousness and begin a dialogue about the drawbacks to international adoption. It is disturbing Ms. Woodward chooses to ignore these problems. The international adoption industry will continue profiting financially while foreign adoptees continue suffering... until these problems are recognized, discussed and resolved.

— Peter F. Dodds
Puyallup, WA

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