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I Can Always Go Back

by

Amelia Mueller

During the time I taught in the American School at Ansbach, Germany - 1949-50 - I had many unforgettable experiences. Especially interesting and meaningful to me were the visits I was able to make to the many relatives and friends that Mamma, Papa, and Aunt Selma had to leave behind when they came to America, and the trips my sister Hilda, Verda Sanders, and I made that summer in Germany, Switzerland, Italy, Austria, and France.

Several years after that experience, when I had given up the idea of going back to Europe again for another year or more of teaching, I decided to write down an account of these various experiences, thinking that perhaps I had the material for a book which could be published. I never did get it published, but decided to type it in this booklet form for family members and others who might find it interesting reading in the future.

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Preface

I Can Always Go Back

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"I think of you often here," Verda wrote on her Christmas greeting, "and wish that you could be with me again. But Germany it quite different now. It has lost its 1949 charm."

I sit here holding the card, enjoying the gay pictures on the front, of two little German children looking into a shop window filled with Christmas toys. There are some dolls, a teddy bear, a train, a boat, some little wooden villages. In the adjoining window a woman is arranging Christmas cookies - Lebkuchen and Springerly, and sugar cookies cut into the shapes of stars and birds and flowers.

As I look at the scene, my mind goes back to the year I spent in Germany teaching in an American Dependents School with Verda in 1949-50. Now Verda, after several years in the United States, is back in Europe for another year or more of teaching, while circumstances keep me here at home in Kansas. But circumstances cannot keep me from going back in memory, and that I often do.

My mind goes back now - to Ansbach where I taught, to lovely old Nürnberg with its destroyed walls and building, to quaint Rothenturm which had been saved from bombing by the intervention of Major McCoy, whose mother spent her childhood there, to the hotel in Garmisch in the Bavarian Alps, to Heidelberg and Munich and Würzburg and the many other places which I had enjoyed.

My mind goes back to these places, but it is to the people that my heart returns: to the Borchers where I spent my Christmas vacation, and the Emil Müllers with their friendliness and hospitality, to my "home in Germany" in Munich with Aunt Frieda, the Rohdes, and Heinrich and Gertrude, to Hildegard Helf who had been my pen pal since college days.

I think of the young baron who helped me on my first train ride to Ansbach, of Miss Marianne and Mrs. Klein, my helpers at school, of talented Trudel Heyden in the tiny garden cottage, of my little American pupils, and the many train passengers and hitch-hikers whose lives briefly brushed mine.

I learned to love these people in the year I lived among them, and I regret that I have lost track of so many of them. Those who are still living must have changed in the years since my return, just as Verda says Germany has changed. Even if I went back now, I could never go back to the Germany I learned to love. And already the memory of those places and people is fading, so that I have to strain to recall details.

I must write down what I remember. Then I can always go back, and it will always be the same.

I Can Always Go Back

Chapter 1

The Baron from Munich

Perhaps the young baron from Munich does not rate a place at the beginning of this story because he did not play an important role in my life while I was in Germany. And yet, in a way, he did!

I often wondered whether he was really a baron, and if he wasn't, why he used that title with his name. But I never had a chance to find out. I met him only once, and then briefly. He gave me his address and asked me to write to him, but I never did. So we never became better acquainted. Perhaps that is why he remains so firmly fixed in my memory; I will always wonder what he was really like.

We met the night that I left Bad Nauheim, where all of the new teachers had gathered immediately after our arrival in Germany for a week of orientation. Until that time Uncle Sam had taken good care of us, planning our every move. We had crossed the ocean on a troop ship, had stayed in an army hotel in Bremerhaven, and then had been transported as a group in a U.S. military train to Bad Nauheim, where all arrangements for our lodging and meals had already been made.

Now, after a week of attending meetings and having fun and making friends, we were being sent out to our various assignments. Some of us who were going alone to the smaller schools were almost in tears. Suddenly teaching in Germany did not seem quite like the lark it had started out to be.

I will never forget the lonesome feeling with which I boarded the train at Bad Nauheim late that Sunday evening. Most of the other teachers had already left in the afternoon. Not a single person was going even part of the way on the same train that I had to take, so I was completely on my own.

In the information given us with our travel orders we had been warned to take with us only as much baggage as we could carry by ourselves. But we had also been told that it might be two months or more before we got out trunks. My wardrobe case by itself was more than I could easily carry. But, weighing the two pieces of information given us, I decided to take a train case and an overnight bag along, too. Who wants to live two months out of one suitcase?

I tried carrying the three bags at one time at home. By taking both the overnight bag and the train case in my right hand and the wardrobe case in my left, I managed to stagger a few yards before I had to set them down. So I told myself that I was obeying orders. I was taking with me only as much baggage as I could carry by myself. I was confident that I would never have to demonstrate the feat to anyone.

How could I foresee that I would be changing trains at Frankfurt in the middle of the night with no porter in sight?

Getting off the first train I managed nicely. There were only a few other passengers on the military train I rode from Bad Nauheim to Frankfurt, so no one got in my way as I was getting off. It was easy to step off with my two smaller bags, then dash back onto the train for the large one. I had almost an hour to wait for my train to Ansbach, so I had time to work the same relay system, a few yards at a time, until all four of us were together at the tracks where my train was to arrive.

But I had seen some of the crowded German trains at the Bad Nauheim station. As soon as the train stopped, doors burst open and people began to

swarm from the cars, while others fought their way through the crowd to get on. How could I possibly get through such a crowd with my three bags? How could I even get through the door of the train with the overnight bag sticking out at right angles to my other case? And there would certainly not be time to leave one bag and come back for it later.

When the train pulled into the station, I stood ready at the very edge of the platform, big bag in my left hand, two little ones in my right. As the crowd surged forward I was pushed along with it, but at the foot of the steps I stopped. So did those behind me. I couldn't go any further because my bags would not go through the door the way I was carrying them, and I was blocking the way so that no one else could get on either.

Whether he wanted to be helpful to me or simply felt sorry for those behind me I don't know, but one of the men who had just stepped off the train sized up the situation and came to my rescue. Grabbing my big bags he sprang up the steps while I followed with the little one. He shoved my bags into a compartment which already seemed full, pocketed the tip I hurriedly took out of my purse, elbowed his way through the crowd and swung off the train just as it began to move.

Relieved, but confused and embarrassed, I sat down on the narrow wooden bench in the one place that was still vacant, acutely conscious of the fact that all of the other passengers were staring at me. Too tired and near tears to make any effort to be friendly, I leaned back, closed my eyes, and pretended to go to sleep.

Conversation flowed around me for a time, but gradually the others became quiet, too. It was then that the passenger sitting across from me bumped my knee with his. In the crowded compartment the contact did not surprise or annoy me, but when I opened my eyes to acknowledge his apology, I found myself looking into the eyes of a young man. His smile was bold and provocative and there was open curiosity and a touch of amusement in his face.

Deliberately, without returning the smile, I closed my eyes again, but a few minutes later the knee jostled mine once more, first gently, then more firmly. I shifted my position, but kept my eyes closed.

"No thank you," I thought, "I'm not even in a mood to talk right now."

But when the train stopped at the next station and one of the passengers from our compartment got off, my eyes opened involuntarily to see what was going on. The young man seized his opportunity.

"How far are you going?" he asked me in German, politely enough.

"To Ansbach," I answered shortly, not too graciously.

"Ansbach!" the young man exclaimed. "What an interesting coincidence. I, too, am getting off at Ansbach."

In spite of my annoyance at the fellow's manner, I felt a surge of relief. At least I would no longer have to worry that I might not know when we arrived at Ansbach. I had been afraid of going to sleep and not waking up in time, or of letting the station go past without seeing it in time, or of not getting all of my bags off in time.

I had learned on a short weekend excursion from Bad Nauheim that German train passengers are not coddled by porters or conductors. Your ticket is punched as you enter the track area, and from then on you take care of yourself.

"Excuse me please for asking," the young man went on. "But you are not German, are you?"

"No," I answered, conscious that again every eye in the compartment was watching me, and every ear waiting for my reply. "No, I'm not German. I'm American."

"American! How nice!" the young man said as though he really meant it. "I knew you were not German when I saw the hat you are wearing. But I did not quite know just what you were."

"The hat I am wearing?" I echoed in surprise, reaching up automatically to straighten the telltale evidence. It was certainly not a conspicuous hat - just a simple, small black crocheted cloche, the kind of hat you can roll up and put into a suitcase and then take out and wear. I was surprised that he should have noticed my hat.

"Oh, it is very nice," the young man hastened to add, "very becoming. But one does not see German women wearing such a hat. Theirs are all larger, with bigger brims. I like your little hat, but I knew it was not German."

Now that I had announced for the entire compartment to hear that I was an American, I could hardly close my eyes again immediately and withdraw completely from the conversation. So I answered the various questions put to me as freely and completely as I could, even volunteering some information.

I had been in Germany a little over a week, I told them. I liked the country fine so far. I would be staying in Ansbach about a year, teaching the American children there.

Some of the passengers exchanged glances. "Ah, a teacher!" their expressions said. I was glad that the prestige of teachers is high in Germany.

No, I had not learned my German in school alone. I had studied the language in college, but before that I had learned to speak it as a child. Yes, my parents were both from Germany. My father's people were from the Pfalz, but he had grown up near Ingolstadt. My mother was also born in the Pfalz, but her childhood home was at Gelchsheim, near Würzburg.

Ah, Würzburg! This train would be going through Würzburg. Most of the passengers in the compartment would be getting off there. They knew very well where Gelchsheim was.

The atmosphere in the compartment became relaxed and friendly. I began to feel less tense and uneasy. Teaching in Germany again seemed the exciting adventure it had started out to be.

The lights were turned off again, and gradually one after the other of the passengers closed their eyes and went to sleep. I closed my eyes, too, but sleep would not come. I was far too stimulated by the situation and the conversation to feel the least bit drowsy, even though it was now long past midnight. My young companion did not sleep either, although he was obviously tired. He stretched and fidgeted, and became visibly cross and impatient.

"Sitting up to sleep is not good," he told me. Then he gave me a slow wink. "After Würzburg it will be better," he said. The statement seemed to have some kind of significance, as though the two of us were conniving together about something, but what it could be I hadn't the faintest idea.

Noticing that I could not sleep either, he continued the conversation in low tones.

"Where will you be staying in Ansbach?" he asked me.

"I don't know," I said. "I don't even know where the American school is. All I know is that I am to report to the school officer at the American Sub-post Headquarters, wherever that is."

He told me that he traveled for a leather ware company, and that he got to Ansbach frequently.

"If I knew where to find you in Ansbach," he said, "I would look you up the next time I come there. By that time you will be settled, and will

have time so that I could show you around. There are many pretty places around Ansbach to see."

He gave me an envelope with his name and address on it. Now I do not even remember the name, except that it began Baron von ---. The last part was long and unfamiliar, and it has completely slipped my mind. The address was Munich.

"When you are located, you will send me a note, will you not, and give me your address?" he said. "Then the next time I come to Ansbach I will see you again. We could spend a nice week-end together."

"I'll have to think about that first," I told him. "I'm not sure that I want you to have my address."

To my surprise he was not in the least annoyed. Instead, he nodded his satisfaction.

"Good!" he said. "Do not promise now. Take time to think it over. But remember that I would like to see you again. And I think we would have an interesting time together."

He took down his sample case and showed me pictures of some of the things he sold. One picture immediately caught my eye. It was of a hand-bag with a tiny light which flashed on inside when the bag was opened, revealing the contents.

"I'd certainly like to have a bag like that," I told him, thinking how much blind groping for keys or lipstick or comb the light would eliminate. "I think that's a wonderful little invention, that little light. How does it work?"

He explained the details to me and then sighed.

"I am sure this bag would prove popular in America," he said. "But unfortunately we cannot as yet put our wares on the market there. We are looking for some American contacts who will help us make that possible some time in the future."

He looked hopefully at me, but I definitely didn't feel like a good contact, so I gave him no encouragement. He sighed again and stood up to put his sample bag back on the rack. Then he settled down on the seat, took out a package of cigarettes, and offered me one.

I shook my head.

"You do not smoke?" he asked in surprise, as he lit his own cigarette. "Good! That is good. I like that! I do not like to see a woman smoke, and I like it that you don't"

Again he gave me that bold, intimate look which had annoyed me so at first.

"You are so shy and modest and reticent, too," he told me softly. "And I like that, too. I find I like so many things about you. I did not know that American women are like that."

His bold and open approval embarrassed and almost frightened me. After all, in spite of my knowledge of the language, I was in a foreign country here, with customs that were unfamiliar to me.

I quickly closed my eyes again. "I think I'll go to sleep now," I said although I knew that I would not really be able to sleep.

The young man chuckled softly to himself, and suddenly I was furious at him again. He knew only too well why I had shut my eyes.

When we came to Würzburg, the lights in the train went on and the other passengers in the compartment roused themselves and began hurriedly gathering together their belongings. Only the two of us were not getting off.

"This is what I meant when I said things would be better after Würzburg," the young baron grinned at me when the others had gone out. "Now you can lie down on that seat and I'll lie down on this one. Then we can get some sleep."

The train car was beginning to fill up again and several passengers stopped at our compartment door. I started to sit up to make room for them, but the young man whispered emphatically, "Lie still!" Curious as to how the people would react, I obeyed.

"Go on to another compartment. Can't you see this one is occupied? We are tired and need our rest," he told the people who started to come in. Some of them went on without a word, others stopped to protest that we could sit up and make room for them. But in the end they all went on to crowd into other compartments with people who were less rude and determined than my companion.

"Now," he said with satisfaction, when the train began to move. "Now we can get some sleep."

But I couldn't go to sleep any easier than I had been able to do sitting up. It gave me a queer feeling to be shut up in the little compartment with a stranger lying on the opposite seat, especially when the stranger turned over on his side just before closing his eyes, to smile at me and say, "Sometimes I am sad and sometimes I am happy. Right now I am very, very happy!"

His tone and expression made the statement sound like something of special significance, but I wasn't at all sure exactly what he meant. But almost immediately his breathing told me that he had gone to sleep.

For me sleep would not come. Some time around 5:30 I sat up and began to watch the quaint villages, the green meadows, the patchwork fields, and the lovely little forests slip by in the early light of dawn. My head ached and my eyes burned from the sleepless night. I felt dirty and unkempt, and I was afraid I would make a very poor first impression at my duty station. But I also felt elated and satisfied. This was Germany! This was what I had come to see.

At six o'clock, almost as though he had set his alarm, the young man awoke, looked at his watch, rubbed his eyes, and sat up.

"Good morning," he said, smiling at me and then looking around. "My little plan worked, didn't it? I hope you slept well. We're almost there now. I'll go wash."

By the time he returned, I was busy getting my suitcases down from the luggage rack. I was still afraid that some of my bags would be left behind when I got off.

"Don't worry about your baggage," he scolded me. "I said I would look after you and I will. I'll see that your baggage gets off the train."

I sat down again and tried to look calm, but I was still uneasy. As it turned out, my worst fears were justified. Part of my baggage did almost disappear with the train. By the time we had worked our way off the train, each carrying as much as we could carry, it was too late to go back after another load. The best we could do was run along the outside and yell at the passengers who were now occupying our compartment. The train had already begun to move as my big bag was finally handed to us through the window.

It was then that I learned a lesson I never had a chance to forget, because I had occasion to review it each time I traveled by train. The trains in Germany moved promptly when it was time, whether the passengers were ready for them to go or not!

After we had checked our baggage, the young baron insisted on taking me to breakfast. I protested, but in the end he won out, mainly because I really was hungry, and had no idea where I could go by myself to eat.

Without consulting me, he ordered soft boiled eggs, bread, and coffee for each of us. Then, because he was still hungry when he had finished his first egg, he asked for a second order of the same thing for both of us, again overriding my very vigorous protest. Fortunately, I can eat soft boiled eggs, but I hardly wanted two of them so early in the morning!

He was so gallant during the meal, quoting poetry and telling me how much he was enjoying my company, that I began to wonder if he would be hard to get rid of after breakfast was over. But my concern was unfounded. When we had finished eating, he took me to a place where I could see the American flag flying over the Headquarters building as a guide to show me the way. Then he asked me again to write to him, kissed my hand, and disappeared.

I did not throw the envelope away until I was back in America. Often during that year in Ansbach, whenever I felt the need for something new or exciting, I got it out. But I never wrote the letter giving him my address, and I never saw my young admirer again.

I will guess that where ever he is now, he has prospered financially, with perhaps a business and a lovely home of his own. He was typical of other young Germans I met that year. Defeated in battle, they were certainly not conquered. Ambitious, restless, proud, they chafed at the occupation of their country by enemy troops, but made the best of it. Already in 1949 they were staging the beginning of the financial and political comeback of West Germany.

And the young baron will always have a special place in my heart for getting me and my baggage safely off the train at Ansbach.

Chapter 2

More Than the Three R's

I'm glad that I did not know how closely my job in Germany would be linked with the army until after it was too late for me to back out, for I'm afraid that if I had known earlier, my Mennonite pacifist conscience might not have allowed me to take the position. And I would have missed the most interesting and challenging year of my teaching career.

I loved the little school the moment I entered the place. I had known that I would not be teaching in a regular school building; that our school room was in the same office building as the Sub-post Headquarters. I'm not sure just what I had expected from that, but certainly nothing as clean and cozy as I found.

A wall had been knocked out between what had been two German offices, making a fair sized classroom. Four adjoining rooms had been turned into a school office, a supply room, a cloakroom, and restrooms for the children.

The walls had been freshly painted; gay draperies at the window added color to the room. The desks were new, and a bookcase filled with new library books immediately caught my eye.

Through the window I could see the playground. It was actually a garden, and was enclosed by a high stone wall. There were trees and shrubs and flowers. In one corner the Hausmeister of the building had a small vegetable garden, so we would have chance to practice consideration for others as we played.

In the spring we would be able to stand under the fruit trees in our own playground and smell the blossoms, then watch them drop off and see the fruit begin to grow. I liked having the garden as part of our playground.

There was also an open space for play in which a swing and other play equipment had been set up. In one corner I noticed a small garden house which would make a fine play house, or a log cabin for Indians to raid, or a stable to be used by small cowboys.

I would never have to apologize for this school to anyone, the parents, the children, or German visitors. It had the look of a place where children could work and play together, and be happy. It was truly an American school in the middle of an old Bavarian town, and to me on that first day it seemed more than a place where American children living in Germany could learn the Three R's. It felt like a bit of America transplanted onto German soil.

I enjoyed keeping the rooms gay with the children's drawings and paintings, and samples of their work. I liked to see the Germans who came past our door when I was working there after the children had gone home, pause and look around at the rooms.

Invariably they would say, "How nice, how bright, how cheerful! I think children would enjoy coming to school here."

Supplies of every kind were furnished to us promptly and in sufficient quantity - from textbooks, pencils, paper, library books, art and music supplies, to toilet paper and liquid soap.

These supplies were sent out from the Dependents School Headquarters at Karlsruhe, but they weren't sent until we asked for them. Since we couldn't make our needs known until we ourselves knew our need, supply lagged behind demand a few times. This was true of our desks at the beginning of the year.

School had closed the previous year with an enrollment of about twelve pupils. We started with 22, so we were ten desks short. The sub-post officer, Lt. Joiner, was a resourceful fellow, and he promised to find something we could use until the new desks arrived from Karlsruhe.

He kept his promise!

On the Saturday before school was to start, an army truck drove up to the school loaded with desks which only faintly resembled anything I had ever seen before. They reminded me of the double-seaters I remembered from my childhood, but these were built on a sort of platform, so that the children had to step up to take their seats.

The backs of the seats were high and straight; the desk tops were narrow and close to the seats. Each half desk had a deep inkwell and a groove for pens and pencils, and there was a narrow shelf below the desk top, but really no place to keep books and other needed supplies. The desks were scratched, stained, and very dirty.

"If these are the kind of desks they have in the German schools --" I thought.

When our German teacher entered the room she gasped, "Where in the world did they get those things?"

The cleaning women giggled and whispered as they scrubbed with soap and water, so I knew that even they were surprised and amused. As I joined them to go over the scrubbed desks with a disinfectant, I asked them in German whether they knew anything about the desks.

"They're from the old Barracks up on the hill," one of them told me, bursting into laughter. "Where the Dependent Persons have been housed. We haven't used anything like this in our schools for years."

"It's good you use the disinfectant," the other added, eyeing my bottle.

The old desks looked grotesque and out of character in our tidy classroom. I could hardly wait to see the children's reaction when they saw them on Monday. Would they fight over who would get to sit at the nice new desks, or would they all want the old ones because they were so different?

The old desks were very popular at 9 o'clock the next morning. By noon I had heard the suggestion several times, "I think this desk would fit Betsy (who sat at one of the new desks) better than it does me."

By the time school was dismissed the children were asking, "When will we get our new desks?" Eventually they came.

My pupils were all Americans. Most of the fathers were in the army, officers or non-commissioned officers, but a few were American civilians.

I learned that American children are American children wherever they are. Yet in many ways our classroom was quite different from the ones to which I was accustomed in the United States. The subjects I taught were the same, but what the children learned wasn't the same.

Throw a third grader from Boston, who talked about the "goils", in with a soft voiced drawler from Georgia, add a tomboy from Kansas and a tall little Texan, and interesting things begin to happen. I could almost teach United States geography simply by letting each child tell about the various places in which he had lived or where he had visited.

More than that, we practically fought the Civil War all over again right there in the classroom during a United States history lesson. It was a rather difficult situation for the teacher to handle, but a good learning experience for the students.

All of the children knew about the ocean and ships from first hand experience. Castles and old fortresses, war ruins and lovely cathedrals, teams of oxen and chimney sweeps, things which children in American classrooms know only from books and stories - these were all everyday matters to my pupils.

Most of them had gone on vacation trips with their parents to some other country besides Germany. When I returned from a Mediterranean cruise during Easter vacation, eager to show the children my Egyptian Fez and pictures of camels and pyramids, the little girl who had gone with her parents to Holland quite stole my show with her wooden shoes and pictures of windmills.

Within easy driving distance for us was the famous walled city of Rothenburg o. Tauber, and the equally quaint old town of Dinkelsbühl. The youngsters went to Nürnberg with their parents to shop. In Ansbach itself there was much of historical interest.

One day we stopped our lessons to watch a chimney sweep climb around on the roof of the building just across the alley from us and in a direct line with our windows. The town of Ansbach was very old, with little narrow winding streets, towers and arched gateways, and ancient looking buildings.

The most interesting place was the Schloss or Palace in the center of the city. Other buildings were now squeezed in so close around it that at first I didn't even recognize the place as a palace. It was immense - so large that I could hardly conceive of it as being one building. About fifty of the rooms were kept furnished in the original style, and these were open to the public for viewing for a small entrance fee. The rest of the rooms were being used for municipal offices.

I took my pupils to see the place early in the fall. We had an excellent guide who spoke English well and was pleasant about making explanations and answering trite questions.

The children "oh'd" and "ah'd" over the brocaded chairs and beautiful draperies, the lovely paintings on wall and ceilings, the gold inlays and carvings on the furniture. I was chalking up this excursion as a worthwhile learning experience.

Then in the middle of the guide's explanation of some of the paintings, one little voice piped up: "Where does that door lead to?" He pointed to a door near one corner of the room.

"That is the servant's entrance," the guide explained patiently. "Whenever the Count wanted something, the servant came in at that entrance and brought it. It leads to a back stairway."

"Can you open it? We want to see!" Now it was a chorus of voices.

The guide said something in a low voice to the German woman who had let us into the palace, and who was following us through the rooms. She shrugged and drew a large bunch of keys from her pocket. Selecting one, she unlocked the door. The guide and I anticipated - and by sheer physical force prevented - the pellmell rush toward the back stairway. Each child in turn was allowed a look through the door.

Unlocking the door was a mistake, and I should have known it! After that the children looked for doors in each room we entered. Their interest in the beautiful furniture and paintings was gone.

"Where does that door lead to?"

"Can you open it?"

"What's back of that door?"

"May we look in at that door?"

The guide tried to shift their interest to other things. Finally he turned helplessly to me.

"Boys and girls," I announced firmly. "Those doors are locked. They aren't meant to be opened for people to see. They will stay shut and you'll just have to use your imagination as to what is behind them"

We completed our tour without further incidence.

The next day my two eighth grade boys came to school with a story about the count who had built the palace.

"If we had known that yesterday," Frank said, "we wouldn't have gone to look at that old palace."

"What are you talking about?" I asked him.

"He was our enemy," Dulaney added. "That old count was."

"His men fought against us in the Revolutionary War," Frank went on. That didn't make sense to me. I was sure the boys had gotten something sadly mixed up. After all, this was Germany, not England.

"Will you please," I demanded, "explain what you are trying to tell me."

"I can give a report on it to the whole room," Frank volunteered.

So he and Dulaney told us the story. I checked on it later, and found it to be true.

"After the count built the palace," the boys informed us, "he ran out of money to keep it up. He had already taxed his people so heavily that they were ready to rebel. So he had to raise money in some other way."

(The boys did not tell us the complete story; perhaps they didn't know it all. I found out that the palace wasn't really built for the Countess. She was living in another palace, practically in exile at the count's request. The woman for whom the palace in Ansbach was built was an English lady, a widow, who was quite a leader in the social life of the various courts and palaces at that time. The Count of Ansbach seems to have been smitten with her, and the palace for her was one way in which he courted her favor. But she turned out to be an expensive piece of luxury, hard to please and never satisfied. That is when the count ran out of money!)

"The King of England needed soldiers just then," Frank went on, "so the Count of Ansbach rented some of his men to England. These Ansbachers, together with some soldiers from Hesse, were the troops which our history books call the Hessians who fought against the colonies in the Revolutionary War."

We studied the Revolutionary War with renewed interest after that. I never dreamed that I would find such motivation for the study of American history in a palace in a little town in the heart of Bavaria.

At our last PTA meeting in the spring, one of the mothers said to me, "I was so surprised and thankful to find such good schools for American children over here. I had been afraid that when we were transferred to Germany it would mean that Lester would miss out on a lot as far as his education is concerned. But the schools here have been as good or better than the ones he attended in American."

I told her that I had been surprised, too, and very happy at what I had found.

The educational system for American children in Germany has changed a great deal since 1949. My friends who have taught over there at various times have written about large, new modern buildings with more than two thousand pupils in one school. But I am glad that I had the experience of teaching in our small, friendly, makeshift school in Ansbach when I did.

Chapter 3

Miss Marianne and Hanne

Miss Marianne, dear sweet Marianne! If it hadn't been for her, my year of teaching in Germany would not have been quite the pleasant experience it was.

Marianne was the language teacher in our school, who taught German to each of the classes, even the first graders, for twenty minutes each day.

That was the assignment for which she was hired, the work for which she was paid. But the work she did took in much more territory than that. She was my assistant teacher, my secretary, my right hand man, my liaison with the German community, my friend, my confidante. She was the one, especially at the beginning of the term, who knew what the Dependents Schools Headquarters personnel expected of me and the school, and saw to it that we met those expectations.

Her name was Marianne Wurmthaler, and she had asked the children to call her Miss Marianne. After the first few days of school I found myself dropping the "Miss" completely except in front of the children. She held out for "Miss Mueller" a little longer, but as our personal congenial friendship deepened, anything but a first name relationship would have been artificial.

She was quite young, not yet twenty, and just out of school when she had first been hired for the position two years before. She had not studied to be a teacher, and had never taught in a German school, but she had a natural aptitude for the work.

She had acquired the job partly because of her excellent marks in her English class in school. But during her first day at work she had discovered that learning English from a German teacher and understanding American English spoken by American children were two vastly different experiences.

"After my first day's work at the school I went home and cried," she told me, able to laugh at the memory by then. "I told Mother, 'I can't even understand one word the children are saying. I simply can't do the work

I've been hired for. What shall I do?"

What she had done was simply to keep on trying. The school needed a German teacher, and she needed the job. So she had gone back day after day to do the best she could. It hadn't been easy, but gradually things had improved.

Now, two years later, she spoke American English so fluently and naturally that I had to listen carefully to catch even the faintest trace of a German accent. She not only understood what the children were saying, she understood them.

She had learned how to work with American children, using American methods. At the beginning of the school term she was able to give me a great deal of helpful information about the families of the children who had been in the school the previous year.

She knew the courses of study and the text books being used in the American schools. She graded many of my papers, carefully, conscientiously, and accurately. And she was thoroughly familiar with the complicated system of reports and forms that we had to fill out and sent in to headquarters every week.

That in itself made her a treasure! She saved me many a headache, and I found myself frequently asking her for suggestions and advice as though she were my supervisor instead of an assistant. I sometimes felt she should be getting my salary.

Most of the time I was busy with other classes while Marianne was teaching German in another room. But occasionally I stole time from my own work to listen briefly to what she was doing.

The lessons were practical, but delightfully interesting and entertaining. The little first graders started out with simple catchy action songs and poems, which they learned by rote. These were followed by conversation, then challenging and sometimes hilarious vocabulary games. The second graders began to read and write German, and in the upper grades some grammar was introduced.

I hadn't realized how much the children were actually learning until I took them on an outing to Rothenburg one day in the spring. After a tour of the ancient city, the children begged for permission to spend the Pfennigs and Marks they had brought along to buy souvenirs and gifts for their parents.

"All right," I consented rather reluctantly. "We'll take a half hour for shopping, but we'll have to stay together."

I had visualized frustration and even bedlam with twenty or more shoppers and only myself as interpreter. But the children needed no interpreter! They could ask for what they wanted, inquire about the price, and pay the correct amount without help from anyone.

Our school started out as a one teacher school, although from the very first it was a two room school. The original schoolroom wasn't large enough to hold twenty two desks, so I put my five little first and second graders into the tiny room adjoining my office, which had been used during the previous school term as a cloak room. When Marianne wasn't teaching a class in German, she supervised my "little room."

In late October our smooth routine was completely upset. Some of our families went back to the United States, and new families moved in. The school didn't break even in the exchange.

I lost a first grader, and then my only second grader left. A fourth grade girl joined the five I already had in that grade. A sixth grader enrolled, and another first grader, who had never been to school before. In early November a family with three children moved in, two of them in the second grade.

This meant that I now had twenty five pupils and all grades except the seventh. Both classrooms were filled to capacity, and the days were little short of hectic.

The next Monday morning after a delightful but tiring week-end trip, I came to school to find a family of five waiting to enroll.

We still had only twenty two desks, and we had no books at all for some of the grades, since there hadn't been any children in those grades until now. Remembering how long it had taken for our new desks to arrive at the beginning of the term, I felt like asking the children to go home and come back in a few weeks.

During the months I had been in Germany, I had become impatient several times at the inefficiency of army red tape -- every form to be filled out in triplicate, a maze of proper channels through which even the simplest request had to go. But fortunately the Sub-post School Officer knew when and how to bend the rules.

He knew that the family had moved in, and before I had finished enrolling the children, he came down to the schoolroom. Sizing up the situation, he swung into immediate action. Instead of requisitioning the desks and supplies, then waiting for the Dependents School Headquarters to send them, he called Headquarters and dispatched a sub-post truck to Karlsruhe to get them.

By the next morning our schoolrooms had thirty one desks, and absolutely no space to walk. My office was piled high with boxes containing books and other supplies. Lt. Joiner took one look at the situation and shook his head.

"Something will have to be done about this," he said. He didn't say what or when, but by then I knew him well enough to know I wouldn't have to wait long. Just what would be done, I couldn't even guess.

When I came back to school after a Thanksgiving vacation spent in Switzerland, I found that the wall had been knocked out between the little room and my office. All of the equipment and supplies from my office and store room had been dumped into the little room which Marianne had been using for her German classes.

I didn't know whether to rejoice or cry. We now had two nice sized classrooms, and the desks fit in beautifully without crowding. But Marianne would have to teach in the office-storeroom. And before she could use it we would have to dig our way through the mess and come out with some semblance of order.

I don't know how I could have survived during the weeks between Thanksgiving and Christmas if it hadn't been for Marianne. It wasn't really the number of children that made teaching them so difficult. I had several times had more than 31 pupils in my classes in the States.

It wasn't even having so many different grades, because I had had experience with that during my first years of teaching in rural schools in Kansas. It was having them in two rooms that proved my undoing. I could never manage to be in the right room at the right time. Trouble was always brewing in the room in which I was not.

Marianne came to my rescue. She shortened her German classes, neglected the paper grading, and somehow usually managed to be where I should have been but couldn't be because I had to be somewhere else. The days continued to be hectic, but with the two of us working together, it became almost fun.

As Christmas approached, we did all of the things usually done in American classrooms just before Christmas. We made simple gifts for our

parents, created our own Christmas cards, decorated the room, learned Christmas carols. It was Marianne who added the German touch to the holiday preparations.

She went with us to a street market to buy our tree, she taught the children German Christmas songs, and she arranged for us to entertain some German children who had been taking English classes at the Amerika Haus.

The German children sang English songs for us, and we sang German songs for them. Then we all sang together, some songs in English and some in German. After that we served cocoa, cookies, and gave each German child a Hershey bar as a gift. The little hosts and hostesses and the guests ate together, trying to converse with each other in two languages. It was a lovely, meaningful Christmas activity.

In late December our situation changed again. Enrollment forms and statistical reports had finally caught up with reality. Headquarters decided that our enrollment was large enough to justify hiring a second American teacher, and another German helper. A substitute teacher, later replaced by Verda, took over the upper grade classroom. Marianne reluctantly turned over to a German secretary the chores she enjoyed, keeping attendance records, grading papers, and making out statistical reports, and devoted her full time to teaching German.

Although we never talked about it, I think Marianne felt much as I did, relieved that our work load would be lighter, but apprehensive about sharing our domain with two new personalities.

However, from the very beginning Hanne's coming proved to be all asset. She was not only an efficient secretary, but a thoroughly interesting personality as well. She enjoyed children and spoke English fluently.

Her husband was a professor in a university in Siam, and she had lived there, too, until shortly before the birth of her second daughter. She had felt it wiser to come back to Germany at that time, and the war had prevented her return to Siam.

Her home was in Neuendettelsau, a small town near Ansbach. Usually she commuted by train, but on nice days in the spring she rode her bicycle. It took her exactly the same time by either method of transportation, one full hour. The advantage of the bicycle was that she did not have to start quite as early in the morning. Our school started at 8:45, but the only train she could take arrived in Ansbach at seven o'clock.

So she could spend an extra hour at home when she came "by wheel". She could also spend the whole hour out-of-doors, which she liked, instead of shut up in a crowded train compartment or in the waiting room at the station where she had to change trains.

After hearing her extol the advantages of the bicycle the first few nice spring days, I noticed that she was taking the train most of the time after all. When I drove out in my car to visit her in May, I began to understand why the train had won out. The last few miles went sharply uphill, and it must have been difficult to pedal up that steep incline after a tiring day at school.

When she came by train, Hanne had extra time in the morning before she had to be on duty at school, so I sometimes paid her extra to type the German letters I received from relatives. She seemed to have no trouble reading even Onkel Adolf's shaky script, which to me was often completely illegible. When it was neatly typed, I could skim in seconds what would have taken me hours to decipher.

Hanne's daughters came to visit us at Christmas time. Their vacation began earlier than ours, so they were free to come for our school Christmas festivities.

No, it must have been at Easter time that they came. The German schools had a rather lengthy vacation in the Spring.

The oldest, Hanneliesse, was a charming, well mannered, talented, quiet young lady of ten. She played the piano beautifully, and had a lovely soprano voice, clear and melodious as a bell. She was studying English in school, and was visibly disappointed when she realized that she could not understand the American children.

"She gets a 'I' in English," her mother said, patting her shoulder, "so she thinks she knows the language. Hanneliesse, don't let it trouble you. You have to hear a language a long time to understand it well. If you were here with the children all day every day as I am, you would soon learn."

Lieselotte, the seven year old, was a merry, laughing, mischievous, boisterous little girl. Her mother had worked hard to teach her manners and to discipline her, that was apparent. But it would have been difficult for anyone to squelch that bubbling energy.

"They tell me that she is just like I was when I was a child," Hanne sighed. "I half way have to believe it, too, and I cannot be too hard on the little girl."

Lieselotte had studied no English, but that mattered not at all to her! My little first and second grade girls took her in tow, and soon they were walking around arm in arm on the playground, communicating with each other partly in German, partly without verbal language of any kind.

I cannot even remember saying good-bye to Hanne and Marianne at the end of the school term. It was at this time that I received the telegram telling me of my father's death, and my last few days in our little school are blotted out of my memory by the blurred confusion of my heartache and grief.

After Hanne remarried and moved to Cleveland, I lost track of her completely, but I continued corresponding regularly with Marianne for many years.

In one Christmas letter she sent me some snapshots of her family. To me the face of the middle aged mother posing with her husband and three children, two of them teen-agers, is still that of my sweet little Miss Marianne who did so much to help make my year of teaching in Germany a happy experience.

Chapter 4

Reitmorsstrasse 37

My address was Ansbach during the year I spent in Germany, but it was Reitmorsstrasse 37 in Munich, the apartment on the first floor left, which really felt like home.

I actually went there only a few times during the year, but each time I went with a sort of going-home-for-the weekend feeling, and I always left with the reluctant, tearing myself away farewell that I had often felt when I drove away from my home in the United States after a visit with my mother and father. And inbetween visits, I had the security of knowing that I could go there whenever I felt the need to "go home."

Reitmorsstrasse 37 was where my Aunt Frieda lived with her daughter Hildegard, Hildegard's husband Ottmar Rohde, and their two children.

Aunt Frieda and Hildegard didn't wait for me to contact them after I got to Germany. As soon as they found out where I was stationed, they

wrote, inviting me for the next week-end. I couldn't go then, but the following week I took Friday off from work so that I could get my passport at the American Consulate in Munich, and take care of some other matters connected with my work.

Then in the evening, with my business all taken care of, I headed for Reitmorstrasse 37.

Aunt Frieda was the widow of Mamma's older brother, Heinrich, with whom she had kept in close touch until mail communication was cut off during the war.

Uncle Heinrich had been gravely ill at this time, and Mamma had felt concerned about him each time bombing of Munich was in the news. So it was almost with relief that she had read the Red Cross message telling her about his death. At least, he would no longer have to go through the torture of anticipating the bombing raids as he lay helpless in his bed.

Aunt Frieda had lost not only her husband, but her older son and her youngest daughter during the war. For a time she had been ill and depressed, but by now she was living courageously and gratefully with what she had left in life.

She was a beautiful woman with dark expressive eyes and thick black hair, now streaked lightly with gray. Her good-natured sense of humor, her practical common sense, her hard-fought-for serenity, and her genuine interest in people drew me like a magnet. From the first minute I saw her, I emotionally adopted her as my Mother pro tem.

Hildegard was a pharmacist, but had not been working since her marriage. She seemed to have turned into a "Kinder-Küche-Kirche" housewife, completely happy with the "children-kitchen-church" role of homemaking and caring for her two children, three year old Nothard and his little "Schwesterly", Ruth, not quite one.

Schwesterly - little sister - was a doll, with fine, curly reddish brown hair, dark eyes, and apple rosy cheeks. Nothard was an unusual child in many ways, but atypical three year old in others.

At times he was overly fearful and clinging, but he had a strong independent streak, and liked to think things out for himself, a trait which his father encouraged. His vocabulary was fantastically expressive for his age, and his interest in anything mechanical almost unlimited.

In the spring, when I drove to Munich in my car, I offered to take him and his grandmother for a ride. At first he refused, hanging back and clinging almost tearfully to Hildegard. But later in the day, after he had seen his Oma return safely and had had time to think the matter over, he reluctantly consented to get into the car with his mother.

Once inside, he forgot his anxiety as he studied the dashboard and the steering mechanism. The speedometer, the brake, the clutch, the gearshift, and the various knobs and levers fascinated him, and his eyes went from one to the other, missing nothing.

"Why do you put the key in there?" he wanted to know as I prepared to start the motor. And then, "What made the motor start when you pushed that button? Why are you putting your foot on that pedal? Why did you move that lever that way? What is making the car go forward now?"

Hard pressed to give him any satisfactory answers, I thought, "Wow! At three years of age!"

There were two other guests for supper that first evening I was there, Ottmar's cousin, a young refugee from Czechoslovakia, and a Lutheran minister who had come to discuss plans for a war memorial for his church with Ottmar, who was an architect.

The young cousin was a student at the University and a bricklayer in his spare time. He slept on a couch in Ottmar's office, and I surmised

from the way he helped Hildegard with the dishes that he was a frequent visitor in the Rohde home.

The apartment was the same one in which Uncle Heinrich and Aunt Frieda had lived with their family before the war. It had been badly damaged by bombs, and for a time they had lived in one room. But the building had recently been repaired and completely re-decorated, so that now their home was comfortable and adequate.

They were still somewhat crowded, for a family their size was allowed only four rooms, and a middle aged couple had rented the other two. So Aunt Frieda had given most of her own furniture to her daughter Elisabeth Bouchers, whose home and belongings had been completely destroyed by the bombing.

I admired the tasteful way in which the home was furnished. Uncle Heinrich's paintings hung everywhere. When I admired an especially striking mountain scene, Aunt Frieda laughed and told me, "Heinrich painted that on our honeymoon."

That was on Sunday afternoon when her son Heinie was visiting, and he heard the remark.

"Yes," he said slowly, teasing his mother. "I can just see it, your honeymoon. Father sitting on the mountainside completely absorbed in his painting from morning till night. And Mother sitting on the mountainside terribly, terribly bored."

"Not bored," Aunt Frieda assured him quickly, with her warm, gentle laugh. "Not bored, but - -" She let the sentence trail off, and I mentally finished it for her.

Remembering some of Mamma's comments about her brother, I thought, "Maybe you weren't bored. But you learned early in your married life how all important your husband's sketching and painting was to him, and you were just the kind of understanding soul who could make the adjustment to that."

On Saturday morning I went with Hildegard to the Gross Markt Halle to get some prunes and tomatoes, which were cheaper there, especially on a Saturday. If she had deliberately planned it that way, Hilde couldn't have found a better way to demonstrate to me the inconveniences they had suffered in getting food in the years after the war. And at that time they had often had to go to several places in various parts of the city in order to get the food they needed.

Hildegard took Nothard with us, and the little boy was quite disturbed by the jostling of so many people in the crowded street cars.

"Mutti, Mutti," he kept begging over and over and over. "You'll have to hold my hand tight. Hold me tight!"

On the return trip we had two heavy baskets and a shopping bag full of tomatoes and fruit. Other passengers also had bags and baskets full of food, and the street cars wasted no time waiting for laggards.

We had to change cars several times, and each time there was a tense scramble to get all three of us and our loads on before the car door closed. By the time we got home I was worn out, and I wondered how Hilde would have managed alone.

At the dinner table Nothard created a minor incident. We had a delicious meat and vegetable mold and fresh tomatoes, a menu which Nothard usually ate with gusto. But now, although he had been given only a small helping, he left most of it on his plate.

"You must eat your dinner," his Mutti told him firmly. "This evening we are having bread and raisin pudding. But if you don't eat your vegetables now, that is what you will eat for your supper."

The announcement had no effect. Nothard made no effort to clean his plate, and I guessed from Hilde's expression that she wished she had not issued the ultimatum. But she remained firm. No bread pudding unless the

vegetables were eaten.

"I think you are just too tired to eat," Nothard's Vati told him sympathetically. "But you have only a few spoons full to eat. You could manage that nicely if you tried."

"Das ist eine Torheit!" (That's foolishness) Nothard said crossly as he struggled to keep his eyes open. "I am not the least bit tired. I just don't want to eat my food."

The vegetables were still on Nothard's plate when Hilde, Ottmar, and I left the house for a tour of Munich. We saw the Isar River, only a half block from their home, the Englischen Garden, a large park stretching across the city for several miles, the Residence, where each of the Bavarian kings had built an addition to the palace of their fathers, the Hof Garten, still lovely with flowers, even though all of the ancient Linden trees had been uprooted by bombs.

They took me to the famous Ludwigstrasse, the Marienplatz, and to the place where the huge picture of Hitler had been posted for all passers-by to "Heil!" We slipped through the narrow alley behind that building, which had been nicknamed the "Schleicher Gasse" (sneaker's alley) in those years because it was used by people who didn't want to "heil" Hitler.

"It was a busy street in those years," Ottmar assured me. "Many, many people came through this way. To openly defy Hitler's mandate would have meant death. But that did not mean that we obeyed it."

When we got home we found that Aunt Frieda had everything under control. Nothard had eaten his vegetables and had taken a nap. Although they made no fuss over his belated obedience, Hilde and Ottmar were visibly relieved, and a now good humored Nothard happily ate bread and raisin pudding with the rest of us.

Ottmar seemed to be keenly interested in his wife's American relatives. After supper he got out some of the snapshots we had sent them over the years, and asked questions about our life in America.

His uncle had sent him some "Architectural Digests" and from them he had gotten a distorted view of typical American buildings, and some misconceptions of the country in general, which he was only too happy to correct.

"The main thing we see and hear of America is New York and its skyscrapers, the mad rush for money, and life in Hollywood with its moviestars and loose morals," he said. "We really know little about what lies between New York and Hollywood."

He showed me a copy of the song book used in the volks-schule in Bavaria in the primary grades which he had bought for Nothard. It contained many of the songs which Mamma had taught us when we were children, and I was delighted with it.

"This is lovely," I said enthusiastically. "I would like to have a copy."

I was about to add, "It's very much like the song books we use in our first grade except that there aren't as many pictures in this as in ours, and the pictures are smaller and less colorful," when Ottmar remarked, "I thought you would like it. It is my impression that you do not have nice picture books like this in America. The pictures in your children's picture books are not so artistic and natural as these, are they?"

My surprise and bewilderment must have shown on my face, for he added, "I was thinking, for instance, of Mickey Mouse, which has by now become famous."

"But the Mickey Mouse comic books are not typical of our children's picture books," I gasped, "although I have to admit they are very popular with the children. We have many nice picture books for our children, too."

"Like these?" Ottmar asked skeptically, indicating the books he had shown me.

"Very much like these," I assured him. I wanted to add, "only nicer, I think," but that would have been rude. I would show him instead of telling him.

No doubt he had seen American children in Germany reading comic books, which had given him the wrong impression of our children's books. Next time I came to visit, I would bring some of our library books along to show Nothard. And I knew exactly what I would buy him for Christmas.

On Sunday morning Aunt Frieda took me to the Mennonite Versammlung (meeting) which is held every three weeks in one of the rooms of a building corresponding to our YMCA. Children do not regularly attend adult worship services in Germany as they do in our Mennonite churches in the United States, so Hildegard stayed at home with her two. Ottmar had to go to his office to take care of an urgent matter.

I had picked the right Sunday for a visit, for it was their Harvest Thanksgiving Festival, so there were about sixty people present, a larger than usual attendance.

A large table had been placed in the center of the room, and the chairs were arranged in several rows around three sides of this. The minister stood at the head of the table to preach, and the small choir gathered behind him for their special number. A reed organ in one corner was the only other piece of furniture in the room.

The worship service was similar to the ones to which I was accustomed at home. It began with several hymns, followed by scripture reading, prayer, a number by the choir, the sermon, a closing song and the benediction. There was dignity and reverence in its simplicity.

The little group had no full time minister, and Mamma's cousin, Emmanuel Landes had come from Ingolstadt to preach the sermon. Aunt Frieda introduced me to him after the service.

"Lischen Ellenberger's daughter," he beamed, shaking my hand. "Is it possible! You must visit us in Ingolstadt some time, too."

Aunt Frieda's younger son, Heinrich, had come to the service from his home in Pasing, a suburb of Munich, and went with us for dinner. Gertrud, his wife, had stayed at home because the teen-age girl who was in Lehrgang (household apprenticeship) in their home had wanted the day off, so there was no one to look after their two little girls.

On the way home we stopped to pick up Ottmar at his office and to let me see where he worked. Then we ate dinner, and suddenly it was time for me to leave if I wanted to catch the 3:15 train back to Ansbach.

Heinrich walked with me to the station, and when I left him at the gate, the familiar "the week-end is over, tomorrow the grind begins again," feeling began to press in on me. But it was tempered with a warm glow.

I had accepted the invitation to come to Munich again in three weeks for little Ruth's Einsegnung (consecration). And I knew now that at any time that I felt the need for it, I could always "go home."

Chapter 5

Gicki and Guki

Although the two did not look alike, my cousin Heine reminded me so much of my brother Ernie that I felt at ease with him at once. Their keen minds seemed to work on the same wave length, the same dry humor showed itself at unexpected times, and they both treated me with the same mixture of affection and tolerant brotherly amusement.

From our first meeting I felt I could relax completely with Heine and his wife Gertrud without being concerned about whether I was making a good impression or not.

Heine corrected my German, informed me that there were some other German adjectives besides "interessant" and saw to it that I learned some and used them appropriately instead of saying that everything was interesting.

His favorite expression was the German equivalent of "Don't throw the baby out with the bath." He had some firm convictions, but his mind seemed automatically to consider all the various facets of a subject or problem, and he had an understanding respect for other people's point of view. He was a good conversationalist, and could discuss intelligently almost any topic from physics to the weather.

He had been a Hitler Youth and had fought in the war, and although he was not really pro-Hitler or war minded, we had a few friendly verbal battles about the American occupation forces and the causes of the war.

Gertrud had a delightful sense of humor and a real talent for living. Although I'm sure she must have at times felt inner tension, I never saw her anything but unruffled, cheerful, and full of fun.

Much as I enjoyed Heine and Gertrud, I really had two other reasons for going to their home as often as I could - their little Giki and Guki.

Giki (Brigitte) was a pretty little black-eyed three year old, with rosy cheeks and a solemn, thoughtful expression. Gudrun was two, with deep-set brown eyes and a happy-go-lucky manner.

Giki was "her father's daughter", a little perfectionist, who liked to have everything just right - clean hands, clean apron, toys neatly placed on the shelf, the rug in front of her bed lying smooth and straight. Haphazard little Guki nearly drove her big sister wild at times with her carelessness.

But Brigitte was already a skilled diplomat who had learned how to manipulate her littlesister when the need arose. If Gudrun had a toy that Brigitte wanted, she did not try to take it away from her little sister. Neither did she try to talk Gudrun out of it. Instead, she found some kind of substitute.

"Oh, look here, isn't this nice?" she would say impressively, holding up the alternate toy. "Look at this! Don't you want to play with this?"

Then when the little girl's interest was successfully diverted, Brigitte would happily play with the toy she had wanted.

In reverse the game worked quite differently. The two year old's tactics were more direct. When Brigitte had something that Gudrun wanted, there would be tears, "Guki auch haben! Guki auch haben!" (Guki have it, too.) Gudrun did not always get what she wanted, while each time that I watched the interplay, Brigitte did.

Gertrud obviously enjoyed her little daughters, and I liked to watch the relaxed, common sense manner in which she handled them. Heinrich was quite strict with them, but he was fair and consistent, and the little girls adored their Vati.

One afternoon I watched with interest while Heine disciplined Gudrun. The little girl was playing in a corner of the room when her father called her to come to him for some reason. Instead of coming, Gudrun ignored him and kept on playing. Heine said her name a second time, loud enough so

that he was sure that she had heard. When she still did not respond, he walked over to her and brought her back with him to his cahir. Holding her between his knees, he lectured her sternly about her disobedience.

She must always come when her father called her. It might be very important that she come at once, so she must not keep on playing. She must come at once when she heard him call.

"Now we will try again," he finished. "You go back to your play, and I will call you once more. And when you hear your name, you must come quickly!"

Gudrun went back to her play, and in a few minutes Heine again called her name. This time the little girl got up immediately and ran merrily to her Vati, to be caught up with a big bear hug in his arms before he told her what he had wanted.

Heinrich was teaching some courses at the University in Munich and was also working on his doctorate in physics. I thought him well suited to the role of dignified professor, even though in the summer time he relinquished it to the extent of wearing the knee length Bavarian lederhosen to his classes.

"I like to see him wearing them," Gertrud chuckled, her eyes twinkling. "They don't have to be washed and pressed."

The family lived in Pasing, a suburb of Munich. They had a small three room upstairs apartment, but the only other occupant of the house was the elderly landlady who lived on the first floor. So the little girls had the run of the yard, with plenty of space for play.

Although I had seen them several times at Reitmorstrasse 37, the first time I was in their home was in early December. When I got up that morning to leave Ansbach on the early train, the moon was shining brightly, so I dressed for cold weather, but not for wet. When I woke up at Ingolstadt from the nap I often took when I took that early train, I saw that the ground was white. And by the time I got to Munich a deep snow was already on the ground. I had worn wool socks because the trains were often drafty, but I hadn't thought to stick my boots into my suitcase.

Heine met me at the Pasing station, and broke track for me as we walked through the deep, fluffy snow. But even so, my shoes and socks were soaking wet by the time we got to the house.

The little girls watched wide-eyed as I took off my wet things and their mother hung them up to dry. Then they were sent into the kitchen to eat with Gertrud's household helper, while we adults ate in the living room.

They were allowed to come into the room with us for a little while after supper, and then it was time for them to go to bed. I was surprised and a little disappointed at their manner. They were so solemn and quiet and reserved, almost as though they were afraid of me.

"They were just being good," their mother laughed when I remarked about it after they were in bed. "Don't worry. It won't last. I heard Brigitte tell Gudrun just before you came, 'Now we must be very, very quiet, so that Tante Amelia will say, 'My those little girls are well-behaved and good little girls!', but I'm surprised that Gudrun managed to obey.'"

Tipped off like that, I took the first opportunity to say the next day, "My, your girls are well-behaved and good little girls!" And then I enjoyed watching those dark little eyes sparkle!

By Sunday the snow had stopped, but it still lay deep and soft on the ground. Heinrich took me with him to the Methodist Church in Pasing, where he often attended the Sunday morning services. My feet were too big to get into a pair of Gertrud's boots, so I wore a pair of ski boots which had belonged to Heinrich's brother Gerhard. I felt ridiculous and conspicuous

clomping down the aisle of the church in the clumsy boots wearing my best dress and coat, and I had all I could do to keep from giggling. But if anybody noticed anything strange about my attire, they gave no sign, and my feet were warm and dry.

The minister was a young man, who had no doubt seen service in the war. For his sermon he used the Advent theme: preparation for the coming of Christ. He called for repentance, enumerating some of the sins committed during the war for which Germany and individual Germans must repent so that Christ could be born.

When we got home, the little girls were snowballing out in the yard. I joined them, and after they had pelted me with snow for a while, the ice was broken. They no longer tried to impress me; we were friends. That noon they ate at the table with the grownups, using the kind of sporadic good manners that any well trained two and three year olds would use. And in the afternoon they and I had fun together!

The last time I visited the family was in late July, and my sister Hilda was with me.

As soon as I had signed my contract to teach in the Dependents Schools in Germany I had begun to make plans for the next summer. Hilda, who was a deaconess at the Bethel Deaconess Hospital in Newton, Kansas, would try to get several months' leave so that she could bring Manna and Papa over to Germany during my summer vacation. We would visit all of their friends and relatives and perhaps go to other places which they had had no opportunity to see when they were young.

Before I had left for Germany, I had known that Papa would not be able to come. He had angina pectoris and the exertion and excitement that such a trip entailed would be too great a strain on his heart. And I doubted whether I would be able to talk Mamma into coming without him.

But all during the winter I continued to plan for Hilda's visit, and after Verda came to Ansbach to teach, she was included in the planning, too. Hilda and I would visit Holland and as many of the relatives in Germany as we could work in. Verda would join us in July to tour Switzerland, Italy, and parts of Austria. Then Verda would go back to Ansbach, while Hilda and I finished our visits to the relatives.

We had carried out those plans quite well. We had finished our tour of the other countries, coming back into Germany from the South. Pasing was a natural place for our first stop.

Heine and Gertrud had offered to take us into the mountains south of Munich for an afternoon's climb. Uncle Heinrich had taught at Resenheim in the Bavarian Alps when the children were teen-agers, so all of the Ellenbergers had become avid mountain climbers. And Heine wanted to show us some of the trails and scenes which they had often enjoyed.

Gertrud was celebrating her last week-end of freedom. The young girl whom she had had in Lehrdienst had finished her year of apprenticeship, and from now on getting a baby sitter would not be so easy.

Hilda and I had accepted the invitation eagerly, but we were apprehensive also. The plains of Kansas had given us little opportunity to learn how to scale mountain peaks. We had enjoyed hiking in the mountains on our rare trips to Colorado, but we were hardly mountaineers. We knew that Heine and Gertrud wouldn't plan anything difficult or daring, but we were still doubtful whether we could keep up with them on the trail.

Our plans called first for a drive in my car to the Tatzelwurm, a narrow, rushing waterfall as twisting and swirling as its name. There we would eat lunch in a spot the two knew well, and then start hiking up the mountain in the early afternoon.

It was one of those days when nothing goes as planned, and yet everything is fun. My car created complications when it balked as we were driving through a tunnel on a steep, slippery incline. Only the fact that another driver wanted to come down through the tunnel and helped Heine push the little car up saved us from remaining indefinitely stalled.

Even Heine had never gone to the Tatzelwurm in a car. He knew there was a well traveled road leading to it, but the road itself was unfamiliar to him. So we missed a turn we should have taken and started up a little used mountain road instead of down the main road toward the fall. We were able to retrace our tracks without mishap, but we had some anxious moments before the feat was successfully engineered.

And then it rained! How it rained! We sat in the car near the water fall and ate our lunch, watching the swirling waters mingling with the downpour. By the time the sun came out again after the shower, it seemed foolish to start up the wet mountainside so late in the day.

So we drove to Rosenheim, where Heine showed us the house where they had lived, his school, and some of the beautiful mountain scenery near by.

We didn't hike or picnic or climb. But we talked and laughed and exchanged jokes and sang. When we let Heine and Gertrud off at Pasing, Hilda and I were sincere when we thanked them for a wonderfully enjoyable day!

I shall always remember little Guki and Giki as they looked standing inside their yard, faces pressed against the fence, hands waving good-bye to us as we drove off for our day's excursion. Giki's face was wistfully solemn, Guki's near tears. But they smiled bravely in response to their mother's cheery "Auf Wiedersehen."

By the time we got back they were asleep.

Heine has been Dr. Heinrich Ellenberger for a number of years now, and has a good position in Hamburg. They live near Harburg, not in a little apartment, but in a new house they built in the Schwarzen Bergen area. On the photographs I have seen of it, it looks spacious and charmingly original in architectural design.

There are two sons now, almost grown - Rainer who is interested in flying, and Wolfgang who at fifteen played as soloist with the Hamburg Symphony Orchestra. He is a talented pianist.

I doubt that I would recognize the girls if I saw them now. Brigitte is married and is finishing her studies at the University; Gudrun is in medical school in Munich. Perhaps some day I will meet these charming, talented young ladies.

But in my heart I shall always keep them as the enchanting little Giki and Guki.

Chapter 6

Christmas with the Borchers

"Christmas at Landau with the Borchers is very highly to be recommended," Heinie told me when I turned down his invitation to come to their home for Christmas because I had already promised his sister Elisabeth to spend my Christmas vacation with her and her family.

He was right. Although on one particular evening I wished myself thousands of miles away from Landau, Christmas with the Borchers turned out to be an amusing, entertaining, and warmly satisfying experience for me.

We were an even dozen that week, and I've never been in a more stimulating group. Besides the parents, Heinrich and Elisabeth Borchers and the six children, Reinhard 14, Friedegard 12, Gisela 10, Hildegund 8, Adelheid 6, and baby Gerlinde, Oma (grandmother) Borchers and Oma's sister, Tante Ida, were a part of the family.

Elisabeth's theme song was "Da kann man nicht kleinlich sein," (One can't be petty or fussy about things) and this was the way she ran her household and treated her guests. Sincere, open, unaffected, and frank, she had an aversion to pretense or sham of any kind. Although she dressed neatly and her home was clean and attractive, her sense of values relegated such things as pretty clothes and a spotless house to a comparatively insignificant position.

Heinrich's sister Suse and I were visitors, but we were given full family rights, with no discrimination, except that I was discouraged from spending much time in the kitchen.

Tante Ida, Reinhard, and Gisela were at the station to meet me when I arrived on the evening of the twenty-third.

Reinhard greeted me with a shy smile, a formal handshake, and a stiff bow, and then lifted my suitcase onto his bicycle. From his manner I guessed that he had come by request rather than from any strong personal desire to meet me.

Tall for his age, with a gangly, leggy frame, he had a certain naive, unspoiled innocence and an open, frank curiosity that made him seem younger than American fourteen year olds. During my week in their home he asked me endless questions about America and Americans.

"Are there still Indians where you live? What are the cowboys really like? Have you seen any of the movie stars in Hollywood?"

Instead of formally shaking hands, Gisela gave me a spontaneous bearhug. She was an interesting contrast to Reinhard - short for her ten years and inclined to be plump. Her black hair hung in two thick braids down her back, and her dark eyes were unusually expressive. During the week I saw them sparkle with happiness, dance with mischief, smolder with resentment, shoot sparks of anger, and narrow into mere dark slits as she burst into hilarious laughter.

Impetuous, affectionate, and warm hearted, she never did things by halves or indifferently. When she pouted or rebelled, she did so with fury; when she enjoyed or approved of anything, she did it with enthusiasm. She showered me with attention and affection, but she never let me win from her in chess as the others sometimes did. With her I had to win by my own efforts or not win at all - so I never won.

Gisela had obviously been sent along to the station to help Reinhard with the bicycle. Just as obviously she preferred to walk with Tante Ida and me.

"Here, hold this on and steady it so I can push," Reinhard told her sharply after he had balanced my heavy bag on his bicycle.

Gisela had become deaf. Reinhard impatiently repeated his request. When Gisela still did not respond, he scowled helplessly and pushed off, holding onto the bag with his left hand and the handlebars with his right.

But my wardrobe case was heavy and awkward, and he had difficulty keeping it balanced on the bike with one hand.

"Gisela, come here," he called for aid. "Come here and help me!"

Gisela asked me a question, and listened intently for my reply.

"Gisela, I need you. Gisela, come here!"

I stopped talking, but Gisela still did not hear him.

Reinhard let the bicycle tilt over until the suitcase slid onto the cobblestones, and waited for us to catch up with him.

"I called you and called you," he told Gisela angrily. "And you heard me. Why didn't you come? You did hear me, didn't you?"

Gisela's black eyes sparkled with mischief, but she didn't condescend to answer. It was only when I offered to hold the suitcase myself that she relented. As Tante Ida and I walked slowly along on the sidewalk, the two disappeared from sight around a corner, forced into becoming reluctant teammates by my heavy bag.

Tante Ida had become a part of the family after the war. She and her husband had been missionaries to Africa, but had retired to Germany shortly before the war began. After her husband passed away, Tante Ida had continued living alone in Landau, but had fled during the worst of the bombing. When she returned at the close of the war, she had found her home and furniture undamaged, but another family had moved in. The Borchers took her into their home and began a legal fight for her things. The best they had been able to do, after much persistence and red tape, had been to retrieve some of her furniture.

The Borchers, too, had fled during the war, but upon their return had found only a gaping, huge hole where their home had been. Partly because of Heinrich's position, they had been able to rent a large second floor apartment in a comparatively undamaged part of the city. But no Germany family at that time was allowed seven rooms. They had to take in at least two other people, so they had been only too glad to have Tante Ida make her home with them permanently. She took her meals with the family and helped a little in the kitchen, but otherwise she was independent, with her own set of friends and her own social life.

When Tante Ida and I arrived at the Borchers home, the cleaning woman had just finished her work, and the table was set for supper. The two little girls, Hildegund and Adelheide, were sick in bed, and baby Gerlinde was asleep, but the rest of the family met us at the door.

Friedegard shook hands and curtsied gracefully, her black braids bobbing up and down on her back.

"I hope you had a nice train trip," she said politely in a low, melodious voice.

She was beautiful! Tall and slender, with soft brown eyes, an oval face with delicate features, and a clear, olive complexion, she moved with the grace and poise of a princess.

Heinrich greeted me much as Reinhard had, with a firm handshake and a slight bow. At first I thought him formal and stern, and found myself ill at ease with him.

Before and during the war he had been a primary teacher. After the war, since Landau was in the French Occupation Zone, his ability to speak French fluently and the fact that he had not been a Nazi party member had helped him

gain a supervisory position as Schulrat in the Bezirk of Bergzaubern. He had no car, so he spent many hours peddling his bicycle up and down hills and through lovely little woods making the rounds of the fifty schools under his supervision.

I soon learned that although he was reserved and shy, he was really a warmhearted, friendly man, with a delightful sense of humor and an inexhaustible repertoire of Pfälzer jokes. Although he disciplined the children and meted out punishment when needed, he was an indulgent rather than a stern father, and between him and his children there existed a relaxed, affectionate companionship.

Music was his hobby and avocation, which Elisabeth and the children shared with him. Each of the older ones played several instruments, and even Hildegund and Adelaide could carry their parts in the difficult musical numbers that the family chorus sang. When supervising the children's practice or directing the family chorus, Heinrich was an impatient perfectionist.

"But Friedel," he would shout. "What did you do there? That's not the way it goes. Reinhard, this is how that score should be played. Who sang that incorrect note? Liesel, Liesel, it was you again!"

The children paid little attention to the tirade except to correct the mistakes he pointed out, while Elisabeth smiled at him teasingly, a dimple showing in each cheek, and said in her droll, humorous way, "Yes, yes, it was I again. That's why I'm sitting here so contritely."

Elisabeth was the practical member of the family. It was she who did much of the work in their two large gardens on the outskirts of town, raising most of the vegetables and fruit her family needed. Although she was a university graduate, with training both as a social worker and as a kindergarten educator, she certainly had no aversion to working with her hands.

During the desperate months immediately after the war she had peddled her bicycle out to some farm almost daily to join the throngs hoeing through the freshly harvested vegetable patches in search of potatoes, turnips, or carrots which the farmers might have missed or discarded. In the fall she had gone to the woods to look for chestnuts and hazel nuts, and so had kept her family from going hungry until their own gardens began to yield again.

Oma Borchers shared her room with Suse and me, and in the evenings, after we were in bed, she also shared her thoughts and memories. Widowed early, she had supported her family by making fine embroidered linens and taking in sewing. She was still an artistic seamstress, and the girls' dresses bore the marks of her skill. She seemed happiest when she was busy, and during the day she worked hard in spite of her age. But she retired early and got up late, and spent hours reading in bed.

She read aloud to me for a while each evening, and again in the morning before we dressed. On the first evening she talked, remembering the Christmas the year they had fled from the bombs.

"We put it off as long as we could," she said. "Longer than we should have. By the time we went, the train tracks had already been blown up so we had to go on foot. We loaded the two youngest with some baggage onto the bicycles, but the rest of us walked, each with a rucksack on his back. Elisabeth pushed the baby buggy piled high with food and supplies for little Adelaide.

"It was cold, oh, so cold, and as we floundered through the deep snow with the airplanes droning above us, I wanted only one thing - to sink down into its soft depth and let my Heavenly Father take me home. But the others made me go on, and finally we reached the relatives at Bockschaft."

After she stopped talking, I had trouble going to sleep. I had read newspaper accounts and stories about the bombings and the fleeing refugees.

But I had always managed to keep them unreal and abstract in my mind. Hearing the soft, sad voice of this dear, sweet, old Christian grandmother tell about their suffering moved me too deeply for comfort.

The next day I had my opportunity to get acquainted with the little girls. They were still confined to their beds, even though they were feeling better and their temperatures were down. Gisela was assigned the job of taking care of them, so she spent most of her time in their bedroom, too. Since the other adults were busy with preparations for Christmas with which I could help very little, I appointed myself assistant to Gisela in keeping the patients contented.

Eight year old Hildegund was a petite, dainty little sprite with large, wide set brown eyes and long black braids. She lisped a little, so that Oma was constantly reminding her to talk plainly. I found her voice and lisp enchanting, and thought several times as I watched her, "I wonder whether she already knows the effect that plaintive, half pouting dimple smile and those beautiful luminous eyes will always have on people."

When she played chess with me she was careful to give me every advantage, sometimes sparing my important figures when she could have taken them. Once she even asked her father to help me. Heinrich took one look at my figures on the board, shook his head, and walked away.

"Impossible!" he said emphatically. "It's impossible at this point for you to win." But Hildegund didn't claim her victory until she had actually captured my last man.

Adelaide was a carbon copy of her grandmother Borchers - the shape of her face, the gray eyes, the light hair, and the sweet, sunny disposition. In some ways she was quite babyish for her age; in other things she was surprisingly knowledgeable and mature.

Baby Gerlinde was an energetic, active little nine-month-old, who was constantly in motion when she was not asleep. Oma and Tante Ida could not bear to hear her cry, and the little imp took full advantage of their solicitude.

Her mother tried to be firm with her, but even she would weaken at times and succumb to the little girl's plaintive whimpering when she wanted to sit on Elisabeth's lap at the coffee table instead of remaining in her crib.

Gerlinde quickly spotted me as another soft hearted victim, but when any of the adult members of the family were in the room, she preferred familiar arms to mine. During the first day I saw very little of her since her crib was in the living room, and that was off limits to the children that day since that is where the preparations for Christmas Eve were taking place.

In Germany the Christmas tree, aglow with lighted candles, and shining with decorations, is as much a part of the Christmas Eve surprise as the presents. Having the children help decorate it, or even seeing it beforehand would spoil the fun. Gisela found repeated reasons during the day why she simply had to go into the room, but she never did actually try to open the door.

When we weren't playing games in the sick room, the children read to me or sang songs while Gisela played her flute. Characteristically, she could play almost as well with her nose as with her mouth, and I nearly burst with silent laughter as I watched her play a lovely Christmas hymn with one nostril plugged shut and the flute held to the other nostril.

At four o'clock we adults had coffee in Tante Ida's room while the children had their snacks in their own room. We had just seated ourselves around the table when there was a knock at the door.

"I didn't dust the living room today," Gisela came in to tell her mother, her voice concerned, her face serious, but her eyes dancing. "Don't you think I should do it before we distribute the presents? I'm sure it is dusty."

"Go back into your room and finish your 'coffee'" her mother laughed, giving her a playful spat. "The living room was dusted today, and you know it."

In a few minutes there was another knock.

Again it was Gisela, this time bringing a telegram signed by all of the children, "Please, please! Hurry with the Bescherung (giving of the gifts) or we will burst!"

At last we had all finished coffee and everyone was dressed in his Sunday best. Even baby Gerlinde, who had worn only Strampelhosen (a garb for babies similar to pajamas with feet) up to this time, wore a dress for the special occasion. The patients were carried onto the two sofas in the living room, and the fun began.

The tree standing in front of a window stretched almost to the ceiling. Elisabeth and Heinrich had chosen and cut it themselves in the woods. Elisabeth had put on only white candles and a few simple decorations so that the symmetrical beauty of the branches could be fully appreciated.

The unwrapped gifts and a plate of nuts, cookies, and candy had been set at each person's place at the table. Before we looked at our gifts we gathered around the tree to sing and then stand reverently as Heinrich read a Scripture passage and prayed.

The presents were simple, but the children were delighted and satisfied. Oma had made new dresses for their dolls. Gisela got a metal ring to use for a popular ball game which she enjoyed playing, Friedegard had some music and a small purse, Reinhard some compasses and other equipment he needed for school. All of them got books, and their Grandmother Ellenberger in Munich had sent some clothing and a candy bar for each child.

Later in the evening we went to the Christmas Eve services at the church, where Heinrich played the organ while Friedegard and Suse sang in the choir and Reinhard played his flute.

Christmas Day was crowded with church activities. Early in the morning Heinrich and Elisabeth went with a group to sing at the city jail and at a Home for the Elderly. At the Christmas morning services, Heinrich again played the organ, and all three of them, Friedegard, Heinrich, and Reinhard, played their violins to accompany the choir. In the afternoon the family sang a special number for the worship service at the City Mission where Heinrich's brother Gerhard was pastor.

After the services we went to Gerhard's home for coffee. And again the families sang. What both amused and delighted me was the informality of the singing.

For most of the songs one of the group played the piano. At times other instruments were added, violins, the cello, flutes. Much of the time the adults sat relaxed in chairs and the children went on with their play. The little girls were busy in the doll house; the boys tried out new Christmas presents, even surreptitiously squirted each other with a water gun. But they were all singing, and the lovely tones might well have come from a professional choir.

Supper that evening at the Heinrich Borchers was simple. After the meal the family gathered around the piano again. This time they did not sing numbers from Christmas Oratorios or choir anthems as they had done before. They sang the simple Christmas songs our family sang when I was a child: "Stille Nacht, Heilige Nacht," "O Du Fröhliche, O Du Selige," "Ihr Kinderlein Kommet", - songs which were familiar to me when I was so young that I can't remember when I learned them.

They asked me to join them, and I wanted to. But I couldn't! I could only listen while I quietly wiped my tears and choked back sobs.

For the first time since I had come to Germany I was acutely homesick. For me the spacious big city apartment had become a little isolated farm house in Oklahoma. Mamma and Aunt Selma were putting the little ones to bed. Papa sat at the piano while my brother and sisters and I gathered around him to sing the songs we always sang on Christmas Eve.

I felt like a child again, and I wanted to go home.

Chapter 7

We Have to Toot the Horn

My visit to the Borchers in the summer proved to be even more fun than the one at Christmas time. By this time I had bought a car and my sister Hilda had come to Germany to spend her vacation time with me. I enjoyed having Hilda with me, and my car proved to be a special treat for the children.

Reinhard was especially interested, and he asked me question after question about it. Unfortunately, I couldn't give him very satisfactory answers. I had driven a car since I was eleven (Nobody had to have a driver's license in those years.) I can change a tire if the bolts aren't too tight. I have learned the hard way to keep gas in the tank and to check on the oil and water. I know when my motor is running smoothly and when it is not. But much further than that I can not go.

Reinhard asked about every button, pedal, and lever. Not satisfied with verbal questions, he asked permission to push, pull, or turn each one.

"How do you raise the hood?" he wanted to know after a time.

When I obligingly took the hint, the questions really began. "What is that for? How does this work? What is that called?"

I could identify the sparkplugs and the battery, but I didn't know the German names for them. As to which wires connected what and why, I hadn't the faintest idea, and I'd never been especially interested in finding out. Such ignorance and indifference Reinhard could not understand.

"You mean you don't know?" he said repeatedly, with honest surprise.

He found it hard to understand in the first place that I could drive a car when I couldn't even ride a bicycle. My explanation that I couldn't ride a bike because I had never had a chance to ride one when I was a girl left him more mystified than before.

"You never had a bicycle?" he asked astounded. "Why not?"

"When I was a girl my parents didn't have much money," I explained. "They couldn't afford to buy bicycles for us children."

"But you said you learned to drive an auto when you were a girl," he protested. "And a car costs much more money than a cycle."

My explanation that we lived on the farm so we had to have a car for transportation, but that bicycles would have been a luxury for our pleasure made little sense to him. He had no concept of the distances involved in rural Kansas. To him a bicycle was the accepted mode of transportation when one could not or did not want to walk. Farmers used wagons pulled by oxen or horses. For long distances one rode a train. Only rich people could afford a car.

He soon found out how useful a car could be. His mother, Elisabeth, had made tentative plans for the car when she found out we were coming.

"Do you like to pick blueberries?" she asked us the day after our arrival. "If so, we might go blueberry picking while you and Mother are here."

She explained that each year at this time she and one of the girls went to the mountains to pick berries. They rode the train as far as they could, and then walked the rest of the way. But if we went in the car, Aunt Frieda, who was here from Munich on a visit, and Oma Borchers could go along. We could go further up into the foothills, off the path of the other berry pickers. And we could bring home more berries than if we had to transport them by train.

Hilda and I eagerly fell in with the plan, and the next morning we set out - Elisabeth, Oma Borchers, Aunt Frieda, Hilda and I and little Nothard, whom Aunt Frieda had brought along for a visit with his cousins.

It was a cool, sunny day, with light clouds flitting over the sky and then building into fluffy masses. After we left the main road, we drove through a green valley, then left the car at the foot of one of the wooded mountains, while we walked up the slope, guided only by Elisabeth's knowledge of where blueberries would most likely be growing. Not another group of berry pickers could be seen or heard, and this was an unfamiliar spot even to Elisabeth.

We found a patch of bushes almost immediately so thickly loaded with large ripe berries that filling our containers was no chore.

Elisabeth had brought hot water in a thermos bottle, instant coffee in a small jar, milk in a tube, thick sandwiches of rye bread and wurst, and a chocolate bar for each of us.

Just before noon it began to rain, so we hurriedly covered the filled baskets and sat down on logs near them to eat, opening umbrellas and pulling our raincoats and capes over our heads to form miniature tents. Raindrops splashed into our coffee and dampened our bread, but no one really seemed to mind.

Soon after we had finished our meal, the shower stopped, the sun came out, and we went back to our picking.

We picked twenty five German pounds. When we got home, Elisabeth and Aunt Frieda packed two baskets full to send to Hildegard in Munich. Most of the rest of the berries vanished at supper time.

Since the Borchers children didn't get to go along berry picking, I thought it only fair that I take them riding in my car the next evening. Elisabeth gave her permission, providing we did not go far, and came back in time for the little girls to go to bed.

Giggling and chattering excitedly, they all helped me drive, taking turns putting up the turn signal wipers, and tooting the horn. Reinhard gave me directions, and he saw to it that we made as many turns as possible. Each pedestrian or bicycle we passed rated a loud toot from the horn. At crossings there had to be an extra blast or two.

When I suggested that they didn't need to use the horn so much, they were indignant.

"But we have to toot the horn," they protested in chorus. "We have to let them know that we're coming!"

My comment that as long as they were talking and laughing so loudly as they were the whole Bezirk would know we were coming without benefit of any horn brought a slight lowering of voices, but no abatement of horn blowing.

The children had talked of showing their cousins the car, so I wasn't surprised when Reinhard's directions brought us to the Gerhard Borchers' home. I gave Reinhard a little time to show off his knowledge of the car and then I herded everybody back in.

"We've got to go back," I told them. "I promised your mother I'd have the little girls home by their bedtime."

We had gone several blocks before I realized that my passenger personnel had changed. There were new hands working the blinkers and pressing the horn. Gisela had stayed with the Gerhard Borchers girls, while their two brothers were in the car.

"You can take us back home when you go get Gisela," Wolfgang assured me, "so we won't cause you an extra trip."

We left the little girls at home and started out again. But now Reinhard had had one more ride than Gisela. And the Gerhard Borchers girls had had none.

"That's not fair," Gisela told me with her most enticing smile. "And I know you want to be fair."

I am an easy pushover where children are concerned, and I was thoroughly enjoying their delight in the car.

"All right," I told them, loading up the girls. "But as soon as we come out even, we'll have to go home. It's bedtime for all of you by now."

We never did come out even, although we made several trips back and forth. The children kept score, and I was in no particular hurry to end the rides. But eventually my watch overrode my "sense of justice". I issued an ultimatum, and Wolfgang, who had gambled on one more round trip, had to walk home.

Chapter 8

A Refugee from Hitler's Purge

By the time I learned to know him personally, Mamma's brother Adolf was a happy resident at Thomashof. But he had not always been so fortunate. In fact, it was only because of the goodness of God (to quote Mamma) and through the quick action on Uncle Heinrich's part that he was still alive.

Adolf's early childhood was placid and uneventful. But the untimely death of his father seems to have affected his later life even more than it did that of his brothers and sisters.

When Adolf's father, my grandfather, died suddenly at the age of 43, Grandmother felt not only grief and shock, but a real concern for her children. For a number of years she herself had spent much of her time in bed because of a serious heart ailment. She had long faced the fact that she might leave her children motherless before they were grown, but now that they were fatherless, this took on an agonizingly frightening aspect.

A warmhearted, faithful, but not too capable relative had been doing the housework and helping to look after the children. She could be trusted to continue to do so if Grandmother had to leave them, but she could not do it alone, even if she had a home in which to care for them.

But the family had no home now. They could continue to live in the parsonage for the time being, but as soon as a new permanent pastor came to take over the church, they would need to make room for him and his family.

Grandfather's two unmarried sisters invited Grandmother to bring her family to Friedelsheim to live with them in the home where Grandfather had grown up. At the time that my great-grandfather had been minister of the Mennonite congregation at Friedelsheim these rooms at the back of the Mennonite Church had been the parsonage.

Grandmother appreciated the invitation, and she was tempted to accept it. But Tante Lenschen and Tante Marie did not really own the home themselves. The church and this former parsonage were a part of an old Burg (castle) belonging to the Mennonite congregation of Friedelsheim.

Another part of the Burg, across the courtyard from the church, had been remodeled to house the pastor who had come to serve the church after Pastor Ellenberger's death, so that the unmarried members of his family could continue to live in the rooms behind the church.

Grandfather had been one of the youngest of a large family. So one of his sisters still living in the Burg was considerably older than he. She might not have many more years to live. What Grandmother needed was a permanent refuge where her children would have a home if she became bed-fast or passed away.

There was also the problem of money. Tante Lenschen and Tante Marie supported themselves by teaching knitting and other handwork to young girls. But the income from this was barely enough to meet their own needs.

Grandfather had served two churches, but these small Mennonite congregations had been able to pay their pastor only a pittance. Grandfather's other activities had consisted mainly of studying and writing, from which he had received no extra income. So he had accumulated no savings on which his young widow could draw.

Grandmother had received a small inheritance when her father had passed away. But this she had invested with one of her brothers and a brother-in-law when they had needed money in order to rent a large Gut at Gelchsheim, near Würzburg. This estate included two dwelling places - the huge Schloss (castle) on the edge of the village, and a spacious three story manor house with gardens, barnyard, barns, and orchard nearer the center of town.

With her money invested at Gelchsheim, Grandmother had little choice. So she left the Pfalz, where she had gone as a bride with her young pastor husband, and moved back to Bavaria. Her oldest daughter had already gone to live with an uncle and aunt at Rottmannshart near Ingolstadt; her older son Heinrich, who was fourteen, was attending the Mennonite secondary school at the Weierhof, but she and the other three children found shelter in her sister's home at the Horsch Hof in Gelchsheim.

Since Heinrich was already attending a secondary school when his father passed away, Grandmother exerted every effort to help him continue his education. As the oldest son of a deceased Mennonite minister he was given special financial consideration at the Weierhof. But after that the financial struggle began. Although Heinrich had certainly done his part, his graduation from the university was an achievement for the whole family.

I can remember that when I was a teen-ager, I sometimes thought I detected a trace of resentment in Mamma's voice when she described the family effort to keep her older brother in school, for she herself would have liked to get more education than just the Volksschule. But she always ended on a note of pride, which at that time I interpreted as a subtle prod to motivate us to do our best in school. Heinrich had passed his final examination at the university with the highest marks ever made in all of Germany up to that time.

After his graduation, Heinrich went from one teaching position to another, always moving upward until his final achievement of the title of Oberstudienrat in Munich.

But his younger brother Adolf did not fare as well. He was still in elementary school when the family moved to Gelchsheim. Unable to transfer to a secondary school there, he continued in the Volksschule until his graduation. This meant that he would never be eligible to attend a university.

He might have gone to a trade school, or served an apprenticeship with some craftsman, but he had no aptitude for working with his hands, and no particular interest in learning a trade. He was a bookworm, who also liked to write. So he was put to work in the cowbarn at the Hof.

He was a sensitive, rather fastidious boy, small for his age, shy and unaggressive. Not being accustomed to farm animals, he found the care of the cows, and especially the large bulls, frightening. Shoveling manure and cleaning out the barns, carrying feed and water, taxed his physical strength, and he found the stench of the manure piles and the crude, ribald conversation of the day laborers with whom he worked repulsive almost beyond endurance.

One morning during his second summer at the work, he fell from the back of a loaded manure wagon in a convulsive seizure. When other seizures followed, the doctor diagnosed his problem as epilepsy, and suggested that he be put into an institution where he could receive the proper care.

Grandmother found it almost impossible to part with her son. If she had been able to care for him herself, or if they had had a home of their own, she would not have been able to give him up. But under the circumstances she had to ask herself the question, if she insisted on keeping Adolf with her at the Horsch Hof, what would become of him when she was no longer living?

So she committed him to Bruckberg, a Christian institution for mentally and physically handicapped men.

Adolf himself went almost willingly. The shame he felt because of his malady, added to the emotional torture he had already been enduring as he worked in the barnyard, made going away to almost any place seem more desirable than remaining where he was.

Soon after he arrived at Bruckberg, his seizures became milder, and after a short time they stopped completely. Adolf regarded his cure as a miracle, a direct answer to his prayers, for which he thanked God for the rest of his life. But his healing posed a new problem. Where would he go after his release from the institution? Back to the cowbarn?

The director of the institution helped grandmother make her decision. "Why not let Adolf stay at Bruckberg as an aid?" he suggested. Adolf would receive no salary, only a small allowance each month, but his fee payments would be lowered considerably. He would have a home in a place where he would receive good care if he should need it later on in life.

Much as she would have liked to have had her son with her again, the suggestion relieved Grandmother's mind of the burden of concern for his future. Adolf himself concurred happily. Since epilepsy was considered an inheritable disease, he did not even consider marriage, but here at the institution he would have a family of sorts.

He felt real empathy and sympathy for the unfortunate men who would be under his care, and grateful admiration for the staff with whom he would be working. The regimented, but calm and orderly routine at the institution suited him well. Even though there were tasks for all of the men who were able to work at all, there was still time for reading and studying, and for walks in the hilly woodlands surrounding Bruckberg.

Mamma has a photo of Uncle Adolf posing with some of his charges. The men are a pathetic looking group - a dwarf with a huge head, an older man with distorted features, younger men staring vacantly into space. But Uncle Adolf himself looks healthy, relaxed, and happy.

Mamma had always expected that Uncle Adolf would have a home at Bruckberg until his death, and I can recall that as both of them grew older, this was a source of reassurance and comfort to her. So she was surprised and shocked when she received a letter from him shortly before the United States entered World War II, saying that he was now living at Thomashof.

At the time mail communication between Germany and the United States was not yet cut off, but everything going into or coming out of Germany was heavily censored. Mamma spent more time trying to ferret hidden meanings from her brothers' letters than she did in reading the actual words they wrote. Now she was upset and concerned.

"Something is wrong," she said emphatically. "I can feel it when I read the letter. Something has happened that he cannot write about. In his last letter he made no mention of any plans to move. And that was written only a few weeks before this one. Why would he leave Bruckberg so suddenly?"

In our newspapers she had been reading about Hitler's extermination of misfits and undesirables in other places in Germany. "Perhaps he decided that the men at Bruckberg weren't fit to live either," she conjectured. "Maybe that's why Adolf had to leave."

Even though she tried all sorts of subtle questions in her letters to her brothers, she wasn't able to get any more information. If either Uncle Heinrich or Uncle Adolf knew more than Uncle Adolf had written, neither felt free to write about it.

It was only after the close of the war that Mother was able to confirm her suspicions. Hitler had indeed taken over Bruckberg, she learned, and the patients had been taken elsewhere. Exactly what happened to them, Uncle Adolf did not know.

After I got to Germany, I was able to glean a few more details, but even so, many of our questions remained unanswered. I did find out that although Uncle Adolf had been working at Bruckberg as an aid for almost fifty years, he was still considered a patient, since he had originally been committed to the institution because of his epilepsy, and had never been officially released or dismissed.

I learned that quick, decisive action on Uncle Heinrich's part had separated Uncle Adolf from Hitler's victims before it was too late. But even Aunt Frieda did not seem to know definitely whether Uncle Heinrich had in some way learned about Hitler's intentions, or had simply anticipated that something like that would happen.

Actually, the why and how did not really matter. The important thing was that Uncle Adolf had been saved and was living happily at Thomashof.

Thomashof was a unique place. I don't know of any spot in the United States that would compare to it. The brochures label it as "Bibel und Erholungsheim" (Bible and recreation or convalescent home). But at the time I visited there frequently, it seemed to be much more than that.

The Mennonite Deaconesses of Germany had their headquarters at Thomashof, and lived there when they were not out in some village or home nursing the sick. Besides Uncle Adolf there were several other permanent elderly guests, and several Mennonite displaced persons from northern Germany had found refuge there.

Other guests came and went, for the Home was a popular vacation spot, especially for convalescents who wanted rest and quiet, or a chance to stroll along the footpaths leading through the woods which were a part of the grounds.

Almost every week some church conference or retreat was in session in the large meeting hall adjoining the main building. Not only Mennonite groups, but other denominations as well, often took advantage of the convenient facilities Thomashof had to offer.

For Uncle Adolf his new home was a paradise. He no longer had to share a ward with other men for whom he was responsible. Instead, he had his own small, but comfortable room. His physical needs, meals, laundry,

mending, etc, were efficiently taken care of. Although not regimented as it had been at Bruckberg, life at Thomashof was an orderly, calm, familiar routine, yet there was always something new to add interest and keep the days from becoming humdrum.

Uncle Adolf had his work to do, both outside and in the house. The rabbit hutches were his responsibility, and he took a personal interest in each of the animals, much as he had in his patients at Bruckberg. He also had the keys to the bookcases in the library, and it was his job to check out books to the guests, charging each a rental fee of ten pfennig. Although he had not been asked to do so, he set himself the task of reading all of the books, so that he could give information to potential readers about the contents.

But with all of this, he still had plenty of time for his favorite form of recreation - long walks in the woods, or along the forest path to Durlach.

However, the most satisfying part of life at Thomas for him was the intellectual stimulation and challenge. He attended many of the retreat and conference sessions, and spent hours poring over scripture passages used for the discussions, and writing his own interpretation or comments.

Shyly he showed me some of these essays one day.

I have always had trouble deciphering Uncle Adolf's scrawling script, but I read enough of one of the expositions so that I wanted to shed tears for the scholarly potential that had been wasted because this man had not had a chance to get an education.

When I asked him on one of my visits what I might get him for a Christmas gift, he finally admitted that there were two things that he had wanted for some time - an Aktenmappe (brief case) and an English-Germany dictionary.

"I learned Greek and Hebrew from these books of Father's", he said, carefully unlocking a bookcase and taking out the old books to show me. "I wanted to know these languages so that I could understand the Scriptures better. But lately there have been so many Americans who have visited Thomashof. And especially now that you are here, I would also like to learn English. But I have no books to help me with that."

Naturally, I satisfied both of these wishes, and after that he tried out some English words and phrases each time that I visited him. And whenever I took him somewhere in my car, he always carried the brief case. I often wondered what he carried in it, but I never asked, for I suspected that its usefulness to him might be more symbolic than utilitarian.

The first time I visited Uncle Adolf at Thomashof I had trouble finding it. Everyone whom I asked for directions in Karlsruhe, and later in the suburb Durlach, had heard of Thomashof, but no one seemed to know exactly how to get there.

The agent at the information window in the Bahnhof (railroad station) at Karlsruhe told me to take a street car to Duflach and inquire of the conductor where I should get off. The friendly conductor told me to stay on the car until the end of the line. But at this point he didn't seem to be able to tell me exactly which street to take to get to the highway leading to Thomashof.

"Eine Stunde gerade aus," (One hour straight ahead) he said, waving vaguely in what seemed to me a westerly direction.

I inquired from several more persons whom I passed on the street, and each of them, after some hesitation, indicated that I should keep on in the direction in which I was going. So I just kept on walking, and after a time I found myself on a road curving gently upward along the side of a forest of evergreens.

This was in early fall, and I had not yet learned that it took me longer than one hour to walk the "eine Stunde" they indicated. Neither did I know that "gerade aus" could not be given its literal interpretation of "straight ahead" because few streets or roads in Germany go straight.

So when I came to a fork in the road and found that neither branch went straight on, I was puzzled, and not at all sure that the road I chose was the right one to take. And when I had walked for more than one hour without reaching my destination, I became uneasy.

When I finally got to Thomashof, I was in need of the warm welcome I received. Several of Mamma and Aunt Selma's friends were waiting for me, Sister Elise van der Smissen, who was a deaconess, and her crippled sister, Lydia; Marie Schneider, a cousin of mothers, who worked in the kitchen, and Martha Funk, who helped with the laundry and mending. All of these were names that I recognized because I had written them into my little blue notebook where I listed the people whom I was supposed to visit.

But Uncle Adolf was nowhere around. He had disappeared earlier in the afternoon, and now no one knew where to find him. So they took me to my room, where I found flowers in a vase and a bowl of fresh fruit on the bedside table, and all sorts of other little personal touches to make me welcome and comfortable.

When I came back downstairs, Charlotte, a refugee from the Danzig area who was living at Thomashof while she worked on the Mennonite Lexikon (encyclopedia), showed me to a small sitting room where I could wait for Uncle Adolf, and visited with me until he finally arrived.

She was an intelligent, talented young woman, and I appreciated her attitude toward Uncle Adolf.

"I enjoy Onkel Ellenberger very much", she told me. "He has a brilliant mind. But he cannot always express himself easily. So one has to learn to know him before one realizes this."

As soon as Uncle Adolf entered the room, I began to understand why he had apparently tried to postpone the meeting with me. For a time we had trouble communicating with each other. He was embarrassingly "tongue tied", apparently not being able to think of anything to say to this

American niece. And I was still having trouble expressing myself in German. But later, while he was showing me his rabbits, he became more at ease with me, and I sensed the beginning of the strong bond of affection which developed between us during the year.

Even the latest photos that Mamma and Aunt Selma had of Uncle Adolf had not prepared me for this thin, frail body, bent slightly to one side, nor the gentle, resigned expression in his eyes. I thought of what Aunt Frieda had said, "Adolf is as thankful for a Pfennig as most people would be for a hundred Marks."

He was one of the most contented, trusting men I have ever met, with complete faith in God and in the goodness of his fellow men. I found him so touchingly grateful for the smallest things I did for him that I found myself sending him unexpected gifts - a small parcel or a ten Mark note slipped into a letter. In return he wrote long letters to me, which often included little sermonettes, or interpretations of some topic or Scripture passage on which he had been working.

I visited Thomashof as often as I could, and after that first meeting, Uncle Adolf was always on hand to greet me. When I said good-bye to him on my last visit to Thomashof, he was so visibly broken up over the parting that I confided in him, telling him something I had kept to myself up to that time. I planned to go back to the United States to teach for one year. But I was going to try to come back to Germany to teach again the following year, and I would bring Mamma with me as my dependent.

She would have to live with me wherever I was stationed, but she could spend weeks at Thomashof. And on week-ends I could take both of them on visits to relatives or on excursions to interesting places in Germany.

Uncle Adolf had little to say in reply, and the happy smile that stole over his face was tinged with disbelief and doubt in his eyes. But on the card attached to the little farewell gift he later gave me he wrote, "with the firm assurance that we will see each other again on this earth, auf Wiedersehen."

I tried to carry out my plan when I got home. But Aunt Selma was sick at the time, and I couldn't talk Mamma into leaving her to go so far away, even though Aunt Selma joined me in trying to persuade Mamma to make the trip.

So year after year I postponed applying again for a teaching position in Germany, until suddenly Mamma's own health would no longer allow her to do anything so strenuous.

When we received the notice of Uncle Adolf's rather sudden death, I cried, not only because the dear old man had passed away, but also because his going finalized the death of a cherished dream. In my mind I changed his farewell message to, "With the firm assurance that we will see each other in heaven."

I feel confident that Onkel Adolf will be there!

Chapter 9

Back to My Roots

I. The Grave in Monsheim

Although Mamma grew up at Gelchsheim in Bavaria, it was at Monsheim, in the Palatinate where she spent the first years of her life.

I went there from Landau one dreary winter morning during my Christmas vacation, and one of Mamma's cousins, Katherine Hirschler, who lived at Monsheim, showed me around.

Grandfather's picture was hanging in the entry way of the little Mennonite Church where he had served as minister. It was the same picture that had always hung in Aunt Selma's room at home, and it made me feel strangely at home in this unfamiliar place.

Not far from the church was the parsonage where Mamma was born. It looked ancient, and Katherine assured me it still looked just as it always had since the time of her earliest memories. She introduced me to the lady who now lived in the house and hinted strongly that we would like to see the rooms inside. But the woman did not invite us in, so I could only take with me a quick mental picture of the yard and sheds, and a snapshot of the front of the house, blending drab and gray with the cloudy December sky.

I went back later by myself to look at the house again from across the street and to see the inside in my imagination as Mamma had often described it - the thick stone walls, the small rooms, damp and musty in winter, pleasantly cool when the weather was hot, the inconvenient kitchen, the tiny bedrooms, and Grandfather's study on the second floor.

The study had been Grandfather's sanctuary, which none of the children entered except by direct invitation. But when they played in the room below, they would often hear the sharp rap of his walking stick on the floor, which

meant that their noise was disturbing Grandfather's contemplation or the writing of his sermon.

The shelves of books in the study had had a special fascination for Mamma, and Grandfather had promised to teach her Latin, Hebrew, and Greek when she was older. But he never did, for he died when she was only seven.

Katherine took me to visit Prediger Händiges and his wife, who lived in the "new" parsonage which was now more than sixty years old. Grandfather had helped plan the parsonage, but his family had never lived in it, because it hadn't quite been finished when they left the Palatinate.

The Mennonite cemetery was at the edge of the village, not far from the new parsonage. Grandfather's grave was at the front, near the entrance, a little apart from the others, as befitted a "shepherd of the flock."

The lettering on the marker was almost invisible, and the grave site was ill kept. A single climbing rose bush grew on it, the bare thorny branches a tangled mass which almost hid the stone.

The bush had an old look, as though it might have been growing beside the grave for a long time. I wondered whether Grandmother, grief stricken and ill, might have planted it there before she moved with her five children to the haven of her older sister's home.

When Hilda and I drove back to Monsheim in the summer, the grave had an entirely different look. Katherina Hirschler had cut down the rose bush, and had cleared off the grass and weeds so that she could plant flowers. They were blooming now, gay and orderly around the marker.

We thanked her, touched that she had taken time to do this for us, and offered to leave some money if she would see about having the grave properly looked after from then on.

But she refused the offer. "I'll be glad to look after it myself," she assured us. "Now that I know you care about it, doing that will give me real pleasure."

The sight of the flowers on the grave in the summer and Katherine's interest in it pleased and touched me. But by now it has almost faded from my memory. It is the rosebush beside the old tombstone that remains in my mind.

The rosebush seemed to belong there - old and enduring, looking dry and forsaken in the winter, but rallying each summer to produce more roses.

II. The Cemetery at Würzburg

Anna Schaub later became one of my favorite people in Germany. But the first time I want to see her - on impulse and unannounced - she was not at home.

Disappointed, I remembered that there was another spot in Würzburg that I wanted to see, my grandmother Ellenberger's grave.

I knew where the cemetery was. I had passed it on my way from the Bahnhof to Anna's home. But I had no idea where to look for the grave in that vast expanse.

For a time I wandered around, just looking and enjoying the bright, crisp October weather. On three sides of the cemetery there were ruins, large bomb craters and masses of rubble so completely crushed that it was impossible to guess what kind of buildings might have stood there.

But the cemetery, even though it was in the heart of the city, very near the Bahnhof, which had also been damaged, had not been touched.

After a time I spoke to a woman who was putting some flowers on a grave, and told her what I wanted.

"Go to the caretaker's office near the main entrance," she told me, pointing. "They have a record of each grave, and will be glad to give you the information."

At the office they looked up the location of the grave for me, and a young man went with me to find it.

I spotted it before he did, recognizing the headstone from the picture that Aunt Selma kept carefully put away with other keepsakes.

Aunt Selma was the youngest of her family, and had never been strong. At the time of her birth, Grandmother was already suffering from a severe heart ailment, and it was only natural that a close bond should form between the ailing mother and her frail child.

From the time she was an adolescent, Mamma had taken care of the two. But when Mamma had a chance to come to America and marry, Aunt Selma and grandmother had moved in with Uncle Heinrich and his family. Aunt Selma had then taken care of Grandmother with Aunt Frieda's help. So it was Aunt Selma who had borne the emotional brunt of Grandmother's last illness and death. She never quite got over it, and still mourned her mother even after she had come to America to join her sisters.

Standing beside the familiar looking stone, the memory of Aunt Selma's tears struck me so vividly that my own tears began to flow. My guide had been looking at the marker to make sure it had the same name as the one on the card.

"1910," he read, "Oh, she's been dead a long time!"

When he turned to me and saw me crying, a puzzled expression crossed his face.

"Well, we found the right one without any trouble," he said quickly. "Auf Wiedersehn."

As I watched his hasty retreat, I thought, "I'll bet he thinks I'm nuts, crying about a grandmother who died forty years ago, before I was even born."

But I wasn't crying because of Grandmother's death. I had no reason to mourn this woman whom I had never known. I was crying because -- Just why was I crying?

I suppose I was crying for a number of reasons, each one of them hard to put into words.

III. The Horsch Hof in Gelchsheim

Kathi Hodel was Mamma's girlhood chum, as well as her cousin. The two were the same age, and they both grew up on the Horsch Hof in Gelchsheim. After Mamma went to America, there were plans for Kathi to go, too, to marry my Uncle Rudolf, my father's brother. But World War I intervened, and by the time it was over, it was too late to carry out the plan that Mamma, Aunt Selma, and Kathi had in mind. I do not know just why she did not come. Perhaps by that time her mother had passed away, and Kathi, as the oldest daughter, had to look after her father.

It was too bad that Kathi hadn't come to America, I decided after I learned to know her. With her resourcefulness, her overflowing energy even at sixty, and her zest for new experiences, she would have made a good farmer's wife in Kansas.

When I went to visit Gelchsheim, I stopped in Geibelstadt and took Kathi with me. The people who were renting the estate now were not at home, so we stood in the large barnyard, looking at the huge four story house,

while Kathi pointed out the windows of the rooms on the second floor where Grandmother had lived with her daughters. Just above that, on the third floor, had been the Hodel's home.

As I walked through the immense barns of this place where Mamma had grown up as the "poor cousin", and looked into the cellar room which had housed the creamery where Mamma had worked before she went to the United States, I remembered her story of how she had been sent as an apprentice to learn to make cheese and butter, when what she had wanted so very much had been to have a chance to go on to a higher school, or at least to become a seamstress.

Mamma's life in America was not easy, and there had been times, especially during the first homesick years, when she had wondered whether she should have come.

Standing in the barnyard of the Hof in Gelchsheim, with the stench of the manure pile heavy in my nostrils, I knew what I would write home in my next letter.

"You did the right thing when you went to America," I would tell Mamma. "Now that I'm here in Germany, I'm sure."

IV - Wallertheim

Our Müller ancestral home in Germany is at Wallertheim in the Palatinate, to which Heinrich Müller came in the early 1700's from Switzerland to live as a Landwirt und Prediger. (farmer and minister) The family genealogy goes back to Switzerland where the Müllers became Mennonites during the time of the Anabaptist persecutions. But our Kansas twig is an offshoot of the Wallertheim branch. So Wallertheim was one place I wanted to see.

The old house looked familiar, just like the pictures in the genealogy book, and probably much as it had looked when my great grandfather had built it and had raised his large family there. The house was no longer used as a dwelling place, but it was still in good condition. The old door was intact, with its ornate trimming and the sign above it, written in script: 18 - Johannes Müller - 32.

I looked at the rooms in the house and went through the barns and the Scheuer (granary) where in grandfather's time they had threshed and stored the wheat. I walked in the fields with Papa's cousin who now owned the place, and talked about the crops.

I snapped picture, asked questions, and jotted down notes. But the incident which made the most vivid impression on me during my visit at Wallertheim was only remotely connected with my ancestral background.

We visited another of Papa's cousins, an elderly widow who was living with her son and his family. As we sat at coffee, the son and his wife came home from the field, riding in a heavy cart drawn by two strong oxen. They joined the group for a little while, then the son looked up at the clock.

"It's time to milk," he said to his wife.

"Yes," she agreed. "It's time to get started."

But the young man remained seated and continued to visit with us. It was his wife, who had been working in the field with him all day, and who would no doubt later get the evening meal and put the children to bed, who stood up and went to get the milk pails.

As I watched her walk to the barn, I thought, "seeing the home of my forefathers has been extremely interesting to me. But I'm glad that Papa decided to come to America to live."

Chapter 10

Pages from my Blue Notebook

I. Warm hospitality, a Boat Trip and Ruins

When I left Kansas to go to Germany, I took with me a little blue notebook containing over seventy addresses of Germany in almost every part of the country whom Mamma or Papa or Aunt Selma would like to have me contact.

These names included relatives, friends, friends of relatives, relatives of friends, pen pals, and the recipients of relief packages who had sent thank you letters and started a correspondence with the donors.

When I got back home, I packed the notebook away with my other souvenirs, so I still have it, dog-eared and nearly worn out from the many times I referred to its pages.

Some of the names in the notebook mean nothing to me now. I can't even remember why I wrote them down. But others are an important part of the vivid kaleidoscope of memories to which my heart returns.

Nothing I had heard or read about the war's destruction, or had seen up to that time in Germany in pictures or in actuality had prepared me for the ruins I saw in Mainz.

I went there soon after my arrival in Germany, when we had a free day during our orientation week at Bad Nauheim. It was my birthday, and I really wanted to accept my cousin Elisabeth's invitation to come to Landau to celebrate the occasion with her family.

But remembering that I was supposed to attend an important meeting for teacher-principals the next morning, I decided not to travel that far.

Consulting my little notebook, I settled on Emil Müller in Mainz as an alternative. He was Papa's cousin, and his name had been given to me both by Papa and by my aunts. Also - since the end of the war my brother Ernie had been corresponding with him about our Müller-Mueller genealogy. So he was on my list of "have to" visits.

On the map Mainz looked very close to Bad Nauheim, so it would no doubt be easier for me to visit Emil and his family now than it would be later from Ansbach.

To my delight, the connections between Bad Nauheim and Mainz were perfect. I left by military bus at 7:30 in the morning for Frankfurt, and then took the fast train to Mainz, getting there by 10:30. The man at the newstand in the station gave me such good directions for getting to Kreyssigstrasse by street car, that I was at my destination sooner than I could believe possible.

When I got off the streetcar at Kreyssigstrasse I stood and stared around me, hardly able to comprehend what I saw. For blocks and blocks and blocks there was nothing but ruins. In a few places partially demolished buildings had been repaired, and were being used as homes again. I walked toward the closest of these, the corner of what had apparently once been a large apartment complex. It had to be Kreyssigstrasse 2; there was nothing else nearby that was still inhabitable!

Since I was coming without invitation and completely unexpected, I had planned to wait until after lunch time to go to the Müller home, but in my pleasure at finding the place so quickly, I completely forgot to look at my watch. It wasn't until I happened to glance at the clock as I entered

their living room, that I realized that I had come just in time to eat - 11:30. And I couldn't stay only a few minutes and then leave because I had already told them that my train back to Bad Nauheim left at 3:52.

When I apologized for thoughtlessly coming at such an inconvenient time, Emil's wife reassured me graciously.

"Think nothing of it," she said warmly. "My sister arrived for a visit just minutes before you came, so we are prepared for dinner guests. But it would not have mattered anyway. We are so happy to have you come."

She was a pretty woman who smiled easily, with her eyes as well as her lips. I could not imagine hereever being unkind, rude, or unfriendly to anyone.

Emil was a "Müller" in appearance, and I think I would have recognized him as one if I had met him in the crowded Frankfurt Bahnhof.

He was tall and well built like my uncles Sam and Peter and my brother Ernie. The shape of his face and his nose were very familiar, and his ruddy cheeks marked him as kin to Papa and Aunt Katherine.

When I remarked about the resemblance, Emil laughed and said, "And I was about to tell you that you are a "Müller". You remind me very much of my sister Matilda."

Emil was the Rector (principal) of a girls' school, with nineteen teachers under him. After dinner he showed me his school, even taking me briefly into one of the classrooms.

"There is a shortage of everything since the war," he told me with a sigh. "I have five new teachers this year who have not yet passed their exams. But their eagerness makes up for their lack of certification, and most of them are doing well."

The Müller's only child, Erna, was married to a teacher, too.

"They're in Bad Nauheim right now visiting Willi's parents," Erna's mother told me. "That is where we spent much time during the war."

When I told her that I would also be in Bad Nauheim for a few more days, she said eagerly, "Oh, then you can visit Erna, too. She will be delighted!"

I looked up the Brohs that very evening, and had time for several more visits with them and their four year old Gisela before I had to leave Nauheim.

Gisela was an outgoing, happy, uninhibited little girl, with a lively imagination. She helped entertain her American visitor more heartily, I think, than her parents would have preferred.

When Erna was telling me about the terrors of the war and of the hard times after the war, Gisela informed us cheerily that there would soon be another war. And then she began enthusiastically to describe how it would be -- with the airplanes coming, and everyone hurrying down to the cellar, and the house burning up, and a bomb destroying the barn so that the rabbits would be killed.

When her father said emphatically, "God forbid that there will be another war!" she answered, "Yes, there will be one," in much the same tone of voice that one would use to say, "Christmas is coming soon."

"She doesn't know what she's talking about, her mother said. "She was born ten days after the end of the war. So she didn't have to find out what it was like."

When my sister Hilda visited me in July we went back to Mainz to visit the Müllers and the Grohs again, and their hospitality was just as warm and sincere as it had been the previous August.

Erna's husband, Willi, went with Hilda for a boat excursion on the Rhine, a trip hich had taken earlier with some American teacher friends, while Erna and I drove along the river in my car. Hilda and Willi joined us

for the trip back, and we stopped to see a beautiful restored castle and the National Denkmal (Monument) high up on the side of a mountain.

I noticed two main differences between this visit and my first one. Gisela was a year older and taller, with a more mature, although still delightful, style of entertaining guests.

And the appearance of the ruins in Mainz had changed!

When I had looked across the street from the Emil Müller's apartment window in August, I had seen nothing but rubble and a huge two-mouthed machine - a miniature factory, as it were. I had watched in fascination as the monster gobbled up rubbish with one mouth, while simultaneously spew-out large firm building blocks with the other.

Now, the following July, the blocks which I had seen in the making had already been turned into new homes.

II. An International Funeral

One of my deep regrets is that I didn't visit Michael Horsch at Hellmansberg soon after I got to Ansbach. I remembered this cousin of Mamma's well from his visits to us in America, and I had an invitation to visit him in his home. But I didn't get to see him, not even at his funeral, because the casket had already been closed by the time I got there.

One Friday in early October I got a special delivery letter from Hildegard Rohde in Munich, telling me that Michael Horsch had passed away as the result of a stroke. The funeral was to be on Saturday afternoon at two o'clock.

My train got to Ingolstadt at 1:00, barely in time to make connections with the Personenzug (local train) from there to Kösching, the station nearest to Hellmansberg.

The train to Kösching was packed, which surprised me because Kösching is a small place. But almost immediately I realized from the conversation that all of the passengers were going to Hellmannsberg.

At Kösching two big chartered busses were waiting to take the passengers to Hellmannsberg. Cousin Heine had come on one of them to meet me. Aunt Frieda was a sister to Michael's wife, and the family had come from Munich the day before.

When we got to Hellmannsberg the Aussegnung (farewell service) in Onkel Michael's room had already started. This service was for close relatives only, but Heine took me up with him. The room was packed, and there were so many people standing in the hall that I couldn't get close enough to the door to even really look at the coffin and got only a glimpse of how beautifully his daughter Erna had decorated the room with flowers.

As we slipped quietly up the stairs, I could hear lovely female voices singing, and found out afterwards it had been a group of Michael's nieces, Hildegard Rohde among them.

After the service in his room, Michael's casket was carried down to the yard where most of the people were waiting.

It is hard to find words to describe Hellmannsberg to someone who has not seen it. It is now the Hof (farm yard) of a large estate. But it was once a monastery, and it still looks like a large cloister, with the buildings in a square around the courtyard.

The yard is immense, and it was packed with people. Afterwards I heard someone estimate that there were a thousand people in attendance, but I would have guessed many more.

From the balcony above the main entrance an instrumental group played hymns while the coffin was being carried out of the house, and then a choir

sang, and a young man spoke briefly. Then the crowd followed the casket to the family graveyard in the garden.

Only the immediate family and those taking part in the service had room inside the little cemetery, but Heine had swept me along so that I had a place just outside the waist high stone wall surrounding the grave plot, where I could see and hear well.

Michael Horsch's activities had spread his influence far and wide. He had not only been a leader among the German Mennonites, but through his Mennonitische Hilfswerk (relief service) he had worked in close cooperation with the Mennonite Central Committee and other American Mennonite relief groups, as well as with other church in Germany. So it was only natural that his funeral should be an international and interdenominational event.

The services lasted three hours.

Ministers from each of the Mennonite areas of Germany and a number of ministers from other denominations in Ingolstadt spoke; representatives from the city of Nürnberg and of Ingolstadt made remarks; several men associated with Michael in the Hilfswerk took part.

One of them made me almost homesick, for his German had such a definite American accent. Another tall, well built man looked American to me, although his German was impeccable. I later found out that the first man was a Mennonite Central Committee worker from Pennsylvania and the second one from Canada where the German language was still being used in many of the Mennonite churches.

After his remarks, each man laid down a wreath from the group he represented, and threw a handful of evergreen twigs into the open grave.

It was almost dark when the guests who had come from a distance filed into the Kapelle (the room that had been the chapel in the monastery) to eat the meal that had been prepared for them. As Heine and I mingled with the group, I realized that the funeral now only had an international flavor, it represented a gathering of the "clan" as well.

If I had had my little blue notebook with me, I could have checked off most of the names. There were few relatives on my list who weren't at Hellmannsberg that day.

III. The Village D.P.s

Erkenbrechtshausen was a quiet, serene village - a little cluster of weathered stucco houses and small, crowded barnyards surrounded by a patchwork of fields and miniature wooded plots. No bombs had fallen here, and the aftermath of the holocaust had affected the farmers comparatively little. When I visited the village, it would have been easy for me to imagine that World War II had never happened, except for one thing - the village displaced persons, or D.P.s as they were usually called.

Mamma's cousins, Christine and Marie Landes, and Marie's husband Peter, also a Landes, lived at Erkenbrechtshausen. They had invited me by letter several times, and I had finally written that I would come on the first Sunday afternoon in May if that were suitable to them.

I had their address in my little blue notebook, and it wasn't until I was well on my way that I realized that this information gave me only a vague idea where the village was or how to get there.

The address told me that it was somewhere near Crailsheim, which was on my map, but it gave me no clue as to what direction to take from there.

I had learned from experience that not many people in a town of the size of Crailsheim would know the names of all of the surrounding little villages, so that asking for directions to Albertshausen in Crailsheim would be almost like asking someone in Hutchinson, "How do I get to Mr. Brown's farm?"
Erkenbrechtshausen

But looking for it myself without asking for information would be like hunting for the proverbial needle in a haystack. I might drive around all afternoon to dozens of villages without reaching the right one.

As I neared Crailsheim, I had no trouble finding someone to ask for information. The road led through a lovely wooded area, and it was crowded with families out for a Sunday afternoon stroll. The first couple I asked couldn't tell me how to get to Erkenbrechtshausen, but they could tell me the general direction to take.

"At least I'm on the right track," I thought, making the turn they had indicated to me. "I'm glad I didn't wait until I got to Crailsheim to try to find out."

I drove in that direction for a few minutes, then asked again. This time the information was more specific. In all I had to ask only three times and backtrack only once before I reached the village.

Christine was waiting for me in front of their Hof.

"It occurred to me that you would not know which place is ours," she told me. "And it's such a nice day to be outdoors."

Christine had been in poor health all of her life, and during the past winter had had a long bout with flu and colds. She looked frail and thin, but otherwise there was nothing of the chronic invalid about her. Alert and vivacious, warm and friendly, she took a keen interest in people and events both in the village and in other parts of the world.

Marie was younger, a quiet, stolid, heavy set person. Peter was the epitome of what the word "Bauer" (German farmer) suggests to me. Marie had helped care for Christine's physical needs since their parents' death, but it was obvious that Christine was the leader of the two. Between them there existed a strong bond of affection, which showed itself especially in Christine's voice when she said anything about "my Marie" to me.

Their house was old, with small, crowded rooms, but the window panes sparkled with cleanliness, and there wasn't a chair out of place.

Peter's farm was small, and in past winters he had gone into the nearby forest to cut wood, to supplement the meager income from his few acres. But now that more and more of the prisoners of war were coming home, there were more than enough younger men in the area, so that this past winter he had not been asked to help cut wood.

"It meant that we had very little cash to spend," Marie said wistfully, to which Christine responded quickly, "But we managed to do all right without it."

"I now have two cows," Peter added proudly, "so we have extra milk to sell, and I have a team to work the fields. We also have three hogs and some chickens."

After visiting a while and having "coffee", I took the three for a ride in my car. As we drove slowly through the village, people stared and waved, and I realized that even a small car like mine was a novelty to them.

At their suggestion we drove to the next village, where we climbed a low hill to a little church from which there was a beautiful view which Christine had wanted to show me.

"And now we must go to see the Beyers," she exclaimed as we started back to Erkenbrechtshausen.

I was surprised at the warmth and eagerness in Christine's voice. I knew that the Beyers were displaced persons, a Catholic family from Sudetenland, who had been assigned a room in the Landes home. I also knew that for

some reason they were no longer living there, but I had no idea what that reason was. Apparently, judging from Christine's attitude, the move had not been motivated by any ill will between the two families.

The Displaced Persons as a group had become quite familiar to me. Even the smallest villages that I had visited had had at least one family of these displaced persons living in it, and I imagine there were few villages in Germany that were exempt. The D.P.s had been assigned to their rooms by the government, and neither they nor the farmers had had any choice in the matter.

Many of the farmers resented the intruders, begrudging them the room which they would rather have kept for themselves. If they were not downright hostile to the strangers, at best they simply left them alone.

For their part, many of the displaced persons were restless and unhappy. Some of them had lived in cities before the war, and had been financially well off. They thought themselves socially above the farmer-peasants with whom they were forced to live now, and had difficulty adjusting to the dull, slow pace of life in the villages.

They complained that the farmers were selfish and unfriendly, but they themselves were often cold, critical, aloof, and unappreciative.

Apparently the relationship between the Beyers family and the Landes family was different.

Christine directed me to the Beyers' home, a neat new stone house at the edge of the village set on a knoll close to where the land dropped away towards a wooded stream. As we drove, she enthusiastically told me about the house.

"Herr Beyer and Otto are both bricklayers," she said. "And last winter, after the field work was done, they began building a Häusle (little house) for themselves. They dug the stone by hand from a place at the river bank and carried it to the hill where the house now stands."

We found the Beyers sitting on a large bench which Herr Beyer had built under a tree near the house at a spot from which there was a clear view of the valley and the river beyond. From the way they greeted us, I guessed that Christine, Marie, and Peter were frequent visitors at their home, and that they had expected them to bring their American visitor to see them.

"I wanted Amelia to see your Häusle," Christine told them after the introductions were completed. She sounded as proud of the place as though she herself had been the builder.

"We will be happy to show it to her," Frau Beyer said graciously, and Herr Beyer added, "Please come in" as he opened the door for us.

There were four rooms in the house, a bedroom and a living room-kitchen for the older couple, and almost identical rooms for Otto, his wife, and their baby. At the back of the house one could enter the basement rooms from a lower ground level. Here there was a large laundry room, a workroom, two storage cellars, and a sort of barn for the Beyers' rabbits.

The rooms were tastefully, actually artistically, furnished, and I decided that both of the women must be good housekeepers to keep two lived in rooms in such good order. Christine called my attention to some of the furniture.

"Herr Beyer and Otto made this themselves," she said. "Show Amelia the loom that you fashioned so that you could make the rugs which cover the floors."

The Beyers' home seemed to have become a sort of community center. Even while we were still in the house, a number of the villagers came to sit on the bench and chat with each other. At first I thought that perhaps curiosity

about the American visitor had drawn them. But later, after we had joined them, I realized from the conversation that this gathering at the Beyers' home to visit was an everyday, or at least, a regular Sunday afternoon occurrence.

I had the feeling that this displaced family had not only accepted Erkenbrechtshausen as their home, but had brought a new interest to the life of the villagers, and a unity in the village that hadn't been there before.

I left Erkenbrechtshausen later that afternoon with a good feeling, and with the thought "churning" in my mind: "If one 'displaced persons' family can accomplish this in one village, what couldn't be accomplished in the world if we really tried!"

Chapter 11

Fellow Passengers

Ansbach might nothave been my first choice of a place to live in Germany, but if I had studied the situation carefully and had asked for a duty station instead of being assigned to one, I could not have chosen a better place to get out of. The main train lines in Germany, both east-west and north-south, including international trains, ran through the city.

I took full advantage of my good fortune. During the fall and winter months I went somewhere by train each weekend. Gradually I became an efficient traveler, but at first I learned a new lesson each week through blundering experience.

Overly eager to get started with visits to relatives, I foolishly took my first train trip the Sunday morning after we arrived at Bad Nauheim. Landau did not look far from Nauheim on the map, so I decided to visit my cousin Elisabeth for the day. The station agent told me that I could take a train from Nauheim early in the morning and take another train back from Landau at 6:49 in the evening.

If he told me what I would be doing between those two times, I wasn't listening, but I soon found out. After riding for three hours on three different trains and waiting for about an hour and a half at each of two stations, I had less than four hours to visit the Borchers before I had to catch my train back.

Elisabeth made sure that we started to the station in time, but when we got there at six forty, the train was already pulling out.

Elisabeth was upset. "That time did you say the train was due to leave?" she asked me.

I consulted my notebook. "Six forty nine is what I wrote down," I told her. "And I wrote it while the RTO agent was saying it. So I was sure that I had written it down right. He was reading it from a train schedule."

Elisabeth led me over to a small bulletin board, which I hadn't even noticed when I got off the train.

"Six thirty nine," she corrected me after she had studied the schedules for a few minutes. "See, here it says 'six thirty nine'."

"It is always better to check," she scolded me. "Always check the bulletin board again. It is easy to misunderstand what the agent says."

I was crestfallen and I felt guilty because I realized that the error was my fault for not listening more carefully. The agent had given me the schedule in English, but he was a German. Few Germans can make our "th" sound

correctly. Mama hadn't been able to master the trick during forty years of living in America. So the man had probably pronounced it "firty", which had sounded like "forty" to me instead of "thirty".

I was really concerned about the error! Missing the train meant that I would have to stay overnight at Landau instead of going back to Bad Nauheim that evening. It was bad enough to impose on Elisabeth that way on an unannounced visit. What was worse was that my friends would worry if I did not come back at the time I had planned. They had been apprehensive about having me start off alone on the German train for fear that I might get lost. If I didn't come back that night, they would be sure that I had gotten lost. To them Germany was still "enemy territory". And I didn't know of any way to communicate with them by telephone.

Worst of all, I would be absent from our first orientation meeting, a very important session for us teachers who were new in Germany.

So that particular lesson became indelibly impressed on my mind. After that, whenever I traveled, I checked and rechecked the schedules on the bulletin boards.

On my return trip the next morning I failed another reading lesson.

During the war many of the German train cars had been destroyed or damaged, and the nicer coaches that were still intact were largely reserved for military personnel of the occupation forces. So the German government had put some very old cars back into use.

It was a train made up of these cars that pulled into the station at Neustadt, where I had to change trains on my trip back to Bad Nauheim. It was so different from anything that I had ever seen that I could hardly believe my eyes.

Each car had six compartments and each compartment had a door opening onto a very narrow wooden platform which ran the full length of the outside of the car, with steep ladder like steps leading down from each door. It was impossible to go from one compartment to the next while the train was moving, so passengers had to find a compartment with an empty seat when they first got on, or stand until the train reached the next station.

There were nine or ten cars on the train, and almost before it had come to a complete stop, all of the doors opened on each car and people began to pour out, some of them rushing to another train standing on the opposite side of the platform, some of them walking more leisurely to the steps leading down into the underpass which led to the station.

Almost before these passengers could get out of the cars, others began to push their way in at each door.

I was so fascinated by the scene, that by the time I woke up to the fact that I should also be shoving my way onto this particular train, the compartments were pretty well filled up. The first few I tried were so crowded that the passengers wouldn't even let me open the door.

In desperation I hurried along the full length of the train, almost in tears. I simply had to take this train or I would miss all of our orientation meetings for the day, and my friends would be in a panic.

Suddenly I came to a compartment that was empty except for two men.

"What luck!" I thought jubilantly, and climbed in, wondering as I did so why this one compartment was so empty when all of the others were so jammed full.

My fellow passengers paid no attention to me. One of them wore dark glasses, and the other had a cane lying at his feet. As I looked out of the window, I noticed that those going by the compartment stared at me, then turned to look again after they were past.

Just before the train started, another passenger got into our compartment, a man with one arm. It was then that I noticed the little sign on

the window, "Nur für Schwerbeschädigte" (Only for severely injured). Instinctively I stood up to leave the car, but fortunately the train was already moving. So I sat down again and rode in comfort with the war casualties.

On these first trips I also learned that there were no conductors on the trains to call out the stations or help passengers off the trains. Large signs on the platforms at each station gave the name of the place, and in the larger cities loud speakers blared the name. But I found out that by the time I was able to read the sign or understand the speaker, I had to hurry, because no train stopped long.

Returning to Ansbach late on Sunday evenings after a week-end trip, I often spent miserable hours keeping myself awake, for fear that I might doze off at the wrong time and miss the one particular sign I needed to see.

Many a serviceman must have fared similarly. One Sunday evening a young soldier got on the train at Frankfurt and sat down in the same compartment where I was. It was quite late, and he was already half asleep when he got on.

"I'm so tired! Oh, I'm so tired!" he kept telling me.

"If you're that tired, why don't you go to sleep?" I asked him.

"Go to sleep now? Not me!" he answered drowsily. "I don't dare go to sleep. I get off at Aschaffenburg, and that's the next station. Last time I came back late like this, I went to sleep, and I woke up the next morning in Munich. So this time I'm - not - going - to - sleep."

He proved his point by beginning to snore!

We reached Aschaffenburg in less than half an hour. By that time the poor fellow was really sleeping soundly. After what he had told me I could not let him sleep on, but for a while I thought I wouldn't be able to awaken him.

I spoke to him, I shook him, I yelled at him. Finally in desperation, I slapped him!

Fortunately, when he woke up, he came wide awake at once, and realized immediately what was happening. He opened his eyes, grabbed his bag, and pushed back the compartment door, all in one quick movement. Then he ran down the corridor, calling back a "thanks a lot", and swung onto the platform while the train had already begun to move.

The rigid promptness of the German trains seemed so impersonal and mechanized that it bothered me.

I often left Ansbach on the 6:19 train on Saturday mornings. It always gave me an eerie feeling to stand on the platform in the gray chilly dawn and know that at exactly 6:19 a locomotive would emerge silently out of the fog and steal quietly into the station, pulling its load of cars.

Sometimes the fast trains traveling long distances would be a few minutes late. At such times the loud speaker would blare, "The Schnellzug from Würzburg will be ten minutes late." I knew when I heard this that I could look at the clock and in exactly ten minutes I could pick up my suitcase and walk to the edge of the platform to board the train.

When Audrey Christensen, another American teacher, and I left for Switzerland for our Thanksgiving vacation, we learned that studying the bulletin boards, being on time, and watching for the station signs on the platform wasn't even enough. You could still have trouble if you didn't take time to read the right signs.

By this time we had been in Europe long enough so that we had no misgivings about traveling to another country on our own. We had gotten information at the RTO ticket office, we had checked again on several bulletin boards, we knew which train we had to take, on which platform it would be, when it pulled in, and when it would leave.

We had also checked and double checked the information that we could ride straight through to Zurich from Stuttgart without changing trains.

Our train pulled in, we got on, sat down, and settled back for a good visit as we rode along.

When the train got to Konstans all of the other passengers got off, which we thought a bit strange. But we sat still because we knew that we could stay on the same train until we got to Zurich, and the signs on the platform showed us that this wasn't Zurich.

Presently the lights were turned off in our car and we heard a voice calling in German, "Konstans. End of the line. Everybody off. Everybody off!"

By this time we were out of our seats and at a window. A trainman with a lantern was going down the line from car to car, calling at the top of his voice and sticking his head in at the door of every car to make sure there was no one in them.

"End of the line; everybody off," he told us again, personally, when he saw we were still in the car.

"But we're going to Zurich," I protested. "And they told us in Stuttgart we could ride straight through without changing trains."

"You could have if you had gotten onto the right car," he told us kindly. "Part of this train is practically in Zurich now. The cars that went there were taken off several hours ago in Singen."

"But how were we to know?" I asked him indignantly. "Nobody told us which car to get on, and nobody told us we were on the wrong one!"

"You can read it on the car," he told us as he helped us off with our bags.

"See," he added, pointing to a sign below the car between the wheels which said in large letters STUTTGART - KONSTANS. Obviously we should have gotten on one labeled STUTTGART - ZURICH.

"But never mind," he consoled us. "There's a train from here back to Singen in a short time. It will meet with another train to Zurich. You'll only be about two hours later getting into Zurich than you would have been."

In spite of these hard learned lessons, I loved to travel on the trains. I enjoyed going with other American teachers on trips to Berchtesgarden or Garmisch or the Black Forest. But I really had the most fun when I traveled alone, and some of the most interesting Germans I met were fellow train passengers.

Sometimes I tried to give no indication to the others in the compartment that I understood German. Then I could listen as they talked freely without realizing that I knew what they said.

More often I tried to go incognito. At such times I entered into the conversations and tried to see how long I could keep the other passengers from finding out that I was a foreigner instead of a fellow countryman.

One evening a fellow passenger questioned me about my dialect. In the middle of a conversation he asked abruptly, "May I be so free as to ask where you are from?"

"I'm from Ansbach," I told him honestly.

He continued to look at me with a puzzled expression.

"You are not really from Ansbach, are you?" he asked. "You don't speak the Ansbacher dialect. In fact, I have been trying all evening to place the dialect you do speak."

"No, I'm not really an Ansbacher," I admitted laughing. "Although I am living there now. I'm an American, and I'm afraid my dialect would be impossible to pinpoint. It's a mixture of my mother's Bayerisch and my

father's Pfälzischer dialects plus the High German which my Aunt Selma tried so hard to teach us children to talk when we were little. And the mixture is no doubt strongly flavored with a Kansas accent."

The man chuckled appreciatively.

"That explains it," he said in relief. "I thought I knew the dialects in this area quite well, and yours had me puzzled. But that you are not German I would never have guessed.

At first the ease with which I could pass as a German pleased and flattered me. But sometimes I was mistaken for one when I didn't want to be, and it didn't seem to matter whether I was talking English or German or keeping my mouth shut.

This puzzled and at times definitely irritated me. In my mirror I looked no more German than many of my American colleagues, and they didn't have that problem. Later I realized that my friends never traveled alone on the trains as I often did, but at first this possible explanation didn't occur to me.

Once when a group of us had gone to see Schloss Linderhof, I was taking pictures while waiting for the tour to begin and so lagged slightly behind my friends when the door opened. By the time I got there, they were all already inside.

The doorman hesitated before he took my ticket. "This is the English tour," he explained in German. "The German tour starts in twenty minutes. Or do you understand English?" I assured him that I did!

On another day I had gone to see my teacher friend Ruby Anderson who taught in the Nürnberg Dependents Schools, and who had a room in the large hotel which had been taken over by the American Occupation forces. No Germans, except those working there, were allowed in the hotel without special permission.

A new doorman was on duty. He greeted me pleasantly, but blocked my entrance.

"What may I do for you?" he asked politely. "Whom do you wish to see?"

"I came to see my friend Ruby Anderson," I said, starting to brush past him. I had been in and out of the hotel countless times.

The doorman stopped me.

"Do you have an appointment with Miss Anderson?" he wanted to know.

"Does she know you are coming?"

"No, I don't have an appointment, and I didn't say definitely that I was coming today," I said impatiently. I wanted to do some shopping in Nürnberg, and I was in a hurry. "But I'm quite sure she's there. She said yesterday that she would be. I'll just run up to her room and see."

"You are not allowed to go upstairs," the young man told me firmly. "You can inquire at the desk, and they will call to see whether she wishes to come down to talk to you."

"Or you may call her yourself," he added, indicating the housephone in the entryway.

By now I was irritated as well as puzzled. "This is ridiculous!" I sputtered. "Why can't I go upstairs today? I've been up to Ruby's room dozens of times before, and nobody has tried to stop me."

"That may be," the German said doubtfully. "But I cannot let you go up. The phone is over there."

I started over to the telephone, thinking, "I'll call Ruby and see what this is all about." Then I stopped as it dawned on me that all of our conversation had been in German. The doorman had greeted me in German, and I had automatically answered in that language. A doorman hired by Americans would be able to speak fluent English. Why hadn't he been speaking English to me?

"He probably thinks I'm German," I decided. "He's just been hired for the job, he's been instructed emphatically not to let any Germans enter, he's trying to do what he's been told to do, and I've unintentionally been giving him a bad time."

My irritation completely mollified, I turned back to the doorman. "I think there has been a misunderstanding," I told him in English.

The young man's attitude changed abruptly. A queer expression crossed his face. Apparently a new idea had dawned on him, too.

He held out his hand. "May I see you AGO card, please," he said apologetically, his face red. He barely glanced at it, then handed it back, and with a bow indicated that I was welcome to enter.

Much as I enjoyed riding with German passengers, on longer trips I preferred to ride with Americans if there were any on the train. This was especially true if I was going to an unfamiliar city and was afraid I might miss my station. But sometimes I didn't find these American servicemen as friendly as the Germans.

Some of them were so ungracious and snobbish that I almost felt hurt. Why didn't these men want to talk to a fellow American?

Then several incidents happened that helped me to understand.

One day when the train was quite full and I was feeling a little lonesome, I decided to ride in a compartment with four young American officers instead of crowding in with the German passengers.

The young men's response to my greeting was a cool, "Good day", and then they continued their conversation, completely ignoring me.

Presently a German cleaning woman opened the compartment door and whispered to me in German.

"Fräulein," she said, "Will you ask the gentlemen if they have any extra cigarettes which they would give or sell to me."

I obediently asked the men her question, but I didn't have to translate their curt "no". The woman shrugged, gave me a significant look and went on down the aisle.

There was something about the incident that bothered me, but it took me some time to pinpoint what it was. She had spoken to me in German. How could she have known that I understood German? I had never seen her before, and I hadn't spoken a word of German since getting on the train.

My face flushed as I thought of the answer. She had taken me for a German Fräulein. And there was only one reason why a German "Fräulein" would be riding in a compartment with American officers. She was either one of the men's companion or she was trying to start a relationship with one.

Angrily I wished that I had pretended not to understand her. Or that there had been some way for me to explain who I was. It never even occurred to me that the American service men might also need an explanation.

It wasn't until the next weekend that I really caught on. Again I had chosen to ride first class in a compartment with a young American soldier. And again I had had trouble breaking through his unfriendly reserve. But I had finally been successful in starting a conversation with him.

Presently he asked me, "Do you work for the Americans? You speak such good English."

It was then that I "tumbled". It wasn't only the Germans who thought I was German, I realized. Some of the American fellows thought so, too. And they were completely misinterpreting my attempts to be friendly. I had never told any of them who and what I was. I had just assumed that they would know.

After that the situation changed. When I introduced myself by name as an American teacher, just recently arrived from the States, they were eagerly friendly, sometimes even touchingly chivalrous.

One evening when the train on which I was riding stopped at Würzburg to take on more passengers, an American soldier stuck his head into our compartment, the one next to the door.

"This train going to Frankfurt?" he wanted to know.

"Yes," I assured him in English. "Yes, it's going to Frankfurt."

The young man thanked me and moved on. A few minutes later I could hear that some more American would be riding the train. The loud raucous voices, the filthy language, and he boisterous laughter told me that some in the group were very drunk.

Almost immediately the young man who had spoken to me earlier was back at the door of our compartment.

"You American?" he wanted to know.

"Yes," I answered. "I am."

"I thought so," he told me and remained standing in the doorway blocking the entrance until the rowdy group had gone past and were settled in another part of the car.

Then he left again, too. "Just didn't want them coming in here and bothering you," he remarked casually as he went back to his own place.

German or American, friendly or on guard, suspicious or protective, I found them all interesting, and I often think back to my contacts with them - my fellow passengers on the German trains.

Chapter 12

"You Talked to Me"

At the time I did not really believe what Seppi said. Or, at least, I was sure that he was exaggerating. But since that time I have become more aware of the situation he was describing and I am convinced that it was true.

I met Seppi and Dan one Saturday morning on the train when I was on my way to Munich. I saw them only that one time, and I had almost forgotten about the incident until a recent TV program reminded me of my conversation with them, especially of one remark that Seppi made.

When I got on the 6:19 morning train at Ansbach, the passengers already on the train were usually still asleep, stretched out on the benches so that there was no place for me to sit unless I roused someone. On this particular Saturday morning, however, I was in luck.

The coach I entered did not have closed compartments as many of the German train cars did. Padded seats, long enough for three people to sit on, were placed so that two seats faced each other. Across a narrow aisle, by the window, were single seats, also in pairs. Two of these single seats facing each other were empty, and I happily took one.

A black American soldier lay stretched out on one of the seats across from me, and opposite to him a German man lay snoring. On the seats just back of them there was another black soldier, and a white girl - probably a German, I decided.

The German man roused first and sat up. He was a tall, lanky man with a weather beaten face, very blue merry eyes, and a friendly smile.

He started a conversation with me almost immediately, and by the time the others woke up, the two of us were visiting together in German. To my surprise, the two blacks joined in, speaking the language quite fluently. The girl, as I had surmised, was German.

The soldier who had slept opposite the German introduced himself as "Seppi", a German nickname for Joseph. The other one, who left his bench to sit with Seppi, was called Dan. The girl also joined the group, but she did not give her name or have very much to say.

Our conversation continued in German until I heard Seppi make a remark about me to Dan in English. What he said was insignificant, but I realized that he did not know that I understood him, or he would not have talked about me so casually.

I waited a short interval, so as not to embarrass Seppi, then I also said something to Dan in English, just to make sure that the soldiers would know that I was not German. The German man quickly shifted languages, too.

"You speak English very well," I commented in surprise. "But you certainly did not learn it in the United States."

"No," he laughed. "Before the war I was a sailor on various merchant ships, part of them English. And I spent several years in Australia, so I learned their language quite well. Recently with so many Americans over here, I've had plenty of opportunity to practice it again."

The girl apparently did not understand English, and presently she began to indicate that she felt left out. She said something in a low voice to Dan, then turned her face toward the wall and began to pout. Grudgingly, Dan gave her his full attention for a time.

I could not tell whether she was actually his "Frau" or whether she was just trying to attach herself to him. Certainly, he did not seem especially enamored with her.

I had noticed Seppi studying me as I talked to the German.

"What I want to know," he asked me abruptly after a few minutes, "is how come you can speak such good English?"

This was something new! I had been asked several times since coming to Germany how I happened to be able to speak German so well, and I was almost tired of explaining that both of my parents had come to the United States from Germany as adults, so I had learned to speak German before I had learned to speak my native language. But only once before had I been asked how it happened that I could speak English so well. I was glad that I had shifted languages.

"That's easy to explain," I laughed. "I ought to be able to speak English well. I'm American, and I've just been over here in Germany a few months."

To my surprise he did not believe me.

"Oh, no!" he grinned, shaking his head emphatically from side to side. "You can't pull that one on me. I don't fool that easy. You ain't American, and you ain't English 'cause you don't talk English English. You talk American English. But what I want to know is, how come you can talk it so good."

His flat contradiction irritated me a little. "What makes you think I'm not American?" I snapped at him.

He continued to grin at me.

"What makes me think you're not American?" he asked. "That's easy to answer, too. In the first place, if you are American and just been over here a few months, now come you can speak that good German? I been over here for five years, and I think I speak it good. But I don't know it nearways like you. And you don't talk book German. You can't tell me you learned it in college, now did you?"

"No," I had to admit. "I learned to talk German as a child. My -"

"Aha!" he interrupted triumphantly, thinking he had caught me. "See there! Now admit it. You ain't American, is you?"

"I am too American!" I stood my ground, beginning to enjoy the argument since I was absolutely certain that I was right.

"If you's American, how'd you come over here?" he asked.

"On the Holbrook, a troop transport," I answered.

"How long did it take you?"

"Ten days."

"Where'd you start from?"

"New York, or rather, New Jersey. We actually sailed from New Jersey."

There were more questions, each of which I would have found difficult to answer quickly if I hadn't actually lived in the United States.

At the end of the quizz, Seppi scratched his head in a baffled manner, and looked at Dan, who shrugged.

"You's got mestumped," Seppi admitted. "I knows you ain't American, but you sure does know a lot about America. Now what I wants to know is, how come you knows so much about America?"

I decided to end the "game" and handed him my AGO card, which was the same kind carried by the army personnel. He looked at it carefully, and when he handed it back to me he was nonplused and apologetic.

He came over to the single seat opposite me, and Dan left the Fräulein and perched on the arm of the seat. For the rest of the trip we talked about America.

The fellows had been away from the States for over eight years. They liked life in Germany and intended to stay there as long as they could. But they were eager for any information I could give them about how things were now in the United States.

"This am as good as bein' home," Seppi kept repeating. "This sure am an experience for me!"

That I had never been to New Orleans or Montanna where he had lived made no difference to him. He kept asking questions, and he kept apologizing. He had a German wife, he told me.

"We ain't legally married, but she's my wife," he said. "I'se had the same woman all these five years."

They had three children. "They're cute kids," he said proudly, pulling out some pictures for me to admire. "When I goes back to the United States I wants to try to take them along. Maybe not their mother, if she don't want to go, but my three kids."

Just before we got to Munich, Seppi apologized once more.

"I hope you don't take no offense at my saying this," he began slowly, a hint of uneasiness in his voice. "But the reason why I was absolutely sure that you wasn't American was 'cause you talked to me. You is the first American woman I'se talked to over here in Germany, and you is actually the first white American woman who ever in my whole life talked to me, talked friendly like, I mean, like we is now. That's why I was so sure you wasn't American."

These were the words that I found hard to believe

The soldiers each had a duffle bag, but they insisted on carrying my suitcase, too. So we walked into the railroad station together, laughing and talking, striding along side by side - we three Americans - while the German sailor and the Fräulein trailed along behind.

Angie's Good Deeds

In America I had taken my car for granted. In Germany, in spite of the good train connections, I felt lost without it. So, when an American relative offered to loan me money so that I could buy a car, I immediately ordered an Anglia, a little two door British Ford. Americans were not yet allowed to buy German cars at that time.

It seemed ages after I had placed the order before I finally received word that my car was at Hamburg and I could go and pick it up there. Excited, but a bit apprehensive about driving a car through such a big city and then finding our way back to Ansbach, Berna Stuart, another American teacher, and I made the long train trip to Hamburg one Friday night.

When we went to pick up the car the next morning, we found to our relief that a salesman from the car agency in Nürnberg had come to Hamburg at the same time to drive a car back for another customer. When he offered to drive ahead of us and show us the way, we eagerly accepted. It would be wonderful to be able simply to follow his lead.

Having him with us also solved the problem of buying gas. Benzine was still scarce in Germany at this time, and we Americans were not allowed to buy it on the German market. Since much of our drive was through the British Zone, where there would be no American filling stations, that posed a problem. And even in the American Zone I wouldn't be able to get gas from the American gas stations without coupons. And I hadn't been able to get any coupons before I had the car. The coupons were issued only to persons who could show a car registration slip. And I couldn't register my car until I had it in Nürnberg.

I had worried a lot about this impossible circle while making my decision to go after the car myself. The sensible thing would have been to hire a German to drive it to Ansbach for me. But I wanted to see Hamburg, and driving the brand new car home would be so much fun. So I had decided to take a chance.

Assuming that the gas tank would be full when I got the car, I would have to fill up only once. I had been mistaken for a German so often before; surely it would work one more time. But if it didn't I might be stranded in the British Zone, or worse still, I might be arrested for my attempt to buy gas on the German market. I had worried about that a great deal after making my decision to go after the car myself.

But now our companion simply bought gas for both cars when we had to fill up and then I paid him for it.

I had owned several cars in the United States. But I had never owned a brand new one before, and I was thrilled with my Anglia. Petite, but sturdy, a bit temperamental, but dependable, the little car with its light green exterior and dark green leather seats and upholstery had a sort of feminine quality about it. So I named her Angie.

After our trip back from Hamburg, Angie and I were almost constant companions. At first I thought I would miss the interesting contacts I had been making on the train trips. But I soon found out that I was becoming acquainted with as many Germans when I drove my car on my week-end excursions as I had on the trains.

Germany at that time was full of hitch-hikers, waving hopefully at every car that came into sight. Many of them wanted only short rides, perhaps to the next village or town. Very ^{few} Germans owned cars, and many of the displaced persons didn't even have bicycles. Train tickets cost money which they didn't have, and many of the local trains were still not running. So they took to the road, walking long distances unless they could get someone to give them a lift.

Truck drivers made almost a business of picking up passengers, depending upon the tips the people gave them to supplement the wages they got for driving the trucks.

I hadn't planned to get involved with any of these strangers, and I picked up my first passenger on a sudden impulse. She hadn't even waved for a ride, and I thought for a moment after I had stopped that she might refuse to get into the car.

Angie and I were going to Munich for the first of our many trips there. Not far from Ansbach I saw a woman walking slowly along the road ahead of me. She was dressed in black, with a bonnet on her head, and on one arm she carried a large basket. She was a heavy woman, and from the back she looked as though she might be quite old. Something about her plodding, limping gait reminded me of Mamma when her bunions were giving her trouble.

"I'll bet her feet hurt," I thought. "And I'm sure that basket must be heavy."

On impulse my foot found the brake pedal. The woman looked at me in surprise, almost fright, when I stopped the car beside her.

"Would you like a ride?" I asked, deliberately using the Bavarian dialect I had learned as a child.

She continued to stare at me, then she looked at my car. For a moment I thought she was going to call for help or walk on as fast as she could. Then slowly and doubtfully she came toward the open door and got into the car so awkwardly that I wondered whether she had ever had a ride in one before.

She sat very still, holding the basket on her lap tightly with both hands, staring straight ahead of her. The look on her face reminded me of my little niece when I took her for her first train ride.

As the train began to move, Carol had gasped, "Ooh, oh!" and held onto her seat, a look of half frightened, half thrilled anticipation on her face. Then as the train pulled out of the city and gathered speed, she had relaxed and had looked at me in disappointment.

"It isn't even going fast," she had exclaimed scornfully.

Carol had often watched streamliners streaking past our home in Halstead, and I imagine she had pictured a ride on one as something akin to a roller coaster ride.

This German woman reacted in much the same way. After she had been riding a few minutes she relaxed visibly, and when I asked her "How far are you going?" she answered me readily and pleasantly.

She was only going to the next village, perhaps two miles away, and when we got there, she exclaimed in surprise, "Are we here already? My, that went fast!"

As she got out she thanked me several times, adding, "It felt so good to rest while going somewhere."

Her pleasure gave me such a warm glow of satisfaction that I began looking for riders whenever I went for a drive. Sometimes on longer trips I ended up with four passengers, picked up at various places along the road. These people were strangers to each other as well as to me, but there was something about being crowded together into little Angie that soon had us chatting like old friends.

Once, on my way to Munich, I left a passenger, picked up near Nürnberg, asleep on the back seat while I stopped in Ingolstadt for several hours to visit my mother's cousin, Emmanuel Landes. I had warned the woman about the delay before she got into the car, but she had accepted the ride anyway.

"Stop all afternoon if you like," she had told me. "I will still get to Munich faster than if I walk. And this is much better than riding in some truck."

These passengers always thanked me profusely when they got out, and many of them paid me the compliment, "You drive as well as a man."

Many of these passengers were displaced persons who had been assigned rooms in some little village and worked in a nearby town. They had to commute on foot unless they happened to be lucky enough to get a lift. One day on my way to Nürnberg, I picked up such a D.P., a middle aged woman who was leading a little boy by the hand.

Even before they were seated she began to tell him, "See, this is an American car. Isn't it nice, and so new, too! And this is an American lady. Isn't that nice!"

I started to tell her that I was American, but that the car wasn't, when she interrupted me.

"Willi is half American," she explained. "And we're trying to raise him to be proud of it. Already he can speak a few words of English. Say 'hello', Willi. Say 'good-bye.'"

Willi obediently echoed "hello, good-bye" and a few more English words. He was a darling little fellow, perhaps four years old, chubby and healthy in appearance. I could picture him on a Kansas farm in jeans and straw hat, tagging along behind his daddy as he did the chores. I began to wonder about that daddy.

"His father was killed by the Japanese," my passenger went on. "He was sent over there from here. He and my niece had planned to marry, but it never worked out. Now she is married to a German and lives in Nürnberg. So I am raising Willi. And he is such a joy to me!"

"He's a lucky little boy," I told her, "to have you to care for him. And you're a lucky woman to have such a fine little boy."

I had found out that not all little half American children were so fortunate, especially if their skin was black. I had heard of several others who were being raised by relatives because the mother had married. And they were not always considered a joy.

Even when the grandparents loved and accepted them, these children themselves realized early that they were different.

One grandmother whom I learned to know, was quite upset about her little grandson.

"He came to me one day crying and said, 'I've washed and washed and I can't get the black off my hands. How can I get myself clean like Peter?'"

"What could I tell him?" she asked me with tears in her eyes. "He's still too little to really understand."

My passenger had lived in Czechoslovakia before and during the war, but had been forced to leave as the German armies fell back and the Russians advanced. Since then the family had been in many places in Germany, wandering here and there, losing even the few possessions they had managed to take with them from their homes. Now they were living in a single room in a small village near Ansbach.

"So at last we again have a home of sorts," she said. "But the farmers aren't the least bit happy to have us there. They are not at all friendly or nice to us. I suppose I can't blame them. They could well use the room for their own crowded family. But we have to have somewhere to live also."

She told me a little about her life in Czechoslovakia.

"It was terrible!" she said. "Just before the war when the Czecks first started to persecute the Germans living there because they wanted us to leave the country. And then when the German army came in, that was even worse. Not for the Germans living there, but for the poor Czecks. I could hardly stand it at times."

She shuddered and went on. "I am German. Even though I grew up in another country, I am German. But I have to say it to our shame. In Czechoslovakia the Germans sinned; they committed a great sin. And God is just."

Such deeds had to be avenged in some way. We as people had to suffer, too. It wouldn't have been right otherwise.

"When I think of those poor women from the Ukraine, working at hard labor in the bitter cold without shoes on their feet. They had wrapped old rags around them, but still the feet were sore and bleeding. I got myself onto the black list because I couldn't help but sympathize with them. I gave one of the women a pair of old shoes.

"For that my name was posted in all public places. None of the Germans living in our town were to have anything to do with me. I could not buy in any of the shops. No one was supposed to give me or my family food or help in any way. For I had so forgotten myself as a German as to dare to give help to one of the despised enemy.

"But I didn't care. I had to do what I did. And later on when we were forced from our homes, my Czech friends more than made it up to me. They parted from me with tears, and I can't begin to tell you all that they did to make the going away easier for me."

The ride I gave her seemed very short; we came to the village where she lived much too soon. I wanted to hear more of her story, and I always hoped that I would see her again on my frequent trips to Nürnberg, but I never did.

At first I was very cautious about offering rides to someone. I stopped only for women; I was careful to pass up all men hitch-hikers. But one day I threw caution to the wind.

I was feeling especially good that day. It was early May, and all along the roads and highways the fruit trees were blooming. I had an extra day for my week-end because Monday was a holiday. The weather was just right. I had just let out a woman passenger whose profuse thanks left me with the usual glow of satisfaction.

A man was standing at the side of the road, waving his hand for a ride. Without taking time to think, I slowed down and stopped.

He turned out to be an artist, or at least so he told me. We spent most of the time talking about Americans, for he had painted pictures and portraits for many of them. Now he was on his way to Sinsheim on a business errand, then he wanted to go to Heidelberg to contact more Americans about some paintings.

"I'm going to stop in Heidelberg to meet some friends for lunch," I said. "Then I'll drive on further this afternoon."

When we got to Sinsheim I wasn't too surprised to have him change his mind about getting out.

"My business here can wait," he decided. "If you will let me ride on with you to Heidelberg, I will go there first."

I was never sure if what my passengers told me was completely the truth, and for this man I discounted a large percentage. I did not think that the paintings which he showed me were good at all, but I bought one. The shabbiness of the man's clothing and the desolate, hungry look on his face, made me feel that he could use the encouragement of selling a picture. And I was sure he needed the five Marks a lot worse than I did.

After that experience I wasn't too concerned about the sex of my passengers, and there was only one time that I felt momentary fear.

The man I picked up that day was quite well dressed and looked like a decent sort of fellow, so I stopped to give him a lift without any hesitation. As soon as he was seated, I introduced myself as I always did to my passengers.

His eyebrows lifted. "Do you often stop to pick up men in this way?" he wanted to know.

"Quite often," I told him casually. "Although I think I have picked up many more women passengers than men."

He gave me a long contemplating look. "Are you not afraid to do this?" he asked.

Something about the way he said it made me suddenly uneasy. "Should I be afraid?" I countered nervously.

My passenger chuckled. "Not with me, no!" he laughed. "I am quite harmless. But not all men are, you know."

The last passengers to whom I gave a ride were two young fellows who were standing at the side of the autobahn near Heidelberg. I was on my way to Thomashof to say goodbye to Uncle Adolf before going back to the States.

They were actually just boys, and I've never seen a more woebe-gone, färlorn pair. One of them was carrying his shoes - a new pair of dress shoes. His feet were red and swollen.

The two talked very little as we drove toward Karlsruhe. In fact, I had difficulty pumping information out of them.

Where were they going?

Back home to Ingolstadt.

Wouldn't they be going out of their way if they rode with me as far as Karlsruhe?

They wanted to stick to the autobahn. The chances for rides were better that way, and they were at the point where they could hardly walk any more.

Where had they been?

They had gone to Mainz to look for work, both of them lived in a small village near Ingolstadt. They had heard there was work to be had in Mainz. So they had started out by way of the autobahn through Munich, Stuttgart, and Karlsruhe. It had taken them several days to get to Mainz.

They had tramped the streets there for several days. There was no work to be had. So they were going back to the farm, but their fathers had only a few acres. They did not really need their sons' help. There was no future for a young man in the village.

They had run out of money several days before. An American serviceman had given them a ride in an army truck from Mainz to the junction near Heidelberg. He had stopped at noon and bought them sandwiches. It was the first time they had eaten for days. They felt better now; in fact, they were all right. If only they would have luck about getting rides.

If Uncle Adolf had not been waiting for me at Thomashof, I would have been tempted to take them home to Ingolstadt. But Uncle Adolf was depending on me to take him to visit relatives at Lautenbach, a place I hadn't seen during my year in Germany. So I had to let them out of the car where the autobahn branched off toward Karlsruhe. As I drove away, I thought about the long trek they still had ahead of them and the disappointing homecoming.

I enjoyed Angie's good deeds; they made me feel good. But they also left me with a frustrated, incomplete feeling. Each time I let a passenger out of the car I felt as though I were closing a book in the middle of a chapter.

And I was never able to find out the ending for any of them!

Chapter 14
Tante Lisbeth

Tante Lisbeth was blind, and she had heard from someone that Americans drive large cars. The combination stuffed little Angie to bursting capacity for one of my most satisfying Sunday afternoons in Germany.

Lisbeth was Mama's first cousin, and in appearance she reminded me of Mama, although she was somewhat taller and looked younger. Both had the "Ellenberger face", with the large, well shaped nose, the high forehead, and fine textured curly hair. Both were large women, with narrow sloping shoulders and well shaped hands with long, tapering fingers. In contrast to Mamma's blond hair turned white and light blue eyes, Lisbeth had dark gray eyes, and her hair was still brown.

She was outgoing and outspoken, bursque, determined, and in spite of being nearly blind, almost defiantly independent. Before she became blind, she and her husband had owned and operated the Pfälzer Hof, a combination Wirtschaft and Gasthaus (restaurant and inn), and she still enjoyed visiting with friends or strangers over a relaxing glass of wine. Although she had little use for the talent now, cooking was still almost a passion for her.

She was high on my list of "have-to's" to visit, but it was mid-May before I actually went to see her. In planning the visit I had hoped to work in several other persons listed in my little blue book who lived nearby. But Tante had every minute of my visit crowded with plans of her own, many of which involved eating.

Widowed, old, and blind, and living alone as she was now, she had little opportunity to entertain guests, so my visit gave her a chance to again use her favorite and once almost famous recipes. Several of her close friends and relatives lived on farms, where food was no longer scarce, and these had apparently been contacted to help out in the preparation for my visit.

I had written that I would come on Saturday afternoon, but when I arrived at 2:30, she had a big dinner waiting for me. Scarcely were the dinner things cleared away when it was time for "coffee", with four kinds of Kuchen baked in my honor.

After coffee we went to a friend's house in my car, but before we had really begun to visit, Tante suggested that Frau Keller might want to go with me in my car and see the sights in the city. She herself could not accompany us because she had to go home to get things ready for supper and for the Sunday noon meal. Frau Meisingler, who did her cleaning and shopping, was doing the actual cooking, but Tante had to be there to supervise and taste.

For supper we had Russian Eggs.

"Real ones!" Tante Lisbeth informed me proudly, setting the heaping plate in front of me. A huge serving of potato salad on a bed of shredded lettuce was covered with slices of ham and cold cuts and topped with wedges of boiled eggs and Russian dressing.

"Some people say they are serving Russian Eggs," she added disdainfully. "But they leave out the meat, and then it's not really Russian Eggs."

She made praising her culinary art easy for me. There was no need to search my meager German vocabulary for fitting adjectives. During all of our meals together she kept up a constant chatter, describing and praising the dishes she had prepared or the pastries she had baked. All I needed

to do was to say, "Ja" (yes) and echo her praise while I stored up the phrases in my memory for future use.

When I had seen her briefly at a cousin's house during my Christmas vacation, Tante Lisbeth had offered to go with me to Friedelsheim when I came to visit her. My Ellenberger forefathers came to this town in the Palatinate in the early 18th century to escape the severe persecution that the Anabaptists were suffering in Switzerland at that time. Both great grandfather and grandfather Ellenberger grew up there, and Mamma had often told us about her visits with Tante Mary and Tante Lenschen, Grandfather's oldest and youngest sisters, who were still living in the old Burg when Mamma was a child.

I had hoped to go to Friedelsheim on Sunday morning and worship in the little Mennonite church at the Burg, where my great grandfather had preached, taught, and played the organ. But there was the chicken already stuffed with dressing, and the orange creme made for dessert for Sunday dinner.

So we went to the Evangelical Church near Tante's home. Toward the end of the sermon Tante Lisbeth became visibly restless. I guessed that her mind might be on her chicken rather than on the minister's exposition, so I wasn't surprised when she impatiently introduced me to a few friends after the service, and then hurried me home to eat.

Dinner was a leisurely meal, and then we had to wait for coffee time before we could leave for Friedelsheim. While we were still drinking coffee at two o'clock, our passengers began to arrive.

I knew that Frau Bielemann was going. She had come up to the apartment on Saturday evening to talk to us about it.

The Bielemanns owned the Hof where Tante Lisbeth had her apartment. They lived in the main house which formed one side of the complex of barn, sheds, haymow, and granary built into a compact square around the barnyard. Tante's two rooms were upstairs above the storage shed next to the house.

I don't know how much land the Bielemanns farmed, but they appeared to be quite well off financially, for they owned six cows and four horses in addition to a number of pigs and chickens.

Tante Lisbeth had introduced me to them when I first arrived. They were gracious and cordial, but for some reason I didn't feel at ease with them. Tante apparently was not on intimately friendly terms with them either, for she told me disdainfully that Herr Biemann drank too much and that Frau Bielemann was a selfish, nosy, scheming woman.

"I hear you are going to Friedelsheim tomorrow," Frau Bielemann said almost accusingly with a critical eye on our plates. "I have been wanting to go to Mürkheim for a long time to see a sick friend there. I wonder whether I might ride that far with you."

"I don't know whether we will have room," Tante replied, not too graciously. Frau Bielemann looked at me.

"Oh yes, I think we'll have room," I said hospitably, not realizing until I had said it that Tante did not want to take her along, and had been depending upon me to say regretfully that there would not be room.

"What time will you go?" Frau Bielemann asked, rewarding me with a triumphant smile.

"We don't know yet," Tante told her vaguely. "Some time after coffee."

When she had gone, Tante Lisbeth sighed. "It's good that Frau Keller decided that she and Liselotte couldn't go," she said crossly. "She and Frau Bielemann no longer speak to each other."

Tante Lisbeth had had no children, but through the years she had taken a number of young people who rented rooms at her boarding house under her motherly wings. Karl Keller had been one of these, and when he married, his wife Ilse had become a part of that relationship.

Even though her own mother lived with them, Ilse had taken time to be a daughter to Tante Lisbeth, especially during the war and the years immediately afterwards when Karl was in the army and later a prisoner of war.

It was Ilse Keller who had opened the relief packages that Mamma had sent her cousin during those years after the war when food and other necessities were so scarce in Germany. After describing the contents to Tante, she had put away the supplies and had written the thank you letters.

After she had been informed about the arrangement, Mamma had sent the packages directly to Frau Keller's address to save Tante Lisbeth the bother of having someone get them for her at the Post Office. Tante had shared the contents with Frau Keller, but she had been careful to keep Frau Bielemann from even finding out that she was getting parcels from America.

One day when Tante was dictating a thank you letter to Ilse, they heard Frau Bielemann coming up the stairs. They had made the mistake of trying to whisk the letter out of sight, but Frau Bielemann had entered the room in time to see what they were doing. She had known then what she had suspected before, that Tante Lisbeth and Frau Keller were keeping something from her, and she had been very offended and angry.

Frau Keller had tried to make things right, but Frau Bielemann's reply had been a cold, "I will need to consider carefully whether I am ready to forgive you or not." Apparently she was still considering, for she had not spoken to Frau Keller since.

I had agreed with Tante that having the two of them riding with us might have been rather awkward, so I hadn't known whether to be amused or apprehensive when Karl Keller had come to us after the church service to meet me and to ask Tante Lisbeth, "Have your plans changed, or will there still be room for Ilse and Liselotte to go along to Friedelsheim? The child wants to go quite badly, and her mother finds it hard to deny her the rare treat."

"We are still planning to go to Friedelsheim and I'm sure we'll have room for them," I had said quickly, lest Tante Lisbeth spoil things by telling him about Frau Bielemann.

I had enjoyed the Kellers during our brief excursion on Saturday afternoon, and I had wanted to see more of them. Ilse was a kind, thoughtful, beautiful young woman with a voice which even in ordinary conversation had a pleasant, laughing lilt. Liselotte was a delightful child, unspoiled, eager, and charmingly unsophisticated. Giving her another ride in the car would add pleasure and interest to the afternoon for me.

To be sure, we would be a little crowded for comfort, but we would manage. Tante Lisbeth could sit in front. Frau Bielemann was a stout woman, but Ilse was slender, and Liselotte only a child. The three of them could manage to crowd into the back.

"They can put Liselotte between them if they can't bear to sit next to each other," I had thought with an inner chuckle. "It will serve Frau Bielemann right for wanting to maintain the grudge."

Tante Lisbeth had never mentioned the fact that Frau Meisingler had been the first one that she had invited to ride along. She was the last one to arrive on Sunday afternoon, and it was only then, when we were already all standing around the little car, that I realized the predicament that I had created.

There we were, six of us, planning to ride in a four passenger car. My size didn't matter, because I had to sit in the driver's seat. But three of the other passengers were large women. Two of them would be uncomfortable in the narrow back seat, and the bucket seat in front was not very wide.

"You should have told me that you have only a little car," Tante Lisbeth scolded me in embarrassment when she realized the situation. "I thought you would have a large American car. You know that I am blind and cannot see. You should have said something and not let me invite so many people to come along."

"I'm sorry," I murmured, feeling very guilty. I shouldn't have said "yes" to Frau Bielemann. But at that time I hadn't even known about the invitation to the Kellers, let alone that Frau Meisingler would also be a passenger.

"I can stay at home," Frau Bielemann said with the air of a martyr imposed on once too often. "I don't know when I will ever have the opportunity to visit my poor, sick, lonely friend. But that's all right. I don't need to ride along."

She made no move to go back into the house.

"We will be the ones to stay," Ilse said emphatically. "I had declined the invitation at first, so I am the one who has caused the problem. But Karl said there would be room!"

After a look at Liselotte's crestfallen, unhappy face, she remained standing near the car.

"I was the last one to get here," Frau Meisingler said slowly. "So I should be the one to stay at home."

"But I especially wanted you to go along," Tante Lisbeth protested unhappily. "I wanted to give you a small pleasure to make up for the many extra things you do for me."

Frau Meisingler walked close to the car and measured the back seat with her eyes. There was a low, wide armrest on each side where the body of the car extended out over the back wheels.

"If we could put a pillow on the seat so that it would be as high as those," she said. "That will give us some extra room. Perhaps it would be enough so that three people could sit back there."

"I have lots of pillows," Tante Lisbeth exclaimed eagerly, and Ilse ran up to her apartment to get some.

The women padded the seat with pillows, then they crowded in - I am still not quite sure how. The three older women sat in back, with Tante Lisbeth in the middle as far back on the seat as she could. The other two, Frau Meisingler and Frau Bielemann, sat partly on the arm rest and a little forward with their knees pressed against the front seat.

Ilse sat in front, with Liselotte perched on the edge of the seat beside her.

Sitting comfortably in the driver's seat, I could only guess how uncomfortable they must be. But no one, not even Frau Bielemann, complained. Instead, they laughed and talked, and exclaimed over the beautiful landscape.

Most of the roads along which we drove were lined with fruit trees. The apple trees had just burst into full flower, and some of the cherries and pears were still blooming, so we drove through a fairytale land of blossoms. The hillsides were almost indescribably beautiful with the light green of the new leaves mingling with the light green of the new leaves mingling with the dark evergreens.

We dropped Frau Bielemann off at her friend's house at Bad Dürkheim, but Frau Meisingler and the Kellers went on to Friedelsheim with Tante Lisbeth and me.

For me it was a significant afternoon. At Friedelsheim Tante Lisbeth showed me all of the places that were already familiar to me from Mamma's descriptions. Tante had known the town well enough before she became blind so that she could still point them out to me even though she could no longer see them. True, I was confused at times because she had trouble adjusting her thinking to the speed of a car, and so would be several minutes behind in her explanations.

At such times I stopped the car or backed up and asked questions until her explanations and what I was seeing were synchronized again.

The Burg was smaller than I had pictured it, not nearly as large as other old fortresses I had visited. The drawbridge had been removed, and part of the moat had been filled up. Most of the high lookout tower had been torn down, but we climbed up into what was left of it and looked out over the countryside. In the distance, in opposite directions, my eyes caught the faint outlines of spires - the cathedrals at Worms and at Speyer, Tante Lisbeth thought.

Tante made sure that I saw every inch of the place, even each room in the pastor's home across the courtyard from the church. The elderly woman who now occupied the living quarters behind the church where my great-grand father had reared his large family, welcomed us eagerly. She showed us the large attic above that wing of the Burg, where the Mennonites of the town hang their laundry during the damp winter months to dry. We went down into the large musty cellar under the Burg, and even saw the dark cell where prisoners had once been kept, long before the Mennonites acquired the Burg to use it as their parsonage and place of worship.

The inside of the little church sanctuary moved me so deeply that I found tears coming into my eyes. I ran my fingers gently over the keys of the pipe organ, which Tante assured me was the same one that my great-grand father had played. I walked slowly up the steps to the high pulpit where he had stood to preach. And I sat in the high backed pews, listening in my imagination to one of his sermons. It was only when I sensed the growing impatience of the others that I finally got up and walked outside.

We had a late coffee with one of Mamma's cousins who still lived in Friedelsheim, then we reluctantly started home, stopping at Bad Dürkheim to pick up Frau Bielemann.

Soon after we left Dürkheim something happened that none of us had anticipated or planned. Ilse asked a general question, and it was Frau Bielemann who answered her. She acted momentarily surprised and chagrined at what she had done, but she did not try to withdraw into a perpetuation of the silent feud.

For the rest of the drive she and Ilse talked directly to each other as freely as to the others. Crowding into little Angie seemingly had brought them close together in more ways than one. Unwittingly, and almost in spite of her real intentions, Tante Lisbeth had at last healed the breach.

My College Penpal

Hildegard Helf and I met personally only once, years ago, yet I think of her as one of the closest and most intimate friends that I have.

She lives in the big industrial city of Essen, Germany, where her husband was a Meister Schlösser (Head Locksmith) and owned a Werkstatt (shop or factory) inherited from his father. She is a Catholic homemaker who has raised two children to maturity and has recently become widowed after years of anxiety over her husband's long fight with cancer.

I am Mennonite and have lived on a farm or in a small rural town most of my life. I have concentrated on my career as a teacher and speech clinician, and have had no family of my own. It would seem that the two of us have little in common. But we long ago discovered that we were "kindred souls" and our friendship has deepened with the years.

When I began my correspondence with Hildegard Menne almost forty years ago, I had little interest in the letter writing beyond a vague desire to please the instructor of my Beginning German class at college, who had suggested the letter exchange.

Hildegard was studying English in her school in Germany, and I'm sure that she began the project mainly for the practice it gave her in learning the language. Following instructions, each of us wrote our letters half in German and half in English, so both of us could get practice in reading and in writing the language we were studying.

After our school days were over we continued to write, less frequently, but still regularly. Hildegard married Wilhelm Helf, and I became absorbed in my teaching. War broke out in Europe, but still the letters went back and forth.

In the spring of 1941 I had a long letter from Hilde in which she begged me, "Please don't let the conflict in Europe make any difference in our friendship!"

It hadn't entered my mind to blame Hilde for what Hitler was doing, and I certainly wanted to continue the correspondence. But I had an unusually busy summer and fall, and it was easy to postpone the time consuming chore of writing a German letter.

Then came Pearl Harbor and the entry of the U.S. into the war. With it, for me, came the realization that mail service between the United States and Germany might be curtailed. With a feeling almost of panic, I dashed off a letter to Hildegard and hurried to the postoffice with it. I didn't want her to think that I had spurned her offer of continuing friendship.

I was too late. The postmaster wouldn't accept the letter. Mail was no longer going through between the two countries.

I thought of Hilde often during the next five years. Essen was frequently in the news as a target for bomb attacks. Had her home been destroyed? Was she still living? Had my failure to answer her letter hurt her? Would I be able to contact her again after the war was over?

In 1946, as soon as mail again began to reach Germany, I sent a letter to her old address. In less than two weeks I received a letter from her. I was astounded!

"It's fantastic that mail should travel so fast when there's still so much chaos and confusion over there!" I marveled.

When I opened the letter I realized that it was not a reply to mine at all. It had been written at almost exactly the same time as mine.

In my letter I had asked if there was anything that she or her family needed, and offered to help in any way that I could. In her letter there was no mention of need or want. She wrote that she had a four year old son, born during the war. They had fled from Essen before the worst of the bombing.

The village where they had been staying had been bombed, too, but all of the family had survived.

When they had been able to return to Essen after the war, they had found that their home and factory had been severely damaged but they had been able to get a small place to live in the same part of the city. She hoped that my family and I were in good health.

When her second letter came, in answer to mine, I appreciated the pride which had kept her from asking for help in the first letter.

Yes, there were many things they needed desperately. Food was of all things the most necessary. Clothing, too, was sorely needed, especially for her little boy.

So an exchange of packages as well as letters began. Mine were large duty free gift parcels containing food, clothing, and such scarce items as soap and medications. Hers were tiny and light, since the Germans were not allowed to send any package weighing more than a few ounces out of the country.

Into them she lovingly packed keepsakes and novelties - a book of poems, some lovely cards, and Advent calendar, a hand embroidered handkerchief case made out of scraps of cloth and yarn, candle holders folded from pieces of gold colored paper, pressed flowers arranged artistically on a cardboard mat.

Gradually, as conditions in Germany improved, we began to limit the exchange to special occasions, and the nature of the parcels changed. Hers became larger, and contained more valuable gifts. Mine decreased in size and omitted articles now plentiful on the German market. But through them we continued to express our love and concern for each other.

Our friendship had passed the test of time, and interruption, of war and its aftermath. When I found out that I would be going to Germany, I put Hildegard's name at the top of the list of people I wanted to visit.

I had hoped to see her early in the fall, and visit her several times during the year. But the trip from Ansbach to Essen required either a whole day or a whole night, so it was January before I finally squeezed the visit into a week-end.

Hildegard, Wilhelm, and little Willi met me at the station in Essen early on Saturday morning. Even though the platform was crowded, I recognized them immediately, and Hildegard came straight toward me. She and Wilhelm greeted me in English, and even Willi managed a clear, well coached "Good morning" to accompany his bow and handshake.

Hildegard's hospitality was as lovingly and thoughtfully planned as her gift parcels had been. Wilhelm had taken time off to drive us home in his auto, an older model which had survived the war. After a "second breakfast" of coffee, rolls, black bread, jelly, cheese, and ham, Wilhelm took Willi with him on some errands so that I could rest and nap on the couch while Hilde prepared dinner.

In the afternoon we went to visit Willi's first grade classroom. German parents did not visit school as casually and frequently as parents in the United States do. But knowing my interest in seeing a German class in session, Hilde had spoken to Willi's teacher and obtained permission for us to come for a few minutes just before closing time.

Willi attended a Catholic school. On the opposite side of the school yard I noticed another large building.

"That is the Protestant School," Hilde told me. "They both use the same playground at different times of the day."

As we entered the classroom, I had a jumbled impression of faces and more faces, all turned toward us in curiosity and interest. I don't think I have ever seen so many little boys crowded into such a small space before.

The schoolroom seemed literally packed with them. Not a desk was empty. I counted them later. There were 62!

Willi's teacher was a young man doing his first year of regular teaching, as he told me in our conversation after the children had been dismissed. He was tall, and already there was a slight stoop to his shoulders, as if he had bent down often to listen to some little one. His face had a kind, pleasant expression, and his dark eyes were friendly and full of good humor. I liked him immediately.

He greeted us cordially, and Hildegard performed the introductions. Then we remained standing just inside the door while Herr Lehrer (Mr. Teacher) went back to his class. He did not offer us a seat. There were no extra chairs in the room, and no space to put any if Herr Lehrer had gone after some.

I looked around, comparing everything with the American schools to which I was accustomed. The room was about the same size as the average U.S. Classroom. Along one wall there was a double row of hooks, filled with an assortment of coats and caps. At the front of the room was the teacher's desk and a chair and a movable blackboard on a high stand. Part of the board was ruled for writing. A large abacus for counting stood beside it.

That was all of the equipment there was, except for the double desks at which the children were seated. There were no pictures, no large bulletin boards displaying the children's written work and drawings, no bookcases filled with colorful story books and supplementary readers, such as one would find in most American first grade rooms.

At the side of each desk hung a schoolbag. These were a necessary part of a German child's school equipment.

Since many schools had been destroyed in the bomb attacks, the repairable buildings were crowded far beyond their intended capacity. Almost all of the schools ran a double shift, which necessitated a shorter school day for each child. Even so each classroom had far too many pupils.

Each child had to take home all of his school supplies every day. The homework given to the children made this necessary even if there had been a place to keep the books at school. Lessons were recited at school and assignments made and explained, but the actual studying took place at home.

HerrLehrer explained that the boys had been memorizing a poem. He asked them to recite it for us, first in unison, and then individually. Willi was one of the first ones called on. Self-conscious, but beaming, he said it without a mistake while all three of us - Hildegard, Herr Lehrer, and I - smiled our encouragement.

Next he asked a little redhead to recite. The boy made a slight mistake, and immediately the entire room, as if they had been waiting for some such incident to release their pent up excitement at having visitors, burst into loud laughter. They laughed gleefully and uproariously. Glancing at the young teacher, I could sense his momentary embarrassment.

"That this should have to happen with an American teacher in the room," his face said. "I hope I can get them quieted quickly."

He did, very skillfully. I agreed with Hilde that he had a fine understanding for small boys.

After one more boy had recited the poem, the children were dismissed. There was no formal marching out of the room as I had expected; no taking turns to get wraps as one would have found in most American first grade rooms.

Herr Lehrer simply told them that was all for the day, and in an incredibly short time and with remarkable lack of confusion, 62 small coats were donned, 62 school bags hoisted on backs and shoulders, 62 caps grabbed from the hooks, and the room was empty.

A few children paused to have Herr Lehrer help them with a bag or a contrary button. A few stopped simply for a last confidential word with him.

One small tousle-head came back into the room after a forgotten cap. Herr Lehrer smilingly teased him with the German version of the familiar, "It's good that your head is fastened on or you'd forget that, too." The boy glanced at us out of the corner of his eye, grinned sheepishly at the teacher, and vanished through the door.

After all of the children were gone, Hildegard, Herr Lehrer, and I chatted a few minutes, mainly about Willi's work, a little about general teaching methods.

Herr Lehrer still used the phonetic method of teaching reading. His colleague, the woman who taught the first grade girls, was trying the new whole-word method advocated by the Americans. He didn't know which was best, the phonetic, he was inclined to believe. At least his boys were learning to read. Most of them would be ready to go on into the second grade. A few weren't keeping up.

"But it has been a struggle," he sighed, "especially at the first of the year. Till you just get them all to sit still -- ! And even now there are just too many of them! One can't give any of them any individual attention."

With this I heartily agreed, and on that note Hilde and I made our farewells.

After we got back from the school, I went with Hilde to Wilhelm's parental home to meet his parents and sisters. Wilhelm's father took me across the courtyard to their workshop and showed me some of the things they made there: steel doors, fences, iron gratings and ornate railings, candlesticks, and light fixtures.

"Everything is made by hand," he told me proudly. "or with hand operated machines. We employ twelve men now, and we are very particular about our craftsmanship. All of the steel framework of our Catholic Church was made here when the church was remodeled, and most of the candlesticks and other fixtures. Our products are scattered all over Essen, and we get orders from all parts of Germany."

He showed me the spot where they had buried their belongings during the war. Before they had fled from Essen, they had made a large steel chest and filled it with dishes, silverware, books, jewelry, and other keepsakes. Then secretly, at night, they had buried the chest under the workshop. Unless there would have been a direct hit, the things would have been safe for years even if the workshop and their home had been completely destroyed.

"So we had all of our 'valuables' when we came back," Herr Helf told me with a grimace. "But one cannot eat silverware, and immediately after the war, jewelry was of little worth to anyone."

For "cöffeë" Hildegard, Wilhelm, Willi, and Opa (Grandpa) Helf took me up to the Heimliche Liebe, a Gasthaus built on the site of the little Bauernhof (farm) where the Krupp who started the huge iron and steel works during the time of the Kaisers, used to visit his secret love when he was still a young unmarried fellow. The old Bauernhaus was still there, but near it a luxurious restaurant had been built.

On the way to the Gasthaus the Helfs showed me a cross section of Essen, the part of the city where the huge factories had been, the communities that the Krupps had built for their workers, some of the suburbs of Essen, the pretty places along the Ruhr, and the lovely lake made out of part of the river.

The Heimliche Liebe is on a high hill, and from our table we had a beautiful view of the Ruhr valley and the lake, and of the mansion built by the Krupps, and occupied after the war by the Coal Control Board, representatives from all of the Allied Countries.

Hildegard had grown up not far from the Krupp mansion, and had gone to school with one of the Krupp boys. Their father had sent them to a public

school because he wanted them to have a normal childhood without any special advantages over other children.

Willi went to bed early that evening, and Wilhelm went to his parents' home to sleep. So Hilde and I had time for some relaxed hours of really getting acquainted. She showed me photographs of herself and Wilhelm, and then of little Willi as a baby and a small child, and gave me such a vivid verbal picture of her experiences during the war that I felt almost as though I had lived those years with her.

"Willi was literally born between bombings," she said. "In the months before he came, I was constantly climbing up and down stairs to and from the shelters, and when he was only a few days old, I carried him up and down in my arms. Even in the village to which we fled, he lived almost constantly with fighting and bombing during the first years of his life."

Sunday was almost anticlimax, although it was filled to the brim with visiting. Hildegard slipped out of the house to go to church early in the morning while I was still in bed. Her father and sister came home from church with her to meet me and to talk. At one point in the conversation her father started to make a critical remark about the wanton destruction of Essen by American bombs, but Hildegard quickly stopped him.

"We will not talk about that now," she said gently. "What our countries did during the war has nothing to do with our friendship, Amelia's and mine."

We had dinner with Wilhelm's family, and in the afternoon Hilde and I had coffee alone and then stopped for a short while at the one land bowling alley where the Helf family congregated each Sunday afternoon.

Opa loved to bowl, so the family made this their Sunday afternoon "together time". All of them: father, mother, three daughters and three sons and their families, took time to meet at the alley to visit, drink coffee, and play together.

Hildegard and I said "Auf Wiedersehen" and not "goodbye" at the station that night, making definite plans for another visit during my summer vacation so that I could see the new baby which was due in March. But the farewells proved to be more permanent than either of us had anticipated. When I decided to go back to the United States instead of staying for a second year of teaching in Germany, my summer plans changed. We have not seen each other since then.

But history seems to have a way of repeating itself.

Several years ago Renate, Hildegard's daughter whom I didn't get to see, was studying English in school, while my niece, Elaine, who is the same age, was taking German in high school. To my delight, a new set of letters began flying back and forth across the Atlantic.

Later, after both of the girls began their nurses training, the letter writing slowed down. But last summer when Elaine was traveling in Europe, I received a card from Essen with notes from each of the three, Hildegard, Renate, and Elaine. Elaine enthusiastically told me how much she was enjoying her visit with the Helfs.

So I hope that in thirty five years their correspondence may have deepened into the kind of enduring friendship which developed between my college penpal and me.

Chapter 16

A Visit and a Visitor

Hedwig Niess had sixty pupils in her first grade classroom. Most of them were boys, but at the back of the room was a small island of girls, seated close together, probably an overflow from the girls' first grade room across the hall. I would have used the quiet little girls as buffers mixed in with the more rowdy boys. But perhaps that would not have been considered proper in a German classroom.

After enjoying Willi's classroom in Essen, I began to make plans to visit one of the schools in Ansbach. But it was May before my plans finally worked out. Marianne made the arrangements for the visit and went with me one afternoon immediately after we had dismissed our pupils at three o'clock.

We went first to the Rector's office, and he directed us to Fräulein Niess' room. As we walked down the hall I noticed small alcoves filled with children's wraps. Each was closed with an iron grating fastened with a locked padlock.

Hedwig was a pleasant faced middle-aged woman with becomingly arranged graying hair, a warm friendly smile, and a twinkle in her gray eyes. As we entered the room she was conducting a class in number work correlated with oral language.

Each pupil had ten Zehn-pfennig pieces cut from paper on his desk, the equivalent of one Mark. With this money the children were buying imaginary gifts for their mothers for Mother's Day, which would be the following Sunday, the same day as ours in America.

I had always thought of Mother's Day as an American holiday. But several Germans expressed surprise that we in the United States celebrated Mother's Day, too. They had thought it an exclusively German custom.

Fräulein Niess took time to introduce us to the children and to explain our visit. Then she invited us to sit in one of the desks at the back of the room.

"Several children are absent today," she explained, "so there are some empty seats."

For a few minutes all eyes in the room were on us, then Fräulein Niess called for attention and repeated the question: What will you buy your mother for Mothers Day?"

Hands shot up all over the room. Faces glanced in our direction - were we watching and listening? - and then turned back to the teacher.

Fräulein Niess nodded at one of the girls.

"I will buy my mother a chocolate bar," came the response.

"Good. How much will that cost?"

"Twenty Pfennig."

Sixty pair of little hands quickly counted out two Zehn-Pfennig pieces and slid them away from the rest of the coins.

Even before the teacher asked the question, "How much money will Anna have left?" hands began to pop up all over the room as busy little heads finished subtracting or counting to see how much twenty Pfennig from one Mark would be.

More children named their purchases. "I will buy my mother an apple."

"I will buy my mother some flowers."

Each child had to form his answer in a complete, correct sentence. If he answered with a single word or spoke in dialect, Fräulein Niess would ask, "What is the correct way to say that?"

After about twenty minutes of this, the "money" was carefully put away in small boxes kept in the school bags, and the children took out their readers.

While the children were getting out their books, Fräulein Niess got a bunch of keys from her desk, unlocked the cupboard which stood in one corner of the room, and took out a book for Marianne and me to use in following the lesson while the class read. Before she brought us the book, she carefully locked the cupboard and put away the key.

The reading class was not divided into ability groups as most first grades are in American schools. All of the children read the same assignment, and every child was supposed to have studied it at home.

The lesson was about half a page in length, and perhaps a dozen of the sixty children read a few sentences aloud while the rest read silently, keeping their places by following along the sentences with their fingers. After the oral reading, the teacher asked a few questions about the passage. Then another half page was assigned to work on at home, and the readers disappeared into the schoolbags, while slates and slate pencils were taken out.

"What shall we write today?" Fräulein Niess asked, pushing up the plain blackboard and pulling down the one ruled with white lines. "Yesterday we wrote, 'Meine liebe Mutter'. (My dear Mother) What shall we write today?"

"We could write 'Ich liebe meine Mutter'" (I love my mother) one of the girls suggested.

"Good," Fräulein Niess took up the suggestion immediately. I guessed that it fit in with her own previously worked out plans. "'I love my Mother' will be a fine sentence to practice writing."

She laid down the chalk she had taken from her desk and pushed the blackboard up again. "We know how to write 'Ich'" she told the class. "And yesterday we learned to write the other three words. So we don't need a copy today."

"And now," she continued in a half scolding, half teasing voice, "erase those scrawls and scribbles you made yesterday from your slates, and let's see all of you do some nice writing today."

Glancing in our direction, the children giggled at the remark, and with much hustle and bustle used the rags fastened to their slates to erase the "scribbles and scrawls." Then for a time there was only the occasional squeak of a slate pencil as sixty heads bent over their assignment.

Fräulein Niess went up and down the aisles looking at their work, praising some, scolding others who were not working, asking a few children to erase and start over. When she came to a child who had filled his slate acceptably, she gave him permission to put it away and get out the clay he had in a small jar in his school bag.

"Make something to give your mother for Mothers Day," she suggested.

The balls of clay seemed almost incredibly small for first graders to use. The things which the children fashioned were equally small, dainty and exact - tiny flowers, a miniature cake with wee candles, a little dish.

For the next fifteen minutes I was fascinated by the free, yet organized and controlled, activity in the room. As each child finished his writing, he got out his clay. When he had completed his clay object, he brought it to Fräulein Niess, asking for permission to take it around the room and show it to his friends.

In the meantime Fräulein Niess began to hand out the "Speisung" from a large box under her desk.

"An American group donates this food for the children whose parents are too poor to provide proper nourishment for them," Marianne explained to me in a whisper. "Other children can have it also by paying a small fee."

That day the children received chocolate bars. "But in cold weather it is usually a hot soup of perhaps milk or cocoa," Marianne said.

Remembering how we disliked having visitors at dismissal time, Marianne and I slipped out a few minutes before school was over. Fräulein Niess followed us out of the room.

"I have often watched from my home just across the street from the American School as the school buses drove up and unloaded the children, and I've wished that I might see what your school is like. May I be so free as to ask permission to come some time?"

"But, of course!" I told her. "We'd be only too glad to have you come."

And I meant what I said. After the hours I had just spent in her classroom I knew that Hedwig would be understanding, and not overly critical of what went on in mine. I only wished I had discovered her earlier in the school term. I think we would have become congenial friends.

She came one afternoon the very next week, when her class met in the mornings. The children liked her, and were on their best behavior, so that the afternoon came to a close without any major mishap or misdemeanor.

Once when Miss Niess went back to the library corner to look over our books, Joyce, my little second grade girl, slipped back to sit close to her and whisper information. Hedwig understood very little English, but she smiled at the little girl, and they sat there for some time looking at the books together.

"You must come and have coffee with me some afternoon during the next week that I'm free in the afternoons," Hedwig said as she left. "Then we can really talk and exchange ideas. I have so much to ask you. You must tell me all about the activity method of teaching. I've heard so much about it, but I really don't understand just how it works."

"The activity method," I thought to myself, "with sixty first graders in a small crowded room would be bedlam."

Aloud I thanked her warmly for the invitation, and a few weeks later we went to have coffee with her at five o'clock.

It was a hot afternoon in late May, and instead of coffee we had Eis and Gebäck (ice cream and cookies). Hedwig served them at a small table in her front yard or garden. It was a cool, quiet spot, shut off from the noise of the street by a high fence, trees, and shrubs.

One of the fourth grade teachers at Hedwig's school had also been asked to coffee. Anna taught in the afternoons that week, and she came dragging into the garden at 5:30, looking exactly as I so often feel at four o'clock after a warm school day in late spring.

"It was so hot in the schoolroom!" she gasped, sinking into a chair and fanning herself with her handkerchief. "And the children are so wiggly and restless. You can be thankful you teach in the mornings this week, Hedwig."

Anna had the task of preparing her children for the examination which would determine if they could go into one of the high schools or would have to remain in the public schools for the rest of their education.

Those who passed the tests and were accepted into the high school could go on into a university and enter one of the professions. The others were doomed to remain in the public schools until the end of the eighth grade and then could perhaps attend a trade school. University training was forever out of their reach.

"The fourth grade is too early to make the division," Anna stated firmly. "There's been some talk of waiting until the children are at least through the first six years of school before separating them, and I heartily agree with that idea. By the end of the fourth grade they haven't developed enough so that one can tell their possibilities."

"And besides," she added with an impish grin, "if they waited until the end of the sixth year, I wouldn't have to worry about those examinations."

Over our ice cream and cookies we talked about our schools. Hedwig told Anna about her visit to my room.

"The children were so quiet!" she marvelled. She turned to me. "How can you keep them so quiet? You never had to raise your voice, but could always talk in a low, pleasant tone. I sometimes have to literally shout to make the children hear me."

"Eighteen children just don't make as much noise as sixty," I reminded her.

"It wasn't just that," she protested. "They were all so busy and interested. That is what I thought was so wonderful."

"And I was astounded at the way you managed to keep sixty children interested and working," I told her. "I'm sure I could never cope with that many six year olds! And you had the activities so well organized."

Hedwig gave me a pleased smile, then went on, "I walked into my room the next day and told the children about the visit. Then I said, 'Today we will have an American school. You are going to work hard and be quiet, and I am not going to shout or raise my voice.'"

She paused and then finished with a little laugh, "And you know - for about an hour it worked!"

Chapter 17

Trudel

The Heydens were on my list as relatives of a friend. They lived in Obermensing, a suburb of Munich, so when in November I was invited to Munich to spend Sunday with Aunt Frieda and the Rohdes, I decided to work in a visit to the Heydens on Saturday.

In answer to my note asking if it would be suitable to them for me to visit on that date, Mrs. Heyden replied immediately with a warm invitation, and the information that she would meet me at the station. But in case we missed each other, I should not go to the address I had for them. Letters still reached them at that address, but they had moved from there several years before, and it would be better if I did not look for them at that address.

I wondered a little about that information. I knew that they had owned the home where they had been living before the move. My friend had visited them shortly after they had built it, and she had told me how lovely it was, and how carefully they had counted the cost and planned each detail of the construction. If they were still living in Obermensing, I couldn't imagine why they would want to move from their nice new home. The obvious answer did not even occur to me.

Mrs. Heyden did meet me at the station, and we spotted each other almost immediately, although we had never met before. She had brought her bicycle, and on this she loaded my suitcase.

"That's easier than carrying it," she told me.

For me it would not have been, but she managed very skillfully, balancing the bag on the bicycle as she pushed it along beside her.

As we trudged through the quiet streets toward her home, she asked me questions about her relatives in America, and I tried to answer them without missing anything of the surroundings.

I noticed that the suburb was not large, and that some of the houses were almost hidden by lovely tall trees. The November fog turned the semi-woodland into a sort of quiet fairyland.

"This is a beautiful place in which to live!" I exclaimed.

"You're not the only American that thinks so," Mrs. Heyden said bitterly, and then added quickly, "Yes, it is beautiful, and it used to be even more so. When we first came out here, it was still just woodland, with a few houses. Gradually more and more people have moved in, until it is getting to have quite an inhabited look. But it is still beautiful! We would not want to live anywhere else even if we could."

When we got to their home, I began to understand several things - why the Heydens had moved, and why Mrs. Heyden had made the remark about Americans thinking Obermensing a beautiful place in which to live.

Mrs. Heyden stopped at a gate opening into a sort of wooded back yard or large garden, and lead the way toward a small frame garden house.

"This is where we now live," she said quietly, with a hint of the bitterness in her voice again. "The Americans took over our house several years ago. We could not find any other place to live, so we moved into this."

"Oh," I said, unable to think of a suitable remark, "Oh, I see."

"The Americans always choose the prettiest parts of any city in which to live," she went on, her voice now matter-of-fact and carefully guarded against the bitter tone. "Not that I blame them. Why shouldn't they? Obermensing is an ideal place for them. Most of the houses are single family dwellings and quite new, with modern conveniences. It's far enough out to insure quiet and privacy, yet it's on direct street car lines into Munich."

Her husband came to the door, and she introduced him. Mr. Heyden was a quiet, friendly man. At one time he had been a popular and successful photographer; now he worked at odd jobs. He acknowledged the introduction with the typical German handshake and stiff bow, then stepped aside and motioned for me to enter the house.

The room into which I walked served as dining room, living room, kitchen, and also as a bedroom for their daughter, Trudel, whenever she spent the night at home. There was only one other room, a tiny one at the back, where Mr. and Mrs. Heyden slept.

In spite of the lack of space, the room was orderly, and charmingly decorated. The walls were finished in dark wood panels; the beams and rafters and the built-in table and bench set had the same finish. Along a high wooden shelf which ran completely around the room, pieces of pottery and colorful plates were arranged in harmonious effect.

Along the south wall stood an old couch which was Trudel's bed. In one corner was a little black woodburning stove which served both cooking and heating purposes. Crowded into the corner were several boxes, set on end as makeshift cupboards. Wedged between the outside door and the stove was a lovely upright piano.

The cottage must once have been a lovely place in which to spend leisurely Sunday afternoons in the summertime. As a home in which to live the year around it was cold, drafty, and terribly crowded.

Mrs. Heyden motioned me to a seat on one of the benches, hospitably bringing me a cushion from the couch to make me more comfortable. Almost immediately Trudel came home, and dinner was served, a simple meal of soup, potatoes, a vegetable, and some meat. I knew that most German families, except perhaps those living on large farms, could afford meat only on special occasions, so I was not surprised to have the family eat sparingly of the delicacy, but urge me to take a second helping.

After the dinner things had been cleared away, Mrs. Heyden brought out the family photo albums and some scrap books which were a sort of combination guest books and family diaries. She began to tell me about the family, painting as vivid a picture for me as possible so I could take it back to their cousin Barbara in America.

The story that Mrs. Heyden told was a charming one, at least the first part of it. They had lived comfortably and well. Trudel, their only child, had brought much joy to her parents. She was a talented girl, and was now a concert musician, although at the present time she was giving piano lessons to children in order to earn a little money.

"During the war and immediately after the war she gave many concerts, some of them with friends, and some of them by herself," her mother told me. "Before the currency reform, people had money and nothing to buy with it, so concerts were well attended. But now nobody has money, and if you give a concert you have to plan to pay the deficit you are sure to incur. Trudel is planning to sing again in January, but it will be only in a small hall, so that the expenses can be kept as low as possible. Only our friends and a few other interested people can be expected to come."

Mr. Heyden had obviously been a good photographer. The book contained numerous pictures of Truden at all ages and in all sorts of interesting poses. There were also several pictures of their home.

"When the Americans came to Obermensing to look at the houses here," Mrs. Heyden said, "we were afraid at once. Our house was new, and it was more conveniently arranged and more modern than many German homes. We had had it built ourselves after much planning. It would be just what the Americans would like. And yet we kept hoping that we would be spared. It wasn't long before we knew."

She spoke now without reserve or hesitation, talking to dear cousin Barbara's friend, no longer on guard because I was American.

"We were given notice to have our things packed and moved out by a certain time," she went on. "After the decree actually came, we went quite cheerfully. We even gave a final little concert in our house. We thought it would be for a short time only. The Americans would soon leave again, and then we could go back home. Trudel even wrote into our scrapbook, 'Let us hope we can celebrate next Christmas in our home again.' I'm glad we did not know then what we know now!"

She sighed and stopped talking, fighting tears. It was Mr. Heyden who went on.

"It's been five years now, and we've almost given up hope of ever getting back. We can't find any other place to live. Munich is more than crowded. The same is true of any other city we might try. Trudel has a room with friends here in Obermensing, where she has her grand piano so she can practice and give her piano lessons. The rest of our furniture had to stay in the house, but we moved the pianos with us."

"The first American family to live in our house was a lovely family," Mrs. Heyden resumed the story. "The lady came to see me here frequently and I was free to visit her whenever I liked. She tried to learn German from me, and I learned some English from her. They even let us keep some of our things in our basement and get them whenever we needed them."

But they stayed only a short while before they moved away. The next family was nice, too, but we never seemed to be able to become friends with them. Now a Warrant Officer and his son live in the house. I don't know where his wife is, or whether he has one. They've forbidden us to even go near the house or into the yard. So here we are, where I have to see the house daily, where I can watch him neglect the yard and abuse the furniture

and change things in the house. And I have no hope of ever getting back to live in my own home again."

She paused and looked at me, waiting for my reaction. But I could think of nothing to say, so she went on.

"When the Americans first began building houses for themselves in Munich we began to cheer up again. We thought that would mean that soon we Germans could have our homes back. But faster than the new American houses were finished, more American families came to Germany to live. When I went to the billeting officer to find out how things were, whether we could look forward to getting into our home soon, he became quite angry with me. 'We'll need those houses in Obermensing for a long time yet,' he told me.

"At first we hoped, 'Perhaps next year we can go home, or perhaps the year after that.' Now we've given up all hope. We completely despair of ever getting back!"

I looked around the crowded little room and re-crossed my legs so that my left foot would be off the drafty floor for a while. My mind was a turmoil of conflicting thoughts that left me feeling confused and angry, although I wasn't sure against whom my anger was directed.

I thought about the people who were left homeless in London, the suffering in Czechoslovakia, the ruins in Frankfurt and Essen and Mainz. Certainly the inconveniences here were nothing compared to that.

I thought about the apartment in Ansbach where I lived so comfortably with two American secretaries. It, too, was in an almost new building, in a recent addition to the city. There was a three bedroom apartment on the first floor, and another on the second, with a much smaller third floor apartment where the Hausmeister lived.

I had known, of course, that a German family had to vacate our apartment when the first Americans moved in. But that had seemed so impersonal; I hadn't given it much thought. And I had heard the billeting officer say on more than one occasion, "The Germans are happy to rent their houses to us. They get good money, so they consider themselves the lucky ones."

Now I knew that this wasn't true, or at least, it wasn't always true. And that put everything into a different light.

I remembered the remark made by one American after listening to a German complaint about the occupation forces, "What do they think this is? Who won the war anyway?". But I found the conquering hero role had to play. I could nothelp but feel sympathy, a great deal of sympathy, for these kind, gracious, sad people. And I also felt a sort of collective guilt.

Suddenly I became curious to see the Heyden house, and wondered about going over there.

"If you'll go with me," I told Mrs. Heyden. "I'll assume full responsibility. I'll ask the man to let you show me the place so that I can tell your relatives in America what it looks like. I really doubt that he will have any objection to that."

Mrs. Heyden's eyes lit up.

"I would simply love to show it to you," she said.

We found only the maid at home, and although she had formerly refused admittance to Mrs. Heyden, she made no protest now when I told her who I was, and explained why I would like to come in. In fact, she was quite friendly and helpful.

The house was not large, but it was charming, and very conveniently arranged. On the first floor there was one of the most modern kitchens I had

seen in Germany, and a big living room separated from the dining room by large sliding doors.

This was our music room," Mrs. Heyden explained, looking lovingly around the dining room. "We used the other room for living and dining room both. In here, beside the piano we now have in the cottage, we had Trudel's large grand piano, and a small harmonium. By opening the sliding doors between the rooms we could accomodate as many as twenty five or thirty guests for the little home concerts which Trudel and her friends liked to give here. Those were lovely times! I can hardly bear to think of them now."

She walked over to the window and looked out.

"Those ugly screens!" she exclaimed, exasperated. "I can't understand why the Americans want to spoil the lovely view from the windows with these ugly screens. It isn't as though we had a lot of mosquitoes or harmful insects here. Just a few flies, and what harm is there in a few flies?"

I said nothing, but I was amused. This, I had discovered earlier, was one of the subjects on which Germans and Americans definitely had different points of views. In any German town that I drove through I could tell exactly where the Amerians lived. There were screens on the windows and no feather beds hanging out to air.

From the house we went to Trudel's room. It was so small that the grand piano completely filled it except for one corner where the couch stood on which Trudel slept when she did not feel equal to the long walk home. The room was cold, and I shivered even though I was dressed for the out-of-doors.

"I have a stove," Trudel apologized, pointing to a tiny one by the door. "But I can't afford coal to keep the room heated except on the days when my pupils come. If I had known that you were coming over her, too, I would have started a fire. When I'm alone here I wear my ski suit, and while I'm practicing on the piano I get quite warm. The first hour or so my fingers feel cold and stiff, but after that they soon warm up. I usually work them pretty hard."

Trudel went with us to see Mrs. Heyden's sister-in-law who lived in the house in which Mrs. Heyden had grown up. It was an older house, not as modern as the Heyden house, but large and stately.

"If we had only known ahead of time that we would have to move," Trudel mourned, "we could have moved in here with my aunt and cousin. But when we had to vacate our house they had already taken in some other German families."

The lovely furniture gave me some idea of the style of living to which these people must once have been accustomed. Now the furniture was so crowded together that its beauty was lost. An extra bed stood in the living room. The radiators showed that the house was equioped for central heating, but now only one room was being partially heated with a small coal burning stove. The room was not as cold as Trudel's had been, but I was uncomfortably chilly, even in my heavy coat.

Mrs. Heyden's sister-in-law had lost her only son in the war, and she still mourned him deeply. She told me about him, controlling her voice with difficulty.

"He was such a fine boy," she said. "So cheerful and affectionate and so talented. We expected much from him. And now he is gone. Everything that is worthwhile seems to be gone. Our country has been wrecked. Life isn't the same. It can never be the same. The old happiness and contentment are gone. You can see it in the faces of people you meet. They are sad and hopeless and grim. All over Germany --"

I felt sorry for this woman with the sad, drawn face and the grief stricken eyes. She had lost much, and her sorrow and suffering went deep.

But along with the sympathy I felt something akin to anger. The way she looked at me made me feel that she was blaming her loss on us Americans. I was remembering a young teacher with whom I had taught just before the war broke out. He had laughed and played, too, and worked hard and written surprisingly good fiction. He had been so full of life and so young, and he had never come back either to live the future we had anticipated for And he had been one of many. All over America, too.

"Yes," I said softly. "War is a terrible thing. Not only in Germany is life different. In England and France and Russia, too. And all over America there are also mothers for whom life will never be the same; mothers who can never feel the happiness and contentment they felt before; mothers whose hopes were wrecked. American mothers lost sons, too."

She gave me a startled look, as though the thought was new to her.

I wanted to say more. I wanted to add, "It is our leaders who declare war and our men who go away to fight. But it is we women who wait and long, and then who grieve and mourn. We should band together, we women all over the world, and put a stop to it. We should declare, "We've had enough! This madness must stop! And then we should raise our children to feel as we do."

But my limited German vocabulary made it hard to express what I felt, and while I was still groping for words, Mrs. Heyden changed the subject.

When we got back to the cottage, Trudel played for me. She played magnificently, with feeling and depth of expression as well as with skill. And then she sang, in a rich full contralto. Sitting there in the twilight in that tiny, crowded room listening to music that belonged in a large concert hall, I could hardly keep back the tears. And I resolved that if it were at all possible I would attend the concert that Trudel was planning to give.

I didn't attend the concert Trudel was to give, for Trudel never gave it. But I did visit the Heydens once more in August just before sailing back to America. This time I had my car, and I drove slowly through the quiet, shaded streets until I came to the little garden house.

Mrs. Heyden came to the door to greet me. Trudel was not there. She had passed away in June, quite suddenly, following an emergency operation to remove an abscess from one of her kidneys.

I did not stay long. Mrs. Heyden tried hard to be the gracious hostess she had been on my previous visit. But the effort was almost too much for her. All life had gone from her face. Her dull eyes showed the pain she felt, and her listless expression told me that life now held nothing of interest for her any more.

We talked mostly about Trudel, and a little about cousin Barbara, whom I would soon see.

"Trudel was so fond of Barbara," Mrs. Heyden said. "And Barbara thought so much of her little Trudel. I'm sorry that now you'll have to tell her that our girl is gone. I don't know I shall live without her. But we're thankful that we could have her this long."

She paused and then said very low, "There is one thing that I can hardly bear to think about, and that is that she had to go without having gotten back into our own home. She wanted that so much, and she was always so hopeful that some day soon we could go back. Now, I don't even care - -" Her voice trailed off.

I still think of the Heydens occasionally. But the years have a way of shifting one's perspective. When I think of Obermensing now, I

I remember that the Germans I met who were the unhappiest and the most bitter after the war were the ones who had lived the most comfortably before the war; the ones who had attached the most value to the security of possessions and things.

And I take a long look at my own priorities.

Chapter 18

1. Never Again War This, Too, Was Germany in 1949

The peace pageant stands out in my mind as a unique entity, completely separated in time and space from anything else that I did or saw while I was in Germany.

I can't remember the name of the village where I saw it. I have no idea what kind of group put on the performance; neither did I ever find out what the occasion was or why the pageant was given. But I remember the setting and the pageant vividly, almost like a series of photographs etched clearly on my mind.

I can see the large, weathered stone building beside which our car was parked, the cobblestones of the street where we stood, the empty village square in front of us, the crowd of people massed around the square, and the huge sign fastened to the front of one tall building: "NIEMALS MEHR KRIEG!" (NEVER AGAIN WAR!)

In the center of the square a temporary low wooden platform or stage had been built. Not far from that was a little house constructed from boards and paper.

I had not known that the performance was taking place; it was purely accidental that I got to see it. An American teacher friend and I had driven to a German village to visit one of her relatives. We found no one at home there, so we drove at random through the countryside, enjoying the mild, sunny October weather. At one village we had to stop because the streets were blocked, and no vehicles were being allowed to drive through.

Curious to see what was going on, we parked our car and got out to join the people who were massed around the edge of the square.

Suddenly the crowd became silent, listening to the sound of music which came faintly from the distance. Presently a small group of children came from one of the side streets, singing as they walked. Their voices were clear and strong, but I could not understand the words of their song. Neither was I sure what nationality or group was represented by their costumes.

When they reached the stage, they mounted it and recited a short passage which I could not understand. Then they performed a merry little folk dance.

When they had finished, they left the stage and moved to another part of the square, while other groups, dressed in various costumes, came from side streets, one group at a time, to recite their verses and dance their folk dances on the stage. The crowd cheered, and the children smiled happily.

Then abruptly the atmosphere changed. Before the last group had quite finished their dance, drums and the sound of marching music could be heard in the distance. A band of boys dressed as soldiers marched onto the square, led by two drummers. They carried guns and threw imaginary hand grenades left and right. One held a match to the little paper house and it burst into flames.

As the soldiers approached each group of dancers, the children cried out in fear, hid their faces, and fell to the ground.

The audience now watched in grim silence, and I could feel their intense identification with the scene. Where moments before there had been music and dancing, happiness and song, there was now a feeling of fear and grief and pain.

Then suddenly the mood changed again! The last group did not cry out or fall. They stood firm. Then slowly, but steadily, they began to advance, pushing "War and Destruction" before them with a banner proclaiming "Love and Good Will".

As they passed each group of cowering children, these rose and joined the group until all of the "nations" together had pushed "War and Destruction" out of the square. Then, singing the song with which the first group had entered the square, the children, holding hands, formed one large circle around the platform as the crowd burst spontaneously into loud cheers.

I have often wished I had asked what group was sponsoring the pageant, or why it was given. But it does not really matter. The memory of those German children has served to prod me into greater personal effort to make their slogan a reality - NIEMALS MEHR KRIEG!

2. A Land of Music and Flowers

After my first week in Germany I wrote home: "This is a land of lovely music and beautiful flowers." That was my most vivid first impression of the country, more vivid even than the ruins and bombed buildings.

I loved the beautiful flowers that had been planted "everywhere" in Bad Nauheim where we stayed for our week of orientation. They blossomed in boxes under almost every window; there were masses of them in the gardens and in the parks.

When I left Bad Nauheim, I didn't have to leave the beauty of the flowers behind me as I had feared. For I found that they bloomed just as beautifully in other German towns and villages. Even in the larger cities there were window boxes. And there were beds and beds of color in the parks and along the streets - "French gardens", with formal symmetrically patterned flower beds; "English gardens", with the flowers growing in more casual, informal arrangements; individual plants in pots along the sidewalks.

In the street markets there were always flower stands, which did a brisk business in the morning as workers and business men and women bought bouquets for their offices or stores, and housewives included them in purchases to take home.

During the fall Marianne brought fresh flowers for the schoolroom almost daily, and our German maid kept colorful bouquets on the living room table in our apartment.

Then in the spring there were the lilacs and the fruit blossoms! Most of the roads leading from one village to another in Bavaria are lined with fruit trees. It is hard to put into words the enchantment I felt as I drove slowly along in my car through this fairyland one Saturday in May.

The day was sunny and mild, the air was still and filled with the scent of the blossoms. There was so much beauty that it hurt; I could not take it all in. I wanted to hold onto time, to keep these few hours of perfection forever and ever, and I tried to capture some of it with my camera. But even as I snapped the pictures I knew that at best I would have only an imperfect facsimile to tantalize me when I looked at my slides.

Later, in early summer, came the wild flowers: the wild roses along the fences, the anemones, violets and buttercups in the meadows, the poppies and cornflowers in the fields. The farmers thought of these flowers as enemies to their crops and tried to eradicate them from their acres, but I could not look my fill!

Then there was the music. There were the park concerts to which we listened every evening in Bad Nauheim, the singing I heard in so many of the homes in which I visited, the church organs, and the church bells on Sunday mornings.

When I was a child I could not understand what my mother meant when she said, "I think that the thing I missed most when I came to America was the church bells on Sunday morning."

But beginning with my first Sunday morning in Bad Nauheim I did understand.

I saw much in Germany, of course, that was not music and flowers. There were ruins and bombed buildings. There was pain and grief and unpleasant memories. There was greed and selfishness and political intrigue. There were the harsh realities of trying to pick up the pieces and put life together again in the aftermath of a devastating war.

But the flowers were there, and so was the music. And they are a part of that to which my heart returns.

3. Puppets for Coffee

Among my souvenirs from Germany I have three large hand puppets: a king, a queen, and a court jester. Their heads are wooden, with meticulously carved and painted features. Their clothing is made from velvet, satin, and lace, and obviously it is quite old.

For a while after I returned to America, I let my pupils use the puppets, then I put them away. I don't really like to look at them, because they represent a part of my activities in Germany that I would rather forget.

The day after we had entertained the German children at Christmas time in our school classroom, a woman appeared at our schoolroom door soon after my pupils were dismissed, leading one of our little guests by the hand.

"I am Frau Wolff, Lotte's mother," she introduced herself. "Lottie wanted me to meet the nice American teacher."

The child hung back, embarrassed and shy, but the mother went on talking. "She said you were so kind and gracious to all of them. I know you must like children."

"Yes, I do," I affirmed, flattered by the praise. "I do like children, and you have a very sweet little girl."

The woman sighed. "Yes," she told me. "I am proud of my little daughter. Even in these old rags. And I love her very much."

She took one of the puppets out of the bag she was carrying.

"It is old," she said, handing it to me, "and valuable. I have two more here. They have been in our family for a longtime. But now I have to let them go."

She sighed again and looked at me pleadingly. "For myself I could not do it," she said plaintively. "But for my child I can do anything. There are so many things I need for her - warm clothing and nourishing food. And I have no money. So I try to sell some of the things I have. But who is there to buy? Everyone else is in the same predicament that I am in. We have things that were valuable once. But we have no money. And we need money for food and other needs."

I examined the puppet. "It is interesting," I thought to myself, "and I wouldn't mind having it."

Lotte's mother must have read my thoughts in my face for she took out the other puppets and handed them to me.

"For the child," she begged. "You can have them for only - -".

I have forgotten the exact price, but it was quite a large sum. I handed the puppets back to her.

"I don't have that many Marks," I told her, "and I don't think I can spare that much money right now anyway. I've bought Christmas gifts, and I need some cash for a train ticket for my vacation travels."

The woman did not give up that easily.

"Perhaps you have extra coffee," she suggested. "Or sugar or nylons or cigarettes. If you could give me some of those, I could sell them and buy food."

I hesitated. I did have extra nylons. And I had bought my full quota of coffee and sugar that month to use as Christmas gifts for our maid, the cleaning women at the school, and some of my relative whom I planned to visit. I had even bought several packages of cigarettes for the Hausmeister and several other German workers who had done things for us at the school or at our apartment. I could probably spare some of these.

I had been introduced to the black market on board ship coming to Germany. Several of the teachers who were returning after vacationing in the States during the summer had cartons of cigarettes and extra nylons hidden in their clothing.

"It's the best way to buy things in Germany," they told us newcomers. "These things have such a high value that you can buy lovely things for almost nothing with them."

"But that's participating in the black market," I protested, vowing never to stoop to that level.

But now I rationalized. This was different. This woman had the puppets and she needed money. I would give her the coffee as a gift and let her give me the puppets in exchange.

Lotte's mother came to my apartment several times after Christmas, each time bringing a family treasure which she wanted to exchange for cigarettes or coffee.

Each time she brought Lotte with her, and each time she pleaded, "For the child." And each time I yielded to the sad, somber look in the little girl's eyes and consented to the exchange.

Then one evening she came before our maid had gone home.

"That woman!" she snorted. "She really runs a racket! She buys things for a very little from people who desperately need money. Then she trades them to Americans for coffee or cigarettes, and sells them for a fortune."

Lotte's mother must have known that Helga would put me wise to her, for she never came back. But that didn't end my participation in the black market completely.

Gradually, so gradually that I did not even realize what was happening, I found it easier and easier to use coffee and nylons as exchange items for the things I wanted. I could always rationalize and excuse my actions. It is only now in retrospect that I feel remorse.

The black market and the American participation in it were a real part of life in Germany in 1949 and 1950. And I feel guilty and unhappy when my mind goes back to my participation in that.

4. We Had to Fight the Communists!

I had never expected that all of the Germans I learned to know would share my own religious and political convictions any more than all of my friends and acquaintances in the United States do. So I wasn't surprised or hurt or upset when my views were challenged during a conversation or discussion. And at times I even took the initiative in challenging their thinking.

Most of these conversations I have completely forgotten. But there are a few to which my thoughts still occasionally return.

One of these is the Methodist church service I attended with my cousin Heine during my first visit to their home in Pasing in early December. The minister was a young man, who had no doubt seen service in the war. For his sermon he used the Advent theme, preparation for the coming of Christ.

His application of the Scripture surprised and humbled me. He called for repentance, enumerating some of the sins committed during the war for which Germany and individual Germans must repent so that Christ could be born.

In sharp contrast are my memories of a Mennonite service I attended one Sunday morning in October. Actually, I remember little about the service itself except that the visiting minister gave an excellent, well organized and well presented Bible exposition. It is what happened in the afternoon that has remained in my mind.

Both the minister and I were invited for dinner to the home of one of the church members, who had known my mother well when they were both young people.

The man was a judge - intelligent, well educated, well thought of in the community. He was a very religious man who knew his Bible well, and was a leader not only in the small local congregation, but among the Mennonite churches of all southern Germany.

The minister was a young man, perhaps thirty five years old, who had seen action during the war in a number of places, but mainly in the Ukraine. It was not long before the two men began to talk about the war, as I found the Germans often did during those days.

"Such rich farm land there!" the young man said, referring to the Ukraine. "But the Russians were using such poor farming methods. What the Germans could not have done with that land had they won it!"

"Yes," the judge said regretfully. "If only Hitler had done things differently, we might have taken Russia and won the war."

I listened in astonishment as they continued to discuss the strategies of the conflict.

My father came to the United States when he was not quite seventeen, making the voyage to the strange land alone mainly because he wanted to escape the military draft of Germany. So the Mennonite doctrine that war is an evil in which Christians cannot participate was deeply entrenched in my thinking.

But these German Mennonites seemed to have lost this concept completely. The main criticism they had of Hitler and the Party was that they hadn't won the war.

"If only we had done this instead of this -- If only we had done that -- The mistake we made was that we did this when we should have done that --" The idea that the war itself had been a mistake did not seem to enter the picture.

"Did German Mennonites take such an active part in the war without any qualms of conscience?" I asked when I could keep still no longer.

"We had no choice," the young minister answered quietly. "Refusing to fight would have meant death."

"Yes," I said, groping for German words to express what I was thinking. "I realize how hard it would have been for the Mennonites here to refuse to take up arms, much harder than for our young men. But you have been talking only about military errors made in the fighting, nothing about the evils of the war itself. Do the German Mennonites really believe that taking part in this war was Christian and right?"

"When my country is at war," the judge said firmly. "It is my Christian duty to defend my Fatherland!"

I wanted to ask whether he called the invasion of Czechoslovakia, the destruction of the English cities, the seizure of Austria, and the murdering of the Jews, defending his Fatherland. But before I could organize my questions into German sentences, he went on:

"When his country is in danger as ours was, a Christian has no right to sit back and make others sacrifice their lives for his. I cannot approve of this pacifism which is being presented to us by the American Mennonites. There is too much that is unscriptural and false in such teaching."

Then he went on to quote from the Bible, passages which I have heard quoted by American Christians as well in defense of war: "Let every soul be subjected to the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God . . ." (Romans 13: 1, 2a)

I knew that not all German Mennonites shared the Judge's opinions about Hitler and the war. The Rohdes in Munich, for example, had several times expressed convictions similar to mine.

When Hildegard and Ottmar took me on a tour of Munich during my first visit with them, they showed me the famous Ludwigstrasse, the Marienplatz, and the place where the huge picture of Hitler had been posted for all passersby to "heil!" We slipped through the narrow alley behind the building, which had been nicknamed "Schleicher Gasse" (Sneaker's Alley) because it was used by people who didn't want to go past the picture and "heil" Hitler.

"It was a busy street in those years," Ottmar assured me. "Many, many people came through this way. To openly defy Hitler's mandate would have meant death. But that did not mean that we obeyed it."

In the spring, in a different part of Germany, I talked to a young woman who had been a member of a large Mennonite congregation in Northern Germany. She had suffered much during and after the war, and was now a refugee in southern Germany.

Her work brought her into close contact with the American Mennonites doing voluntary service and relief work in the area. She admired these dedicated, loving workers, but their ideas disturbed her.

"They tell us that we should not have fought in the war at all," she told me plaintively. "But they don't understand. Our Fatherland was being threatened by the Communists. They were infiltrating our government; they would have taken over everything. Hitler's strength was our only hope. He couldn't wait for them to make the first move. He had to strike first if he wanted to save Germany from Communism."

"We had no choice," she went on, looking at me pleadingly as she fought back tears. "Communism is evil. A Christian cannot hold back and let the Communists take over. We had to fight the Communists, didn't we?"

Today I hear this same feeling expressed in my own land. And to me it sounds no more Christian here now than it did in Hitler's Germany then.

Chapter 19

Two Italians on a Vespa

While Hilda and I were visiting relatives in Germany during June, Verda was touring Holland, France, and England on her motorcycle. But before she left on the trip, we had made arrangements to meet at Freiburg in July so that she would go with us in Angie to Switzerland, Italy, and Austria.

When I made my plans for our stay in Switzerland I had no way of knowing that the William Tell play would be given in the outdoor theater in Interlaken on the Sunday afternoon that we were scheduled to leave for Italy.

And no one could have made us believe when we decided to stay for the afternoon and see the play, what a difference that half day would make in our whole Italian tour.

As we drove out of the city early the next morning we all agreed that we were glad we had waited. The play had been "wonderful", well worth any inconvenience that being half a day off schedule might cause us.

I had planned carefully for our drive through Switzerland Italy. Long before Hilda had said definitely that she could come to Europe, I began talking to American Express Agents, collecting travel folders, and questioning friends when they came back from vacation trips.

I studied maps and figured mileage, and wrote for Hotel reservations. By the time Hilda had her passport, I was ready to send her a complete itinerary of our trip - "on this day we go this far, we stay in this hotel, we see this."

Up to this point the schedule had worked fine. And my timetable had left some leeway for emergencies, so a few hours shouldn't throw us too far off.

"We can probably make up the time today and still keep our reservation at Genoa tonight," I said confidently. "We're getting an early start, and I figured only thirty miles an hour for the drive. Surely we can do better than that."

I had never driven over the Susten Pass and the St. Gotthard Pass in one day before, or I wouldn't have been so confident. And my study of the map of Italy had for some reason failed to impress the Italian mountains on my mind.

Reaching Genoa that evening was a lost cause long before Angie's fan belt broke and we used a precious hour getting it replaced.

Darkness found us hot, tired, cross, almost out of gas, and barely over the Swiss-Italian border, still a good half day's drive from the hotel where we were scheduled to spend the night. We held a hurried consultation, and then used one of the few Italian words we had learned.

"Albergo?" we asked the attendant at the filling station where we had stopped to fill Angie's tank. "Can we find a good hotel in this town? A good Albergo?"

"Albergo?" the man repeated. "Si, si." He started to say something else, probably to give us directions for finding a hotel, then shrugged and called to a boy playing near the station. By pointing and gesturing he made us understand that we were to turn around and follow the child in the direction from which we had come.

The hotel to which our little guide led us was set back from the street so that we had not noticed it as we drove by. There seemed to be no other guests, and this made us somewhat uneasy, even though we realized that in a small town there would no doubt be few tourists spending the night.

The place was clean, the proprietor friendly and eager to please, and the price was less than half of what we would have had to pay at the American

Express recommended hotel where I had made our reservations.

The evening meal was tasty, and the beds felt comfortable, so we congratulated ourselves for having unwittingly made a good choice. But when we started getting ready for the night, we discovered that the faucets in the bathroom barely trickled cold water - no hot water at all. And when we tried to complain, the maid either could not, or did not want to, understand what we were trying to tell her.

When we were ready for bed we realized that our room had no windows, only French doors opening onto a balcony which was separated from the adjoining balcony by a low banister over which even a child could climb. So we had the choice of closing the doors and sleeping in a stifling hot room, or leaving them open and taking the chance of having an intruder come into our room.

When fresh air won over security, I was afraid that I wouldn't be able to sleep. But I dropped off almost immediately, slept soundly, and awoke the next morning unharmed.

"Let's still try for our hotel reservation in Rome for tonight," I suggested as we drove onto the highway. It didn't seem like an impossibility, less than 500 miles. We were getting an early start, there would be no mountain passes to cross, and we would not have to stop early to find lodging since we had reservations.

We started out in good spirits, but by evening we were wishing we could have omitted this particular day. Long before noon the air was blistering hot, and for hours we wound around and around, curving in and out among barren dry mountains.

"This is so much like parts of California," Verda kept exclaiming. "This reminds me so much of home."

I didn't say it out loud. I didn't want to risk marring the "togetherness" forced upon us by Angie's small interior by hurting a Californian's feelings. But to myself I thought, "If this is like California, I'm thankful that I do most of my driving in Kansas."

It was frustrating to look across a valley and see our road winding upward around a hill on the other side, knowing that we would have to double back and drive around the valley for an hour or more before we reached the spot we could now see so clearly.

We drove through Genoa without even stopping, but at Pisa we called a halt. We could not possibly drive past Pisa without at least taking a quick look at the leaning tower.

"What do we want to do anyway?" Verda wanted to know. "See how fast we can drive through Italy, or see something of Italy?"

In a slightly different form, Hilda and I had batted that question back and forth all winter and spring in our letters. This would probably be a once in a lifetime experience for us. We had only a limited amount of time and money. Should we concentrate on one country and one area, enjoying it thoroughly? Or would we feel better satisfied if we skimmed, hitting the highlights in a number of places?

We had decided to skim, hoping that some time in the future we might be able to manage another European trip to visit in depth the places we liked best. But we hadn't meant to spend all of our time on the road, and at this point we were certainly ready to settle for a while in one spot.

"We'll take an hour or so here," I decided. "Or even longer if we feel like it. We can't possibly make Rome before night anyway. But I think we should drive as far as we can before it gets dark so we can get to Rome fairly early tomorrow morning. Otherwise we'll have to skip some of the

things we want to see in Rome unless we want to miss our reservations for the rest of the trip."

It was a foolish decision. We should have tried to stay at Pisa for the night.

By the time we got to the next large town, the rooms in all of the hotels where we stopped were taken. After that we drove for miles without reaching any town at all. All of the places indicated on the map turned out to be small villages with no lodging for travelers.

By now it was dark, and I began to feel uneasy. I wasn't exactly afraid, but all sorts of unpleasant possibilities crossed my mind, especially after I looked at Angie's gas gauge. Three women stranded on the highway in a strange country at night - there were allsorts of things that could happen.

"We'll just have to go on to Rome after all," Verda said in a voice which left no doubt that this was not what she really wanted to do.

"We can't," I told her shortly, feeling cross because I knew that our predicament was mainly my fault. "Angie's almost out of gas."

Thinking that we would soon be stopping for the night, I had deliberately let the gas supply run low. If we had our gas tank drained while we slept, as one of my friends had on one trip, we'd have to fill up again in the morning anyway. And none of the villages through which we had just passed had had filling stations.

I had already switched to the small extra tank that I had had installed in the trunk for just such emergencies as this. That would probably take us to the next place marked on the map. But what if that also turned out to be a small village with no place to get gas?

We passed a side road, and just after passing it I stopped the car. In the distance, perhaps two miles away, we could see lights and even a large lighted sign. Did the sign say "Albergo"? We couldn't tell. The place was definitely not on the main highway and it wasn't on our map. Should we waste gas driving there to find out? Or should we stick to the main road?

Suddenly we were startled by the sound of a motor. Two men on a Vespa came out of the darkness behind us and turned onto the side road, then stopped, turned around and came over to the car.

They greeted us with smiles and a flow of Italian, which we didn't understand. But from the tone of their voices and their facial expressions we guessed they were asking us what was wrong, and offering to help. So we used that important word again, "Albergo?"

"And gas," I added, indicating my gauge. "We need to find a place where we can get gas."

The men smiled and nodded, then motioned for us to follow them.

"Shall we really follow them?" Verda questioned as they drove off down the side road. "Who knows where they'll lead us?"

I started Angie's motor, then hesitated, hand on the gear shift. What if the men had misunderstood our question?

Noticing that we weren't following them, the men stopped, turned around and drove back to us, again waving vigorously with their arms for us to come.

"Let's go," I decided, driving on after them. Following those friendly faces felt a lot safer to me than staying where we were on the road, and sleeping in the car.

The sign did say "Albergo." The place to which the Vespa led us wasn't a village or a town; it was a tourist resort on the shore of the Mediterranean. The hotel was large, luxurious, and modestly priced, compared to the one where we would have stayed in Rome.

There was a police guarded garage for our car and a filling station close by. The hotel clerk spoke English, the dining room was still open, there was plenty of running hot water, our beds were soft and comfortable, and our room had windows opening out upon the Mediterranean.

In our prayers that night we included a heartfelt "thank you" for the two young Italians on their Vespa.

Chapter 20

A Helpful Taxi Driver

The Colosseum is oval in shape. And if you don't observe closely, it's exterior looks very much the same from whatever direction you approach it, which makes it a poor landmark to use in finding your way back to your hotel, especially at night.

Hilda, Verda, and I learned this the hard way during our first evening in Rome.

By prodding each other out of bed at our Mediterranean resort hotel much earlier than any of us really wanted to, we arrived in Rome about mid morning, almost a full day off schedule.

Our original plans called for a guided tour from our hotel to St. Peters Cathedral that morning and to the Appian Way, the Catacombs, and St. Paul's Cathedral in the afternoon. But by the time we checked in at a hotel now, all of the tours for the day would no doubt have started.

Verda was impatient to get to St. Peters in the morning while the light was good for taking pictures. So we drove directly there from the highway, stopping only long enough on the way to get a panoramic view from the hill overlooking the city.

We snapped pictures of the exterior of the cathedral, and then went inside, planning to see as much as we could by ourselves, since we had no guide. But instead, we attached ourselves to a group which had entered the cathedral just ahead of us.

It was a very special group, at least to us, composed of Mennonite students and a few adults from the United States, a number of them from Kansas. Two of the party were close friends of mine.

I had known that they were coming to Europe with the tour group, and I had planned our visit to Thomashof so that Hilda and I would be on hand to welcome them when they stopped there. Early on our first morning at Interlaken, we had waved to them as the group was leaving the hotel where we had checked in late the night before. But we certainly had not expected to see them a third time here in Rome! Had we been on schedule, our paths would probably not have crossed again.

I think that everyone who has traveled in a foreign country will agree with me that even a casual acquaintance feels like a close friend if you happen to see each other when you are both thousands of miles from home. Meeting a good friend unexpectedly under such circumstances is one of life's thrilling bonuses.

I remember few of the details of St. Peters that impressed me at the time, but it is easy to recall how good I felt about walking through it with Margaret and Katherine.

After Verda, Hilda, and I left St. Peter's, we sat down in a small park near the river to eat the rest of the fruit and bread we had bought along the way for our breakfast, and to make plans for the rest of the day.

"I think we'd better see about a hotel first," Hilda said emphatically. "We don't want a repeat of the last two evenings!"

"Why don't we just go to the hotel where we had reservations for last night," I suggested. "Maybe they'll have something for tonight."

The bellboy who met us at the door of the hotel wasn't encouraging.

"You can go in and inquire at the desk if you like," he said in precise English. "But I am certain that we do not have any rooms vacant. Several others have already been turned away."

"We'll just have to find the American Express Company office and see what they have listed," I said regretfully. The last thing I wanted to do was to waste all afternoon finding a hotel instead of doing the planned sightseeing.

"Wait," the young man said as we started slowly to the car. "May I make a suggestion?"

We couldn't decide afterwards whether he was just naturally a helpful fellow or whether he had felt sorry for us. Perhaps he had even doubted whether we could afford to stay in one of the better hotels.

Since it had been so late the previous two nights before we had found lodging, we had done little unpacking, and certainly no ironing or pressing. We had simply washed things in the evening and put them on again the next day. In our hurry to get to Rome, we had arrived looking anything but well groomed. I'm sure that the three of us and our belongings stuffed into dust covered little Angie didn't fit the picture the young man had of American visitors staying at the kind of plush hotel where he worked now.

"This is a special year in Rome," he told us, "the year when the Porta Santa in St. Peter's is open. And now is the time of the tourists. So the American Express Company may have no hotel rooms to suggest to you."

"But before I came here, I worked at a little hotel in another part of town. It is not as luxurious as this one, and it is not listed by the American Express Company. But it is clean and comfortable. And they may well have a room vacant."

He wrote down the name and address of the hotel and gave us directions for getting there.

"It is on a side street very near the cathedral of St. Maria Major," he added. "It is not large, but it is a clean, respectable place."

We found the hotel without difficulty on a narrow street in what looked like a poorer, or at least an older, section of the city. As the boy had said, it was small and unimpressive, and on our own we would never have thought of asking for a room there. Even with the bellboy's recommendation we might have hesitated if we hadn't been in such a hurry to get settled.

On the inside the place was as clean and "respectable" as the young man had described it. The desk clerk spoke German, which for us was almost as convenient as if he had been able to speak English. They had vacant rooms, so we checked in, unloaded the baggage we needed for the night, and then set out again to see Rome.

We managed to go to all of the sites on our planned itinerary, and added a few we had originally planned for the day before. We still weren't up to schedule, but we were beginning to catch up.

At 4:30 we headed back to the hotel to clean up and rest for a few minutes before going back to St. Peter's to try to get a glimpse of the Pope. We had found out that morning that he was giving an audience that evening at 6:00.

We were confident that we could find our way to St. Peter's. But we knew it might be dark by the time we were ready to come back, so as we drove along, we picked out easy to see landmarks to guide us back to the hotel: St. Maria Major, a wide street with several street car lines converging at an intersection, the Colosseum, and the Victory Monument.

Traffic was heavier than it had been earlier in the day, so it took us longer to drive through the city than we had planned or anticipated. By the time we had found a place to park in the vicinity of the cathedral, it was a few minutes past six o'clock. The Pope's appearance must have been prompt and brief, for almost immediately people began to walk past our car, leaving St. Peter's. The Plaza had been jammed, judging from the crowd that came pouring from it.

For more than fifteen minutes it was impossible for us to move the car because the street was packed with pedestrians. When we finally were able to drive away, a policeman waved us to a detour from the way we had planned to go. I tried to keep my sense of directions so that I could later turn back onto our street, but on the side streets where we found ourselves, I was soon completely confused.

Our map was no help at all because we couldn't find any street signs to compare with the names on the map. Finally, when we thought we were hopelessly lost, we turned onto a wider street and saw the Colosseum looming ahead of us like a familiar friend.

Shortly before we reached the Colosseum I made the turn which should have brought us onto the street leading to the street which would take us past St. Mary Major.

Even as I turned, I realized that something was wrong. This was not the wide street from which we had made the turn near the Colosseum on our way to St. Peter's. It was narrow, with no buildings which looked even remotely familiar, and there were no street car tracks running down the middle of it.

"We'll have to go back to the Colosseum and try again," I said wearily. "I must have turned too soon."

"I think we were coming from a different direction than we should have been," Verda volunteered. "If we drive around past the Colosseum a little further, I think we'll get to the street we want."

Going back to the Colosseum to get our bearings sounded simple, but we were on a one way street, and the street which I chose to use in retracing our tracks must not have run parallel to it, for we drove for some time without again spotting our landmark.

My memory of that evening's ride is a jumble of dark streets and high buildings, with Hilda sitting beside me studying our map and trying to find a street sign which might give us some clue as to where we were. Finally we gave up and stopped to ask directions.

Asking directions turned out to be easy. The name of our hotel rated only a blank, questioning stare. But "St. Maria Major" brought a volley of words and gestures.

It was understanding the directions that posed a problem. Each time when we tried to follow the gestured instructions, we ended up still hopelessly lost.

We drove around for what seemed like hours. Hilda and Verda took turns at intervals getting out of the car to ask people walking on the sidewalk for help. Presently we passed a taxi station, and I pulled up alongside a cab just getting ready to drive away with some passengers.

"Maybe the driver can speak English," I suggested hopefully, and Verda leaned out of the car window to try again.

The cabbie knew no English, but he did recognize the name of our hotel. And when he realized that we did not understand him, he motioned for us to follow him, and started to drive on.

He's going to lead us there," Hilda exclaimed jubilantly. "I'll get out the money for our cab fare."

We followed him for a number of blocks before he stopped at a busy intersection to let some cars go by. We stopped behind him. The cab turned to the right, but before I could go on, a policeman blew his whistle and waved us over to the curb.

Angie's lights were too bright. It was obvious from his gestures that his words were telling me that.

"I have my lights turned to dim," I told him impatiently, indicating my light switch.

But apparently he understood no English. "Down, down!" he kept indicating as he pointed to my headlights.

I decided to show him what I meant by turning the lights to bright. This brought an excited, "No, no, no!" in a tone of voice and a frown that added, "You knucklehead!"

I tried dim again, but this resulted in more head shaking, so I turned the lights off.

"No, no, no, no!" This time the tone of voice implied, "Let's not get smart alecky!" Meekly I switched back to dim, which was all that I knew to do.

The man shook his head and shrugged helplessly. But he didn't give up and let me drive on. He started all over again, explaining verbally, pointing and gesturing. And finally while trying everything I could get my hands on, I accidentally turned on my parking lights, which I didn't even know Angie had. The policeman heaved a visible sigh of relief and waved us on.

When the policeman had stopped us, the taxi had at first waited, too. But long before I finally did the right thing he had been forced by the heavy traffic to drive on.

"Well, I flubbed that chance," I said dismally, as I made the turn to the right, which the taxicab had made, and drove on down that street. It was then that I realized that I could have asked the policeman for help. But I had been so relieved to finally be able to do what he wanted that I hadn't even thought about that.

Several people were walking along on the sidewalk a short distance ahead of us. "I guess it's my turn," Hilda volunteered grimly. "If you'll stop, I'll try once more."

She got out of the car and accosted one of the women. This time the explanation was brief, and in a few minutes Hilda came back to the car, chuckling.

"If I understood her right, we're practically there," she said happily. "Just around the corner on this sidestreet about a block. I asked for St. Maria Major first, and when the woman hesitated, I said the name of the hotel. And she recognized it! She understood what I was asking. She actually seemed to know where it was, so it can't be too far from here."

I turned the corner, and suddenly everything looked familiar, the narrow street with our hotel squeezed in tightly between the rest of the shabby buildings. But we were approaching it from the opposite direction from which I had thought we would come. No wonder we hadn't seen St. Maria Major first.

"We actually found it," Hilda sighed in relief. Then she looked sadly at the coin purse she had been holding in readiness.

"That dear taxi driver took us almost home before he had to abandon us. And we can't even give him a tip."

Three Men on the Mountain

Sometimes as I drop off to sleep I see them in my mind, the three men sitting on the loading dock somewhere in the mountains of southern Italy. In that nebulous state of half waking and half sleeping, their swarthy, grinning faces come out of nowhere to reassure me.

Even the fear is there as I felt it that evening years ago, and the exhaustion, and then the relief that came when their heads nodded vigorously up and down as they shouted, "Si, si!" and then again, "Si, Neopoli."

We had arrived in Naples that morning just before noon, and had found a room in a luxurious hotel on the Bay of Naples just opposite the large rock of Santa Lucia and Dell Ova Castle.

As soon as the porter had brought up our bags, we sat down to make some decisions. We were still running almost a day behind schedule. Unless we wanted to continue to miss our hotel reservations for the rest of the trip, we'd have to catch up here at Naples.

Both Pompeii and the Amalfi Drive were in our plans, but there would be time for only one of them. Which one should we do?

Verda said she didn't care. Hilda had briefly considered a career in archeology when she was in college, so her choice was easy to predict. I was a bit tired of mountain driving. So Pompeii won without any disagreement.

We were already too late for the bus tour to Pompeii, but the desk clerk assured us that we could easily drive there in our car. We set out right after lunch, taking our time and stopping several times to take pictures.

The pace of the tour of Pompeii seemed leisurely, too, with our guide giving us plenty of time to take it all in - the narrow streets with the stepping stones for pedestrians at intersections, the home of a patrician which still bore the marks of luxurious living, the forum, and the public market place. But even so, it was early when we had finished - not yet five o'clock.

There was nothing on our agenda for the evening except to eat in the outdoor cafe on the bay near our hotel, and to get to bed early.

"Let's look at the map," I suggested. "How far is it from here to Salerno? Maybe we can still take the Amalfi Drive."

"Do you think we ought to try it this late in the afternoon?" Hilda asked. "The buses leave the hotel in the mornings."

I had spent so many hours planning our trip that I hated to give up any of my plans. The map showed only only about thirty kilometers to Salerno, and another twenty four to Amalfi. That would be about thirty miles. By now I knew that I couldn't count on averaging 35 miles an hour, but even at 20 miles, it would be only about a three hour round trip. The road from Pompeii to Salerno was a good highway. It would be only the fifteen miles from there to Amalfi that might take more time.

"Ruby says it's simply beautiful," I insisted, "She told me to be sure not to miss it."

Hilda was still reluctant. "But can we go in this little car?" she questioned dubiously.

"If the road is wide enough for a tourist bus, it should be a snap for Angie," I assured her.

Ruby was right, and I was right. And if I hadn't missed the turning around place in Amalfi, everything would have been all right.

We made good time to Salerno, and the drive from there to Amalfi was as breath takingly beautiful as Ruby had described it. Almost before we realized it, we were driving through the quaint little town set high up on the rocky bluffs overhanging the Mediterranean.

I knew that the busses turned around at Amalfi and came back to Naples by the same way that they had come. Without really thinking about it, I had assumed that the spot to turn around and go back would be marked in some way. Intent on seeing as much of the scenery as I could while still watching the road, I didn't realize that we had come to the edge of town until the road started winding up the mountain on the other side.

It was then that the first pangs of fear struck me. I couldn't stop the car and take time to consider what to do. The incline was too steep for that. I couldn't turn around on the narrow road. I had already taken one sharp turn, so backing down into the village was out of the question. I had no choice except to drive on.

"We'll keep going until we get to a place where I can turn around," I said with more confidence than I felt. I couldn't remember one single place where I could have turned around between Salerno and Amalfi. How far would it be before we came to one on this road?

Hilda studied the map. "There's a place called Praiano not far from Amalfi," she said. "The road from here to there is a double line with quite a bit of space between."

The key on the map described such a road as "Strade di grande comunicazione e di particolare interesse turistico." Drawing upon my almost forgotten Latin, I translated that to mean, "A street of good communication and of particular interest to tourists." In other words, "A good road with beautiful scenery."

"We'll go there and then turn around," I said, feeling such relief that I began to enjoy the scenery again. "This is even prettier than on the other side of Amalfi. I wonder why the buses don't come this far."

Even as I said it, I knew why. No large bus would be able to maneuver the sharp turn that Angie had just made. The space between the lines on the map might be wide, but the road certainly wasn't!

We were climbing upwards now along a ledge protruding from a cliff hanging out over the Mediterranean. I hugged the rock, thankful that it was on my side of the road, and wondered whether the entire distance to Praiano would be on this narrow shelf high above the water. Then I felt sheer panic as I realized that after we turned around at Praiano and came back, I would be driving on the outside.

Suddenly Verda gave a little cry. "Ooh, look!" she said breathlessly.

I stole a quick glance, and during the next few minutes my anxiety was completely blotted out by what will always rank at the top of my list of beautiful things I have seen.

The sun was setting, slipping rapidly down toward the horizon. Color flared and blazed in the sky around it, and the Mediterranean glowed with reflected light.

We looked and exclaimed in entranced wonder as the fiery ball disappeared from sight. Then suddenly it grew very still inside our little car. I think that the same thought struck all of us at the same time, "After the sunset comes the dark."

In calculating that we would have plenty of time to get back to Naples before dark, I had completely forgotten that summer daylight hours are not as long in southern Italy as in Germany where we had so recently been, and that twilight does not linger in the mountains as it does on the plains.

Darkness came suddenly and completely. There were no street lights; there was no moon. There were only the faint beams of Angie's headlights as we continued to climb and turn and climb again into the black unknown.

Angie's motor didn't have the power of the larger American cars to which I was accustomed. I had known this, of course. Even on the autobahn I had often had to shift to second gear on the well graded inclines. Here, with my foot pressing the accelerator as hard as I could we were barely inching upward in low.

Presently the radiator began to boil, and I knew that I would have to find a place to stop and pour in some of our drinking water. But there was no place to stop. And we had brought along only a small jar of water. That wouldn't help long.

What if Angie's overheated motor stalled on the next steep pull? Could I keep it under control if the car started rolling backwards? How long before the brakes burned out?

I prayed desperately, but I didn't feel that I really deserved help. Why should I expect God to perform a miracle when I had done something so foolhardy as to start on an unfamiliar mountain drive late in the afternoon? But Hilda and Verda hadn't wanted to come. I could pray for God to save them.

Presently we reached a small plateau, with the road running on the level for a few yards. And there on the side of the cliff was the miracle for which I had not dared to pray, a mountain spring running through a short pipe into a sort of tank built from stones.

Even before I stopped the car and turned off the motor, we could hear that there was life very near us. The lowing of cattle and the bleating of goats and sheep came to us clearly from somewhere in the darkness. A dog barked, and then another one. There was laughter, and human voices speaking so distinctly that we could have understood what they were saying if we had known Italian.

"That may be Praiano," I suggested, even though I hardly dared hope that we had really already come that far. There was no other town or village shown on the map.

Verda and Hilda walked ahead to explore while I stayed with the car to fill the radiator as soon as it had cooled off enough. They came back in a few minutes to report that the road ahead turned left, the opposite direction from the sounds we were hearing.

"If those sounds come from Praiano, we've already missed the road leading to it," Verda suggested. "And from what we saw, we'll have to keep going up for a good while longer."

As I got back into the car, I felt physically ill from the possibilities that crossed my mind. I was quite sure that we had not missed any turn-off. If that was Praiano somewhere below us, on the other side of the cliff, then the "Strade di grande comunicazioni" was probably also down there. We had probably missed it as we drove through Amalfi and had been driving on a winding, narrow, little-used road leading to - where?

"The map showed a cut-off road through the mountains a little before we reach Praiano," Hilda said faintly. "Maybe we should take it. It was just a narrow line, but it looked shorter."

"We'll take it," I assured her. But I did not feel any better. If we were on the wrong road, there might be no cut-off through the mountains.

Neither of us would say it out loud, but I was quite sure that Hilda was thinking the same thing I was. If Angie plunged down some mountain side, there was a possibility that someone would find her remains and our bodies. At least the family would know what had happened to us, as they might not know if the car disappeared into the Mediterranean.

The brief rest made it harder instead of easier to go on. My fear that we could be on the wrong road did nothing to help my overtaut nerves. My head ached, my eyes hurt, and my arms felt stiff and leaden. I was beginning to lose the will to keep going, and I had to fight hard to keep myself concentrating on the turns in the road. The crazy urge to just let go and get the inevitable over with tempted me.

We all saw it at the same time, the fork in the road. Suddenly, around a bend hidden by trees, a large shed loomed directly ahead of us, with the main road going left of it, while another road branched sharply to the right.

Three men sat on a loading dock in front of the shed, relaxing and visiting in the cool of the evening. Their laughter stopped as they saw the car, and they stared silently, astonishment written large on their faces.

"Does that road lead to Neopoli?" Verda shouted at them, pointing to the right hand fork which would take us into the mountains and away from the sea. "ad Neopoli?"

Relief spread over their faces. These foreign ladies might be on a little traveled road but they knew where they wanted to go. "Si, si," they shouted in chorus. "Si, Neopoli!"

As I turned to the right, I knew that the worst was over. Something about the relaxed laughter of the men hadeased my panic. The very fact that they were there, that there were other people on this part of the mountain besides us, had reassured me. Everything was going to be all right. We had not been on the right road and we might still have some rough driving ahead, but we would get to Neopoli and I would be able to hold out.

Almost immediately the road began to wind downwards, and after a few miles it leveled off. As we reached the highway leading to Pompeii and then to Naples, we spontaneously burst into a shout, "Thank you, God, Thank you!!"

We ate our evening meal in the outdoor restaurant on the bay and then went to bed, not quite as early as we had planned, but still at a reasonable hour. The whole terrifying experience had lasted less than two hours.

But the memory of how God helped me on the dark mountain when I hardly dared ask for His help because I didn't deserve it, will stay with me for always.

We were too tired to write home that evening as we had been doing ^{almost} every day, and when I did write a few days later, I was careful not to tell everything. Mamma and Aunt Selma saved all of our letters from Europe, and I read them after I got home.

This letter says simply: "In the afternoon we went out to Pompeii and then took the beautiful Almalfi drive. The road winds up and up along the rocky cliffs rising out of the Mediterranean. One has the feeling of driving on a balcony hanging out over the sea. As Hilda said, it was more awe-inspiring than beautiful, and I'm sure we wouldn't try it in our own car again."

I don't believe that even Mamma, with her almost uncanny ability to read between the lines of her children's letters, was able to extract the real picture of our night drive in the mountains from that.

Chapter 22

"Nun Sind Wir Da"

When I accepted the position as teacher in the Dependents Schools, I signed up for only one year. But I went over to Germany with the firm intention of staying at least two years if everything worked out all right. During the year my mind vacillated between going back at the end of the term or staying for another year, depending upon whether I was homesick and tired, or enjoying my work and travels.

By the time the final decision had to be made in March, there was no longer any question in my mind. I marked "yes" without hesitation.

If I didn't stay for another year, my travel orders would probably be for late June or early July. That would spoil all of the plans Hilda and I had made for the summer. And there were still so many things I wanted to do and see and buy.

By June two things had happened to make me undecided again. War had broken out in Korea and tension began to mount for army personnel and civilians stationed in Germany. The Berlin airlift was a grim indicator of Russia's attitude, and whenever groups of us got together, one of the questions discussed was always, "Will Russia strike in Germany while our attention is diverted in Korea?"

Acting on orders from army headquarters, the sub-post officers worked out detailed evacuation plans which were posted in all buildings where groups of Americans worked. There were several alerts during the night when all military personnel was called to duty. Whether this was simply practice drill or whether actual danger had been anticipated, we civilians had no way of finding out.

Dependent wives were given specific emergency instructions, and all of them packed bags with necessities and kept them beside a door where they could be grabbed at a moment's notice. As civilians, we teachers, the secretaries, and the Special Service workers were lowest on the priority list. This meant that in the event of an emergency evacuation, we could well expect to be left behind.

In mid June when I received the telegram that my father had passed away, my first reaction was to go home immediately, and take care of the necessary red tape of terminating my employment from there. But Hilda had already arrived in Holland, and Mamma telegraphed, "Go on with your travels as planned."

As Hilda, Verda, and I traveled together, my homesickness and grief gradually eased, and the tension about the military conflict was almost forgotten. Even so, the question continued to nag me all summer, "Should I stay for another year, or should I still try to go home?"

When we arrived at Aunt Frieda's home in Munich after our tour of Switzerland and Italy, we had a pile of letters waiting. Several were from Mamma, and although she did not actually express any anxiety in the words she wrote, we could read between the lines that she was upset and lonesome and concerned about us. After all, Papa was no longer there to reassure her with "Don't worry. They'll be all right," as he had done ever since we were old enough to venture out on our own.

There was also a letter from Mr. Woodard, the elementary supervisor in Hutchinson, Kansas, where I had taught kindergarten before coming to

Germany. Immediately after Papa's death I had written a letter of inquiry, and Mr. Woodard now wrote that there had been a resignation, leaving a kindergarten position open. If I were interested in returning, the position was mine. They would hire a substitute until I got there, if I could not come in time for the opening of school.

I called Headquarters and found that there was room for one more passenger on a transport sailing the last week in August. They would tentatively put my name down on the passenger list if I would write for travel orders immediately.

For me this combination of circumstances felt almost like a mandate to go home. Added to this was the fact that Hilda would be leaving me soon and that at the moment I was tired of traveling and sightseeing. So I made the move which meant that my decision would be final. I wrote for travel orders back to the United States.

I know that if I had decided to stay, there would have been many times during the year when I would wish that I had decided to go home. But I was never completely happy about my decision to leave.

As I made hurried farewell visits to Uncle Adolf and the relatives in Munich, and wrote others whom I had fully expected to see again, I felt that I was "tearing myself into two pieces." One part of my heart would always stay in Germany with these people whom I had learned to love so dearly.

On the ship I found that there were others who were crossing the bridge from one world to another, and who were being torn apart emotionally by the experience.

Most of the passengers were military personnel and their dependents returning to the United States after their tour of duty. In general these seemed to be happy that they were going back. As one wife put it, "During the first year you have an adjustment to make; during the second year you simply love it; but by the end of the third year you're ready to go back home."

But there were several German war brides aboard. Their husbands had already been sent back to the United States months before and now they had finally completed the necessary red tape to allow their families to join them.

One morning two of these women were behind me in line as we waited to enter the dining room for breakfast. They apparently had just met on the ship for they were comparing notes, and giving each other information about the places where they were going. They spoke together mainly in German, although apparently they knew English well, too.

One of them was going to San Antonio, and it was obvious from the features and coloring of her little boy that her husband was Spanish American.

"He says it never gets cold there," she told her companion boastfully. "Even in mid winter they don't have ice and snow."

"I would not like that," the other protested. "I would miss the snow, and I love to ice skate. I would not like at all to live where the weather is always warm."

"But think how nice it will be not to have to buy winter clothing. And Tony can play outside all year long," Tony's mother said emphatically, so emphatically that I suspected that she was trying to convince herself as well as her companion that she would like the place where she was going.

The other young woman had not been married long before her husband's

termination. They had no children, but she was pregnant. She was going to the mountains of Tennessee.

"He has not written very often since he's been home," she admitted. "But I know that we'll be living with his family for a while. I don't know much about them except that he and his brothers like to fiddle and sing. I know I'll like Tennessee because I like hillbilly music.

"I'll get along all right," she repeated firmly. "I like hillbilly music!"

Hillbilly music and warm weather! The ingredients of a happy adjustment to America?

But there was one family group on board for whom there was no question! They were going to America, they were happy about it, and they let everyone with ^{whom} they came in contact know this.

I noticed the three little German children and their mother when I went up on deck to watch as our ship sailed out of the harbor. The children were almost beside themselves with excitement, and their harried mother looked lost and bewildered. Thinking that she might be in need of a friend or an interpreter, I made my way over to them and introduced myself in German.

"Wir gehen nach Amerika!" (We're going to America) the older of the two little girls interrupted me almost immediately, jumping gleefully up and down.

"We're going to see Vati," the boy added, and the three of them picked it up as a chant, clapping their hands to the rhythm, "We're going to see our Vati, we're going to see our Vati."

"Yes, yes," the mother said in a quiet, soothing tone, putting a hand on the shoulders of each of the two older ones. "We are going to see your father, but now you must calm down and be more quiet."

"They are so excited," she apologized to me. "Their father has been in America for more than two years. Little Gertie, who is only three does not even remember him, but the older two remember him very well."

"I am Hans and I am six," the boy told me. "This is Anni, and she is four."

"Almost five," Anni protested. "On my birthday in America with Vati, I will soon be five."

"Their father is a scientist," the mother went on to explain. "He was taken over to America virtually as a prisoner to work on a scientific project there. We did not know when or if we would ever see him again. But now at last he has been able to send for us. He has even been given permission to take time off from his work to meet us in New York."

"It has been so long!" she added, struggling with tears.

As it turned out, I saw my three little friends often during the following days. Their mother became seasick, and was only too glad to accept my offer to look after her little ones. Actually, I had plenty of help, for the children made friends easily and quickly, and even though they spoke no English when the trip started, it wasn't long before all of the passengers knew that Hans and Anni and little Gertie were going to America to see their father.

One afternoon word was passed around that someone had spotted the skyline of New York in the distance. I tried to show it to the children, but their eyes could not find the skyscrapers which looked like faint thin matchsticks at that distance. To their disappointment they still had not seen America when darkness set in.

When I awoke early the next morning and went on deck I found that we were at anchor waiting to be brought into the harbor to dock. Most of the passengers were still asleep, but four of them were very much awake.

The mother was standing quietly at the rail, but the children were dancing around her chanting:

"Nun sind wir da

In Amerika!" (Now we are here, in America.)

When they spotted me, they took my hands and pulled me over to the railing to look, then they broke away again to dance and chant:

"Nun sind wir da,

In Amerika!"

When we docked, the four were pressed against the rail, scanning the crowd that had gathered on the wharf. Suddenly the mother gave a little cry.

"There he is!" she told the children, bursting into tears as she pointed to a man on the front row, vigorously waving a large white handkerchief. "There's your Vati."

I would have enjoyed watching the happy reunion, but I had to see about my baggage. So I quickly said, "Auf Wiedersehen" to ears that didn't hear me, and hurried below.

During the whole boat trip and the two days on the train, I was surprised and upset at my conflicting emotions. I wanted to see my family again, but I definitely felt reluctant to get home. And I wasn't sure why.

Part of it was the knowledge that once I stepped off the train in Newton, Kansas, my year of adventure would be over. But the feeling went deeper than that.

After we got into Kansas, I began to wonder who would meet me. And then it struck me. I didn't want to get home because I knew that Papa would not be there. I had been numb with grief when I got the telegram about his death. But I had not yet really experienced the pain of loss, not as I would feel it now.

I knew that someone would be at the station in Newton to meet me, but it would not be Papa, as it had been for so many years. Whenever I had gone home for a holiday or a weekend, he had always been the one to meet me at the bus or in the train depot, or to come to the car when I drove into the yard. And this time he wouldn't be there.

But once I stepped off the train at Newton everything was allright. They were all there to meet me, the whole family, from Mamma to the youngest nieces and nephews. Even Papa was there although I could not see him. I could feel it.

As I threw myself into Mamma's arms I was ready to chant like my little friends: Nun bin ich da

In Amerika!

Mueller - I Can Always Go Back

When I went to Germany to teach, I had planned to stay for two years. After my father passed away in June, I tentatively considered resigning and going back to Kansas to help ease Mamma's grief and loneliness. But there was still so much that I wanted to do and see in Europe.

Among the many letters that were waiting for us at Munich when Hilda and I got back from our vacation trip through Switzerland, Italy, and Austria, were two that helped me make up my mind. One of Mamma's letters thinly disguised her anxiety over what might happen in Europe since war had broken out in Korea. A letter from the elementary supervisor in Hutchinson, Kansas, where I had been teaching, told me that one of the kindergarten teachers had resigned during the summer, and that if I were interested in the position, he would hold it for me even though I might not be able to make it back by the beginning of school.

When I called Headquarters and found out that they would accept my resignation under the circumstances and that there was still room for one civilian on a troop ship sailing about the middle of August, all signs seemed to point in the direction of "Go home." So, on an impulse which I later regretted, I sent in my resignation, wrote for my travel orders, and asked for passage on the August sailing.

When I said good-by to Uncle Adolf on my last visit to Thomashof, he was so visibly broken up over the parting that I confided in him, telling him something that I had kept to myself up to that time.

I planned to go back to the United States to teach for one year. But I was going to try to come back to Germany to teach

Mueller - I Can Always Go Back

again the following year, and I would bring Mamma with me as my dependent. She would have to live with me wherever I was stationed, but she could spend weeks at Thomashof. And on week-ends I could take both of them on visits to relatives or on excursions to interesting places in Germany.

Uncle Adolf had little to say in reply, and the happy smile that stole over his face was tinged with disbelief, and there was doubt in his eyes. But on the card attached to the little farewell gift he later gave me he wrote, "With the firm assurance that we will see each other again on this earth, auf Wiedersehen."

I tried to carry out my plan when I got home. But Aunt Selma was sick at the time, and I couldn't talk Mamma into leaving her to go so far away, even though Aunt Selma joined me in trying to persuade Mamma to make the trip.

So year after year I postponed applying again for a teaching position in Germany, hoping each time that in another year Mamma would feel free to leave.

When we received the notice of Uncle Adolf's rather sudden death, I cried - not only because the dear old man had passed away, but also because his going finalized the death of a cherished dream. In my mind I changed his farewell message to, "With the firm assurance that we will see each other in Heaven."

I feel confident that Uncle Adolf will be there!

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