

**Helga's**  
**Poems, Stories,**  
**and**  
**Articles**

English Collection

By  
Helga von Schweinitz

# Helga's Poems, Stories, and Articles

Released June 2020  
by  
Helga von Schweinitz

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This book was originally released in 2019 by Helga von Schweinitz.

# Helga's Poems, Stories, and Articles

## A Word to the Reader

Multiple poems, stories, articles, and other musings written by Helga von Schweinitz before 2019.

These writings contain variations in spelling, spelling error, and variations in grammar. They are maintained intact as indicators of how Helga's English writing improved over time. As told in one of the writing, English is not Helga's mother language. And because Helga's family was stationed in England for many years, some of the so called "errors" are because of the difference between English and American.

If a manuscript is written in a mix of German and English, that is the way it is entered into this book. No attempt is made to translate.

Helga was renowned for her "Helga's Corner" articles in the German-Texan Heritage Society's publications. In "Helga's Corner" she combines English and German to educate the reader in a fun and amusing style. After reading some of these manuscripts, the reader can begin to tell that Helga is developing a skill that she will later use in "Helga's Corner".

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## About Myself

While living in Banbury Oxon England from 1964 to 1969, Helga was taking a writing class and an assignment was to write an autobiography. The words have the English spelling, because, well Helga was writing while in England. The use of apostrophe for plural possessive sometimes does not follow the rules for English but for German.

I was born in 1937 as the third of five children of a middle class family, for generations well settled in and around the West German town of Herford.

The people I grew up with were ambitious and hard working, slightly narrow-minded, but with a great sense of humour.

The war, the ruins, years with the father away from home, the occupation by British troops and then the rebuilding of the country are the background to an exciting and - in spite of it all - happy childhood.

After five years of elementary school I attended an all girl high school for nine years completing it by passing the final examination, the "Abitur".

I wanted to study journalism, but my father insisted on sending me to a teachers' college.

My mother had died when I was sixteen. Ever since I had observed that my father was very lonesome as a widower and longed for female companionship, but refrained from it for the sake of his children. During my first semester at college I decided that I should leave home to give him more freedom. Combined with this reasoning was an irresistible desire to prove myself in the world without anybody's help. Then twenty years old, I spent a summer in Italy, and a few months later I immigrated to the United States of America, to Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

I worked as gift-wrapper, mail clerk, waitress and telephone girl in a newspaper. I worked to earn a living while becoming familiar with the American way of life. A year of adventurous learning while living and of experiencing the American way of dating and courting ended in my marriage to one of the most

## Helga's Poems, Stories, and Articles: About Myself

popular men in town: to "Hans", a handsome German immigrant who was and still is serving in the United States Air Force.

Three days after the wedding Hans flew to his new assignment in Wiesbaden, Germany. I followed him by boat, spending my honeymoon as a grass widow on the "Queen Mary".

We lived in Wiesbaden for nearly four years. Since Hans is the son of a well known family of the German nobility, I found myself belonging to the "Society", a fascinating mix of blue-blooded people, some rich, some poor, of newly rich "Wirtschaftswunderkinder" who would like to be of aristocratic origin, of artists, doctors and lawyers.

We had two problems in those years: our relatives and friends resented my husband's wearing an American uniform, and our income was too small to live up to the way we were expected to live, especially after my first child, a girl, was born.

We were then transferred back to the states, to Roswell, New Mexico, a rather isolated community in the desert.

Every day of the four years we spent in Roswell offered new experiences. The extremely hot climate, the types of people living in town and the isolation concentrated life into a nutshell. Being as usual rather involved in other peoples affairs I gained a valuable insight into human behavior. My memories of Roswell are filled with many different personalities, all individual characters with their very special problems and their very own way of coping with life. There is the proud cotton farmer, the alcoholic missile site commander, the lonesome lecturer, Bob the killer, a score of frustrated women and last not least, there is my own family, to which I added a little boy.

Many happenings were tragic in a way, but I can't help smiling when I remember the details that make out the big story.

Before leaving New Mexico for our present assignment in England, I became a naturalized American citizen, although I have always been quite natural.

## Helga's Poems, Stories, and Articles: About Myself

I have been living in Banbury for over two years now, and I am very happy with my relationship with the local people. The English are a lot better than their reputation.

Life around me is less exciting now because emotions and actions are highly controlled by common sense and tolerance. Nevertheless I did not have a single dull day yet. I find great pleasure in observing the details of every day's routine; and to me as well as to my friends, little events like a performance of the local Dramatic Society becomes a highlight, and the party afterwards is a happening one wouldn't talk about in front of the children. Since my husband spends many months out of the year away from home I have ample opportunity to run into the adventures a woman on her own is likely to. How do you control your husbands' bachelor friends? How do you control the overflowing washing machine? etc.

Besides having lived in several countries and adjusted to different societies I have travelled whenever I had a chance. I went to Spain, Italy, Switzerland, Austria, East Germany, France, and Benelux Countries, to various parts of the United States, Canada and to Mexico. When travelling I am not so much concerned about monuments and ruins, but rather about the people's everyday life.

I also like to feel the particular atmosphere of a place, like the godforsaken loneliness in a Texan desert, the fear of being attacked in Hamburg's dark alleys, or the sensation of being part of a beautiful universe when the sun sets in the bay of Acapulco.

My hobbies change with the opportunities offered by my surrounding and the money available. I like to get a few weeks of skiing in every winter. My favourite way to spend a winter holiday is to go cross-country skiing in Austria with just a few friends and a local guide. In the United States I was a member of the Rocky Mountain Ski Patrol, where I had to console the injured and revive the dead in order to have free use of all the lifts.

New Mexico gave me the opportunity to go potholing, or spelunking, as we called it. That meant spending several days and nights with two or three friends away from civilization somewhere in the desert or in un-habituated mountain areas under tremendous stress and in many forms of dirt and danger.

## Helga's Poems, Stories, and Articles: About Myself

Ever since I was a little girl I go on long walks and bicycle rides. I belong to a rambling club in Banbury.

I do many things that I would not really call my hobbies, like painting, playing instruments, square-dancing; I really enjoy evenings at the theatre or the folk cellar, I hate gardening, but I love to read and write.

My favourite literature is the local newspaper, no matter where I am. Whenever I read a daily national paper I select informative articles covering everything from finance to psychology, but I don't bother about the sport pages or the gardener's part.

I had until last week not spend any money and little time on magazines, partly because there are limits to my time and money available, and partly because I really prefer to read books. When I studied a score of magazines last week with an analyzing eye I found out that I really enjoy the higher priced men's magazines, not the pictures but the articles. But I am aware of the fact that many people are asking for a completely different type of entertainment when they buy a magazine, and somebody has to write according to those readers' needs.

Most of the books I read are selected to increase my knowledge on a subject that interests me at the moment. I had a few months when I chose nothing but books on psychology, lately I studied the nature of light, cosmic rays, nuclear physics, ect.

I do enjoy reading a novel if I have enough time to relax and dedicate myself to the book for at least an hour or two without interruption.

I simply adore Somerset Maugham. I was inspired by his skill of mastering the language and a plot when I was just a little school girl. I worked my way through many of his novels and short stories although I knew then very little English.

Other modern authors appreciated by me are numerous, I like every one of them for a different reason: Hemingway for the simplicity of the language, St. Exupery for the philosophy, Salinger for using the spoken American language so masterly, Françoise Sagan for the simplicity of plot, Manfred Hausmann for the idyllic backgrounds, Han Suyin, because I sympathize with her key characters, and



## Helga's Poems, Stories, and Articles: About Myself

Mary McCarthy for her portrayal of human behaviour and her sense of humour when dealing with tragic situations.

I started writing at the age of sixteen without ambition or great hopes, rather following an intuition while I was babysitting for my little sister one night. I wrote three or four pages about an insignificant holiday adventure and sent it in for a competition sponsored by the North-West German Radio Station. I won first prize.

During the following years I wrote essays about places I visited and few very short stories that I sold to daily newspapers.

Since I lost contact with the spoken German language I found writing a frustrating exercise; I was not at all satisfied with the way I wrote in German, and I was not confident enough for any attempts in English. My future will be with English speaking people, however, and I have decided that I just have to learn how to master their language.

Although I don't read too many short stories, I like plotting them and weaving the necessary details in. At the moment I don't care what magazine I could possibly contribute, because every reader has a right to his kind of story and everybody's taste can be a challenge for me. I simply want to learn how to write in a manner that other people appreciate.

I have written a novel in which I consider the plot acceptable, but the filling in of the emotions rather poor. Another novel, that I started - both novels are in German - gives me a headache with the plot, because it is based on facts and things just did not happen the way they should have. It is the story of a girl I knew well, who lived a bit unconventionally and was killed by the very man she loved most of all. I'll start that novel all over again in a few months time, but in English.

I don't think I am gifted. I take this course because I enjoy writing, and I might as well do it properly. I hope that one day I'll be good enough to earn a little money with my writing, because that would flatter my ego.

**Email from Christopher 9 Feb 1993**

Christopher is Helga's son. Chris is the type of person that is always questioning life and cherishes input from others in the quest to find answers.

From: Chris von Schweinitz  
To: Hans L von Schweinitz  
Date: 02/09/1993 at 12:09  
Subject: Stepping Stones  
Papa & Mutti,

What have been some of the most significant experiences, events, periods, thoughts in your life?

I'm very interested. I've been asking this question of myself too. It's stimulating a lot of thought.

Christopher

## **The Significant Event**

This is Helga's response to Christopher's 9 Feb 1993 email

My life is a series of significant events, of course. Yet I can zero in on one that I remember so well because it started out with a terrible fright deep in my stomach. I was a fourth grader happily skipping rope on our side walk in Fürstenaustraße. When I turned towards the house I saw Miss Düwel, my teacher, ring out door bell. My heart dropped physically into my lower intestines, although I liked her, I knew she liked me, and I had not done anything wrong. After she had been visiting with my parents for what seemed four to seven hours, my mother called me in to join the conversation. I learned that they had been discussing what school I should go to after fourth grade. Most kids would continue in the Volksschule for another 5 years and learn a trade. Others would switch to a school where more academic skills and business skills were taught, and a very small percentage (this was in 1947) would be admitted to the "Gymnasium", a college prep school where one started at the age of ten or eleven. One would take an examination, and - although it was a public school - most parents had to pay tuition and buy the books, which was a major concern for many.

My parents had originally decided to send me to the school which would lead to a solid business career or open the way for nursing and other vocations. The assumption was that I was such a nice girl and quite pretty and that I would marry early anyhow.

Miss Düwel, however, has other visions for me and the future role of women. She explained to my parents that if God gave a child good health, intelligence and some talent, that child's parents owed it to God and society to develop those gifts for everybody's benefit. And that child would later have the duty to use the education gained to be useful to society. My parents were easily persuaded, I passed the test to the Gymnasium, and I became the most expensive child my father ever had (the others did not attend tuition charging schools).

All through my nine years in the all girl Gymnasium the idea of increasing knowledge and skills as a matter of responsibility towards society was the underlying philosophy. Few teachers expressed it in those words, it was simply

## Helga's Poems, Stories, and Articles: The Significant Event

taken for granted. The notion of getting an education in order to earn more money did not cross my path until I came to the United States.

Miss Düwel's visit to my parents, which was definitely beyond the normal duties of a teacher, obviously had an effect on the immediate course of my schooling, but the philosophy of making one's gifts available to benefit others is probably the cause for my spending so much time on volunteer projects and not devoting a lot of effort on money making activities. I see my responsibility with money in not spending more than what I have, ---- But I would like to have a house with a big guest room and lots of closets one day, and for that I might have to be selfish for a while and take up paid employment again.

## **An Experience**

This is Helga's response to Christopher's 9 Feb 1993 email

This experience came out of a very unique set of circumstances and is of significance only because it might explain my relationship to organized religion. I do not want to say that my view is right or of relevance to any other person.

I was sixteen. My mother had died a few months earlier after a long time in the hospital. My father, my two sisters and my brother were coping somehow with the motherless situation at home. I told myself that in the overall scheme of things in the universe my mother would only temporarily be separated from me until it was time for me to die and join her in heaven. In the meantime she would be watching me, and in my mind I could have conversations with her. That was the vision of the world I thought I had learned about in church, and I had always accepted that.

Then, on rainy, windy afternoon in the fall, I happened to run into our Pastor Henche. He had known my mother very well and asked about how we were getting along and how we were taking the loss. I told him that I felt that she was somehow still with me. And then I asked him how he, as an authority on these matters, envisioned the actual meeting of the souls in heaven. Would I be able to recognize her right away? As soon as I uttered that question I found it very naive, yet, I was not prepared for his answer.

The pastor said in his ever-comforting man-of-the-cloth voice that, oh no, once a person is dead the soul goes to heaven and is no longer interested in anything or any person on earth. All the moral suffering is left behind, and the soul enjoys eternal life in the beauty and purity of God's presence.

I was shattered. My mother was now nothing but an unidentifiable, happy bubble? The pastor had just killed my mother, right there in the wind and rain, he had killed her with the words he had just spoken. As a figure who had always presented what was true and right, my first reaction was to believe what he had just told me, that my mother was no longer interested in me, did not exist anymore.

It took me several weeks to come to terms with that experience. But I did not cope with it by accepting the pastor's description of "life" after death. I coped

## Helga's Poems, Stories, and Articles: An Experience

with it by deciding that the pastor might be wrong. Maybe he was just like any other human being trying to make a living, and somehow he became a pastor, and not matter what he believed later on in life, he had to act as the man of God. People expect that from him.

And then I looked at the institution of the church as I knew it, the Lutheran variety, and then I looked at many other organized religions, and I came to the conclusion, that while there is a definite need in most people to believe in some superior power called God in our language, the organizations that people build around that God are based on their social needs. There is nothing wrong with joining one of those groups or congregations, but I would keep in mind that even the pastor or the preacher, even the pope, are only human. (The Catholic Church says that the Pope can do no wrong).

I do believe in God, in a being greater than myself, and I still believe that (if we have a soul, if we are not just a constellation of energy bundles<sup>0</sup>, we stay "ourselves" even in heaven, whatever that is, and that there can be conversations between people in heaven and people still on earth.

## **A Significant Period**

This is Helga's response to Christopher's 9 Feb 1993 email

This period extended over several years beginning in late 1945 when I was nine years old. It is difficult to describe the circumstances in a few sentences. The war was over, my family had moved back into our bombed-out house, we children played in the ruins of the neighborhood, usually unsupervised, because our mothers were too busy trying to get food for us from somewhere. As long as we were not cold or hungry we generally had a great time.

My father had come home recently from being an American prisoner of war. He had been terribly mistreated for months by being almost starved to death and by having to live in an Alpine pasture without shelter. I had not recognized him when he had walked into our yard one day, and I had run away into the house to hide. But my mother's and grandmother's good care had soon brought him back to the halfway healthy state, and I had my "Vater" at home again.

Many of my friends were not so lucky. Many dads had died in the war, some were known to be prisoners of war, and many were simply lost. Nobody knew where they were if they hadn't died. The same was true of sons and husbands, daughters, mothers and on and on. Every day the Red Cross read long lists of people looking for other family members.

My friends Bubi and Liane knew that their daddy had been taken prisoner in Russia and had been seen in Siberia in a labor camp. There was no mail, only rumors and the hope that one day he would walk into their yard just like my father had. Among the trains that came through our town every day was occasionally one which carried prisoners of war from Siberia. Local charities and whoever had time would greet the train, and take food to the travelers and ask if they knew anybody from our town who was still back in Siberia and still alive. Every once in a while one of those thin, scruffy, sick bodies would get off the train before it left the station; he had made it home.

We lived just a few hundred yards from the railroad station and hardly ever missed a prisoners train unless we had to be in school. Liane, Bubi and I would sit on a piece of fence and watch closely. We had one big hope every time, we were hoping to meet their daddy. We did not know what we would say to him or if we

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would even recognize him, but we waited - again and again. During all those months, actually years, that we waited for him and for other people from our town that we knew or knew about, we heard from those who had already returned about the awful conditions of the prisoner of war camps in Siberia. These tales haunted me at night. I had lived through some horrifying experiences myself during the bombing raids and when the Allied troops invaded our town, but I had no trouble coping with that. However, stories of the cold Siberian nights with the prisoners trying to sleep in unheated shacks without blankets, with nothing but watery soup for food, but above all the cold, windy nights when they couldn't sleep unless they huddled up close together and maybe find their companion dead in the morning, these stories and the fact that there was nothing I could do to help them, disturbed me greatly. Liane, Bubi and I told ourselves, that their daddy had to be in a better sort of a camp.

Several years after the war - I don't remember how it happened - their father came home. Others have never been heard of. I still feel for them.

What lasting effect did this episode have on my life? To this day I never go to bed on a cold cool night without being grateful for having a blanket and a bed of my own in a well insulated home. With grateful I mean a deep physical feeling of well-being which makes all worries and troubles I might think up during the day seem insignificant in comparison to having to spend a night in a Siberian prisoner of war camp. That's why I don't need a fancy mansion for a home. (But I would like a house with a big guest room).



## **The Great Thought**

This is Helga's response to Christopher's 9 Feb 1993 email

My really great thought is still to come, and it is hard to single out one of my many almost great one, but here it is.

It happened many years ago, but I don't remember when, although it dawned on me suddenly. I realized that my life was complicated by the thousand little decisions I had to make about what is right and what is not. Everybody considers himself honest - thou shallst not steal, thou shallst not lie . . . but even the definition of stealing varies from person to person. Many say "it's only a pencil, and nobody will miss it" etc. Sometimes people stick ten dollars into my hand for helping them with a translation, and they say "I hope you don't report these little sums to the IRS" . . . Or an elderly friend wants me to meet her for lunch and I really would rather stay at home. Do I tell her I have other commitments, although I know she is lonely?

One day I made up my mind to use the following principle in making my decision: Can I go to bed tonight and not toss around regretting what I did? There is a good saying in German: it says as much as "a good conscience is the best pillow to sleep on".

This principle has helped me tremendously during the last two years when I had a whole house (the German Free School building) full of things that nobody really knew of and many volunteers came and suggested "let's take that junk home, nobody will miss it, and we can get this place tidied up". I always said "it's not ours to take home" period. And sure enough - recently some heir was looking for a little drawing that she thought was hers.

That does not mean that I don't toss around in bed at night for sleepless hours, but it is for reasons other than a bad conscience. Why I don't sleep well I have no yet analyzed. Maybe I should drink milk with honey with the 10 o'clock new.

### **Clone Me, Clone Me Not!**

While applying for a Driver's License in United States, the issue of cloning came to Helga's mind. From that thought Helga wrote two similar short stories about cloning. When they were written is not known, except that they were probably written after 1976 when her family was transferred (stationed) in Austin Texas. This can be surmised by some statements she makes in this story concerning her time of life.

I wish the cloning researchers would hurry up. I am not getting any younger, and as far as I am concerned, the only person that should be cloned is me, I, first person singular.

I would love to hold my little self in my arms, cuddle it (me, her?), gently bathe her, admire my first smile, feed her perfectly balanced food, lullaby her to sleep with light classical music. I would call her Meklona.

I would do everything just right. Not, that my parents didn't do right by me, especially if I consider the war, the neighborhood and their other children to cope with. But I, in this stage of my life, am relatively well off, and so wise. I would be the perfect mother.

I am not as intelligent as some people I know, but I am a lot happier than most of them; and a world of unhappy people is an unhappy world.

I was an adorable baby. Plump, healthy and huggable, always showing a cheerful, if sometimes mischievous face, I was the baby every wants to have. Not one of my baby pictures shows me biting my brother, throwing a fit, or smelling bad.

I was, of course, pretty and presentable, my Papa's pride. However, since the scientists are fooling around with my genes and my DNA anyhow when they clone me, they might do well to correct my teeth in the pre-embryo stage; that would save Meklona the agony of braces. And while they are at it, they might as well give me (her?) long black hair. My blond curls have always been a thorn in my eyes, and speaking of eyes, their blue began to fade early, and dark brown eyes indicate more passion. Olive skin would go with all of that, it is less sensitive and

## Helga's Poems, Stories, and Articles: Clone Me, Clone Me Not!

has more sex-appeal. In other words, I always wanted to look like a gypsy, like Carmen rather than Brunhilda. Here is my chance.

I am too old to nurse Meklona, barring a miracle, but since a clone embryo needs a womb to develop in, I might agree to share the baby with a young mother type who has that womb and generous breast but none of my experience with life. Should I personally be gone from here, I mean, be dead, some of my cells and DNA can be deposited in cold storage for later use. I would not be able to hug, cuddle and spoil myself as desired, but I would possibly receive eternal life that way. With power outages troubling civilization on and off (pun intended) I would suggest, that the cold storage is located in a region that is naturally below freezing even after global warming, like the Arctic. I would not want my DNA to melt down intermittently. How about if Meklona turns out to be schizophrenic?

I wonder if I am having second thoughts now about my or me being cloned. How about when Meklona reaches her golden years and a terrible famine breaks out. Would I, long "dead", suffer pains of hunger, I, who loves to eat?

I hope the government does not send me a form to fill out or ask me on the back of my driver's license whether to clone me or not.

I am not ready to answer that question - not yet.

## Klonata

This is Helga's second short story about cloning. Probably also written after moving to Austin Texas in 1976.

When I applied for a renewal of my driver's license, the form issued by the Department of Transportation asked me, if I wanted to donate my organs. No Way! What is the Department of Transportation going to do with my liver? Next thing they'll ask for is a few cells with my DNA in it for cloning!

Well? There is a thought. I hope the clonologists hurry up with their research so I can be cloned while I am still alive. I want to enjoy her (me? myself?).

The only person I know who should be cloned is I, me, first person singular. I would love to cradle my little self in my arms, admire my (her?) first smile, lullaby her to sleep with light classical music.

Her name shall be Klonata. With all my learned wisdom I would bring her (me?) up just right. Not, that my parents didn't do right by me, especially if you consider the war, the neighborhood and that little brother of mine they had to cope with. I would be the ideal mother to the perfect baby.

I, myself, the product of an age-old production method, was such an adorable child. Plump, healthy and huggable, I always displayed a cheerful face and made everybody who fed me, feel good. Not one of my baby pictures shows me biting my brother or smelling bad.

I am not as intelligent as some people think they are, but I was pretty, my daddy's pride, and he would be the first to agree to have me all over again.

When the clonologists get busy cloning me, they should take a close look at my DN and straighten out my (Klonata's) teeth in the pre-embryo stage; that would save her the agony of braces. And while they are at it, they might as well give her (me?) black hair, straight, no curls. My blond curls have always been a thorn in my eyes. Speaking of eyes, my sparkling blue faded during puberty, and I had the craving to have dark brown eyes that could reflect the passion that overcame me in certain situations. With those dark brown eyes, I (Klonata) would have to have olive skin. O, the sex appeal! that would radiate from Klonata (me?).

## Helga's Poems, Stories, and Articles: Klonata

I (she?) would be like Carmen rather than like Brunhilda. We should all fight for our tax dollars being spent on cloning research rather than on war. I am no longer as young as I used to be. I might expire before Klonata can be created, I mean, I might be dead. In that case I would not be able to cuddle, feed and spoil her (myself?), nevertheless, I hereby advise the clonologists to use me. This is my chance, the first step towards eternal life.

However, with power outages plaguing civilization on and off (pun intended), my DNA or cells have to be stored in an environment that is naturally below freezing and also not subject to the whims of some governmental religious beliefs. Maybe the Antarctic would be a good place. Power outages and a meltdown of my cells and DNA might turn Klonata (me?) into a schizophrenic bubble gum.

How about if a famine breaks out when Klonata is in her golden years and I, myself, am what is called "long gone"? Would I still feel her pangs of hunger, I, who loves to eat?

With that question lying heavy on my mind, I hope the Department of Transportation is not yet ready to add the cloning item to their questionnaire, because I am not ready to mark my X.

## **Giovanni**

Helga and her husband Hans did travel to Italy in 1994, and their first grandchild was born in 1993. So this was probably written about 1994 or 1995

Wishful dreams, like sweet memories, may be rekindled by the faintest of touches, like the thigh brushing against fresh hay, or by the whiff of pure butter cream, or by the sound of a name - a name like Giovanni.

I was fifteen or sixteen that spring, when Giovanni and his Mama opened a hair salon in our town, right on the market square. They did nothing but cut hair, mainly for men and children, but every once in a while, when I stood outside their door to listen to them talk, talk, talk and sing in Italian, I would see a woman or even a girl my own age plant herself in the swivel chair. I liked the way they looked when they came out, the tapered razor cut, shaping the head in a favorable oval, and I began to study the prices displayed in the window. Well, I knew I could never afford to get one of those Italian trims, yet every time I passed the shop, I stopped to watch Giovanni for a while and I thought about his nimble hands and cheerful smile whenever I did my own schnipp, schnipp styling with my aunt's sewing scissors.

It was in Sorrento, on a bus tour through Italy, after having spent the morning buying gifts for my first grandchild back in Texas, that I noticed at lunch that my fellow traveler Irene was sporting a new hairdo. Her hair, blue-gray, is so short, that one can't do much to it, but it had a different swing that noon.

"I had myself coiffed by this guy in town, his name is Giovanni and his place is right next to that bank, and if you have to ask how much it cost, you can't afford it but you can always ..." she would go on talking all through dessert and then some.

By four that afternoon, when the town came to life again after the long siesta, I was already standing across the street from a narrow door with "Giovanni" on a cardboard hanging inside the glass panel. I had left Irene snoozing in the lobby of the hotel, and our husbands had gone down to the harbor to look at the yachts, or rather at the girls on the yachts.

A heavy bell rang as I opened the door into a dark hallway. An arrow pointed me upstairs. Not only had I forgotten to change dollars into lire, I realized just then, I had only about twenty or thirty dollars in cash on me, and then a stack of credit cards that might be worthless in this establishment. Nevertheless, I figured a haircut should not cost me more than a chicken fried steak dinner - or would it?

I stopped half way up, just enough to see feet in purple pumps and shapely calves tippie back and forth - and here I was in my heavy soled sneakers and white socks, a shapeless skirt and a souvenir T-shirt from the Vatican with the naked David spreading all over my breasts. I had to admit: in the world of elegance and haute coiffure, I was the absolute queen of the country bumpkins.

Yet, I continued, climbing the scaffold, step by step. I knew this Giovanni whose black soft leather shoes I saw first, would not be the one from my hometown, but when I saw him, I froze. This young man had no smile, no song, just the critical eye of a master at work. He did not even look at me, for which I was quite grateful after a while, because I realized that my hair looked somewhere between atheism and little orphan Annie, and once it was wet and washed, the lack of style would no longer be so obvious.

There were five or six ladies being taken care of by girls in their teens, either under hoods, over a sink, being back-combed or blow-dried, and el maestro was poking around with long fingers in the coiffure of an elderly signora who had the air of an heiress about her, maybe she owned the Fiat company.

One of the teen age girls in jeans and high heels pushed me gently into a chair, and the washing began. Several times. Then I was toweled and placed in front of a mirror. Before I had time to straighten up and give my legs somewhat of graceful position, el maestro stood behind me, began to ask "Lady, what ..?" However, he then took one look at me, shook his head and snip, snip, snip, and again snip, snip, snip, and once again on the top, snip, and he walked over to the Fiat signora. Was that all? The master's touch in less than two minutes?

It was not. After various girls had rolled me, teased me, sprayed me, brushed and combed and layered me and sprayed me again, Giovanni stood behind me, lifted one strand of my hair, uttered "mousse" to a girl and attended to the

heiress of the Lamborghini empire. So I was brushed again and moussed heavily, and it seemed like hours of procedures before el maestro stood behind me once again. He actually - I swear he did! - looked at me in the mirror, his nimble fingers and his comb added a little sway and sing to my hair, and his eyes hinted at a satisfied smile.

Not that I recognized myself in that mirror. There was this good looking woman who had to get up, do mathematical acrobatics with dollars versus lira, pay the bill and get away from the mirror before she changed her looks. The bill was not bad, equal to going to the Broken Spoke and having a margarita followed by chicken fried steak with all the fixin's, a cool long-neck or two and a good tip.

I slung my carry-on bag over my shoulder, said my arrivi-derci and carefully, lest I might disturb my coiffure, I descended the staircase, step by step, smiling, enjoying who I was. The staircase had widened, my full skirt trailed gracefully behind me. I was the Queen in the World of Elegance and Haute Coiffure. I had finally been with Giovanni, I looked good. It was well worth the price of a chicken fried steak and a beer or two.

But I sure needed that margarita or the Italian equivalent, as soon as I faced my husband in that sidewalk cafe next to the Cathedral.

"What happened to you!" he grinned, "Let me take a picture. The kids will never believe that you can look like this."

And Irene, when I got back to the hotel, whipped out her camcorder and filmed me like I was a volcano in eruption. "You look really good this way!" she kept saying, affirming each time that before my visit with Giovanni I must have looked, well, not really so good.

I am back now to somewhere between atheism and little orphan Annie, but for that moment when I descended Giovanni's staircase in Sorrento I was who I really am.



## **Monosyllabic Lament of a Young Mother**

The manuscript is dated 24 Juni 1974

Ich wollte heute abend zum D.F.S. Coffee House gehen, aber dann hatte ich keine lust wieder so ??? im Auto zo sitzen und soviel Geld für B??? auszugeben. Ich fahre fast den gansen Tag Auto. Es wäre oft angenehmer, wenn wir im Osten von Montgomery wohnten. Schade, daß ich nicht zum Caffee House gegangen bin. Ich fahre shendenlan??? für andere Leute und für meine eigenen Interesse habe ich dann keine energie mehr. Sch....

I have a coke  
and then a smoke.

I mop the floor  
and wipe the door.

I fix some lunch  
and mix some punch.

I spill the beans  
and change my jeans.

I weigh a ton  
and scrub the john.

I fold the sheets  
and eat more sweets.

I watch two shows  
and wash my hose.

I nurse my son  
and dust the gun.

I catch a fly  
and make her die.

I don't know why.

Helga's Poems, Stories, and Articles: Indian Lullaby (also Chaves County Lullaby)

### **Indian Lullaby (also Chaves County Lullaby)**

Written while living in Prattville Alabama around 1982. Was submitted to New Mexico Magazine on 12 November 1982, but they were not interested, because the magazine does not publish poetry.

I hear the wind on yonder plains -  
Hush, my baby, hush -

The night will bring us clouds and rain -  
Hush, my baby, hush -

The rain will cool your burning eyes -  
Hush, my baby, hush -

The desert sand will drink the skies -  
Hush, my baby, hush -

I see a cloud in yonder sky -  
Sleep, my baby, sleep -

The cloud is red, the wind is dry -  
Sleep, my baby, sleep -

And what the wind will bring this land -  
Sleep, my baby, sleep -

Is tumbleweeds and dust and sand -  
See not your Mama weep.

**Forever Alone?**

Just a handwritten sheet found in her box of manuscripts. Date unknown.

For what goal

Has my soul

Been begotten?

Forever unknown - -

Forever alone - -

Forever reborn - -

And forgotten.

Come closer and love me!

### **A Doll**

Just a handwritten sheet found in her box of manuscripts. Date unknown. Spelling are as she intended.

A head with reddish curls of hair  
Lay staring in a box.  
A headless body whimpered there  
Beneath a pair of socks.

And at the table sat Marie  
And wrote with sharpened mind:  
When i gro up i want to bee  
A muther of some kind.

## **The Chair So Moves**

This article comes in various forms. In 1988 the article was submitted to the Austin American-Statesman and on March 2, 1988 this article became part of Mike Kelley's column.

On February 16, 1990 it was unsuccessfully submitted to the Texas Monthly magazine and on January 20, 1992 it was also unsuccessfully submitted to the Austin Chronicle.

This version was submitted to the Texas Monthly:

You may be called upon to serve - and you are not prepared. It could happen: At your club's annual business meeting the president and his vice are whisked off to the hospital with heart attacks. Who would be asked to continue in their place if not you? Or, to be more specific, let's discuss a dilemma any unsuspecting voter can be found in every so often, at least in Texas: having to conduct a precinct convention. You know, of course, that in Texas on the evening of a primary election the voter is invited to attend a little convention of the party and in the precinct (s)he voted in. The person to chair that caucus (pay attention now!) is elected from among those present. Let's assume the choice falls on you. Are you ready? I wasn't either, but based on some recent personal experiences with these situations, I came up with the following notes to guide me in the future, and you are welcome to use them in such time of need - just in case you become a chosen leader.

For an electee it is important to know the proper jargon.

First, as CHAIR, you hope that THOSE PRESENT are a bit rowdy, because you have to CALL them TO ORDER. That would be a silly thing to do if they were all sitting there like so many potted plants. If you are all by yourself - which might well happen in these days of limited participation in the democratic process - you, alone, will turn into a QUORUM. Don't ask me how to undo that.

If you are not alone, the woodwork steps into action: There is the CHAIR (you), the FLOOR, the TABLE, the PLATFORM, and maybe even a BENCH, if the ELECTION JUDGE is in ATTENDANCE.

Should you be of the female persuasion like I am, THOSE PRESENT have to address you as MADAME CHAIR. Now, I personally have never before been called a madam, but I didn't mind for just one evening since it was for the sake of

## Helga's Poems, Stories, and Articles: The Chair So Moves

democracy. However, if you are a (M)ale CHAIR, you should not be called MADAME.

Somebody will have take the MINUTES. Remember that MINUTES have nothing to do with time; that's why meetings drag on for hours.

Sooner or later one of those know-it-all citizens will get up and say: "I MOVE ...". Well, let him. Any REGISTERED VOTER, having voted, has the right to MOVE anything he wants to.

Look around for some people who have some extra time and money to spare. They should be DELEGATED to the COUNTY CONVENTION. Each one of them is entitled to a replacement, the so-called ALTERNATE in case the DELEGATE loses his (her) VOICE, mind, car keys or whatever. Each prospective DELEGATE and his (her) ALTERNATE should sing a little diddle for you like glory, glory hallelujah to testify to the strength of their VOICE. A loud VOICE is of the utmost importance at PARTY CONVENTIONS for those VOICE VOTES. It can change the course of the nation.

You have to find room for all subjects on the FLOOR so they can be SUBMITTED for DISCUSSION. If a subject turns out to be too intellectual, you TABLE it, and it will be forgotten. Make sure difficult subjects are not being readdressed to the CHAIR. That can too easily happen when someone shouts: "MADAME CHAIR! POINT OF ORDER!" You best call a fire drill at this point in time.

Beware of THOSE PRESENT who know how to start a sentence with WHEREAS. These folks are out to RESOLVE something. They know what they are after: they want you to SUBMIT to the PLATFORM. As CHAIR you can then MOVE the FLOOR, MOVE to ADJOURN, MOVE a SECOND Chair on the TABLE - whatever you do, don't SUBMIT on the FLOOR, but if you do, do it in TRIPLICATE as requested by the COUNTY CLERK'S OFFICE - at least in TEXAS.

## Joe and the Little Girl

This story is from a handwritten manuscript with lots of mark-ups. There is no indication when this story was written. But it could have been an assignment in the Writing Class taken in Banbury England between 1964-1969

"Where is our map of Mexico and that little Spanish dictionary, and how much money do we have in the house?" shouted Chris when he stormed into the house.

Mary his wife, stepped out of the shower, "You are not on the run from the police, are you?" she asked.

"Worse than that, honey! You are wet all over." he said while he stripped his shirt and shorts off and stepped under the cold shower.

It was hot and dry on this September morning in Texas. Mary did not bother to dry herself with a towel, water dripped out of her hair, down her face and back.

"You said something about Mexico?" she asked toward the shower curtain.

"Joe is flying his planes down to El Paso for regular maintenance. I can fly along with him and then I can catch a bus or hitchhike to Mexico City and then I'll go further south into the jungle."

"You'll be gone for a couple of weeks then. I've got only ninety some Dollars in the house." said Mary.

"That'll be enough. I told Joe that I'll be gone for three to six weeks." He turned the shower off and stepped on the bath mat. She slung her arms around him, their wet bodies were shivering and he pulled her closer to him.

"My big adventurer, always full of surprises, but I love you Chris!" as she rubbed her cheek against his chest. In the mirror she could see that he smiled helplessly like an embarrassed little boy.

"Not now, Mary," he begged, "You are trying to change my mind, you little Eve." He kissed her hair and slapped her on her behind.

"Go and find that map, but for heaven's sake, put some clothes on first."

It did sound just like one of Chris ideas, to take off on the spur of the moment and to wander about with very little money somewhere in the jungle. He had been too many parts of the world this way. The first time he took off was when he was fourteen. He had left school in the middle of the a lesson, leaving a note that he would be back in two weeks time, hitchhiked north and spent a week fishing along the St Lawrence River until the police found him. Since Mary had met him five years ago, they had gone off together whenever he felt like it. They spent five months in Europe and after their return to the States he arranged their wedding without ever having proposed to her.

As an independent geologist with Joe as reliable partner, Chris could easily arrange to leave his office for a few weeks between project or contracts. He earned enough money during the months that he did work to carry them through their long holidays. Just little over a year ago they had been camping all over Austria, but when she told him over a glass of wine in Vienna that she was expecting a baby in half a year's time, he was overcome with delight. They flew back to Texas the very next day, bought a four bedroom house near a school within a week and lived like any other American young couple. He worked hard to pay off the furniture and to save for the baby's arrival, he spent almost every weekend working in the garden, servicing the lawn mower or the car and improving the house. He even agreed to play bridge every Friday night with the couple next door. When Mary had to go to hospital for the delivery of her baby, Chris was too excited to drive the car and they had to be driven by a neighbor who had to stay with Chris in the waiting room, showing sympathy for his headache, stomach cramps, and breathing difficulties. When he was finally told that he could have a look at his little daughter, through the window, he stopped breathing altogether because he was so relieved and proud. The neighbor caught him just in time when he fainted.

But he never took little Caroline in his arms, after she was home, never gave her the bottle or played with her. He often smiled at her from a distance and made sure that Mary gave her the best care possible, but babies belong to their mothers he had told her when she tried to encourage him. She knew it was not a lack of love for his daughter, he was just uneasy about holding something so delicate and precious in his big hands. Mary didn't really blame him.



## Helga's Poems, Stories, and Articles: Joe and the Little Girl

All this passed through her mind while she searched the shelves for the map of Mexico. "Of course", she said, "there is no reason why you have to stay at home year after year like any ordinary guy just because we have a baby."

"You two will be alright, I think, Joe will put some money in the bank for you next Friday."

"I've been wondering for several months now whether you shouldn't do something exciting for a change."

Chris had packed his luggage: a plastic Airline Handbag filled with his camera, a nylon shirt, a handkerchief, his old sweater and the Spanish dictionary.

Mary gave him the map. "I'm glad you are not just like everybody else. I wouldn't like to be married to a man who is so homely and stays around wife and house all lifelong just because he is married."

"Let's go then" he rushed, totally preoccupied with things to come.

Joe had the plane all ready for takeoff. A kiss for Mary, a handshake for the baby and Chris jumped into the cockpit.

The plane took off and there stood Mary under the merciless sun, cuddling her baby, staring across the desert as if she was waiting for the plane to return. Only dust came out of the desert, a wind started to blow, tumbleweeds came rolling across the runway, a dark red cloud of dust moved towards her, within minutes she was whipped by thousands of sand-corns, the wind was steady and breathtaking. She wrapped the blanket around the baby's face. "Don't cry, darling", she shouted against the noise around her. "We must not tie our daddy down, you understand? He is a free man."

She fought her way back to the car and found that she had left the window open. The inside was covered in dust and sand, in a corner on the back seat there was a proper sand dune. She got in, closed all windows tightly and made the baby comfortable.

She didn't know whether to drive straight home or whether to drop in on some friend. Since she had met Chris she had never spent more than a day without him.

## Helga's Poems, Stories, and Articles: Joe and the Little Girl

She was free, or was she? The idea excited her. All of a sudden she was not just Christopher's wife having to get up at seven in the morning, serving dinner at six in the evening and making sure the house was tidy all the time and the laundry hamper not over spilling. Now for a few weeks time she could decide all by herself what to do all day and when to do it, of course considering the baby, of course.

It was certainly healthy for her personality to be on her own, she was glad Chris had taken the sudden decision to have a holiday all by himself. She stopped at a Drugstore to buy some bleach for her hair. This was her chance to find out what she would look like as a honey blonde.

"You mean to say that he took off on his own and left you and the kid at home?" said Nancy, a friend of Mary's who had dropped in for a cup of coffee the next morning. "I couldn't believe it."

"I feel sorry for you, Mary," she went on, "I'm sure glad my ol' man knows where his place is as long as he is married to me. You shouldn't have let him go."

Mary was glad when Nancy left. She had just seen Nancy to the door when the phone rang.

"Hi Mary, here is Joe."

She asked whether he had taken Christ to El Paso alright.

"That husband of yours caught a bus heading for Mexico City last night. I just couldn't stop him. I tried to talk him out of it but he just laughed."

"Why would you try to talk him out of it? Joe, " she asked, realizing that Joe must think the same way as Nancy did.

"Come on Mary, no need to pretend cheerfulness. You must feel awful. I'll pick you up at twelve and we'll have lunch together somewhere."

"But I can't, I have the baby..." she didn't really know what to say.

"I know you have the baby. Can't you bring her along?"

They had lunch at the Country Club. Joe knew just about everybody else in the restaurant. Although Chris had never cared to join the Country Club, Mary had met some of Joe's friends on parties or barbeques. A grey haired gentleman in an embroidered western silk shirt and jeans and high heeled boots came to the table.

"Mary, this is my friend Oscar. Oscar, this young lady is the wife of my business partner."

"How do you do, Mary, I've met your husband last summer. You watch this old wolf here, " he said, pointing towards Joe, "He knows how to lead an innocent lady astray."

Joe laughed and took Caroline on his lap and offered Oscar the empty chair.

"My partner, Chris, is spending a month or so in old Mexico, and leaves his wife and kid back home, So I thought I take them out for lunch,"

"You don't have to feel sorry for me," interrupted Mary, not hiding that she was annoyed, "I didn't mind him going."

"That's the type of women I like" shouted Oscar, "A pretty young lady like you is entitled to have a bit of extra fun once in a while."

He invited Mary and Joe to come over to his Ranch next Saturday for the opening of the dove hunting season and turned to the bar. He took it for granted that his invitation was excepted.

The waiter served the lunch. Joe enjoyed feeding the little girl on his lap little bits of his food. They talked about babies and food and ordinary housewife subjects.

I wonder, why his wife left him, thought Mary, Joe is easy going, really understanding and very good looking too. He had agreed to a divorce two years ago, leaving his three children, now all in their early teens, in care of his wife. He lived all by himself on his little cotton farm which was run by a Mexican family. The money he made as a geologist plus the income from the farm made him a desirable object for husband seeking females in town. He certainly knew how to make a woman feel comfortable and at ease.

## Helga's Poems, Stories, and Articles: Joe and the Little Girl

When he took her home it seemed only natural that he should carry the baby into the house and stay for a drink.

"You get a babysitter for tonight and I'll take you to a dance somewhere, tonight honey" he whispered into her hair, putting his arms around her from behind when she tried to loosen some ice in the tray.

"Joe! Christopher didn't leave me for good, you know! He simply needs some excitement occasionally. I am quite happy without your sympathy and advances"

So he left.

Mary spent three days cleaning the house, reading the daily paper, from the last to the first page, sitting under the air conditioner rocking the baby on her knees, lying awake at night, waiting for the time to pass. She felt lonesome. She did not want to go and see her friends because they pitied her. If Chris would only send a postcard or give her a phone call. She had not heard from him since he had left.

She was glad when Joe rang on Saturday morning, just to tell her that he had deposited some money on her account. She couldn't stand being alone any longer.

"How about that dove hunting party on Oscar's Ranch this afternoon?" asked Joe.

"I would like to go, if you don't mind."

"Good girl! I'll pick you up at 4 o'clock. We can leave the baby with my Mexican woman."

## **There is a Horse in Your Yard!**

This story is from handwritten manuscripts with lots of mark-ups. There is no indication when this story was written. But it could also have been an assignment in the Writing Class taken in Banbury England between 1964-1969. There are two variations to the story. The first more complete story is about Eric. Another variation is about Danny, but it is only a rewrite of the first few paragraphs.

### **Eric's variation**

"Look, Eric, there is a horse in your yard!" shouted Tanja across the street as she stepped out of the school bus.

"So what!" shouted Eric and disappeared in his house.

Tanja had to hold on to a tree, oh, life was so unfair! Eric Cunningham, the worst boy in class, a troublemaker wherever he showed up, that dumb Eric had a horse and she, who had almost never been in trouble, had nothing but promises from her parents that "maybe at the next place we move to we can rent a house with an acre or two for a horse."

Well, in all her fourteen years it had never happened and never would as long as her father was in the Air Force. Wherever they lived they lived either on a base without stables or in a residential area. The only house in this neighborhood with some land behind it was that of the Cunningham's.

Tanja hid behind the tree and watched the boy's efforts.

What a beautiful horse it was, a gelding. His coat was light brown with white ankles. He seemed very young, maybe three or four years old, and he was probably just green broke and still needed to be trained for riding. Eric should lead him around on a rope and talk to him before jumping around on his back like a fool. It was obvious, that boy had no idea about how to treat a horse.

Should she go down and give him some advice? At least to tell him that he had to tighten the saddle girth so that the saddle wouldn't slip and make him fall? Never! Nobody in his right mind would fool with Eric Cunningham. And she was to envious to even face him. It would serve him right if he fell and broke his neck.

## Helga's Poems, Stories, and Articles: There is a Horse in Your Yard!

She cried when she ran back home through the back alley, and after she had closed the door to her room and turned her radio on really loud she ripped all the pictures off the walls, because everyone of them had something to do with horses. She tore them up in little pieces and furiously stuffed them in a drawer.

The next morning she left the house early enough to be at the bus stop outside of Cunningham's' house before anybody else. The gelding was grazing along the creek, Tanja (schmalst), he lifted his head, listened for a while and slowly made his way towards her.

She sat on the fence and rubbed his forehead and told him how handsome and strong he was. When she heard a noise from the house she quickly gave him the carrot she had hidden in her pocket and went to the bus stop.

For several days after dinner Tanja would sit in a tree half way up the hill pretending to read a book, and she watched Eric "fool around" with Prince, as she had overheard Eric call his horse. And every night she would go to bed bitter and disappointed with life. She just could not understand why God would shut his ears to all her prayers for a horse and arrange for Eric to have one. But every morning she would have her secret little meeting with Prince. Her mother was quite pleased to discover that Tanja was finally taking carrots to school for snacks instead of Fudge bars.

The next week Eric did not come to school and finally the secretary asked Tanja to stop at his house and ask his parents to inform the school of the reason for his absence.

She felt her heart beating in her throat when she rang the door bell. There were a lot of rumors about the Cunningham's going around in the neighborhood. Mr. Cunningham was said to be involved in illegal gambling activities, whatever that meant, and he was hardly ever at home. Mrs. Cunningham was said to be working in a cocktail bar at night and sleeping during the day.

Eric opened the door. He had a leg in a cast. "They want to know why you aren't coming to school," said Tanja, to surprised about the cast to ask how it happened.

## Helga's Poems, Stories, and Articles: There is a Horse in Your Yard!

"Tell them to mind their own business," he answered. "O.K.," she said and turned around to leave when he asked her to come inside for a minute. She stayed right next to the door, while he hobbled to a couch and explained: "That stupid horse started to gallop and the saddle slipped and, well, this is the result."

They talked about school for a while and then Eric said that actually staying at home was a lot worse than going to school. He was so lonesome. His dad was in Kentucky and his mom was either gone to work or shopping or sleeping. He talked and talked. Now they gave him that horse, which he didn't really want, but he had mentioned for no real reason that he wanted a horse and peng, his dad had called a friend and asked him to bring one over. Crazy.

"I can take care of him for you," she said, and again she felt her heart pound.

"You?" he asked surprised.

"Sure, I know more about horses than about anything else." she continued to tell him how she started riding lessons during a summer camp in England years ago and how ever since and in whatever country or state they lived in she had taken lessons if possible and that she had read over a hundred books on horses.

"I know," he said, " I remember that when we had to write that stupid story on 'the friendliest person I ever met' you wrote that story about a horse in England."

They laughed. All of sudden Tanja no longer felt envious of Eric, in fact, if he were not such a troublemaker in school he might be quite a normal person. He said that she could come and try her luck with Prince anytime she wanted to as long as she didn't bother him with talking about it.

Summer vacations were starting. These would be the happiest vacation she ever had experienced.

Tanja from sunrise until dark, except for an early afternoon dip in her swimming pool, worked with Prince, the equipment or on clearing the neglected area behind the yard. She cleared a trail along the creek so that they could ride along all the way down to the Alabama River. On these trail rides she would talk to him about the stud farm or dude ranch she would have when she grew up, and

he seemed especially happy when she call him "My Prince Charming". She was happy.

Eric watched the two through the window during the first few days, he was all by himself most of the time and could not go anywhere with his cast. Later on he sat in the yard and they had short conversations.

One day Eric came back from a visit to the doctor. His cast was off.

"Do you still want me to take care of Prince?" she asked him.

"It would be nice," he said, strangely shy, "You seem to be so nice to him. We could kind of share him."

"Oh Eric," she sighed with relief, "I guess you are a lot nicer than everybody thinks you are. Climb up behind me and lets ride down to the river for a swim. It will be good for your leg."

"You don't mind being kind of my friend?" he asked.

"You know," she whispered to Prince when she led him into the shade of a tree near the river, "having a good friend with a horse is almost as good as having a horse of my own."



### **Danny's variation**

"Look, Danny, there is a horse in your yard!" shouted Tanja as she stepped out of the school bus.

"So what!" mumbled Danny and stalked off into his house.

Danny had a horse! How unfair could life be? She stood in the middle of the road pressing her books against her chest as if that would keep her from trembling. Danny Canterbury, the worst boy in class, a troublemaker wherever he showed up, who told lies about others to the teachers, Danny had a horse and she, who had never done anything really bad, she had wanted a horse so badly ever since she could remember, she had no horse. How unfair could life be!

After dinner she made her way through the back ally in to the little wood that was part of Canterbury's property. Hidden in a old oak tree she could watch the horse.

He was a gelding, light brown with white socks.

Wouldn't it be nice if she could ride him, feel his strength and yet be able to command him?

Danny came into the yard dragging a saddle and a bridal.

"Prince, come here!" he yelled. It took him a long time to saddle up, evidently he had little experience, but when he was finally mounted and Prince fell into an easy canter, Tanja couldn't hold her tears back any longer, she jumped out of the tree a few feet in front of Prince, she ran home and locked herself in her room. She tore the drawing of her dream horse off the wall and ripped it in many pieces.

She sat on the fence and rubbed his forehead and told him how handsome and strong he was. When she heard a noise from the house she quickly gave him the carrot she had hidden in her pocket and went to the bus stop.

For several days after dinner Tanja would sit in a tree half way up the hill pretending to read a book, and she watched . . .

## **Die Nacht Before Christmas**

A German-Texan Version of Clement C. Moore's "The Night Before Christmas". It was published in the German-Texan Heritage Society's journal Vol XXIII #3 Fall 2001.

's war die Nacht before Christmas, und all durch das Haus  
Keine creature sich muckste, nicht mal eine Maus.  
Die Socken were hung by the Schornstein mit care  
In der Hoffnung that Nikolaus soon would be there.  
Die Kinder were kuschelt gar snug in their beds  
While Träume von Zuckerplums danced in their heads.  
Und Mama in her Häubschen und ich in my Käppi  
Had g'rad nesteld down für a long Winter's nappy  
Als out auf dem Rasen such Getöse arose,  
Ich sprang ous dem Bett to see: Was is da los?  
Away an das Fenster ich flog wie ein Blitz,  
Tore offen den Laden, the sash just a Schlitz.  
Der Mond auf der Brust of the new fallen snow  
Gab ein Glitzern of Mittage to the Dinge below.  
Als, was to my staunenden eyes should appear,  
but a Miniature-Schlitten und acht kleine reindeer,  
Mit 'nem Kutscher so lebhaft, so alt und so klein,  
Ich wusste sofort: das muss Nicolaus sein!  
Und schneller als Adler, his coursers, die kamen,  
Und er pfiff, und er schrie, und er rief sie bei Name:  
"Nun, Däscher! Nun Tänzer! Nun Pränzer und Vixen!  
Auf, Komet! Auf Kupid! Auf, Donner und Blitzen!  
To the top of the Vorbau, to the top of the wall!  
Nun eilet euch! Eilt euch! Eilt euch, y'all!"  
Wie trockene Blätter, die vorm hurrican fleuchen,  
Wenn sie meet mit 'nem Hindernis, zum Himmel hoch kreuchen,

So up auf das Housdach die Tiere, they flew  
Mit 'nem Schlitten voll Spielzeug und Nikolaus, too.  
Und dann in a twinkling hört' ich auf dem roof  
Das prawning und pawning of each kleinem Huf.  
Als ich drew in my Kopf und was turning herum,  
Down the Schornstein kam Nikolaus mit 'nem Klumbum.  
He was dressed ganz in Pelz von his Koopf to his Fuss,  
Und his Kleidung war tarnished mit Asche und Russ.  
Ein Bündel von Spielzeug war flung on his back,  
Er sah aus wie ein Händler, just opening his pack.  
Seine Augen - wie sie glitzerten! Seine Grübchen - wie merry!  
His Bäckchen wie Rosen, sein Näschen wie a cheryy!  
His drolliges Mündchen war drawn up wie a bow,  
Und der Bart on his Kinn war so weiss wie der snow.  
Den Stumpf seiner Pfeife Hielt er fest in his teeth  
Und der Rauch, der umkreiste den Kopf wie ein wreath.  
He ad a breites Gesicht und a rund little belly  
That shook wenn er lachte, wie 'ne Schüssel voll jelly.  
Er war chubby und rundlich, ein recht lustiges Elfchen,  
Und ich lachte, wenn I saw him, in spite of myselfchen.  
Ein Zwinkern des Auges, und a twist of his head  
Bald bag mir zu wissen, ichhad gar nichts to dread.  
Er sprach nicht ein Wort, ging direkt to his work  
Und füllte die Socken, then turned mit a jerk,  
And laying his Finger aside of his nose,  
Und giving a Nicken, durch den Schornstien he rose.  
Er Sprang auf den Schlitten, to his team gab a whistle,  
Und vondannen sie flogen wie der Flaum einer Distel.  
But ich hörte ihn rufen als er drove out of sight:  
"Eine fröhliche Weihnacht, y'all! Und Good Night!"

## **German Heritage for Nickels and Dimes**

This article was printed in German-Texan Heritage Society's Journal Vol IX, Number 3 in Fall 1987. The original article has multiple line drawings of exercising men. This one only has one included.

It's not depression glass I hunt for at estate sales. Pre-Columbian first editions are not what I hope to discover in our local Goodwill store and in the Salvation Army thrift shop. I am propelled to bargain centers by a rare affliction: I collect books and magazines related to the German-American heritage, most of them in German. They might have been one of the few tangible links to the culture an immigrant family came from; other books were once helping in the teaching of German; and then there were publications designed to fortify the reader of German in his moral standards and in his quest for a Christian and healthy (!) life style.

And what an amusing collection I have built up!

Being a teacher of German and in perpetual search of new material I started out with old school books. My absolute favorite was published in 1887 under the title "Classic German Course". There is not a single German word in that book. And we think we are too easy on today's students. "Beginners' German", 1933, accommodates the student by completely ignoring the "du", the pronoun used when talking to friends, family, God, animals and children. This way it eliminates all the problems with the verb forms after "du".

A surprise must have been the false promise implied by the title "The Easiest German Reading for Learners Young or Old", 1898, when on the first pages one finds such meaningful phrases as "...meine schwarze Henne, die legt Eier für Herren (...my little black hen, it lays eggs for gentlemen)" and "Braucht ein Hund eine Perücke? (Does a dog need a wig?). It does make me wonder about educators in those days.

Compared to today's dialogs like "Guten Tag, wo is der Bahnhof? (Good day, where is the station?), the old books testify to a more pastoral time with "Hans trieb seine Kuh ruhig vor sich her (John drove his cow quietly in front of himself)", and to a more illustrious era in grammar exercises on The Absolute Accusative:

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"Der Kaiser sitzt im Untersberg, die goldene Krone auf dem Haupte (The Kaiser is sitting in the Untersber, the golden crown on his head)".

"German Composition", 1909, startled me with the title of one of its short stories written in English: "The Babes in the Woods." Aha! I thought, finally an edifying piece of immorality among all these pages dripping with righteousness - and I was not disappointed: Two rich, orphaned children were taken into the forest to be killed so that their uncle could inherit their wealth. However, the hired killer changed his mind and left the babes in the woods where they died - slowly and painfully - from starvation. What was the lesson to be learned from that?

The American textbook publishers obviously had no problem with the change from the Kaiser to the Third Reich. Just the other day, while the news media had a feast because the White House had hired a man who had at the age of ten been a member of the Hitler Youth, our Goodwill store sold me "German, Book One", 1938, with a drawing of two boys in Hitler Youth uniform striding cheerfully across the cover.

Political adjustability is reflected even more drastically in my garage sale trophy "Perspectiven 1", printed in 1975 by Madison Collective. It teaches German history and grammar according to the communist persuasion: Fred, an American student on vacation in East Berlin, demonstrates his capitalistic ways to Susan, who is impressed by what she has seen of socialism. "We American men are much stronger than the guys in the DDR, who can't even get Playboy," says Fred and puts his hand on her leg. "Nein, Fred, nicht beim Frühstück (No, Fred, not at breakfast)," snaps Susan, because first she wants to learn more about socialism.

I don't judge a book by its cover, of course, but I sure buy them for their outside looks. Fritz Reuter, ever so popular with the immigrants because he wrote in one of their north German dialects, has his bust on my edition of his works in solid gold. I am very partial to old, anyhow. I have an 1887 copy of "Deutsche Dichtung" (German Literature) with such fine golden lines making the most exquisite pattern on the cover, and the pages are gilded - it would be a shame to read it.

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Illustrations and pictures have a soft spot in my heart. Some are so unique or beautiful, they are just begging to be framed. Why not? "That is a crime too often committed by the illiterate collector," said a book dealer to me in horror, when I explained to him how I would frame a page of the "Gartenlaube" magazine.

Another book I bought for its cover aroused by interest not only by its gold but by the fact that the title was on its back. A bookbinder's mistake, I thought, surely a rare find. It wasn't until I got home and had found my reading glasses that I realized that the book, "Israels Gebete", printed in 1902 in Mainz, was a collection of prayers in Hebrew with their German translation on the opposite pages. In the Hebrew manner it has to be read starting at the end. Since so many Jewish books in Germany were destroyed during Hitler's reign I treasure this copy as a rare survivor.



Amazing is the large number of health and fitness books that survived their owners, almost all of them imported from Germany. Their serious illustrations make them so much funnier than Jane Fonda's video tapes. There is the muscular gentleman, his pin-striped trousers secured by suspender, his Kaiser Wilhelm moustache pointing in the proper political direction. He is doing his daily regiment of exercises for mind, body and fatherland. The instructional sketch on this page is copied from a book by Sebastian Kneipp, a Catholic priest and the apostle of a German fitness craze of years long gone. The "Kneipp Kur", however, with its alternating hot and cold water treatment, is to this day a favorite torture in German spas.

Some of my bargain books actually have to be read to be appreciated or to be banned from husbands' eyes, like, for example, the innocent looking "Ehestandsbüchlein" (On Marriage) which grandfather was supposed to read before he entered the state of holy matrimony: The most important quality to look for in a bride, it says in there, is her capacity to obey. If she talks back to her father she'll be quarrelsome for the rest of her life. Don't marry her. A wife must not insult the Lord's order of the world by feeling hurt when her husband unjustly

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punishes her. As everybody knows, his bad mood and evil temper are most likely brought about by her constant nagging.

Most novels and novellas I found were printed in America and have an obvious moral or religious message. If the hero is not the local pastor, there is at least a monk or some other man of the cloth to lead the virgin on the righteous path. According to the illustrations in "Am Altar" (At the Altar), a love story, the virtuous maiden never even looks a man in the face, she is always embarrassed, from page to page, even when a monk she knows just happens to come around the corner as she walks along a lonesome mountain path.

While the English speaking Miss Evelyn had the likes of "Lady Chatterley's Lover" for her clandestine reading pleasure, Fräulein Johanna in Fredericksburg was stuck with magazines and books touting Gehorsamkeit (Obedience), Tugend (virtue) and Frauenleiss (Woman's enjoyment of endless work). It is surprising then that Johanna learned English in a hurry? With all their moralizing and pontificating these books might have given their writers more pleasure than their readers - until now, when people like me (and you?) can enjoy them with slightly bemused curiosity as part of our history and heritage.

## **The Org-**

This short story went through many iterations and was completed about 1984 and then submitted to both Playboy and Harvey. Sadly, both magazines rejected the story. The following is the letter Helga sent on January 2, 1984 to Playboy explaining the submitted short story.

Mr James Morgan  
Articles Editor  
Playboy  
919 Michigan Ave  
Chicago, IL 60611

Dear Mr. Morgan,

Here is a short feature about a young woman who hides her pre-occupation with sex under a blanket of linguistic research.

Since that happens to most of us occasionally, this little expose might strike a humorous chord in the reader.

Connie Belle is my pseudonym. My real name sounds so German and would spoil the impression of an ordinary American speaking about herself.

Sincerely yours,

Now for the story

"Mom, what's an orgims, no, I mean orgasa . . . this word here?" asked my seven year old this afternoon as we were browsing through my magazines.

"Honey," I said absentmindedly, "the word is orgasm." And then I heard myself saying that I burst out: "Hey, what are you reading there, anyhow?"

I squinted into that old copy of Southern Living on the floor in front of him. The word was organism.

"An organism is something made of cells and it can grow, or something like that, honey", I said with a sigh of relief.

I am a sucker for words and their roots and family connections. That's why tonight I pulled out my Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary from underneath my bed. I am looking for words with "org".



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It starts out with "organ" and ends up with "orgy", and both make me think of my Billy Joe, who's up in Ohio right now.

"or-gan...a differentiated structure consisting of cells and tissues and performing some specific function..." it says. Yep, that's my Billy Joe's all right. His organ sure is differentiated.

But then there is another "or-gan", a wind instrument. That's what old Brother Finkenschlag plays in church. He himself is quite an old organism, really, but we call him our organist. I'm only kidding.

And that reminds me of Johann Sebastian Bach and my grandmother, Oma, not that they ever met, but she, Oma, who spoke nothing but German to me, told me that Bach composed great music for the organ; however, in German you are supposed to be more particular with words, and now, that I think of it, you translate "the organ" into Das Organ" if you mean the one made of cells and tissues, and you use "die Orgel" for the organ with wind in the pipes.

In both languages you can hand the suffix "-ist" on a thing to describe the man who handles it: the machine and the machinist. That would be in German die Machine und der Maschinist. You should expect now that Johann Sebastian, who played "die Orgel" very well, was called "der Orgelist". Not so. Bach's title was "der Organist". And that does not hint at the fact that he fathered many children. All living languages are sort of unreliable.

You have another example of that if you feel like hanging another suffix on the "Organist", let's try "-in": "Organistin". Now you think that means that the Organist is in. Wash your mouth! It does, I admit, introduce the subject of sex, since "Organistin" means that the organist is a female, and she handles "die Orgel" and not "das Organ" - during church anyhow.

"Or-gan-grin..." let's not even think about what an organgrinder might do to you. Let's move right on to "or-gan-ic".

The Wholesome Food Mart next to K-Mart's sold organic turkeys for Thanksgiving, for crying out loud. What then are normal turkey made of? 65% limestone and 45% polyester you reckon?

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An organic turkey doesn't excite me. However, since we are playing with words, have you ever heard of an organic orgasm? Or, to be more scientific, an orgasmic organism? They are probably hard to come by.

We left out "or-ga-niz-er" with the suffix "-izer", which we know from womanizer. He is one who "pursues or associates illicitly with women". Thus, an organizer should be one who "pursues and associates illicitly" with organs. Yep, that's my sister Liza Mae all right. Even the Reverend Boetcher calls her a real good organizer, the way she gets the guys to take turns and stay after prayer meetings Wednesday night to clean up the church.

"An administrative and functional structure" is what the dictionary has to say about "or-ga-ni-za-tion". If you lay all organs end to end around the earth along the equator, you would have a real neat organization. I don't know how functional it would be, but I am sure it would be quite administrative and a structure to behold.

Before we come to "or-gasm" I am scanning over some humdingers like "or-gan-ot-ro-pism" and "or-ga-no-mer-cu-ri-al", which I will ignore. If you can't pronounce it, don't eat it, they say.

There is one long word, though, that causes me concern: The study of bodily organs is called "or-gan-ol-o-gy" with "-ology" being the study part and "organ" referring to cells and tissues. What, tell me, do you call the study of the musical organ? Does a co-ed go off to music college and major in wind instruments with a minor in organology?

And - oh Lordy - speaking of studying! There arises a new question: What is the connection between the words "study" and "stud"?

No wonder only 55% of some women interviewed ever came to "or-gasm". There are too many problems on the way.

## Autumn Leaves

This story was completed after 1976 while Helga was in Texas. While being written it had the titles "Cut off" and "Miss Josephine Merridown". The story may have been started between 1965-1969 while Helga lived in Banbury England, where the story takes place. But after 1976 the story was submitted to the New Yorker and the Atlantic Monthly as "The P\*\*\*\* and Miss Josephine Merridown", and to the Tilted Planet Press in Austin Texas as "Autumn Leaves". Sadly it was reject by all three publications. This version is the one that was submitted to Tilted Planet Press.

It only happened because Miss Josephine Merridown took the nine o'clock bus to Banbury yesterday morning instead of waiting until noon as she normally does on market day. She wanted to have a chat with Mary Livingston during the ride, and Mary is known to prefer the nine o'clock. (Having served as the editor of our village weekly for the last fifty-eight years now, I become rather concerned if people don't go about their routine as I am accustomed to it.)

Miss Merridown had been away from the village for over a fortnight to help her cousin Agatha through her last days. They had given Agatha a lovely funeral on Tuesday, and Miss Merridown had had a good cry afterwards.

She had returned on Wednesday night with the last coach from Birmingham, and now she was dying to hear from Mary about the goings-on in the village during her absence.

There was still some fog on top of the hill, and the queue in front of the church door awaiting the bus looked like a parade of ghosts to Miss Merridown as she worked her way up the steep path slippery with wet leaves. On rainy days we use the foyer of the church for a bus shelter, putting that old building to some practical use after all; for services one goes to Upper Cropedy now, but in any other weather we queue up outside between the 17th century gravestones and the vicar's roses.

There was Mary Livingston all right, and next to her stood the constable's young wife with four of her children and the fifth one obviously on the way. And of course, there were the pupils on their way to school, most noticeable among them the flock of Pakistani children with their eyes and hair as black as coal, and

the girls with legs hidden in long, white trousers under colorful dresses. Little Jonathan Mc Moorland from the Manor looked like a grey shadow next to this exotic group, his red knees were shaking, and his arms were drowning in the pockets of his mackintosh.

"Well, you haven't missed much", started Mary Livingston her account, "Wilma Sims feels a bit better since she took the powder you gave her. But don't ask me what's going on in the doctor's office in the Manor, love. Closed his surgery for two days, Dr. Mc Moorland did. They say it's because that younger brother of his has turned up coming back from Burma or India or thereabouts, and a sight he is! His hair as long as that of my niece Tilly and tied like in a pony tail, and his skin is a lot worse than hers, all full of red and purple blotches. I am surprised they let him into this country. Downright contagious he looked to me, if I may say so, love".

Miss Merridown has always expected dreadful things to happen in the village whenever she was not around for a while. She cares about us, you see, and she is sure that it just won't do without her. To her the news concerning the closing of the surgery were very bad indeed, but for reasons that shall soon be clear, they engulfed her in a wave of satisfaction.

"Closed his surgery for two days, Dr. Mc Moorland did?" she said, "Well, don't we all know that he is not the dedicated kind of doctor my father was".

"That may be so, but you do agree, don't you, Josephine, that we buried your father seven years ago. We did have to replace him, I suppose." Miss Livingston is not the most tactful among us.

Old Dr. Merridown had been the village practitioner for more than two generations, you see, and his daughter had been by his side for more than forty years taking care of all sorts of afflictions that might befall the human body and mind. After her father's untimely death, a young chap from London, one Dr. Mc Moorland, had taken over the surgery, a stand-offish sort of fellow in Miss Merridown's judgment, not well equipped to give the villagers the personal attention they needed. He had married the heiress from our Manor and had moved the surgery into the west wing of that stately old house. After little over a year,

Lady Ashley, then Mrs. Mc Moorland, had asked Miss Merridown to resign from her job in the doctor's office and to help her with her baby, little Johnathan.

It had been quite a shock for Miss Merridown to see her villagers having to put up with that young nurse that had taken over her position, inexperienced as she was, but the affection little Jonathan had for her made up for some of her loss.

He was a lovely baby. He was still in his nappies when his mother died - a great tragedy - and the unexplainable happened: Dr. Mc Moorland asked an Irish nanny to live in. Miss Merridown's services were reduced to helping in the doctor's well-baby clinic on Fridays after three. At sixty-seven, of course, she felt many healthy years ahead of her.

Miss Merridown buttoned her coat as those thoughts were interrupted by the arrival of the bus. What better way than to ask his son Jonathan to find out why the doctor had been so inconsiderate as to close his surgery for two days. Although she does not normally climb up to the upper deck, she did so yesterday in order to sit across from the little boy. Jonathan attends the first form of Mr. Rhinacker's public school. He looked ever so pale, and in his staring gaze Miss Merridown discovered a trace of terror.

"Are you all right, dear?" she asked. She could see they did not take good care of him, his uniform was hanging on him like from dress hangers. "Has your father been very busy lately?"

No answer, only a gazing out of the window. Poor lad, she thought, a spitting image of his mother he is, may she rest in peace, his hair is just as long as hers used to be, almost touching the shoulders; if one tied it up and controlled the curls. She couldn't resist, she took out her brush and moved it gently over his head. He smiled faintly. Soon somebody would decide that he was too old a boy for such childish curls, she feared.

"The other night," whispered Jonathan as he stood up to get off at the corner of West Bar, "the other night," he started again with his grey eyes wide open, "the other night father cut off that man's, you know that man from Pakistan, he cut off that man's thing." And he jumped down the stairs and disappeared.

"I'll never!" shrieked Miss Merridown, "That man's thing, the boy says!"

"It's all that watching the late shows on the teli," said Mary Livingston, a bit confused.

"It's not the teli, Mary, you mark my words." Miss Merridown was rather in a kind of shock; she missed the stop at the Cross, where she wanted to get off to fetch her pension from the post office, so she got off half way down High Street. For a little boy of five to have witnessed such an unimaginable procedure! She couldn't get her mind off it. Not, that she hadn't always agreed with the doctor on the benefits of birth control, especially for the Pakistani families, but there were other ways indeed, one didn't actually have to cut that thing off, or do whatever was done that looked like that to the child. Yet, this was exactly the type of medical practice she had expected from the young doctor. One couldn't undo the damage already inflicted upon the poor Pakistani, but Mc Moorland had to be taught that the village was not about to tolerate so drastic an approach to a social problem. How could she let him know how everybody felt?

The doctor had to be put in his place, she decided, and she considered herself absolutely responsible for doing just that, now that little Jonathan had confided in her.

When she entered the butcher's for half a pound of minced beef, she ran into Mr. Rhinacker, the headmaster, who had just ordered his Sunday joint as is his custom on Thursdays at ten o'clock.

"A lovely day, Mr. Rhinacker," said Miss Merridown, "you would never believe it if I told you what that little lad from our Manor just confided in me. Was quite a shock, that boy was.

"Young Jonathan?" Mr. Rhinacker lit his pipe.

"Dr. Mc Moorland should never have been allowed to take over my father's surgery." she went on, "He is too independent, too inconsiderate, wants to change the world over night."

"Do you think we should expect some rain?" asked the headmaster with a searching look into the smoke that crawled out of his nose.

"The lad said to me, and don't blame me for it, he said: the other night, my father cut off that man's thing!" She whispered the last words behind the back of her hand.

"Thing?"

"Yes, sir."

"Whose thing?"

"Whose?"

"What thing?"

"Oh you", she giggled, a bit annoyed, "I have seen you in your nappies when your mother brought you in with a rash. You rascal want me to say that word out aloud right here on High Street. Never!"

"Well then," Mr. Rhinacker always puffs very fast when he is chasing a brilliant thought, "it seems we have a simple problem to solve: who cut whose what off and why? Have a nice day, Miss Merridown." And then he walked across the street into the chemist's.

She completed her shopping half heartedly, and the people who stopped to have a chat with her noticed an unusual absentmindedness about her. On the ride home she resolved to gather more proof before she acted, the world being so mistrusting these days.

When the four o'clock bus came back to the village with a load of school children, Miss Merridown was attending the vicar's rose bushes as she occasionally does. She arranged to be finished just when little Jonathan walked past her.

"A bit misty today, Miss Merridown," he said with a grim face.

They walked down the hill together.

"Miss Merridown has some freshly baked cones in the cupboard, and she knows just how you like your egg boiled." She does know how to please him

"All right then," he said. It was not the first time that he stopped at her house for a bit of tea. He like to be spoiled occasionally.

"What a shocking story you told me this morning, love." she tried to sound casual as she poured him another cup. "You did watch your father do it didn't you?" He nodded and kept on chewing.

"Yes, of course I saw it all," he said finally, "and that man looked so horrified and sad, and I saw it through the glass in the door, and that man said: all right then, go ahead, but I'll never forgive you because it will change my life forever."

"Where is the man now, dear?"

"He is still upstairs, and nobody is allowed to see him, and father told him not to leave the grounds until it's all healed, and he let nobody come into the house, not even the lady with the screaming baby."

Miss Merridown could no longer control her compassion for the little lad, she hugged him and rocked him and then brushed through his curls again because she knew it calmed them both down.

"I can't think of the word of that he cut off, but tell my father not to do that to me when I grow up, would you please?" he asked.

"It starts with a p like in pony, dear, but no need to say it out load, love."

"Yes, it starts with p like in pony, that's it, I think."

Miss Merridown blushed when she remembered her father talking to the vicar in the parlour about man's five inch curse. They had both laughed, those naughty rascals.

Well, she knew enough now, she had double checked the facts. After the boy had gone home she furiously washed the dishes. Since opening time at the "Hare and Hounds" was still over an hour away, it was Mary Livingston who would be the first to hear about the new developments in the case.

Mary's cottage has no heat other than the fire in the sitting room. She had her back against the fire and her feet in a bowl of hot water. Only last week had the specialist in Stratford-upon-Avon confirmed that her blood was running backwards, she said.



"Running backwards, dear?" remarked Miss Merridown shaking her head. "Well, you and your specialist." And coming to the point, she continued, "Our good Dr. Mc Moorland is quite a specialist too, you know, he has found his very own way to control the production of Pakistani babies in the council flats."

While Mary Livingston knitted on her pair of woollies, Josephine Merridown wove her theory into a picture: Two years ago the Borough Council had built several houses right behind Mr. Patton's garage, and most of the flats were being let to immigrant families from Pakistan who had found employment in a new industrial development outside of Banbury. The Pakistanis spoke very little English at first, and in spite of their silent friendliness, they remained outsiders to the village. Their presence was felt nowhere more than in the doctor's surgery, according to Miss Merridown, because they had more than their share of influenzas and trouble with the English food, and, and above all, they had an abundance of offspring. Four children in a family were not unusual. They were a noticeable burden on the social services of the community like the nursery, the school and, least not least, the National Health, Miss Merridown continued her monolog. All too often the doctor had to go to the council flats during odd hours, and to many hospital beds were taken up by them.

Oh yes, she was sure the doctor had no longer been able to handle the situation, he was not a man to sacrifice himself as her father would have done. Hadn't she heard him say to that Pakistani lady only a few months ago, that he would cut her husband's baby maker off if her husband would not let her take the pill, and if she would have another baby? Indeed, those were his very words. He had laughed then, and the lady had been ever so embarrassed, but last week she had another baby, according to the notice in the Banbury Guardian.

"I've told you, Mary," she concluded, "he has taken the law in his own hands. A second Adolf Hitler he is. And under the eyes of little Jonathan, mind you! We have to ban this sort of medical tyranny from the village. You shall see how finally everybody will agree with me that my father has not been properly replaced."

"You do go on a bit about that," said Mary Livingston, but nevertheless she suggested that they mobilize public opinion as soon as she was finished with the first leg of her woollies.

It was just after opening time at the "Hare and Hounds" when they arrived. Mr. Butler, the innkeeper, looked tortured.

"It's me feet," he complained.

"It's not your feet, dear," said Miss Merridown, "it's the extra weight they carry. You are about three stones too heavy." Her medical advice and opinion are accepted without argument as a matter of respect towards the late Dr. Merridown.

"The usual," she ordered and paid for half a pint of bitter, "I don't care if anybody listens," she said quite loudly to Mrs. Butler, who was placing some warm steak-and-kidney puddings on the counter.

The usual six o'clock lot of men and women gathered around her in steaming coats and pullovers - it was raining outside - and listened to her account of the barbaric goings-on in the Manor. They even stopped the game of darts. Mr. Patton from the garage insisted on hearing it all over again when she had finished. A roar of comments, laughter and anger accompanied and supported her. Beer was flowing faster than normal as everybody had to overcome the shock and the awful thought of what had been done to that poor man. Not that anybody really knew him, not that anybody objected to fighting the "populations explosion" in the council flats, it was just that the doctor's method was too uncivilized. No way of telling what he might do next and to whom - for that matter- although he had been quite competent so far, to be fair.

"You don't impose on anybody's privacy or private parts, so to speak, in such a manner," said Mr. Draper, who is known for his very opinionated letters to the editor in the Banbury Guardian.

"Another pint," order Mr. Sims. He owns the village store and is therefore the natural center for all community action. "Somebody go and get that bloke down here to testify to what happened to him. We have to conduct this like they do on the teli."

"He is not too well, I suppose", said Miss Merridown, "and being locked up in the Manor the way he is, I don't expect him to be able to honour our invitation."

"Locked up in the Manor, you say?" Mr. Sims had to take off his spectacles to better realize the extent of the doctor's action. "Good Lord! We have to go to the Manor this very night without warning and see for ourselves exactly what has been going on. And see for ourselves, I say."

"See for ourselves?" came a voice out of a smoke filled corner, "I say, there is nothing to see anymore; it's off, isn't it."

"Mind your language, George!" shouted Mr. Butler over the laughter, "But I suggest we let the Pakistani blokes fend for themselves. Dr. Mc Moorland has always been a good doctor for me and my children. I can't complain, although old Dr. Merridown was more familiar with me tendinitis. Let's leave it up to the Pakistanis."

"But these Asians don't fend for themselves," said Mary Livingston, "these Muslims or Buddhists are very good Christians, ever so peaceful they are."

"Closing time! Last Drink please," reminded Mr. Butler his customers. He was anxious to get off his feet. He always is around closing time.

The door opened, and Colonel Connaway staggered in for his customary good-night cap, a double brandy. He is a colonel in the Indian army, retired, and forever writing his memoires, drinking his way through a stream of memories and liquor. When he had heard what the doctor had done he ordered another double brandy and one for Miss Merridown.

"It's not the doctor," he shouted, "it's his bloody brother! Came back from Burma last week, or Singapore, they tell me." We do consider the Colonel an authority on Asian matters. "It's a shame what the colonies do to our boys these days. The chaps turn into communists and want to change the world over night. It was the doctor's brother who told him how to deal with overpopulations, I presume. A second Stalin he is, that boy, a hippy, with long hair and v.d. from copulating with the natives."

The Colonel was right, everyone thought, it must have been the influence of the brother, an absolute outsider to the village. Nevertheless, it was decided: the doctor had committed the crime and had to be held responsible.

"Let's go then," suggested Mr. Simms.

They buttoned their coats and wrapped their shawls around their neck and made their way through the moonless night in the light drizzle of rain. You could hear by their noisiness that they all had more to drink than their usual amount. Miss Merridown's knees had never before felt so heavy, but then, never before had she had three pints of bitter in one evening and a double brandy for the road.

Since our surgery is in the Manor, the gate to the grounds is never locked. Although the agitated group began to feel a tad like intruders, they advanced straight to the front door making enough of a hubbub to cause somebody inside to turn on the lights over the entrance.

"You are under siege!" shouted the Colonel, and everybody wished he hadn't done that; by George, they were not playing at war, they were conducting a criminal investigation! Mr. Simms knocked on the door.

Dr. Mc Moorland opened. He was dressed in a maroon house coat, his hair was unkempt, and his blue eyes were framed in red. They must have called him out of bed. He looked puzzled when he recognized the great number of visitors.

"Anything the matter?" he asked.

"It's about what you did to that man, sir," started Mr. Simms. He didn't really know how to put it into words.

"I did what? And to what man, if I may ask?"

"No need to pretend you don't know, sir," hollered Miss Merridown pushing her way to the front, "Jonathan told us all about it. And I don't mind saying so, if my father knew what was going on in his surgery, he would turn over in his grave." Her head felt hot and flushed, and she realized that she had not intended to speak in this manner.

The doctor asked them all into the hall, they could catch pneumonia standing in the rain, he said.

"It's about your method of birth control, sir," Mr. Simms made another start towards an explanation.

"I beg your pardon?" Dr Mc Moorland was surprised indeed.

"You should be ashamed of yourself, doing it in front of little Jonathan," added Mary Livingston, "The lad confided the details to us this morning."

"In front of the child?" The doctor blushed in anger or embarrassment and shouted so loud that the walls seemed to tremble: "Jonathan!"

The frightened little boy stood at the top of the staircase, shivering in his pajamas from the cold and from not knowing what was going on.

"Do darling, dear, come to Miss Merridown," cried his former nanny running up the flight of stairs quite forgetting that her knees were too heavy and her head was too light. She sat down on the top step, took the boy in her lap and wrapped her coat around him.

"Tell your father what you saw the other night when you couldn't sleep, dear," she whispered in a comforting voice. The villagers held their breath to hear his faint answer.

"When he cut that man's thing off?" he asked.

"Yes, dear."

"Well, he...There he is, that man, and it is all cut off." He pointed to the parlour door which was slowly opening. A young man, his head shaved bald and with an obvious skin problem, appeared in confused silence.

"That man, as you call him, is your uncle Philip who just came home after two years in Pakistan," thundered the doctor, "and what did you see me cut off? Answer me!"

"I don't know what you call it, that thing that he had. I liked it. It started with a p, I think, doesn't it Miss Merridown? I don't know why they use it for babies, but you cut it off the other night."

"His thing? Starts with a p? My method of birth control? By George! Do I understand what happened? It was his ponytail I cut off, his ponytail. Yes indeed, Miss Merridown, with p. If we would only call things by their proper name we might get our facts right." The doctor had caught on and so did most of the visitors.

"Cut it off you did?" muttered the Colonel, "cut off his ponytail, your brother's?"

"Mercilessly. A medical necessity it was with his scalp being in that condition and with him being on his way to Cambridge to read philosophy. I cut it off, that p-thing, and closed the surgery for two days for the lab tests to show if his rash was contagious."

"Has a golly great lot to do with birth control in the council flats, I dare say." mumbled Mr. Simms, "Case dismissed." He sounded rather a bit disappointed.

There was a muffled shuffling towards the door.

"Good night, doctor."

Dr. Mc Moorland lit his pipe, and when the group had left and the flame over the tobacco had settled to a quiet glow, he stood at the bottom of the stair case looking up at Miss Merridown who was tenderly rocking little Jonathan to sleep.

"I do suppose you caused this ruckus out of concern for the child, Miss Merridown," he stated with a firm voice, "but it seems there is nothing I can do right in your eyes as long as you shut them to the facts of life. It seems appropriate that you no longer help me with the well-baby clinic on Fridays."

"You are right about the first part." whispered Miss Merridown. Jonathan was almost asleep.

## Helga's Poems, Stories, and Articles: Autumn Leaves

"There is a season for new leaves and blossoms in the spring, and there is great beauty in the falling leaves of autumn Miss Merridown, if we accept it." And after a while he added: "Good night then, Miss Merridown. The weather seems to be clearing up, we'll have a lovely day tomorrow, I suppose."

And indeed, the weather has been lovely today. But for Miss Josephine Merridown, who is raking about in the leaves, the sun is hidden behind the heavy branches of the majestic oak that overshadows her father's grave. The grey and black of her tweed coat blend in with the church yard around her as if she were part of it.

## **But the Truth**

Helga and her family lived in a trailer park near Montgomery Alabama from November to December of 1973. The family was being transferred from Alabama to Austin Texas, and only stayed in the trailer park as temporary housing while transitioning. This story was probably written during or soon after living in this trail park. A lot of this story is true, but some areas are embellished. It is up to the reader to determine what is true. There is no indication that this story has ever been submitted for publication.

This is not a work of fiction and there is no end to my story either. It is happening not far from Montgomery, just a shot and a half up the road after you cross the Alabama River. I have to change the names though because hopefully some of the people involved will still be alive when this is printed, although there is little chance that any of them reads the newspaper. But then you never know.

Just as I never knew what was going on in that part of America which lay behind the little woods bordering my back yard fence - until I moved there some weeks ago.

We had sold our thirty thousand dollar home before our forty thousand dollar home was ready for occupation, so we had to store our furniture and find a furnished place for a month or two. Looking for a mobile home somewhere where our children could catch their school bus, we discovered that there was a trailer court right behind that above mentioned little woods on the other side of our fence.

"Sure, take your pick," said Mr. Brumbleweed, the manager, when we asked him if he had a trailer for rent.

There was only one to pick from, though, and it looked decent enough.

"Hundred and thirty five bucks a month and I foot the water bill," he said and aimed a mouthful of whatever into the commode.

So we moved into "Southern Acre Trailer Court". What was meant to be simply temporary lodging turned into an experience.

As soon as the electricity was turned on and we had screwed some light bulbs into the place, I had a case of morning sickness, although I am not in that condition. It was the roaches and the bugs of many sizes, shapes and colors that did it. They crawled through the cabinets, into the closets, out of the stove, all over



the fridge, from underneath the carpet and out of the wet rags under the kitchen sink, The bathtub was a mass grave of creatures I had never seen before, and the corner behind the shower curtain was adorned with a few cotton balls soaked in blood. I'll spare you more details.

When the gas man had done his thing you could not help but notice that the people or whatever had lived in the trailer before us, had owned a dog who had done to the carpet what he should have done to the old oak tree.

The place was filthy. "The American housewife buys more cleaning fluids than any other housewife in the world", end of quote.

I cleaned and sprayed for three days. I also found out that what I had taken for dried out coffee grinds was actually dropped there by mice. Every night our American cheese in the traps, trapped at least one of them. Have you ever been lying in your bed at night listening to hush-hush-scratch-hush-hush-scratch noises, hour after hour, and you dared not go to the bathroom because you were afraid of stepping on one of those grey little busy-bodies? Have you ever opened a closet wondering what may come out of there this time?

"Most families in Europe, they have just one bathroom," I remember Major Garland telling us last summer about his experiences, "They are not to our standards, if you know what I mean. Like here in the states we have at least one extra bathroom for the kids."

Sure, even a trailer can have two bathrooms, our does, but you dare not use the one for the kids; septic tank trouble, if you know what I mean, nothing serious, just don't use it, and be careful with the other one. The same with the water heater. It's all right as long as you don't turn it on. We heat two saucepans and a teakettle full of water every night for our bath. That is quite enough water because the tub is rather small, especially for my husband who is a big man. At first he went in feet first, but then he couldn't sit down. So he went bottom first. That isn't easy, and his feet get cold this way and none the cleaner.

The telephone worked, but when the Southern Bell let me know in no uncertain terms that it would cost me thirty dollars in addition to the monthly fee

just to have it registered in my name I decided that I did not have their kind of money.

My husband leaves early in the morning in our car. Since our second car had to be sold to give us money for the moving expenses, I am now stuck all day in "Southern Acre" with practically no communication to the outside world. Not even the milkman delivers around here. Well, that's life in the USA, 1974.

Most neighbors leave for work before sunrise. The honking and tooting is the most reliable alarm clock. I observed that car-pooling really gives some drivers a case of the nerves, since it seems that quite a few people don't wake up until their pool car start honking.

And then there are the dogs, about twenty or thirty. There was a cat too. Her name was Kittykitty. One day I called her to help me tackle the problem with the mice, but she wouldn't come. Then I saw that her head was gone.

"It's them dogs," said Mr. Brumbleweed and launched a mouthful of whatever into a discarded charcoal grill.

The first toddlers toddle about after Captain Kangaroo is over, most of them barefooted and in pajamas, nursing a king size bottle of 7-up. But before that time comes the school bus. Some children hop on, other don't; they stay at home.

"Aren't you going to school?" I asked Leroy the other day when I met him at the coke machine.

"In this weather?!" he laughed and stretched out on the couch under the old oak tree. He had obviously just heard the dumbest question in his life.

The boys don't really stay at home. Most of the time they roam back and forth kicking beer cans and paper bags around. Occasionally they show up with dead rabbits or squirrels. They sure know that guns are made for shooting.

Leroy does not have a gun, but every morning he goes down to the river and catches "them big ones".

"Feeds his whole family, that boy does," said Florence. Florence is the answer to my problem of daily hours of loneliness. She talks to me. I hardly ever

see the other women who spend their day in "Southern Acre". Once in a while a door opens here or there and a voice screams at a toddler: "You come back over here or I'll whip you!", then the door closes again.

Florence owns most of the trailers around here, and since she seems to be the only one with a telephone, everybody has to pay her an occasional visit and add a little fodder to her arsenal of gossip.

She lounges, if that is the proper term to use for a woman well in her seventies, in her recliner facing three T.V. sets. She must weigh in well over the two hundred pound mark. You would not guess her age judging by the swiftness of her baby blue little eyes or by her interest in the world around her. There is a telephone on her left and on the right is a spittoon, a can that once contained two pounds of Folgers's coffee, mountain grown. She hasn't done any cleaning lately because her husband drinks, she told me. The floor is covered with newspapers and with whatever the dogs left on them.

I don't know if Mr. Brumbleweed is her husband, but he lives with her and she speaks of him as "my man".

"Ain't got a penny to his name," she told me about him, "Jist runs around and spends all the rent money on whiskey."

About once a month, she said, she calls the law and has him locked up in the tank, whatever that is, but then she has to take a taxi and give the police twenty five dollars to get him back. If she could spare that money right now she would be calling the law this very morning because "that man" needs drying out.

"Started to drink that stuff the day he drewed his first social security check, didn't he Leroy, and he ain't quit since." That must have been a quarter of a century ago, at least.

Florence could hardly exist if Leroy ever decided to attend school regularly. If he isn't fishing he hangs around close to her and practically serves as her arms and legs. He does her a thousand little favors a day. Florence never leaves her recliner. There is an affectionate relationship between them, or at least it seems that way.

## Helga's Poems, Stories, and Articles: But the Truth

"Is as nice as can be, that boy," said Florence when he had left to get her a coke, "lives down yonder in that shack with all them other niggers. I wouldn't let them live in 'Southern Acre', but he has a fine Christian mother. His daddy took up with another woman last year, ain't nothing you can do about it. All nice people. I mean the mother and the boys."

For his twelve years Leroy is a tall boy. I don't think he has any shoes or a change of clothes.

"Who is that dame out there?" I asked Florence last week when a petite blond in high heels and tiny hot pants swung her hips along the dirt road toward the coke machine.

"She is one of the fancy dancers they have in that new motel along the Interstate, ain't she, Leroy," said Florence. Leroy giggled, he must know more than I do.

The next day around noon the fancy dancer ran screaming and barefoot, wrapped in a blanket, past my kitchen window. A man jumped out of her trailer straight into his pick-up and drove off with tremendous speed.

In a similar manner did I see the man from the trailer behind my bedroom window take off, but his wife did not run away from him, she ran after him. And her choice of words!

"She caught him with another woman on the river last night," said Florence and unloaded a mouthful of whatever into the coffee can.

You get used to these things going on. Your heart misses a heart beat when you hear a shot fired; after a while you regard the sheriff's car as part of the scenery, especially after you have survived a long week-end like Thanksgiving, when I began to think that maybe several of the trailer were the home of law officers; they were coming and going all the time.

Well, in my old neighborhood I saw the police at one or two occasions only. That must have been in connection with obtaining statements concerning other people's accidents. In our old neighborhood we sinned in a more civilized manner, like book-making or underpaying employees, or dropping bombs out of airplanes.

You don't report a neighbor to the law because you know he sells poor quality merchandise at a stinking profit; after all, you own house increases in value when he spends a few thousand to have his yard landscaped. But here people feel they have to "call the law" all the time.

And you can't keep your children inside and hope they don't notice what is going on, not when they are as sociable as mine. My eight-year-old Andy masters the art of making friends with the leader of every neighborhood gang he has to live with. It didn't take long to be buddy-buddy with Johnny, a ten-year-old blond and strong all-American type who rules with an iron fist and a shot gun. He is one of the hunters. He can also drive his four cars through the tightest passages and park them backwards in the smallest corners.

"Don't let your boy play with that Johnny," said Florence, "he ain't kosher."

"What do you mean?"

"He lies and he steals, don't he, Leroy. And he'd sell his own sister. Ain't nothing you can do about it." Another important load into the coffee can.

I thought she was kidding when she mentioned selling his own sister. That cute little girl could hardly be of school age. But I don't know any more. When I mentioned to Andy that Johnny's little sister was the cutest little thing, he said he didn't care.

"She is oversexed," he said.

"Over six?" I wondered, "she can hardly be old enough to go to school."

"Mother, don't you know anything? I said oversexed!"

It was only two nights ago that bright lights and a noisy commotion woke us up and made us peak through the curtains. Two police cars were parked outside of Johnny's trailer. After a long time Johnny's father was put into one of them and taken away. A little later the rest of the family climbed into the Plymouth and left. That's the last we saw of them. Their laundry is still hanging on the line.

"Fooled around with his own daughter again, didn't he, Leroy," said Florence. "It ain't the first time and ain't nothing you can do about it."

## Helga's Poems, Stories, and Articles: But the Truth

"The law came got him, though," said Leroy and spit through the door.

"Yeah, the good Lord knows when to send the law over, " said Florence, "I jist wish he'd do something about that couple in number twelve."

"Is that the couple with the two flashy sport-cars?"

"That's them. She says he got something going at work with another woman, but she cain't prove it. But she wants the law to lock him up."

"What for?"

"For beating her," another load into the coffee can, "He won't do it, though. Have you never heard her yelling 'come on, hit me, just come and hit me, you coward!'"?

"He too smart," giggle Leroy, "Ain't he, Miss Florence."

I hadn't see Mr. Brumbleweed for several days. Apparently he had gone into the woods on Thanksgiving morning to celebrate his country's heritage with a few bottles of Kentucky Bourbon.

:I ain't going to put up with that no more," said Florence when I talked to her last night,. "I'm going to find myself another man." Her little blue eyes had a happy gleam. The dream of happy times to come.

But his morning he must have come home, still drunk. He is not the dangerous kind though, maybe dangerous, but not vicious. When he started shooting he wasn't aiming at anybody in particular. And when the law came and asked him to hand over his gun he just handed it over. Now he is aimlessly wander about near the cotton field.

"See, that hurts him more than anything when they take his gun away from him," said Florence.

I can't help but feel sorry for Mr. Brumbleweed, though. It must not be easy to a man to have his virility confiscated by the local police.

Well, I have to go over to Florence now and pay the rent for another month. Then I'll cross the highway and check the mailbox. We have a community

## Helga's Poems, Stories, and Articles: But the Truth

mailbox, box 123. Everybody goes through the mail once a day and picks out what he wants. By the time I get there I find nothing but bills left in there. Most people don't bother to pick theirs up. After five days or so the mailman takes them back to the post office. There isn't a day pass by in "Southern Acre" that I don't learn something.

p.s. "What's all that writing for?" asked Leroy when he returned from getting me a coke. "You a teacher?"

"It's just a little story about this side of the fence," I said, "and I ain't wrote nothing but the truth."

## **A Grandmother for Andy**

Helga first submitted this story to "Highlights for Children" in May 1975, and it was not accepted. On November 20, 1982 she submitted the story to "Story Friends" and received another rejection. In 1984 she submitted the story to "Children's Press" and "Troll Associates" with again two rejections. Not to be discouraged Helga on January 24, 1989 submitted the story to "The Small Street Journal" and was rejected because they preferred stories about animal, not people. All indications is that this story has never been published.

First, two of the cover letters Helga wrote are included because they help to explain the story and to put it in context of what was happening in the 1980's.

January 24, 1984  
Children's Press  
Chicago IL 60607

"A Grandmother for Andy" addresses a child's problems caused by the absence of grandparents. In light of the present foster grandparents movement it is very timely and gives food for thought to old and young people.

I think the story lends itself to humorous illustrations and can be presented in the form of a picture book, in a magazine or in a collection of juvenile short stories.

It has never before been published.

Sincerely yours,

February 24, 1984  
Troll Associates  
Mahwah, NY 07430

"A Grandmother for Andy" is an unpublished story which - I think - lends itself well to illustrations, possibly in a little book, and addresses the problems of the many children without grandparents. It is quite in line with the foster grandparents program our present First Lady promotes.



Helga's Poems, Stories, and Articles: A Grandmother for Andy

I hope you find use for the story in your publications.

Sincerely yours,

Now for the story

Andy asked his mother: "Mom, why don't I have a grandma like Bob?"

His mother looked up from her magazine and said: "Sweetheart, both of your grandmothers died a few years ago."

"Bob got a present from his grandma for his birthday and a cake," said Andy, "can't you get me a new grandma?"

"No, Andy, I'm sorry," replied his mother, "I just don't see how I could do that."

Well, he thought, if Mom doesn't know how to get me a grandma, I have to look for one myself."

That afternoon they went to Sears. While his mother tried on one dress after another Andy walked around. Wow! That place was full of old women! The lady behind the counter with all the necklaces looked like a good grandmother.

"Are you a grandmother?" he asked her.

"Oh, yes, dear," she said and reached for her purse. "Do you want to see a picture of my little granddaughter?"

Andy turned around sadly and walked away. He was not interested in having somebody else's grandmother.

On the way home they stopped in a beauty shop. A lady with her hair in rollers pulled her head out of the big hair dryer. "That heat in there is killing me," she puffed. Her face was very red, and she was almost as big around as Bob's grandma. In his mind Andy could already taste the chocolate cakes this lady would bake for him.

"Are you a grandmother?" he asked her.

"Me?" she screamed and sat up straight. "I don't look old enough for that, buster!"

Andy felt like crying. For the rest of the afternoon he sat in front of the TV and wished that nobody else had a grandmother if he couldn't have one. Finally he went across the street to buy a donut from the little shop. He like to eat donuts when something troubled him.

While he was waiting to be served he happened to peek through the shelves into the back of the shop. There she was! She looked just like he had always thought his grandmother would look like: She was nice and cuddly, and she had gray hair in neat little curls with a net over it. She had glasses on and seemed a bit worried about the donuts she was dipping in some chocolate sauce. She was beautiful!

Andy ran around the building to the open window in the back.

"Are you a grandmother?" he asked her.

"Oh my!" she cried out in surprise and looked at her little visitor. "I sure am old enough, but I am not really a grandmother because I have no grandchildren."

"Do you want to be my grandma? I don't have one," said Andy.

"Well," she said and turned towards him. She had to take off her glasses to have a better look at him. Then she smiled.

"Why don't you walk home with me in a few minutes when the shop closes. We can talk about it then," she suggested.

A little later Andy walked with her to the end of the block where she lived in a small white house. She had brought along two big donuts for him to eat. They talked it over. She couldn't be his real grandmother, she explained, but she could be his pretend-grandmother if his mother agreed to it. And he could call her "Granny", of course.

"And you can put a picture of me in your purse as if you had a real grandson," said Andy and jumped around with joy.

## Helga's Poems, Stories, and Articles: A Grandmother for Andy

"I hope you come and visit me often," said Granny and gave him a little hug when they arrived at the gate to her garden.

"Aren't you glad you found me?" asked Andy with a happy smile and bit into the second donut.

Then he ran home to tell his Mom all about it.

## **Monkeying with Textbooks**

On 10 February 1989 the Austin American-Statesman printed an article 'Panel considers revising texts' evolution rules' and this article inspired Helga to write this story. She submitted this story to the Austin American-Statesman and on 28 February 1989 she received a reject letter.

Creation versus evolution. Adam versus Monkey. "For years the board's (State Board of Education) meetings ... have sparked debates over how the books address the scientific theory of evolution and the biblical version of creation" said my newspaper last week.

Are they still considering having both versions in one textbook? They are trying so hard to perpetuate a problem.

Visualize the scenario: With chapter 5 of the book Miss Brodelbeck will explain how God created Adam and Eve. For props - her classes are never dull - she'll give each child a lump of clay so they can all practice making little Adams. Of course, in these days of equal rights, she'll also bring along a spare rib from last Sunday's barbecue.

The following week, chapter 6 - entitled "The Evolution and I" - has to be taught by the same Miss Brodelbeck with the same enthusiasm. She'll ask the lady from the Humane Society to bring their resident ape to the class so the children can shake hands with him and imitate his gait.

The children, of course, get confused: How can their Miss Brodelbeck change her mind from one chapter to the next about how we got here? In their identity crisis they withdraw into the safety of collecting baseball cards.

It's time our textbook authorities look at how other societies are trying to do different theories justice without creating (no pun) these problems. They haven't asked me for advice, but I should tell somebody about my own experience: Where I went to school we did not only have two different books on the subject, we also had different teachers to present a variety of views on it.

On Mondays and Wednesdays from eight to eight fifty, Miss Kapp had the opportunity to state her case concerning the Lord's creativity according to Moses, the apple and the snake in paradise, Adam's rib and the entire New and Old

Testament. One could be excused from attending. Miss Kapp - we called her Mary Magdalene for short when she wasn't around - had a doctor of divinity and the body to prove it, I mean, she was so shapelessly straight from top to toe, that nobody thought of her as a person of flesh and blood. You would naturally believe in immaculate conception when she told you about it.

But you would never think of virgin birth when you were around Dr. Siegfried. A fine specimen of a man he was, our biology teacher. We worshipped him every Monday and Wednesday from nine to nine fifty. We were an all girls school, you might have guessed.

How we, the female equivalent of homo sapiens, developed to modern woman I don't quite remember - there was something about a sea otter along the way - but Dr. Siegfried had a chimp at home by the name of Cousin Eva. When he brought her to school one day, I blushed like a red light bulb at the display of affection this Eva had the nerve to show him. All that hugging! I bet some of my friends were a little jealous of her. When Dr. Siegfried explained about the survival of the fittest, every one of us girls was secretly planning to be his woman should the continuation of the human race be otherwise in danger.

As we matured, we had to deal with still more ideas about our origin and destination. There was our French teacher, Monsieur Chartreuse. He was into existentialism. According to him we did not even exist until that certain moment of crisis when we had to sort of launch ourselves out of ourselves ... je me lance ... To this day I am waiting for that moment to come. Maybe it came and I was too busy handling that crisis and forgot to think in French ... je me lance ...

In our senior year, when our values and beliefs were getting their final touch, we had Mr. Nierenstein in physics. Neither God nor Neanderthal man were of any consequence to him because he believed in nihilism. Gathered in the lab around the dynamo and the vacuum pump, we discussed the absolute nothing. Physics with "Professor Nix" was a deliciously abstract subject where a good philosophical mind like mine got better grades than those calculus wizards. His idol was Friedrich Nietzsche. He would quote him like a monk might chant the 23rd psalm. Since he feared neither Heaven nor the Board of Education, he could afford to show his anger when we asked for it. "When you go to a woman, don't

forget the whip," he yelled at us one morning when we kept interrupting the class for some silly reason. "Whom did I quote with these words of wisdom?" he continued in the same tone of voice. Of course, it was a line from Nietzsche, and Prof. Nix had our attention for the rest of the period. We never got around to  $C=ME$  squared, but we did revere our physics teacher, nihilism and all, our own superman.

All the different teachers and the variety of books have never really disturbed my relationship with God nor stopped me from paying a courtesy visit to all cousins Eva first thing when I enter a zoo. My faith may be a bit weather beaten, but since I never had to wonder about what my teachers really believed, I felt free and somewhat knowledgeable enough to think and express whatever I felt like at various stages of development, especially, since all the different teachers obviously got along together so well after school. During a faculty outing Mary Magdalene was observed enjoying the tango with Professor Nix. That's what academic freedom is about.

If those Boards of Education continue to let the Adam versus Monkey problem rest on the shoulders of the Miss Brodelbecks of our country, I'll invest my savings in baseball cards. Our children's demands will drive up their value, and everybody needs some value to hold on to.

## **Dog Days of Immigration**

On 1 October 1986, Helga submitted an article to the Austin American-Statesman concerning immigrants. The body of her submittal letter helps to explain the article.

'Here is a lighthearted article of about a thousand words on the timely subject of immigrants of yesteryear. It has not been published before. I would be delighted if the "Statesman" would print it, especially since there are so many immigrants in the Austin area who chose to come to the United States not because they were poor, downtrodden and prosecuted, but because they love a challenge, welcome adventures and opportunities and found her a great place to prove themselves.'

You don't eat dogs, of course, neither with nor without sauerkraut, but how is a newcomer to this country supposed to know?

All the attention paid recently to the role of immigrants in the history of our nation stirred up some embarrassing memories from the time when I came to this "land of opportunities."

Like most immigrants I had problems with the language. My knowledge of English was largely a collection of grammar book sentences (He/She/it goes to town) and Shakespeare (...it cometh like a gentle rain from heaven upon the earth beneath). My great appreciation of American culture was a Hollywood product: I had watched miles of films like High Noon, Mickey Mouse and - to top them all - Rock Around the Clock. I felt therefore well prepared when I disembarked in New York one day in the late 1950's, survived Immigration, Customs and a taxi ride to Grand Central Station and followed the luring scent of sauerkraut to a pushcart vendor around the corner. Mensch, was I hungry!

The guy was selling skinny sausages on little loaves of bread, with or without sauerkraut.

"I would like to buy a little sausage on ..." I stopped when I realized what my eyes had just read on the banner above the cart: 'hot dogs - .15w, .20w/o'. Dogs? Sausages made of dachshunds or Dobermans? My stomach jumped into my throat. I had come to America for adventure, that was true, twenty years old and ready to meet any challenge, but life among dog eaters was definitely beyond my worst expectations.

Still famished, I dragged my suitcase into a narrow sort of restaurant nearby where people rushed along a buffet, grabbed some food, paid, gulped it down and ran. I carefully picked out a fairly civilized looking cheese sandwich and a bottle of beer.

"Your driver's license for that beer, hon," barked the cashier. I knew what a driver's license was, but I didn't have one. I knew nothing about age limits for drinking.

"I do not want to drive the bottle," I said very distinctly, "I want to drink the contents therein."

She yanked the beer away from me and slammed a glass of water (Wasser!) on the tray. What was that talk of liberty and the pursuit of happiness all about when you needed a driver's license to enjoy a bottle of beer? I felt betrayed and wanted to go straight back home to Germany on the next boat. But I didn't have enough money for a return ticket and could only think of a useless phrase, "...my kingdom for a horse ..." (Shakespeare).

So I stayed and tried to cope. I quickly learned to listen for words that are similar in German and English. Many basics of life sound almost the same: house (Haus), man (Mann), bed (Bett), God (Gott), wine (Wein) and beer (Bier), to name just six (sechs) of them in random order.

Those familiarities were a treacherous trap. The two girls with whom I was to share a room in the YWCA looked friendly enough on first sight. They had been living together happily for over a year, said Nancy, and they had been expecting me. I felt a bit like a third eye in somebody's face. Mary handed me a bottle with a German wine label on it and beamed with anticipation of my reaction.

"A welcome gift for you," she said.

"A gift?" Poison? There is a German word "gift", and it means poison, nothing else. It can kill you. Naturally I let Nancy and Mary drink most the gift before I touched it. We did become friends after I had a chance to consult my dictionary.



Sooner or later even the most reluctant immigrants find themselves indulging in the favorite American pastime: working. I started in the advertising department of a Milwaukee journal which must not be named here. I had to contact business people by phone and ask them if they wanted to renew last year's Christmas greetings to their customer in this year's edition. Has anybody ever counted how many ways there are to express "yes" and "no"? "Ahm nut shoor" and "Lettuce think a Dover" were some of the answers that hit my puzzled ear. Since I was paid on a commission basis I decided to mark all customers as "yes" unless I was sure they had meant "no". The supervisor praised me as one of the most successful telephone girls ever. By the time the bills were sent out to the clients, I had already found employment in another part of town.

I was a waitress then, breakfast and lunch in a hotel coffee shop near the campus where I attended afternoon classes. The clientele was mainly of the business type (two eggs over easy), but not the blue-haired lady in a grey knit suit who, on my second morning, sat inconspicuously in a corner by herself. She ordered a grapefruit. I had never eaten one myself, but I had seen one in the refrigerator and put it on a dinner plate. A whole, round, pink grapefruit. I gave her a paring knife to peel the fruit with and an extra napkin for the mess. She mused over her plate for quite a while, touched the knife, then the grapefruit - and finally she called me over by waving her little finger at me. She snuck a two-dollar tip into my hand and said "I would like to show you how we serve a grapefruit in this country, sweetie. We serve only half..." To this moment I feel the eyes of all the guests watching us.

For lunch she sat in the same corner and ordered a bowl of soup. Refills, a basket of bread and the butter were free. In those days even coffee was free in most restaurants, but not in all.

"Is the coffee on the house?" she whispered after the third bowl of soup.

"Oh, no," I hastened to assure her, ever so anxious to avoid another lecture, "the coffee is right here in the kitchen."

## **Whiskey: Whiski of Rudna**

The Austin American-Statesman provide Helga with lots of inspiration to write something. On 17 February 1994 the humor columnist John Kelso wrote about the registered names for dogs. Helga sent Mr Kelso this reply:

Dear Ch. Jonathan the First,

I have barely recovered from reading your article on dog shows in today's paper. I agree with your 'Punt Theory' and your feeling about the champions' names being longer than the dogs, but the rest of the story is just too embarrassing to me.

I am sure when you talk about the pooch Whiskey and his 'master' you are talking about my very own family.

We live not too far from you in South Austin. Our dog, whose name is 'Whiskey', takes my husband for a walk at various hours of the day. My husband had obedience training, so Whiskey is 'under voice control' and refuses the leash. They often go to Garrison Park behind Crocket High School, and I have occasionally gone along. But no more.

Garrison Park has a lot of smells to offer. There are the cats focusing their attention on the birds. There are thousands of seasoned sneakers from the school kids, and then there are the well scented girls hanging around and the Cougar athletic teams in training on the field which can be smelled - I was told - all the way to Albertson's Deli Counter.

Naturally, my husband and our Whiskey lose sight of each other, and then it happens. My husband stops in his tracks and yells at the of of his voice for Whiskey. 'Whiskey! Whiskey!' When I was along I walked ten steps behind them pretending to know neither man nor beast. Most people react with a look that expresses pure compassion for this poor guy.

And now I have to read about this deplorable situation in the newspaper. I am glad you didn't mention our names. We are legal immigrants to South Austin, but well integrated. You could call us Hans and Helga von Bubba. Our dog's full name is 'Whiski of Rudna' (sic), being named after my husband's ancestral estate in Silesia, although I am satisfied that my husband had no hand in siring the pooch.

Whiskey is called a male buff or a buff male of the Cocker Spaniel persuasion. Or he is buff Cocker of the male persuasion. His paper don't make that clear.

I am just glad my husband never took our former dog to Garrison Park. Her name was 'Lady Chatterley', and the Vice Principal of Crocket High would have him arrested.

Well, I'm fixin' to have me some lunch, some of my lentil soup. You oughta come over and try it some day.

Helga's Poems, Stories, and Articles: Herman Ehrenberg and other Germans in Texas' War for Independence

## **Herman Ehrenberg and other Germans in Texas' War for Independence**

Helga researched many of the Germans who immigrated to Texas. Her research on Herman Ehrenberg and others have been published numerous times and Helga also gave presentations. Some versions showed up in the magazine "True West" in 1986, and the German-Texans Heritage Society "The Journal" in 1995. This version is based upon a presentation Helga did for Comal County Genealogy Society in September 1995. She took her presentation notes and created this article that was sent to Comal County Genealogy Society on 15 July 1996 to be printed in their publication "Footsteps".

### Time Line: The War of Independence According to Hermann Ehrenberg.

Dec 5, 1835: Battle for the Alamo won by Taxians (Milam and Collinsworth)

Feb 27, 1836: Battle of San Patricio near Refugio

March 2, 1836: Declaration of Texas Independence.

March 6, 1836: Battle for the Alamo won by Mexicans

March 18/19, 1836: Battle at Colelot Creek in Goliad county

March 27, 1836: Goliad Massacre

April 21, 1836: Battle at San Jacinto

A quote from the Austin American-Statesman: "When the first German settlers arrived on the Texas Coast in 1884, they were subjected to massive attacks by mosquitoes." You all know better, and I'm not talking about the mosquitoes but about the year 1884. I am quoting the Austin American-Statesman to highlight the fact that I came across a lot of fancy and amazing information while doing my research. To top it off, just the other day someone pointed out to me that there couldn't have been any Germans involved in that war since there wasn't any Germany at that time. I'll take the last problem first.

Between 1815 and 1871 there was no German state as such but there was "der Deutsche Bund", a loose federation of many countries with mostly German speaking people. This German Federation included Austria, Bohemia, Silesia, and

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Prussia, Saxony, Hessen, and more. It was a growing national consciousness and the frustrated desire to form one German Nation without these many borders and oppressing rulers, that caused many educated people to leave and go to America. Many were in political trouble. Anybody with a German accent was (often is) considered German, or Deutsch or "Dutch". When on Oct 1, 1835, Texans in Goliad challenged Mexican troops to "Come and Take it", there was already a presence of German colonists in the state, German were in the Long Expedition in 1821, among them Ernst von Rosenberg who advanced to colonel in the Mexican artillery but died before 1835. There was Eduard Harcourt, first on the Mexican side, then an engineer in Houston's army; Langenheim came in 1830; Erath in 1833. Friedrich Ernst with family, and Fordtran had arrived in 1831, Klebergs and von Roeders in 1834. (They brought a piano with them). Biegel had a farm near Cumming Creek, and Grasmeyer was running a ferry on the Colorado River near Bastrop. Adolphus Stern was one of the politically active German in Nacadoches.

Only some of them served on the battle field. They had families and properties to take care of. Nobody was drafted. When William von Rosenberg lists 95 adults male Germans that aided the colonists in their struggle for independence it appears that there must have been another source of German warriors. Those were the German that happened to be in various spots in the US when Texas agents were putting together groups of volunteers.

I would like to take you through the war with the help of one of these volunteers, Hermann Ehrenberg, who survived and wrote a book about his experiences and his opinion: "Texas und seine Revolution" (Texas and Her Revolution).

He must have expressed what other Germans felt and wanted to hear because he published his book twice more under different titles. Everything else is the same, just the title is different. Maybe that is why he later left Germany again. The only published and heavily edited English translation is "With Milam and Fannin," long out of print. Tracing Ehrenberg's path on a photo journey a few weeks ago, I realized how recently this war took place right here in South Texas. Faulkner said "The past is never dead, it's not even past."

## Helga's Poems, Stories, and Articles: Herman Ehrenberg and other Germans in Texas' War for Independence

Ehrenberg's family background and early years are a mystery, to put it mildly. There's claim he was Jewish, or a renegade catholic or protestant. He himself spread rumors about himself.

When he was just 18 and a recent immigrant from Prussia, he happened to be in New Orleans in the Arcade when gifted speakers kindled his enthusiasm for the Texans' fight against the "tyrant Santa Anna and the greedy priests of Mexico." With five other German volunteers he signed up with the New Orleans Grays that very night. What inspired them? It was not the money. The pay was lousy, and they all left behind good jobs. They came to help the Texans fight for liberty and justice, for freedoms like religion, freedom of movement, and for freedom of the press.

All this was being suppressed by Santa Anna and his Centralist Party, similar to what the Germans had left behind in their fatherland. By supporting the Federalist Party in Mexico and thus in Texas, they meant to fight for a righteous cause. In 1835 - it seems to me - most Germans looked at the war as a Mexican civil war. They wanted to help all Mexicans get rid of Santa Anna and his tyrannism.

By boat and horseback the German volunteers made their first acquaintance with Texas. They were at awe with its riches, at the abundance of fish and fowl and the neat cotton plantations of the Anglo colonists; and of course, they were fascinated by the idea of savage Indians lurking behind every hill.

The Grays made it to the outskirts of San Antonio where they joined a militia already in place. After a few days in camp, disgusted with the inactivity, most of the militia left for home. However, 130 men, most of them volunteers from out of state under Colonel Milam, attacked 2,000 Mexicans in San Antonio on December 5th 1835. This "Siege of Bexar" was a gruesome battle, and at least 13 Germans participated besides Ehrenberg. Wilhelm Thomas was painfully wounded, Colonel Milam fell, but so did the Alamo. It came under the Texians' control, and the Mexican Federalists' flag was hoisted. Next time you have a TexMex dinner on the River Walk in San Antonio, think about all the blood that was shed right there in 1835.

## Helga's Poems, Stories, and Articles: Herman Ehrenberg and other Germans in Texas' War for Independence

Life in San Antonio soon became too peaceful for Ehrenberg, and he ventured out to the missions where he had a bout of homesickness when the ruins reminded him of the castles back home. At year's end, Colonels Johnson and Grant asked for volunteers for an attack on Matamoros on the other side of the Rio Grande, where they planned to join up with other Federalists. Ehrenberg and five other Germans were only too happy to leave San Antonio and the Alamo, so they went along. Two Germans stayed behind at the Alamo because they were not looking for action.

Ehrenberg's group met up with a company from Kentucky, among them a Dr. Bunsen, a cousin of the man who invented the Bunsen burner. These were educated people. While they camped in Refugio, Sam Houston showed up and convince the would-be-heroes to abandon the Matamoros action. To the volunteers the whole war was nothing but hanging around, waiting for supplies, waiting for more troops, friend or foe, waiting for action. They split into several groups. Ehrenberg and a few others went to Copano Bay where Colonel Fannin was expected to land with more supplies, more troops, and the ability to make decisions.

The journey to the coast, the open country, the rough winds, the water fowl and other coastal wild life impressed the young German immensely. Europeans now as then find an Eldorado in these shallow bay waters, and you might find an Austrian, a Prussian, and a Bohemian fishing together and telling Texas size stories.

Although the old piers are gone, you can still imagine the tracks that the carts and cannons of the volunteers from Georgia and Alabama - with several Germans among them - left on the beach of Copano Bay.

While Ehrenberg with Colonel Fannin and the other soldiers waited in Mission La Bahia near Goliad, Captain King and Colonel Ward helped the local population of Refugio who had taken refuge in the old Mission Church, now an archeological dig.

Mexican soldiers under General Urrea camped nearby under some old oaks. The ensuing battles caused the loss of many lives, and there are monuments in Refugio in their honor. One of the Mexican officers heard two men supposed to be

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executed speak German, so he saved them and made one of them his cook. The Mexican's name was Hans Joseph Holzinger, from the Prussian Rheinland. He would have fought on the Texan side, he told Ehrenberg later, if they would reimburse him for his land holdings south of the Rio Grande and if they would let him keep his rank as Major.

While Ehrenberg was stationed at La Bahia with Fannin, he learned with great pain of the fall of the Alamo and the death of his German friends, Henry Thomas and Henry Courtmann. He also heard that Santa Anna had captured the New Orleans Grays with several Germans, and that he had executed all of them. This merciless execution of all prisoners convinced Ehrenberg and most Texians that the liberty and justice they were fighting for could only be achieved with complete separation from Mexico. From that point on the war became one for independence for them. When they were informed of the Declaration of independence on March 2, 1836, they happily hoisted the flag with the Lone Star over La Bahia.

A large Mexican force under Urrea approached La Bahia, and Fannin decided to meet them on an open field near Coleto Creek. Ehrenberg gives a blood curdling description of the battle and of the moment when he heard his dying fellow German, Eigenauer from Lauterbach, moan: " ..write to my mother... that ... I died for Texas. Ich starb für Texas."

The negotiations for Fannin's surrender ran into a language problem. Urrea spoke no English, Fannin spoke no Spanish, but there was Holzinger who spoke Spanish and German, and some of the volunteers spoke German and English. So German was used as well, especially since - according to Ehrenberg - the German volunteers did not want to surrender. But they had no choice. Holzinger offered all German prisoners to go free if they would join the Mexican side. Ehrenberg and two friends refused in disgust, but a few Germans switched sides. Ehrenberg called them traitors, but we have to consider the terrible conditions of captivity.

By order of Santa Anna, on Palm Sunday 1836, all able bodied prisoners were lined up and shot. The wounded met the same fate a few days later. One of the few who escaped was Hermann Ehrenberg, the 18 year old. Although wounded, he jumped into the San Antonio River and swam across. He stumbled



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around quite deliriously for almost two weeks trying to find Sam Houston. The farms were deserted because people were fleeing from the Mexican troops and the Indians in the so called "Run away scrape". While he always praised Texas as the land of plenty, he suffered from lack of food, water and shade during this time. In desperation, he eventually walked into Urrea's Mexican camp. Urrea did not believe the fantastic story Ehrenberg told him about why he was in the neighborhood, especially after one of the Germans who had changed camps, gave him away. But the General was intrigued by this "little Prussian", gave him food and clothes and let him sleep in his tent.

While Urrea and the major body of the Mexican army moved further east, Ehrenberg stayed with 400 of them in Matagorda which the Mexicans had looted. They were under the command of Juan Hozinger who planned to transport his loot to Mexico. He and Ehrenberg had long evening discussion in which Holzinger confessed to having sent for a German wife.

Meanwhile on April 21, 1836, the fate of the war was decided in the Battle of San Jacinto. At least 12 of the heroes had German names, many of them colonists. Soon thereafter, Ehrenberg escaped and learned of Houston's victory. He was overjoyed at the birth of the new republic. "The new star, radiating freedom, rises on the horizon."

Most of the Germans who risked their lives in the fight for Texas were resourceful men with good education and background who left their mark as successful civilians later on in Texas and other parts of the country.

Some, willing to fight, landed too late on our beaches, like Gus Eli, who became a Ranger and gave away a league of land to get a bible.

Ehrenberg received an honorable discharge. He went home to Germany for a while and encouraged many others to emigrate. He spent most of his adventurous life in California and Arizona as one of the most outstanding pioneers, mining engineer, map maker, Special Indian Agent, prospector, and in many other roles, always trying to attract immigrants and to establish law and order in the new settlements, so people would be safe and free.

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He was murdered, most likely for some cash he had in his luggage, in 1866 in Arizona, in a place that was then named after him.

Germans were not the only heroes of the war, but due to Ehrenberg's book which he wrote when he was only 20 years old, we know how they fought and died for their ideals, and that some fought on the other side. Hermann Ehrenberg inspired many countrymen to set sail for the Texas coast.

Ehrenberg closes his German language book with the English words:

"LIBERTY, LAW & TEXAS FOREVER"

## **Johann Wolfgang von Goethe**

Helga would sometimes research and write special articles for the German-Texan Heritage Society's Journal. This article was published in 1999. The inspiration was that Germany was celebrating all year the 250th year since Goethe's birthday on August 28th. This article was published in the English and the German version, at the request of some of the society members who wanted to read some simple German text occasional in the Journal.

### **JOHANN WOLFGANG VON GOETHE**

1749 - 1832

Special for the GTHS Journal

In 1999 one celebrates the 250th birthday of the German poet and thinker Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. Under the slogan “Travel better with Goethe” you can attend special theater performances and concerts in many places in Germany, you can dance at street festivals, go to exhibits and lectures, you can even take a trip on the Rhine from Koblenz to Ruedesheim on the new paddlewheel steamer called “Goethe”.

Goethe was born on August 28, 1749 in Frankfurt on the Main. He had a happy childhood. He studied law at several universities, among them is the one in Strasbourg where he fell in love with Friederike Brion.

His first place of work was in Wetzlar where he fell in love with Charlotte Bluff. But Charlotte was already engaged to another man to whom she wanted to remain faithful. Goethe felt deeply discontent with the world and love-sick, and he wrote the sentimental novel 'The Sorrows of Young Werther'. This book was translated into many languages and made Goethe well known world-wide. In addition to 'Werther', his sensitive, romantic poems were very popular during the early years of the poet.

Goethe was only 26 years old when Duke Carl August called him to Weimar in Thuringia. The young regent and his mother had a great appreciation of all forms of art, and they promoted the cultural life of the town. However, Goethe did not only work there as poet, writer and painter, he also helped govern the country and concerned himself with scientific and technical problems. He gained the reputation of being a “Renaissance Man”.

## Helga's Poems, Stories, and Articles: Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

When Goethe met the young playwright Friedrich Schiller, he brought him to the theater in Weimar. This gave Schiller a job with financial security, and he was able to write the great dramas like 'William Tell' which inspired so many German emigrants. The two poets developed a deep friendship which benefitted their literary creativity.

Goethe's love for the female gender led him to many love affairs. However, he also had many famous platonic friendships, for example with a lady-in-waiting, Charlotte von Stein.. Among the many women and girls who adored him was Bettina von Brentano-Arnim. Their letters were published in a book. (When in 1847 a group of communist idealists, under the protection of the Society of Noblemen, founded a settlement in Texas on the Llano River, they named the settlement "Bettina" in honor of this friend of Goethe's).

In 1806 he married his children's mother, Christiane Vulpius. He had lived with her already for eighteen years, although they had not been married in church. This situation was considered scandalous at the time.

Goethe died in Weimar in 1832. His only son had no children, and therefore there are no direct descendants who carry his name. But in his works like 'Faust' and in his beautiful poems he is still alive.

JOHANN WOLFGANG VON GOETHE  
Sonderbeitrag fuer das GTHS JOURNAL

Im Jahre 1999 feiert man den 250. Geburtstag des deutschen Dichters und Denkers Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. Unter dem Motto "Schoener Reisen mit Goethe" kann man in Deutschland an vielen Orten besondere Theaterauffuehrungen und Konzerte besuchen, man kann auf Strassenfesten tanzen, man kann zu Ausstellungen und Vorlesungen gehen, man kann sogar auf dem Rhein von Koblenz nach Ruedesheim fahren auf dem neuen Schaufelraddampfer 'Goethe'.

Goethe wurde am 28. August 1749 in Frankfurt am Main geboren. Er hatte eine glueckliche Kindheit. Er studierte Jura an mehreren Universitaeten, so auch in Strassburg. Dort verliebte er sich in Friederike Brion.

Seine erste Arbeitsstelle war in Wetzlar. Dort verliebte er sich in Charlotte Bluff. Charlotte war aber schon mit einem anderen Mann verlobt, dem sie treubleiben wollte. Goethe verfiel in tiefen Weltschmerz und Liebeskummer und schrieb den sentimentalsten Roman 'Die Leiden des jungen Werther'. Dieses Buch wurde in viele Sprachen uebersetzt und machte Goethe in der ganzen Welt bekannt. Ausser 'Werther' werden aus seinen jungen Jahren als Dichter auch seine feinfuehligen, romantischen Gedichte sehr geschaezt.

Goethe war erst 26 Jahre alt, als Herzog Carl August ihn nach Weimar in Thueringen holte. Der junge Regent und seine Mutter hatten grosses Verstaendnis fuer alle Formen der Kunst, und das Kulturleben der Stadt wurde von ihnen gefoerdert. Goethe arbeitete dort aber nicht nur am Theater, als Dichter, Schriftsteller und Maler, er half auch bei der Regierung des Landes und befasste sich mit wissenschaftlichen und technischen Problemen. Er gewann den Ruf eines "Renaissance Menschen".

Als Goethe den jungen Dramatiker Friedrich Schiller kennenlernte, holte er ihn nach Weimar ans Theater. So hatte Schiller eine Stelle mit finanzieller Sicherheit und konnte die grossen Dramen wie 'Wilhelm Tell' schreiben, von denen viele deutsche Auswanderer inspiriert wurden. Die beiden Dichter entwickelten eine tiefe Freundschaft zugunsten ihres literarischen Schaffens.

Goethes Liebe zum weiblichen Geschlecht fuehrte zu vielen Liebesaffaeren, die seinen poetischen Geist befluegelten. Er hatte aber auch beruehmte platonische Freundschaften, z. B. mit einer Hofdame namens Charlotte von Stein. Zu den vielen Frauen und Maedchen, die fuer ihn schwaeernten, gehoerte Bettina von Brentano-Arnim. Ihre Briefe wurden in einem Buch veroeffentlicht. (Als im Jahre 1847 eine Gruppe von deutschen Edel-Kommunisten unter dem Schutz des Adelsvereins in Texas eine Siedlung am Llano gruendeten, nannten sie die Siedlung "Bettina" zu Ehren dieser Freundin Goethes).

## Helga's Poems, Stories, and Articles: Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Im Jahre 1806 heiratete er die Mutter seiner Kinder, Christiane Vulpius. Er hatte schon achtzehn Jahre lang mit ihr zusammen gelebt, obwohl die beiden nicht kirchlich getraut waren. Die Situation wurde damals als skandaloes angesehen.

Goethe starb in Weimar im Jahre 1832. Sein einziger Sohn hatte keine Kinder, und deshalb gibt es keine direkten Nachkommen, die seinen Namen tragen. Aber in seinen Werken wie 'Faust' und in seinen schoenen Gedichten lebt er immer noch.

## THE GOETHE EGG

This short article by Helga von Schweinitz was written for Helga's Corner in the Schulhaus Reporter, the newsletter of the German Free School Guild. However, it is too long for the space available therein and was published in the Journal in 1999 in celebration of Goethe's 250th birthday.

German people have a reputation of working (arbeiten) hard. Yet, when it comes to celebrating (feiern), they really show what they can do. This year the excuse for all that "feiern" is the 250th birthday (Geburtstag) of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, the prolific poet (Dichter) and great thinker (Denker) and writer of majestic works in many a genre.

Natural centers for special events are, of course, Frankfurt-on-the-Main (Ff/m), where he was born in 1749, and Weimar in Thuringia (Thuringen), where he spent most of his adult life and where he died in 1832. However, Goethe traveled a lot, and every little hamlet has established some link to the poet.

That leads to many attractions as in "Goethe slept here" (Goethe schlief hier) - no reference to his famous love affairs (Liebesaffairen) intended. But if neither his love life (Liebesleben) nor his literary achievements arouse your interest, you might follow in his footsteps on an organized hike (Wanderung) through the Harz Mountains. You can then stop at Landgasthaus (country inn) Tanneck for a new type of cream puff called "Goethes Traum" (Goethe's Dream).

The ultimate culinary delight can be found in the village (Dorf) of Astenbeck (population 58) on August 28, when Goethe's sister's great-granddaughter (Urenkelin) will concoct an egg dish called "Goethe-Ei" (Goethe egg). The recipe (Rezept) comes from her great Grandmother's (Urgrossmutter) cookbook (Kochbuch): "Lightly scramble 50 to 80 egg yolks (Eidotter) and put them into a bladder (Blase) which you then lower into a pot (Topf) with furiously boiling water....."

What a way to celebrate the birth of a great poet!

## **Austin - Koblenz**

Helga and Hans were very involved with establishing the sister-city relationship with Koblenz, Germany. This article was published twice. First in the Austin Weekly newspaper Dec 19-25, 1990 issue, and the second time in the Austin American-Statesman newspaper on March 23, 1991. This is the original article that was submitted to both newspapers. Each newspaper did some editing to fit the length requirement, but the changes were barely noticeable.

If plans develop as hoped for by hard working groups of people in both towns, Austin will soon have a sister city in Germany: Koblenz.

Sister city relationships between American and foreign cities are regulated by federal and local authorities. In Austin they have to be based on citizen initiative and not be funded by tax dollars.

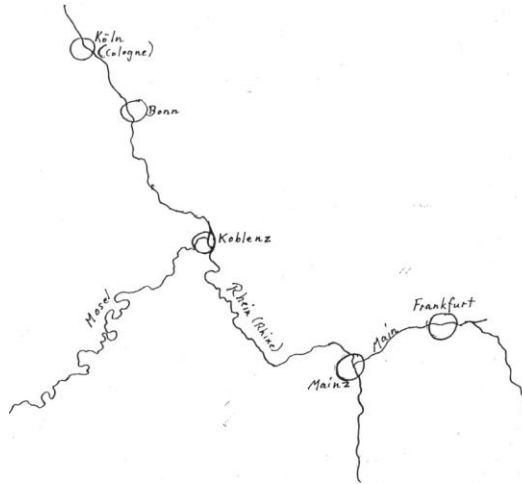
At no expense to Austin tax payers, Mayor Lee Cooke and almost two dozen citizens of various walks of life spent three days in Koblenz last September. They met with city and state dignitaries, representatives of industry and trade, with cultural groups and educational institutions, and with other citizens looking forward to a partnership with the capital of Texas.

The Lord Mayor of Koblenz and other representatives of his city are expected to visit Austin this spring. High school students and teachers, a choir and a jazz band are among those already booking flights to Texas hoping to find host families to stay with. The Graduate School of Business at UT has for years been enjoying students from the Koblenz area in its programs. The Board of Trade in Koblenz has expressed an interest in hosting 30 vocational students from Austin in German families for a few weeks.

The German word for sister city translate into "partner city", which characterizes the expected relationship: both sides have to work to make the relationship viable, valuable and enjoyable.

Just as few people in Koblenz know a lot about Austin, few Austinites know Koblenz, but those who do, agree that: Koblenz is Fun to Visit.





You'll find two endearing features in Koblenz just by looking at a map of Germany: Koblenz is close to many other interesting places, and while you are in the town, you can walk to almost anything you want to see there.

Koblenz lies less than a hundred miles northwest of Frankfurt/Main at the confluence of the lovely Mosel river and the mighty Rhine in the heart of Germany's wine region. It can be reached by Autobahn or on scenic country roads, but also quite easily by rail. You catch a train right at the Frankfurt airport and whisk to the Hauptbahnhof in Koblenze without a transfer.

Its location suggests that you unpack your suitcases and make Koblenz your headquarter for as many day trips as your schedule allows. You might take a boat ride on the most beautiful stretch of the Rhine with its castles, vineyards, the legendary rock of the Lorelei and pretty towns competing for your attention. A ride on the Mosel includes the thrill of going through several locks.

On "Inter City" trains you can be in Bonn, Cologne or Mainz in less than an hour. A Saturday morning in Mainz should include at least an hour on the market held near the Dom (cathedral). The towns of Trier, Wetzlar and Limburg are among the popular destinations, but leisurely drives through the wine villages or into the mountain areas are rather relaxing if you take the time for a tour through a castle or a Spaziergang (stroll) in the park of a spa and, of course, if you stop in a Cafe in the afternoon zum Kaffee (for coffee and cake). Many Texans with German ancestors find their origin in this region which includes the former duchy of Hessen-Nassau with the little town of Braunfels.

You might not want to take any day trips once you have begun to explore Koblenz proper and its immediate vicinity. Wear comfortable shoes for that, because any respectable old town has its share of cobble stones, and being well heeled means being well sneakered.

Although Koblenz has now over a hundred thousand citizens, the heart of town and the historical district are also home to most shopping facilities, parks, museums, and many residents. This harmonic combination of the past the today's life gives you an immediate sense of being a pearl on the long string of people playing their role in history by just being there.

The strategic importance of Koblenz on two major rivers has brought wealth and destruction to the town. The Romans were there, of course, so were the Swedes, the Spanish, the French and the American (WW I and WW II).

In 1944 allied bombs destroyed 75% of the city, but you'll find that hard to believe since reconstruction was undertaken with great skill, love for the original designs and financial investment.

A guided walking tour (available in English) can be arranged. It would give you an introduction and take you into some nooks and crannies you might otherwise miss. A good tour book lets you take it all in at your own speed since you might want to enhance your appreciation of Gothic arches with intermittent sampling of local libations offered in cozy wine and beer taverns. Or you might want to sit and rest for a while in the open air section of a restaurant and do some people watching while you eat yet another Schnitzel.

Those with an interest in the different periods of ecclesiastical and secular architecture find beautiful samples to study. The St. Kastor Kirche (St. Castor's Church), a triple naved Romanesque basilica, was consecrated in 836 AD and completed in its present form in the 12th century.

The Liebrauenkirche (Church of Our Lady) elegantly combines Romanesque, Gothic and Baroque styles and is easily recognized by its domed Zwiebel (onion) towers. In the Church of St. Florin one is struck by the beauty of its windows, while the Jesuit Church features a fine sample of a rose window.

Among the worldly structures of old are the Alte Burg (old castle), the Kurfuerstliches Schloss (Palace of the Prince Elector) and the Deutscher Kaiser, a "residential tower" with late Gothic arches, said to be a popular meeting place of friends who enjoy a good glass of wine together.

Most of the charm of strolling through the Altstadt (old town) of Koblenz comes from the little surprises in the shape of modern and old statues, fountains, picture perfect bay windows, house fronts covered in vines, an organ grinder, and from the eye-catching displays in the store windows (window shopping is understandably a favorite pastime of locals and visitors). At the entrance to the pedestrian area at Loehrstrasse you find all four houses of the intersection showing off an oriel turret, each one different, which your camera will not be able to resist.

Many of the old, venerable buildings are now owned by the City of Koblenz. Some are used as offices, others continue their splendid past with receptions, banquets and similar occasions where ambiance is of some consequence.

Shopping is made tempting - even with today's low purchasing power of the Dollar - in the traffic free district with easy access to major department stores, a downtown mall (Loehr -Center) and the countless specialty shops ranging from sex boutiques to fashion to China.

One should not be on a diet while in Germany. Most of the pubs offer tasty meals and snack with specialties of the region and the season. There are many of each in Koblenz. In the fall you have to have a glass (no more than two) of Federweissen (the young wine which is still cloudy) accompanied by a hefty piece of Zwiebelkuchen (onion cake).

To get the best view of Koblenz and the confluence of the Mosel and Rhine, you should pick a clear day and cross the Rhine by bridge or ferry and walk or chair-lift up to the Festung Ehrenbreitstein, the biggest and strongest fortress ever built by the Prussians. From this vantage point a firework display is launched every year on the second weekend in August as the highlight - so to speak - to the "Rhein in Flammen" festival (Rhine in Flames). This well rehearsed spectacle draws more than half a million tourists into the region when several miles of the Rhine with its romantic shores are illuminated.

Since Koblenz is popular all through the year and hosts conventions, many sport competitions and trade fairs, a choosy visitor or groups should book accommodations well in advance. Prices for hotel rooms are downright decent when compared to what some international hotels in Europe extract from their guests. Top of the line, price-wise, (with \$1=MD1.50) include the Scandic Crown

Hotel with up to \$140 per person/night, and the traditional German style Hotel Diehl just across the river with up to \$90 per person; both have telex, fax, and conference rooms.

However, there is many a comfortable bed to sleep in offered by a Gasthaus, Pension or small hotel for as low as \$20 a night.

Most prices quoted in brochures include taxes and service charge but usually not the use of a wash cloth, so pack your own.

And then, for the young at heart, there is the youth hostel in the Ehrenbreitstein Fortress. All ages are welcomed there for even less money, and you can have a two or four bed private room. You can even partake in the afternoon meal of Kaffee and Kuchen up there which is not considered too bourgeois, nor for sedentary folks only.

No visit to Koblenz is complete without a Spaziergang through the parks along the "Deutsches Eck", a piece of land protruding into the Mosel and the Rhine where they come together. Having enjoyed centuries of historic distinction for a number of reasons, it has now a colossal pedestal standing there which looks like it should have some statue on top of it. Well, until 1945 it had Kaiser Wilhem I up there, complete with Bard (beard) and horse. But then an American general took offense of the old Kaiser and had him shot to smithereens. Only the imperial head survived the ordeal and is displayed in one of the fine museums. The citizens of Koblenz are now divided over the question of whether to have a replica of the old statue made and placed on the Deutsches Eck or not. In the meantime, the German flag is weathering time in its place on the pedestal just above the flags of the now 16 states of the new Germany.

To Kaiser or not to Kaiser ... if you get to Koblenz before the Kaiser does, you might want to ask the guy next to you in the wine tavern about his opinion on this monumental dispute. He might then tell you of many other things of interest to him or you in Koblenz that were not mentioned in this little article.

## Jacqueline

Had at the start of the year anyone thought of asking Jacqueline the philosophical question "What do you consider most important in life?" she would certainly have answered: "The arts, of course." But who would ever think of asking a twenty year old woman a philosophical question if she has bond curls and green eyes and cheeks with deep dimples, not to mention certain other prominent features. One could not be sure whether she was a mischievous angel or a little devil favored by the gods.

During the spring of 1974 there were only three men in Jacqueline's life: her father, Jonathan C. de la Fontaine and Daniel Scott MacFarlyn.

She had classified her father as a 'nouveau riche' when she had been introduced to that expression in Sociology 201, although his riches were not so nouveau since the family had come to wealth before the turn of the century. She would not have considered him worth mentioning had he not stopped the monthly deposits on her bank account soon after he had learned about her living arrangement with Danny and her decision to spend her time painting in oil rather than finishing her senior year at Hutterfield University. "Have you at least sold some of your art things?" he had asked her, and she had yelled at the top of her voice: "Daddy, all you can think of is money! Nothing but filthy, vulgar money!"

Whereupon he had yelled equally loud: "I'll keep my filth to myself from now on!"

And he had done so, giving Jacqueline much food for thought but little to eat - with the prices for hamburgers being what they were.

But there was Daniel Scott MacFarlyn who was entitled to receive under that name a monthly check from the Veterans Administration for services rendered, and who was willing to share with her what little he had. He loved her careless, unpredictable style, her dedication to art and her body, not always in that order. Having studied history and education and having recently survived a semester of practice teaching, he planned to turn his hobby into a career and open a photographic studio upon graduation - but only, he had said repeatedly, if Jacqueline agreed to marry him and tidy up the apartment.

Then there was Jonathan C de la Fontaine, a young god presently occupying the position of assistant professor of philosophy at Hutterfield. He was a Greek statue clothed in casual elegance. On his hands the most ostentatious jewels were but a compliment to nature. His intellect reached spheres that his students could only speculate about. He blended his interest in human life with a certain aloofness and thus lived in harmony with the world. He was not known to have an intimate relationship with any one woman, which made him the more adorable to the female congregation. Yet, like any god worth his reputation, he planted a seed of desire in every woman and therefore a seed of jealousy in every woman's lover.

When professor de la Fontaine had left the apartment Jacqueline sighed and sighed again - he was beautiful! One day she would reproduce him in blue and white, not only his appearance - my god! - but everything he embodied. She felt not yet ready for such a task. Was it lack of experience with the brush or was it lack of experience with life?

While she listened to the fading sound of his Ferrari she heard the door of a VW being slammed shut. Danny so early? He was supposed to be in History 450 at 2:45pm. But here he was.

"Hi, Danny."

"Don't say a word. Was that Fontaine leaving just now?"

"What do you mean?"

"I can't believe it! You having an old-fashioned affair with that creep behind my back. I dropped dead when I looked into the developer and saw these pictures shaping up, and don't tell me you don't know how they got on your film. I personally took it out of your camera this morning to develop it in Jimmy's lab while I had the chemicals mixed for the convention films."

He threw four prints on the bed. Jacqueline, in one of the few speechless moments of her life, examined them: Professor de la Fontaine checking the pressure in his aqua-lung, Professor de la Fontaine holding an injured bird, Professor de la Fontaine standing on the pier behind the Holiday Inn in Pensacola, and a close-up of his face double exposed with a close-up of her own face. Well, how did they get on her film? She had no answer.

## Helga's Poems, Stories, and Articles: Jacqueline

Danny paced the studio picking things up and putting them down somewhere else, brushes, tubes, pictures, clothes, cups... "Now I know why you didn't want to get married to me. All that carp about pure love being more than paper. Let's just break it up right now."

"But, Danny, this is some kind of a misunderstanding! You can't walk out for no reason."

"I am not going to walk out. I paid the rent for this apartment, and you are going to walk out of here. Grow up, for heaven's sake! You can pick up your things later."

"Please!"

"Out! Before I lose control and hit you."

He opened the door and she walked out, down the shaky staircase on the outside of the house. She sat down on the crumbling wall fencing in the front yard weeds.

For minutes Jacqueline was so confused that she had to hold on to something real: she counted nineteen cents in her pocket. Another real thing was her stomach; she was very hungry. Danny was great in his fury, she had never known him but considerate and generous, lively and intuitive, yes, but always reasonable. There was a special type of beauty in his furious eyes; she would never love another man. Did he make up the mystery of the pictures to get rid of her?

She strolled down the road toward the river, no sense in thinking and worrying on an empty stomach. Maybe she should have taken a job, maybe his check was too small for both of them. Maybe, certainly, he had not made up the mystery of the pictures.

She could bunk up with the girls on Pinewood Lane and clean counter tops in the Dairy Queen, or she could crawl back into the tyranny of the parental home ("Dinner will be served in the Blue Room, do wear a dress, darling, we are entertaining the Goldsteins").

But as she sat down in the shade of a weeping willow and gave her feet to the passing river, a wave of new sensations swept over her like a profound blush: I

am free! No father demanding obedience, no mother nagging about today's fashion, no final exams, no date to keep, no lover expecting eternal faithfulness, free, responsible only to her own desires. It was silly to care about those pictures, the important thing was to find out what her life should be all about.

She walked up to an old man with a fishing rod and cheerfully asked him if he could help her out with a quarter.

"What happened to you?" he asked, obvious not surprised by anything in this day and age. He pulled a neatly folded dollar note out of a Lucky Strike packet and handed it to her.

"Just a victim of pomp and circumstances," she laughed marveling at her own wit. Now that she could eat whenever she wanted to, she was no longer aware of the hunger and went back to her place under the willow tree.

Floating on a cloud of dreams and visions she spent the afternoon building a future filled and fulfilled with painting. She would have no patience with the useless bickering of ordinary life, she would not waste her time on an eight to five job. Heaven would feed her like the lilies in the field, for she was called upon to capture the truth and the beauty of the world and ban them on canvas to make great moments stand still.

The only problem was, she was no lily. She needed more than water, sun and trace elements.

It was dark when she refreshed her face in the water and tiptoed up to the house in the garden near the river. Everybody knew that Professor de la Fontaine lived on the second floor because he had often praised the view over the valley. His aunt lived downstairs. The door from the balcony to his study was open, but no light was switched on upstairs, he was probably at the theater.

Jacqueline crawled across the porch to see what a black girl had just placed under a mosquito cover. There was a huge apple strudel, still steaming. It took an eternity to cool off and only half that long to be almost completely devoured. The thought, that the lilies in the field were most likely not fed with apple strudels from people's back porch bothered her a little, but not enough to nail her to the ground.



She climbed on the ornate rod iron frame of the balcony. To have the view over the valley just for a moment before the clouds covered the moon!

She had barely swung one leg over the railing when Jonathan C. De La Fontaine arose out of a chair.

He took a hold of her arm to secure her landing. The touch kindled a desire that had been dormant ever since Philosophy 204. He undressed her in the light of the moon on the patio couch and carried her to his bed when the breeze became too cool before sunrise. His kisses were divine, of course.

"Who taught you to love like this?" she asked eventually.

"In tenth grade I had a biology teacher with a PhD. in human relations."

Everything in the room was white except for the clothes on a valet and some books. De la Fontaine served peach nectar out of a refrigerated corner cabinet.

"Danny threw me out of the apartment because he thought I had an affair with somebody else."

"Adultery before the wedding?"

"He was wrong, naturally, we, yesterday he was." She felt uneasy discussing these mundane matters, but if she wanted to lead the free life of an artist she had to know why Danny made her leave him. She had to know who or what had launched her into her own orbit.

"I don't really want to care. I don't want to be bothered with these little, insignificant details of life. You see, I am an artist." she said rather hastily, "Do I have to waste my time proving my innocence?"

"You love him."

"I do?"

"You were longing for his hands during the night. He has strong hands, working man's hands."

"So how do I prove my innocence?"

"What innocence?"

Jacqueline took a comb from the dresser and tried to calm her curly hair.

"Do you know why I came here last night?" she asked.

"Yes, you couldn't help it, my little angel. Besides, Danny called me and asked me about some pictures."

"Did you tell him that I had nothing to do with them?"

"Didn't you?"

"Oh my god!" she gasped, slowly she turned around on her stomach and buried her head under a pillow. She wept, and after a while her body was given to desperate sobbing. Johnathan C. de la Fontaine, now dressed in light blue trousers and a white pullover, gently sat down at her side and let his hand glide over her back.

When he spoke, he did so in such a low voice that she had to stop crying in order to hear him.

"You are an artist, Jacqueline, you have to paint and you can't help it. Good artists make the world worthwhile. But even the most gifted painters are subject to the laws of terrestrial existence. More than that, you miss the luxuries you had when your father supported you. I have often wondered how I could help you. I feel an obligation to spend part of my wealth supporting a great artist like you. When I came to you yesterday morning and asked you to send Danny over to me to photograph my collection of antique books I was pretending a bit. I had really come to see you and your paintings. Would you, just for a start, sell me the painting of the blue flower that is bending over to see her image in the water?"

"You mean, you pretended to buy my paintings so that I sleep with you?" she sat up straight, quite started.

"No, my little angel, I don't pay women to sleep with me. But I do want you to paint and I do want you to exist physically."

"Some people call you a god."

"I don't mind."

"May I call you Jonathan?"

"Please do. I was about to suggest that before we made love."

"Why did you ask me to go scuba diving in the Gulf the other day?"

"Because I knew Danny had to go to Birmingham and I knew you had loved this type of thing when you could afford it. But you said no, and I was a little hurt. And then we passed you in that little VW on the way to Pensacola the next day and later on I saw you along on the beach. Then I knew you could not get along without me."

At this moment Jacqueline had in her visionary mind a glimpse of the true structure of her life. If she was an artist, and she was, and if Jonathan was a god, and he was, and a vain one to say the least, then all her earthly problems concerning food and rent and so on were solved. And his vanity held the answer to the mystery of the photos. That was at least an acceptable explanation.

"Oh, Jonathan, how much would you give me for the blue flower?"

"If I buy a picture from a young artist I don't buy the picture, I buy part of the artist."

"Six hundred Dollars?"

"Are you selling yourself to the god or the man?"

"Whatever you have to be. I can no longer be bothered with these details. I have to go to my studio and paint."

Within half an hour Jacqueline was on her way to Danny's apartment, skipping and whistling, with eleven fifty dollar notes tucked in a pocket of her jeans.

"I have solved the mystery of the film, Danny," she burst into the studio where Danny was attempting to tidy up. She sat on a stool: "Never mind about the mess in here. Last weekend when I went to the coast just to dream about my old friends when I was a child, like I told you, Professor de la Fontaine was there also,

but I didn't see him and while I was having lunch in that hut behind the dunes and my things were on the beach he asked a friend of his to take those pictures with my camera, just so I would come to him later on and ask him if he knew how he got on my film. He is really quite human once in a while."

"Did you talk to him?"

"Yes, I met him near his house last night. There is nothing between us, you know, but he is a great admirer of my art. He bought my blue flower. Aren't you glad I came back?"

"Yes, because your story isn't true. I just had a call from Jimmy which explained everything. Jimmy had gone diving with Fontaine and he had taken the pictures. After he had come home he took that film out of his camera and left it in the darkroom and I thought it was the one I had taken out of my Nikon and I loaded it into your Contaflex and shot the first couple of exposures in the dark like I always do. And then you started that series of self portraits."

" Why do you think I came here this morning with a more or less fabricated story, Danny?"

"Because you couldn't help it and you could not get along without me."

He unbuttoned her jeans, and when they later dressed for lunch at McDonalds and he watched her count her money, he knew that he would never have to share what little he had from now on. His good old days were over.

"By the way, little devil, where did you sleep last night?" he asked while he was trying to tame the curls on her head with his comb.

"Near the river," said Jacqueline, "it was really quite divine."

### **Once Upon a Fallen Angel ...**

It is not known when Helga wrote this story, but based on the typewritten pages (and not on computer paper) it was written once she returned to American between 1970 and 1987 (when she got her first computer). There is no indication that it was ever published.

Here we are - ignorant of the presence, expecting the impossible from the future, forever changing the past.

When I woke up I couldn't see. My head was wrapped up in something. But I could breathe and I could smell. Then I noticed that I could hear. But my eyes were covered with something. Fear made me break out in perspiration.

"Who took that shot at you?" asked a hoarse voice.

Oh yes, now I remembered, I had turned around and then I had seen that flash. I figured I was in the hospital, thoughts flooded my mind and dissolved into nothing before I could get a hold of them

A while later - maybe half an hour or a day or two - that voice asked again.

"Ma'm, who shot you? You've got to help us. Just whisper the name we'll leave you along. Ma'm, who took that shot at you?"

"I don't know."

:Ma'm, you were facing him."

"I didn't have the time to recognize him."

"Ma'm, why did he do it?"

"You have to ask him."

"We can't ask him if we don't know who did it, Ma'm."

"You mean you really don't know?" I had thought that the questioning was simply a matter of routine to satisfy some police regulation. It was Randy, of course, or was it? Maybe he was still running around free and just waiting to have another chance to kill me.

"I think it was my last husband, Captain Randolph Hall."

The hoarse voice whispered, then some other voices mumbled and somebody said:

"Captain Hall has a perfect alibi for that night."

If Randy didn't shoot me, well, it couldn't have been anybody else, because Randy had always threatened to do that one day. I had lived with that fear for over a year. I hoped they wouldn't tell me that they suspected Johnny. But why wasn't Johnny at my bedside? He was the most considerate lover I had know. He should be here. Maybe he had found a job.

"Where is Johnny?" I asked.

"He is dead, I am sorry. He died seconds after you were shot at."

Whatever had been going on that night? We had all been so drunk!. There was a long silence, then the hoarse voice came closer and smelled like that of a chain smoker. "We have reason to believe that Michael Weidmann was involved."

"No."

Not Michael, please not Michael, the only person in the world that really mattered. What would have made him do it? Did he shoot Johnny?

"No, not Michael." I pleaded, "that is stupid. He has been kind of looking after me ever since we were little kids. He wouldn't hurt me, not like that. We have never told anybody, but he is my half-brother." The mentioning of Michael had upset me, I kept repeating myself in an attempt to convince the voices - and possibly myself - that Michael was not involved. Maybe it was a stranger, maybe one of the queer lovers I had entertained, but probably Randy with a faked alibi.

"Michael is your half-brother, you said?" asked the voice from another part of the room.

"Don't tell him I told you. It's a secret."

"We don't know where he is, Ma'm. He disappeared during the night you were shot at."

\* \* \* \* \*

They found Michael three weeks after the shooting. He walked into a supermarket some thousand miles north of New Mexico, not knowing where he was, in rags, unshaved for weeks, and hungry. Somebody called the police, and he surrendered without causing any trouble.

But there was no proof that he had committed the crimes he was accused of, only the fact that he had taken to the road and gone into hiding. Why would an innocent man run, asked the newspapers. Yet, Michael did not confess to anything. He could not remember anything that had happened from the time that he drove into my driveway to about the next evening when he realized that he was running out of gas on a highway in an area that he had been in several year ago, somewhere in Arizona.

He volunteered to take a lie-detector test, he asked to be given medication that might help him remember, he had long sessions with a psychiatrist who was flown into town, but nothing helped to clarify the matter.

It was all very clear to Sheriff Smith. First of all, there was an election coming up in the town, and an unsolved murder with all the publicity that accompanies a case in which one of the more popular bar maids of the town was involved did not exactly impress the voters the right way. Then there was the fact that Michael had "fooled the law" for three weeks (the sheriff had publicly stated that he knew Michael had escaped to Mexico), and above all, there was I, a woman with a certain reputation, who tried desperately to cover up for him, and worse, who had recently been accused of spying for the communists.

"No need to listen to anything she says," said Sheriff Smith to the defense lawyer. "She and that Michael what's his name are kinfolks and they have lived in sin, and them Germans they stick together like niggers, and there's no way of knowing what the communists have to do with this mess."

I should never have told them that Michael was my half-brother. He would have had a better chance, he might have been given a fair trial.

Instead, he was advised to plead guilty to second degree murder in exchange for a promise of short term sentencing. This way the matter did not have to come

before a jury, a lot of people who did not want to be mentioned in the newspaper as having ever made my acquaintance were saved from embarrassment. And Michael was saved from the possibility of a life term.

But we still don't know what happened that night. Michael said in his last letter:

I spent eight years in prison because a judge considered me capable of such jealousy that I would try to kill you. I am now at a point where I would like to believe him. I'd rather know I did it than lie in bed night after night wondering. Please, help me. Try to think back, way back to the days when we played in the sandbox behind my mother's garden shed. Please, go back over your life and find out if I had a place in it.

I am what they call a free man, and I have a good job. I would like to take care of you as long as I live, but with this uncertainty between us I cannot ask you to live with me. I am going to build a house in which you can easily find your way around. That task might keep me from going insane until we have made up our mind about what has happened. We have to stop looking for the proof that Randy committed the whole mess or that Johnny was or is an FBI agent or worked for the CIA and was told to silence you before you could talk.

My little angel, your faith in me has kept me alive, but it is no longer enough. I have no future until I have made up my mind about the past. Yet, I keep lying to myself, even when I try to relive insignificant moments like the evening when Opa and I picked you up from the station and you hid in the Ladies' room just for fun. Was I worried about you, or was I hoping you would never come back?...."

\* \* \* \* \*

So I'll try to remember. I don't have the wisdom of old age, nor have I ever lived in order to have a past, I have always been too busy enjoying the moment.

I am blind now. It is a great experience to have so many friends drop in and help whenever I need it. They bring paper and coffee, Dr Schwarz supplies my record player with music, his secretary checks my spelling, other take me out for



rides into the desert, or they just hang around so I don't feel alone. If only Michael was here ... but he is not going to come until he knows what nobody can tell him.

\* \* \* \* \*

My birth was accompanied by a big lie. Only my mother knew that I was due to be born, everybody else had been led to believe that I was due in June or May.

Aunt Tilly has told me the story at least a dozen times: On a Sunday afternoon, while my father and my two eldest brothers were watching a soccer game in a nearby village, my mother was found on the floor in the hall, her hands cramped around the handle of a floor buffer, groaning and calling for Aunt Tilly, who had just gone next door for a chat. Karola, one of my sisters, ran to get her, and minutes later half the neighborhood was standing around in the hall and in the kitchen listening to the noises that came out of the bedroom, ready to dash across the street to a telephone in case a doctor was needed.

"And now this," they whispered, "first she has such a difficult pregnancy and is only a shadow of herself, and now she has a premature baby. A women in her condition really should not wax her linoleum floor like that."

And by the time they heard my efforts at screaming they had just enough Wacholder left in the bottle to drink to my health.

"May this little worm grow up to be a healthy German woman, a tribute to our Führer. Prost!" said Mr. Klein, a greengrocer, who was easily carried away.

It was the first warm day in March. The ice on the bedroom window melted to let the sun have a look at me.

"A perfect baby," said Aunt Tilly, "considering she is a seven-months-child."

She knew about babies; she was a midwife. My mother had suggested that she live with us for a while in order to get out of the big house in which Uncle Heinrich had died after a long illness. I suspect now that my mother was so hospitable because she knew her baby was due and Aunt Tilly was a handy person to have around under these circumstances. I also suspect that Aunt Tilly realized

the moment she held me into the sunlight that I was not premature. But if she did, she never gave that secret away. Not only did she tell everybody about my critical condition at birth, she also pampered me for many years as if I were a permanently premature baby.

"You stop that kicking and fussing," she would say when I protested against the second pair of woolen panties she tried to stick me into, "you are a seven-months-child, remember."

She even arranged an emergency baptism for me. Although I was not born too early, I was a tiny baby. There was no guarantee that I would make it through the night. As soon as my father, or what I call my father, had recovered from the news of having his seventh child born on a day when he had planned to spend the evening in the "Bier-Keller" celebrating the victory of his soccer team, he got out his bicycle and rode into the darkness to fetch Pastor Schnatmeyer.

They carried some burning coal from the hearth in the kitchen into the slow combustion stove in the sitting room. They spread a white sheet over the big oak table. The door to the bedroom was opened so that my mother with a sandbag on her stomach and an ice bag on her head could participate in the ceremony.

I was given the name of "Angelika", not because I looked or smelled like an angel, but because Pastor Schnatmeyer had suggested it, and you don't argue with the Lord's deputy if you don't go to church unless it's Christmas or Good Friday.

After the baptism Pastor Schnatmeyer spilled some Cognac on his black robe, which gave Aunt Tilly the unforgettable honor of having to scrub the mighty dignified belly of a clergyman with a brush and black Ersatz-Kaffee.

My mother was slow to recover from her nine months long seven months of pregnancy. My father seemed to have enjoyed the official praise and honors that accompanied the arrival of a seventh child in those days. I don't know whether he considered a large flock of offspring proof of his virility or whether he considered it his civic duty to increase the Germanic race. I guess he simply enjoyed being officially appreciated, and as everybody knows, having children is easier to do than not to do. Whatever his reason, he carried the "Mutterkreuz", a cross shaped medal that was bestowed upon a mother of five or more children, in the inside pocket of

his coat. However, he was not what one calls a family man; he did not even like to be near children.

To this day I don't know who suggested that Aunt Tilly take me into her home and take care of me "for a while." But I am sure that she was a very happy woman when she wrapped me up and took the afternoon train to Heimstedt.

Since she was in mourning, she was dressed in black, wearing the same black scarf and coat that I should see on her at the many funerals she was to attend during the following years. Yet, underneath all that black cloth was a slender woman in the late twenties with rosy cheeks and an easy smile. She was in mourning, but she did not mourn.

"That old nut-knacker!" she used to say whenever she mentioned her deceased husband, my Uncle Heinrich. He had been more than twenty years older than she. He used to call her "my little girl" in those rare moments when he allowed himself to be affectionate. Their apartment, which she called 'the nut-knacker suite', became a sort of 'salon', in which she entertained not only what Uncle Heinrich called 'respectable people', but also journalists and other doubtful characters.

Sooner or later Uncle Heinrich would have been terribly compromised by his wife's conduct and acquaintances. After all, he was a German officer with a Prussian code of ethics. And in the 1930's a German was wise to choose his friends according to their political confessions in public and not according to their sex-appeal. But he was saved from all possible embarrassment by a liver condition which he had brought upon himself by moderate and steady drinking and which killed him.

As soon as the seriousness of his condition was known he was granted a transfer to the little town of Heimstedt, because he thought that his "little girl" should spend her long widowhood in a hometown environment. He bought a three story house, almost a villa, in the better part of town and lived long enough to establish the proper social contacts with the doctors, the pharmacist, the judge, the mayor, and the owner of the local brewery.

When I appeared in Heimstedt, I must have been the happiest baby in town and even now, more than three decades later, I am still taking all good things in life for granted. The very last thing that could possibly have crossed my mind in those sunny days in 1937 when I was just a few weeks old, was communism. Yet, since several years later the little town of Heimstedt happened to be in the part of Germany which is now ruled by a socialist regime, my last husband, Captain Hall, interpreted my move into Aunt Tilly's house as "defection into communist territory."

Although I was no politically minded baby, my first definite memories have political overtones; soldiers were marching up the road and I was sitting on somebody's shoulder waving a flag with a swastika, then it started to rain and I was given an open umbrella to hold over my head, but the soldiers had no umbrellas and I wondered why they didn't run to the railroad station for shelter. I felt sorry for them.

"German soldiers are German soldiers in any kind of weather," said the person under me. The answer must have impressed me and probably made even sense to me then. Whenever the real war left us children alone for an afternoon and we found time to play war down at the river, I made it a point never to end the game on account of bad weather. I spent many a week in bed with a sore throat.

For most single children staying in bed means having nobody to play with. But for me, there was Michael.

He lived in the house across the yard from us. In fact, the gate between our yard and their yard was never closed, which was a sign of the friendship between the two families. Michael is less than a year older than I, and since his mother and my Aunt Tilly had gone to school together and were very close. Michael and I spent more time together in our early years than apart from each other. I had a swing hanging in a pear tree and a play house, Michael had a sand box and a great horizontal bar behind his mother's garden shed, which, due to their location, could only be seen and watched from Aunt Tilly's kitchen. And when I was sick his mother would say "Well, sooner or later he'll catch it anyhow." Aunt Tilly followed the same reasoning whenever Michael came down with something, and

so we had to gargle with the same nauseating brews and drink the same bitter herb teas that the two women concocted with our welfare in mind.

Michael usually came along to our frequent visits to the many relatives we had in the area, and often, when Michael's mother went somewhere on her bicycle, she had me in a seat hanging from the handle bar, while poor Michael was sitting in the back on the luggage rack hanging on to his mother's coat for dear life. "Are you going to invite me to your wedding?" asked my grandfather every time we saw him, but while I assured him that everybody would be invited, of course, Michael insisted that he was not going to get married. Nobody took him seriously.

One is not supposed to remember incidents that occurred during the first two years of one's life, but I think I remember my first birthday, at least a few seconds of it. The room was filled with people and noise. I was standing inside a playpen, Michael was standing on the outside. I was still bald-headed, and somebody had jokingly tied a ribbon around my head to doll me up. I must have like that fixture, probably because everybody admired me in it, but Michael did not like it and pulled it off with one quick move and was immediately slapped on his hand and screamed as if he was being burnt. Was that his first attack of jealousy? After all, that ribbon had made me the center of so much attention. Or was it an early indication of his sense for the "proper", his distaste of things that were not the way they were supposed to be; a person with a bald head, he may have thought, should not wear a ribbon.

The next memorable moment I have is certainly a genuine one and is not based on later accounts by grown-ups. I must have been three years old. It was during my first year in Kindergarten. Michael and I were sitting on the wooden board surrounding the sandbox. We were making cakes and decorating them with torn-up grass. We loved to do that. It was a warm day and my nose was running, but I did not want to take the time to take off my heavy woolen sweater and certainly would not take the time to blow my nose, instead I was wiping it on my sleeve. The head nurse, whom we called Aunt Ella, came sailing across the yard with her navy-blue gown with the tiny white dots and her white head gear almost trailing behind her. "Oh dear, oh dear," she exclaimed cheerfully, "what are we doing here!" She wiped my nose with the handkerchief I had hanging in front of me in a little knitted string purse. Then she clapped her hands and shouted: "All

the little children line up in front of the washroom. Time for breakfast, hush, hush."

Michael did not get up, Aunt Ella had to come and get him, and, oh dear, when she lifted him, she notice that the place on the board where he had been sitting, was wet. She grabbed him by the hand and without saying a word she dragged him past everybody in line straight to the toilet. I immediately choked on tears, not out of compassion, but out of horror. Aunt Ella had made such a stern face! She had two deep lines between her eyes and her pupils were tiny little dots, and she had perched her mouth and had a hundred wrinkles around it all of a sudden. She had always been so nice before. How could she look so mean? It was better to stay away from her.

The next morning Aunt Tilly accompanied Michael and me across the street near the railroad station, shook hands with us and, as usual, told us to go the rest of the way to the Kindergarten on our own. We had to cross a bridge to get on the other side of the railroad tracks, and then we walked along a narrow path to the back gate of the Kindergarten, which housed an old-age home in the front of the building. When I saw the gate, I decided not to go any further. I did not want to take a chance to have Aunt Ella ever look at me the way she had looked at Michael the day before.

I sat down on the bottom step of the bridge and did not budge, no matter how hard Michael pulled me. Eventually, I convinced him to spend the morning on the bridge with me. We had a marvelous time. Trains passed underneath us, usually quite slowly, because they were either just pulling out of the station or preparing for a stop. Smoke crawled up to us from the steam engines and for seconds we could not see each other. We were just tall enough to get our head over the black iron rail and spit on the tracks. At first we aimed for the chimneys, but due to the smoke we could never see whether we made it or not and so we aimed for the train in general, but we had to stand well to the left of it to allow for the wind. We learned a lot, we even stopped for breakfast, which we carried in the form of a sandwich in a leather purse we had hanging around our neck. When the gate to the Kindergarten opened and all the other children came out we figured that it was time to go home.

The next day I did not even have to persuade Michael to stay on the bridge with me. We were just eating our sandwich when a voice behind us said, "Aren't you supposed to be somewhere else?"

It was Mrs. Untermeyer, who cleaned house across the street from us on Wednesdays and Saturdays. On Fridays she used to dash to the fish-shop to buy two sour marinated herrings for herself and her husband for dinner. I knew that because after the war she worked for us for a while and she still ran to the fish-shop every Friday for two sour marinated herrings. She lived in the big apartment houses on the other side of the tracks and had stopped to ask us that fateful question "Aren't you supposed to be somewhere else?"

I have never been known for making good excuses. In a sticky situations I usually stick to the truth, probably out of lack of the necessary intelligence. I said, "We are supposed to be in Kindergarten, but Aunt Tilly left us here all alone."

Mrs. Untermeyer shook her head and ran on. She must have run straight to Michael's mother, because minutes later Michael's mother climbed the stairs to the top of the bridge, still in her apron and out of breath. That was the end of my first act of truancy. Many more were to follow, but only once did Michael get involved in it again after many years, and that was on the day when we tried to escape through the Iron Curtain and I made it and Michael did not.

But during those early years we had enough excitement without bothering with the big questions of the world. Aunt Tilly accompanied us all the way to the gate from now on and stayed there until we had entered the building. For at least a week I was so worried about having an accident that I wet my panties every day just before it was time to line up for breakfast. However, I don't think Aunt Ella ever gave me "that" look. Finally she had a little chat with Aunt Tilly, and they concluded that I had a bladder condition. Aunt Tilly unraveled her old kidney warmer and quickly knitted a scratchy pair of angora woolen panties for me that I had to wear through most of the summer. I was no longer allowed to play in the sandbox, instead, I was allowed to help Aunt Christa, a nurse's helper, to mop the floor, which I love to do ever since.

My first truancy had no serious consequence except those scratchy panties, but my second escapade of that sort got me into trouble. It was shortly after

Christmas, we had had the first good snowfall of the season. On the way to the Kindergarten I had seen some children rolling down a hill behind the apartment houses, they were making snowmen and one of them had a sled. Those children, I knew from Mrs. Untermeyer, did not go to Kindergarten. They were lucky. We had to play inside. I stood at the window for a while and wished that Aunt Ella would burn up like the little girl that played with matches. She had just finished reading that story to us. But I was realistic enough to know that nobody would burn up when you wanted them to, I realized, that I had to take matters into my own hands. I did not set Aunt Ella aflame, but I walked out of the building after I had asked for permission to go to the toilet, which was adjacent to the hall. I did go to the toilet and then I just walked out and aimed my steps in the general direction of where I thought the other children were playing. I wandered for a long time before I found them. I was cold by then, because I had not taken my coat along, my hands were hurting and my feet were numb. One of the boys let me ride on his sled after I had pulled him up the hill. Other let me help to make a wall against something or against some expected enemy. I was quite happy and when I began to wonder whether it was time to go home with the kids from the Kindergarten, I realized that it was much too late for that. I heard the horn of the chocolate factory whistle for the beginning of the afternoon shift.

I did not have to wait long for things to happen, The police had been notified and all the neighborhood was swarming about to look for me. A policemen picked me up and planted me on the bar of his bike and delivered me into the arms of a crying and sobbing Aunt Tilly. After a lot of people had thrown a lot of words at me and then left, she took me into the kitchen and hugged me and scolded me and hugged me again. Not knowing what to do or what to say I kicked her and bit her and tried to tear her silk stockings, which brought her into such a rage that she locked me into the broom closet under the staircase, screaming.

"The black man will get you in there! Just wait till the black man comes. He'll get you!"

The broom closet was absolutely dark. Every time I moved I touched something spooky, maybe a mop or the bristles of a brush or the spare bag for the vacuum cleaner. To try to see a black man in a dark closet is frustrating, I did not know from where he would come, so I screamed and screamed until I stopped



breathing. Aunt Tilly quickly pulled me into the light, ran with me to the kitchen sink and rubbed my head with a sponge soaked in cold water. A minute later, and the black man would have caught me! She put me to bed and made me drink some peppermint tea, a little later she fed me some oats mixed with cocoa, sugar and just a little milk, my favorite snack, and tucked me in for the night.

This was not the last time that she exposed me to the fangs of the black man in the broom closet. I cannot describe my horror, when, a few years later, while the American forces moved into our town, my bedroom door opened and a black man walked in grinding his teeth or chewing on something and pointing at me with a machine gun. But he turned around and left without me and took Aunt Tilly instead.

According to Aunt Tilly, my mother has never made an effort to get me back. We visited often enough for me to know my brothers and sisters, but I did not feel comfortable with them. All of them had dark blond hair and either bright blue eyes or light brown eyes. I looked different, I had green eyes and blond curls with a touch of red which got darker with the years. My mother must have had a moment of cardiac arrest every time she looked at me, because she knew that I was a spitten image of my real father. might have felt for me had to be hidden, because a discovery of her extra-marital relationship would have had disastrous consequences to the reputation of the entire family and therefore to the welfare of all of them.

Aunt Tilly's house was my home. We were comfortably off financially with her widow's pension and some income from Uncle Heinrich's investments. She did not have to work, but she was a very active person who had to be busy and among people almost day and night. Outside of cooking she hated housework, so we had a woman come in twice a week to do the cleaning. Mr. Mielke came twice a day and serviced the furnace for the central heating system and did small repairs. Once a month Mrs. Pahlen did the laundry and somebody picked up the things to be ironed, We even had a seamstress once in a while to do the mending and to sew dresses and coats. A retired railroad man kept our garden pretty and his wife helped with the canning of fruit and vegetables. We had no lawn, but like most people in the neighborhood, beautiful flowerbeds and different shrubs and trees that offered something green to look at all year round. We also had fruit trees and

bushes that bore berries like gooseberries, raspberries and many more. One year we had chicken, but they were all stolen in one night, except for Cicero, the rooster, whom we found with his neck twisted around.

Aunt Tilly was always on the go. Besides attending all the birthday parties, weddings, silver wedding anniversaries and funerals that our large relationship celebrated even during the worst years during and after the war, she had taken up voluntary work as a nurse for the Red Cross, and she became increasingly involved in her role as a midwife. With so many doctors and regular nurses being needed near the battlefields, her services were in great demand at home. So often a nervous father would ride his bicycle right up to the front door or the telephone would ring and she would climb into an enormous pair of grey trousers, in which she tucked her skirt, then she would pull a brown leather cap over her hair, add a pair of goggles to her face in Red Baron fashion, struggle into a leather coat and swing herself on her motorbike. She was the only woman I knew who could start a bike on the first try. There was no telling for how many hours she would be gone.

And I did not care, because I would take my little eiderdown pillow and run across the garden to stay with Michael's family, the Reinhardt's. The Reinhardt's had three children, Klaus, Uli, and Michael, then there were the parents, whom I called Uncle Reinhardt and Aunt Reinhardt, and then there was Grandpa Reinhardt, whom I called Opa, as if he were my own grandfather.

Opa had white Kaiser Wilhelm whiskers and a lot of time and the smell of pipe tobacco about him. I loved him. During meals he let me sit on his knees and eat off his plate. When we had sandwiches, which we ate open face and with fork and knife, he used to put one bit into my mouth and the next one into his own, and I made sure that he did not eat more than I did. Sometimes his whiskers tickled my ears.

Almost every day he did a little shopping and had things to take care of in many different offices, workshops and other people's homes. What a treat it was to be taken along by a man of Opa's standing. He had once been the mayor of the town. He seemed to know everybody, and men took off their hats and snapped a smart "Heil Hitler", women stopped to chat with him, the butcher's wife never failed to give Michael and me a big chunk of bologna, nor did the baker's wife ever

forget to give us a piece of pastry called "Amerikaner". In many houses the greeting ceremony was followed by "a short one", a mouthful of Wachholder or a simliar kind of strong alcoholic beverage. We children, however, were only allowed to take a sniff at it and to stick our tongue into the glass without sucking.

He knew a lot of magic tricks. He could put his empty hands into the pockets of your pants and after he had pulled them out you found a coin in there. He was also the best tooth puller I have ever known. Unfortunately he never did have a chance to pull any of mine, but I remember with envy how first and second graders of the neighborhood took turns sitting on his lap in the air-raid-shelter during the bombings and stare at him with a false grin. I don't know how he did it, but after he was through performing a trick involving a handkerchief and a string the loose tooth was gone.

The coziest place on earth was Opa's bed. We slept between clouds of white eiderdown pillows and covers. On days when it did not rain those clouds were shaken and put into the open window for hours to air out. But at night they were heaven on earth. You simply could not be afraid of anything in all that comfort, especially with Opa's warm body breathing heavily and regularly. The black man, he said, would not come into his room because the smell of Opa's tobacco would kill him. Opa called me "little Angel".

Sometimes Opa had indigestion, and then I had to sleep with Michael.

There was a lodger living in Aunt Tilly's house, one ageless Miss Müller, who taught needlecraft in school. She lived in constant fear of loud noises. She believed in God, the Führer and the principal of the school, but probably not in that order, because when she was alone - or alone with me - and the slightest bang was audible, she lost all faith in a future and literally went to pots. She spent an ordinary thunderstorm on the toilet in the basement, and during a bombing attack blood would come out of her feet and stain her shoes. No wonder that she hanged herself near the end of the war when she heard the rat-tat-tat of the machine guns when the Americans moved into town. It was impossible to leave me in her care, be it during day or night, the two of us would have convinced each other that there was a black man somewhere in the house planning to get us by making a lot of noise.

I have never been afraid of thunder, because I thought in those days that God was moving furniture while housecleaning, but I did share the common fear of bombs, because they were dropped out of airplanes and blew up houses and people and dogs and everything that happened to be where the bomb happened to hit the ground. "They are trying to hit the railroad station," said Aunt Tilly, but I had no reason to believe her. It was not until the very end of the war, probably the last attack on the town, that the station was actually hit and half a steam engine settled in our house.

During the first years of the war I enjoyed watching the enemy planes move along the sky like little silver stars. When the sirens warned the population of the planes we should make sure that we were close to home or close to a shelter, but not out of knowledge of danger, rather because we were told to do so. Michael, in his urge to collect everything that didn't resist, looked all over for little strips of aluminum foil that fell out of the sky at times. The humming squadrons of British or American bombers would fly over, usually very high, from the Bismarck tower a few miles away the anti-aircraft artillery would shoot at them, and after a while the grown-ups would turn on the radio to find out where that attack has taken place. It was just one of those things. There are two kinds of bombs though, those that fall on other people and those that fall on you or near you. By the time I started school in 1943 the second kind made itself felt in Heimstedt.

It must have been during the night from Friday to Saturday, for Aunt Tilly had taken Michael and me to a wedding in a village a few miles out of town. As I remember it, we had been the most important people at the occasion, I in a white dress with a wreath of flowers in my curls and Michael in a sailor's suit. We had walked in front of the bride and groom and thrown flowers on the carpet in church. Everybody adored us and let us have a sip of the wine or stuffed us with butter cream cake and whipped cream. When it was time to catch the streetcar that ran through several villages and ended near our railroad station, Michael had an upset stomach. We missed the streetcar, which meant that we had to wait for the next one, which was a dangerous situation, because most bombing attacks were flown during the night, and it was a lot wiser to be home after dark.

Sure enough, it was during this night that I made my first personal acquaintance with a bomb. We had just settled down on the benches behind the

driver of the last streetcar scheduled for the night, when we left the station and moved out of the village at high speed. "It's better to be out in the open fields somewhere," said the driver, "they are always trying to hit the stations." Somewhere in the country he stopped and turned off all lights and yelled at one of the few other passengers to stop smoking. Any light might give us away to the pilots. We had not been there for very long when we heard that deep humming sound. "That's them," said the driver, "thanks goodness they are on their way home and have unloaded on Leipzig or Dresden." But suddenly a light appeared in the sky and came down, it illuminated the entire area around us, "out! in the ditch!" shouted somebody, and we all jumped out of the street car, ran along the road for a few seconds and dove into the drainage ditch. And there came the bomb, at first it looked like a big M written into the sky with fire, then there was a hissing sound and then a terrible pain in the eardrums. Afterwards I screamed and Michael threw up again, but the driver of the streetcar screamed even louder. He had lost a leg when part of the track was hurled into our direction.

From then on the attacks became increasingly frequent. Occasionally they took place during the day. The sirens disrupted many a school day and sent all the children of elementary school age of the district into the basement of one building. Once in a while we were surprised on our way to or from school and had to run into a strange house for shelter. Our school was hit during the night while only the caretaker and his family were in it. Their youngest girl survived. Unfortunately that did not mean the end of our education, instead, we had to attend classes in the afternoon in another school from then on. That other school was an hour's walk away from where we lived.

Most attacks took place during the night, during nights that defy description, Wake up, hurry, wake up, shoes on the wrong feet, I want to sleep, where is Opa, cold winter air, why don't you carry me, Uli keeps on crying, make him be quiet, why don't they let us sleep, my stomach hurts, I have the stitches, I can't run any more, do you think they'll kill us tonight, I lost my shoe, I am cold, please, pick me up and carry me .....

Once we were in the shelter we could catch our breath and calm down. All houses on the block were reinforced with concrete slabs outside certain parts of the basement, but according to the man who inspected these preparations occasionally,

the Niemöller house was the strongest. The inspector, who seemed to be a good friend of Aunt Tilly's, had taken me on his arm one morning and took me along on his round through the houses. He told me, that I should always try to stand next to the chimney in any house I happened to be in while there is an attack. He had also shown me where I should stay in the Niemöller's basement, and he had told the mothers to put mattresses down for the children in that spot. We were well equipped for everything but the worst, there were blankets and fresh water, sandbags and a big box of sand that nobody was allowed to play in, there were pick-axes and shovels, gas masks, flashlight, first aid equipment, a radio and even a telephone, a bucket to be used as a toilet, because Miss Müller occupied the commode, and even games for the children and a hymn book. There were mice, too, because the basement was also the storage room for the Niemöller's food supply for the winter. And it was always cold and wet in there, because the cellar was not too well insulated, and sometimes the ground water came up and soaked the mattresses. We did not always make that dash for the Niemöller's; sometimes we stayed in our own cellar, and Aunt Tilly said, "Tonight they are going to bomb somebody else."

Niemöller's air raid shelter was usually very crowded. There were mostly women and children in there and two or three old men. The daddies were in the battle fields or dead or at the fire station. Most women just sat there and listened to the sounds outside. Some of them looked very angry when we children made a noise, they told us to sleep, but we were wide awake by then and also a bit apprehensive. I like people like Opa who performed tricks or told us stories or played games with us. Actually, the only game we ever played was "mensch ärgere dich nicht", because you did not have to count to more than six. Mrs. Meyer, who owned a shoe store, said one night, "That children really ought to be doing something useful." And then she taught us how to crochet. We worked on potholders. I was ever so proud when I discovered that I could crochet so much faster than Michael, but when we looked at the finished product mine was like a profile of a pyramid, whereas Michael's was a perfect square. After that she taught us how to knit. Our teachers had told us that we should all make something useful for our soldiers at the front, especially for those in the snow of Russia. I decided to knit a scarf. Aunt Tilly unraveled an old mitten she had left over from Uncle Heinrich, and I forgot about the air raids and sleepy eyes to help those poor

soldiers who were freezing so far away from home. I don't know what ran out first, the wool or the war, my scarf grew no longer than little over an inch, my good intentions however could only be measured in thousands of miles.

No bomb ever fell directly on the Niemöller's house. Usually we emerged as soon as the sirens gave the all-clear signals and stumbled straight to bed only to be rudely awakened a few hours later when the planes were on their way back. The adults often ran off and busied themselves in the new ruins, but just as often they would drop on the bed without even taking their coats off, happy that this time the passing planes had not dropped anything. But one afternoon a bomb fell right in front of our shelter and dug a deep crater into the road. We were all in a cloud of dust and stucco for a while and had to leave the building for fresh air. The windows of the entire neighborhood were shattered and the fronts of some houses were marred by flying cobble stones, but nobody was hurt, or so we thought until the iceman, who used to supply those who could afford an ice box, came running out of one of the houses and started to swear and furiously threw cobblestones into the crater. Then he sat down on the ground in the middle of all the destruction and stared. His horse and the ice-cart had stood in the very place where there was now nothing but a dust-puffing hole.

This was war and we really did not know any other way of life. It did not mean much to us when the adults talked about the war coming to an end very soon, neither did it help us when our school principal told us that for every one of our playmates that lost his life during an air-raid, our German planes would kill at least two English children. Our biggest worry was that we did not know whether the dead children, who lost an arm or maybe even their head when they died, would go to heaven as cripples or whether God would make them whole again. Michael was very concerned about this, he simply could not share my optimism. And we were afraid to ask anybody out of fear of a disappointing answer. I told Michael that I had never seen a picture of an angel that had something missing. But Michael had seen one. There was a big book in his father's bookcase with a lot of pictures of strange looking women, some of them even naked, and on the last page was the picture of a fat little angel standing on one leg in somebody's flowerbed. That angel had a leg missing, but the foot was still on the ground. Now we knew. Only years later did I realize how haunted Michael was by the image of a mutilated angel.

When most of the town was in ruins there were no more parades, only groups of men in grey uniforms crowded around the station. But there were older boys and girls marched through town, I think on Sunday mornings. I loved the music and the uniforms. I couldn't wait to grow up and join them. One of the big girls once gave me her navy blue woolen cap with the much admired two white strips in it. I treasure it immensely and wore it even after the war when it was risky even to have an item like that hidden in the closet. The smartest uniform was worn by a man who told me I should call him Uncle Siegfried. Aunt Tilly called him "that SS-pig" when he wasn't there and she thought I was asleep and could not hear what she and Opa were talking about. Uncle Siegfried's boots smelled like leather and he let me look at them from close by until I could see my teeth reflected. He was also the only person who gave me chocolate every time he came. He brought bandages and medicines and ration cards to Aunt Tilly.

We never had to worry about food during the war. Living in the vicinity of the railroad station and the street-car stop and having doctors and specialists like the one nose throat and ear near-by and, most of all, living close to the office of the health insurance, most of our relatives had to pass by our house now and then. Since most of them were somehow connected with agriculture, they naturally brought a few eggs or butter or homemade sausage along. I always like the men visitors most. Being chubby and having reddish curls I was welcomed on every man's lap. With a little hugging and a smile they would give me anything I asked for. I was so sure of my tricks that I gave away most of what I received, knowing that there was more where that came from. This generosity never left me; even during those meager years after the war did I supply other kids with my last reserves.

Aunt Tilly had told me to be very polite to Uncle Siegfried, but should he ask me anything that sounded like it had really nothing to do with me, I should say that I had to go to the toilet and then I should go over to Michael's. That made me feel very important and I was always hoping he would ask me something grown-up, but he never did. One day, or rather one night I found out why he was so important. Next door to us lived the Schönbaums. Everybody knew that they were Jews, even their daughter Marion was a Jew, although to me she seemed to be just like every other kid. She was a year or two older than me. We had learned in school that the Jews were trying to destroy our Germany. Dr. Schönbaum did not



look very dangerous either, he was the only eye doctor in the county and people came from far away for help. Mrs. Schönbaum limped a little, maybe she was a witch, suggested Uli after "it" had happened. Lately very few people had come to Dr. Schönbaum, Marion skipped school every day and at night Aunt Tilly developed strange activities. When she thought I was sound asleep she would open my bedroom window and throw one end of a long rope toward Schönbaums upstairs living room window. After a while she fastened a basket with food on the rope and let it slowly glide to the other house. I had watched that many a night. I had discussed it with Opa and I had to promise on my life to him not to tell anybody about it. It was so hard in those days to know what you were allowed to say to whom. I continued to fake a sound sleep when Aunt Tilly hassled with the rope. She was not good in throwing and always missed several times.

One night she did not come to my room. I heard a lot of voices in the street and then a truck and some shouting. I opened the window to see what was going on. It was very dark, because all street lights were turned off and all the houses had shades in front of their windows so that enemy planes could not see that they were flying over a town. A group of men were stepping all over the flowerbed in Schönbaum's front garden and shouting words like "pigs" and "about time you worked for a living". Then one of them threw a rock into the window of the front door, soon others threw more rocks at other windows. Then it was all quiet. Aunt Tilly came running into my room and with a jerk pulled me away from the window and hissed that I had no business looking out of the window in the middle of the night, but then we both took up a position behind the curtain and watched the scene. Uncle Siegfried came out of the Schönbaum's house, followed by two men dragging Mrs. Schönbaum, and seconds later Dr. Schönbaum came out with Marion on this right arm and a small suitcase in his left hand. Behind him came another man in SS uniform with a gun. The Schönbaums had to climb on the truck. We have never seen them again.

The next time Uncle Siegfried came to us Aunt Tilly told him to stuff his ration cards up his ass. When I heard her say a word like that I left the house right away. I was frightened. A few weeks later Aunt Tilly received orders for duty in a field hospital on the Eastern front.

We children did not know why this nightly horror scene had taken place and we were afraid to ask the grownups because we knew they did not like to be asked any questions. For us there rose out of the situation an immediate problem: How could we get access to Schönbaum's attic. The Schneiders, who moved into the house within a week, had two children who looked nice enough, but they came from another part of town and we were told not to play with them. They had no right to live in that house, we were told, they had stolen it from the Schönbaums. We did not want to play with thieves, but thieves who live in a house with the type of attic that everybody dreamed about was another matter.

The attic was high and solidly built, almost like a gymnasium. The remarkable thing, however, was a big pile of mattresses. They were of such a size that three of them would make one bed, they were therefore easy to handle for us. There were enough of them to make a road once across the floor. I liked to use them that way for all kinds of gymnastics at which I was extremely good. I also liked them stacked up in a pyramid over which we would try to jump and always knocked it over. But one of the girls who was admitted to the attic had ideas that fascinated us for a long time. The girl was Marianne Steinmann, then about seven or eight years old. She said she loved Michael, although he was only five or six. Sometimes Marianne whispered to Marion and all children except Michael and I were somehow made to leave. Then we would make a little house out of the mattresses and Marianne would lay down and spread her legs apart. I had to tickle her ears and Michael had to tickle her panties right over her private parts. Meanwhile Marion would exercise on a spare mattress. We felt very flattered to be chosen by Marianne, she was obviously enjoying what we did and the way we did it. She smiled all the time.

There was no place anywhere to the privacy of Schönbaum's attic. Marianne's parents did not mind her playing with the Schneider kids, a boy and a girl about her age, but they did not tickle half as well as Michael and I, she said. Besides, I missed the mattresses for my exercises, after all, I was going to be an acrobat later on, I was told, and I needed all the practice I could get. So we, that is Michael, Marianne, and I, entered Schönbaum's house through the back door one day. That evening Michael received a sound spanking from his mother. Whereupon, the next day he said he wasn't going to tickle Marianne any more "because she stink anyway." But that was the day when Aunt Tilly told me that

she had to leave and that I had to go back to my parents. Nothing really mattered from then on. Except, of course, the night when Michael and I did secretly what everybody expected us to do in a few years anyhow: we got married. He was eight, I was seven years old.

It was on the eve of my departure to my parents' home. It must have been on the sixth of December, for Nikolaus, the German Santa Claus, had been around our neighborhood and filled our slippers with homemade sweets and nuts and apples. Earlier that afternoon we had been to a Christmas party given by the firemen in the community for those children who had lost their father during the war. Michael and I, also his brother, had been invited because Opa had been the organizer of the event. It had been a perfect day, that sixth of December 1994. Not ever a single air raid had taken place. During the party, with faces glowing and eyes reflecting the light of the wax candles on the Christmas tree, we had listened to our pastor tell us the tale of Hänsel and Gretel and watched some older children enact the story of Jesus' birth. We had enjoyed singing the carols while the firemen band accompanied us with a drum and trumpet. Most of all, however, we had enjoyed the part when Nikolaus' helper, who was nobody else than Opa, all dressed up like Santa himself, had discovered a sack full of presents behind the door. I had received a hand-carved angel holding a candle., Michael had received a hand carved locomotive.

After the late supper several neighbors came over to our house and sat around the kitchen table and talked and shared what was obviously the very precious contents of a bottle. It seemed to me that everybody was there to bid me farewell, and I was rather happy, going away had, after all, a pleasant side. When it was time to go to bed Michael hugged Aunt Tilly for a while and asked her to let me sleep in his bed for the last night, because he was afraid, he said, that I would never come back to play with him. Everybody admired the seriousness of his feelings and remarked about what a mature boy he was for his age. Of course, we were allowed to sleep together, wasn't it cute!

Aunt Reinhardt took us across the yard. She wrapped a blanket around the stove in the hall, and when it was nice and warm we all ran upstairs into the cold bedroom. She wrapped us up in the blanket, tucked us into the pillows, waited until we had said our prayers and left after switching off the light.

"If you don't come back," whispered Michael, "will you marry somebody else?"

"Do you think I'll never come back?"

"Most people don't come back."

I had never really thought about that. I had taken it for granted that I would come back as soon as the war was over, and according to Mrs. Mielke, our teacher, our troops would win the war any day now.

"If we are married," I said given to a sudden idea, "then I have to come back."

"That's what I thought, too."

"You have to give me a ring and a present."

"I know. But I don't have a ring right now. I can give you my locomotive for a present, if you want it?"

"And I can give you my little angel."

We exchanged the gifts that we had placed under the bed to have them nearby in case we had to run to the air raid shelter. It was getting warm, we were dressed in heavy woolen garments, including socks and a sweater, so that we could just get up and run in case the sirens would howl.

Our wedding needed no words. Michael put his arms around me and turned over so that he lay on top of me. A never before and never since I felt awareness of love glowed in us. My heart was like a volcano pumping out hot lava. Michael's private part became hard and bothered him, he pressed his lips on mine, and my hands caressed his ears, because I knew he liked that. Thus we fell asleep.

Of all my wedding nights so far, this was the happiest.

Bad Kleinfurt was not nearly as thoroughly bombed as Heimsted. But it was very crowded. Most houses had additional occupants who had been bombed out of their homes in other parts of the country. It took me two days to find out who was living in my Mother's house at that time. There was, of course, my

Mother, but of my two sisters I found only Gisela alive. Karola had died of diphtheria a few months ago. I had never been told about that and felt very sorry for my Mother who cried a lot about her and looked very old in all the black clothes that hung loosely about her. Hans, my eldest brother, was somewhere in Belgium, but nobody seemed to know for sure. My other three brothers, Udo, Emil, and Karl, were at home, at least at meal times, but my Father was gone. I dared not ask anybody where he was. I presumed he was dead, although I hoped that he wasn't. But somehow I did not care enough to really worry about it. A number of distant relatives lived with us: Aunt Frieda from Hannover and her two boys, Dieter and Thomas. There was also her Mother, Aunt Johanna, who was just celebrating her sixtieth birthday when I arrived, and there was old Uncle Wilhelm, who had very peculiar habits and had never been married. Everybody knew that he had once travelled around the world.

We slept two or three to a bed, and when the sirens warned us of approaching planes, we just stumbled into our own cellar.

There were practically three households under one roof and all of them using one kitchen and one toilet. My Mother had the food under lock and key, but the provisions never filled the waist high cupboard with the fly screen door. We lived from one meal to the next.

I was seven years old and the youngest child in the house. I felt no rejection from my brothers and my sister, although I had expected Emil to be really mean since he had once, when I had been home on vacation, told the neighbor's dog to bite me, and the dog had not hesitated to do so. They even let me play with their toys, and my Mother let me sleep in her bed between herself and Karl.

Yet, as soon as I arrived I became helplessly homesick. I wanted to go back to Heimstedt and to Aunt Tilly, although I knew very well that Aunt Tilly was somewhere in Poland helping wounded soldiers. I was worried about what might happen to her; she might come home wounded one day, and I wasn't there to help her. I was worried about Opa and the kids in the neighborhood; had they been bombed out during the attack that hit the town the night after I had left? Was Michael still alive? Did he remember that we were married?

I tried to hid and keep my crying to myself, but there was no privacy anywhere, I sobbed into my pillow at night and was joined by my Mother, who cried about Karola. I cried squatting in a corner of the dark and smelly hen-house, I even cried while in my favorite spot sitting on the high wall that surrounded our garden, my legs dangling down and hitting the sign which read: Beware of the Dog. People stopped and asked me if I had hurt myself, but I was in no condition to speak. I developed an unbearable pain in my chest which made breathing difficult. After about three days and nights of this my Brother, Udo, who was fourteen and the oldest boy at home, felt that he should do something about me. He promised me that he would let me listen to his radio in the attic if I would shut up. I promised that I would try. His radio was a contraption the mechanics of which I never learned to understand, but I did learn to decode the messages that he received with it. Udo had a chart hidden in an old stack of magazines. The chart listed what looked to me like names of people across the top line and another row of names straight down the first line. When a man would announce on the radio that a squadron of British bombers was flying over a certain combination of these names, we could draw lines and thus come up with the name of one of the towns listed on the chart. If, for example, the man said: "Heinrich-Siegfried Fünnef," we knew that the enemy was over nearby Herford (location of Bad Kleinfeld was more to the east of Herford) and that our sirens would start any minute.

One day - about a week after Udo had let me in on his radio secrets and a week of unsuccessful efforts to control my homesickness - I heard on the radio that another major attack had been flown against Heimstedt.

I had to go and see what had happened. Not knowing was too much of a burden for me to carry. I took my gas mask and my Father's big black umbrella and started walking. It was dark and rainy day, but I felt quite cheerful for the first time in weeks. I had a goal.

I did not know how far I had to walk, maybe for three days, maybe for a few hours or a week. Aunt Tilly and I had made it in an afternoon on her motorbike, the train would take me home in a couple of hours, but the trains did no longer run the way they used to. The tracks were blown up in many places, or the train itself could be under attack, and they were too crowded anyhow, you had to hang on by

the roof or hang half way out of the window, if you were lucky to get a hold of it at all. No, I knew the best way to get home was to walk.

There were a lot of people on the road, some with cars, some with horse and buggy, most people were walking, carrying bundles and suitcases or pulling their luggage and their babies in little handcarts. There were soldiers on crutches with a leg of their pants rolled up and held in place with safety pins or with a sleeve hanging down loose and empty. The luckiest of all, I thought, were those that had a bicycle. But I had only me feet, a pair of wooden Dutch clogs and one of my woolen stockings sliding down unless I held on to it because the rubber band had torn.

I don't remember much about my hike except that my mind was ahead of me in Heimstedt. Over and over again I imagined how all the people I longed for would run into the street and welcome me with hugs and kisses. If they were all dead, I thought, it was my duty to tidy up the ruins and to salvage what was still usable.

I wished all day long that Michael was walking along with me. He was so good to talk to , and I could not keep quiet for so long.

Towards evening I realized that I had no experience in begging or stealing and I began to be ashamed of myself. I was very hungry and that was only due to my stupidity and clumsiness. Most children I knew were capable of taking care of themselves, they knew how to sneak into people's cellars through tiny windows, they knew how to stand around in a shop and walk out after a while with a bun or an apple in their pocket. I was sure that Michael would have no trouble finding food for me, but I was so dumb and much too scared. Before darkness set in I realized also that I was still far away from home. I was not even close to the bridge across the River Elbe. I was just then passing a barbed wire fence. Inside the enclosure I saw a long building which might once have housed horses or cattle or the machinery of a large farm. It looked to me like it was now the living quarters of prisoners of war. May be French prisoners, may be Russians or Lithuanians. Francois, a French prisoner who worked on my Uncle Wilhelm's farm, had once told me, that all prisoners are very homesick. Now I felt that I had something in common with them.

The gate was open. A German guard was squatting at a corner of the building playing with a cat. All prisoners were out, probably working on the surrounding farms.

The inside of the house was one big room filled with beds and a few boxes. I found no food and curled up on a bed in a corner. By now, I was sure, the police would be looking for me on all the country roads and highways and in every ruin in town. It felt good to get those clogs off my feet.

I woke up when somebody lifted me gently and carried me in his arms like a baby. Many voices whispered all around me. I could not understand what they said. Then I was put down again. The men offered me some bread and let me puff on a cigarette. Somebody gave me something sweet to drink. They did not switch on the lamp in my part of the large room.

Later during the night I woke up again when I felt that somebody was moving in under my blanket. I pretended to be sound asleep. The man put one arm under my head and the other one move about, stroking my hair, then holding my hand. His body was warm and made me feel very cozy and comfortable. I thought of Opa for a while, but then I started to wish that the man was my Father. My Father holding me close, touching me, passing the warmth of his body on to me, my father taking care of me, making sure that I was safe, I imagined that my father had returned from whatever battle field he had been on, found out the I had run away and had run along the road to look for me. I imagined that he had now found me and was lying next to me waiting for the morning to take me home.

In the morning I was alone again, the men had called a German guard who couldn't understand that I was not screaming in fear of all these foreigners. He took me to the office of the Mayor in town. The Mayor's wife washed me and cooked some porridge for me. They asked me where I had come from. In a flash of intuition I told them I had run away from Heimstedt three days ago. The Mayor made a few telephone calls and later on in the day they wrapped me up in a blanket and stuck me into an army truck which was taking a few soldiers into the direction of Heimstedt.

When we arrived in front of the familiar police station Opa was waiting for me.



"That's our little angel, all right," he said as if he hadn't believed that I would really come home. But he did not act as if he was happy about seeing me again.

"You know what you did?" he asked.

"Sure," I said with a vague smile, "but I had to check and see what happened during the raids, Opa." By that time I began to fear that he would spank me and I felt very uneasy.

"You worried your mother out of her wits, you little run-away," he coughed into a handkerchief. I notice that his head was bandaged. "I'll show you what happens to little girls who run away."

After asking two policemen to leave the office for a moment he spanked my bare bottom until he was all out of breath. Then we shared a sandwich and a bottle of beer out of his briefcase. My tears were made of happiness.

But before dark Opa took me by my hand and we walked to our street. "Don't worry," he said as we came around the corner of the street, "everybody came out alive."

Aunt Tilly's house had no roof, no windows, but part of a railroad locomotive sticking out of the second floor. The Reinhardt's had a deep bomb crater in the back yard and the back wall of the house was gone. There was still some furniture balancing on the slopping second floor. The Niemöller's further down the road were loading a piano on to a truck.

"War," said Opa, "war." He blew his nose and wiped his eyes in an effort to conceal his tears. "you must excuse me, little angel," he said, "I think I am just getting old."

I knew that old people could never understand the world and needed a lot of love from children to keep them going. "If the war stopped now we could still live in the basement," I suggested.

"But wars don't stop when they should, do they," he said.

We walked about, over bricks and boards and broken glass into Aunt Tilly's front yard. It had begun to drizzle and the grey light of the day turned darker and

darker. I picked up part of my favorite plate. It had the legs of Little Red Riding Hood on it.

"I can stay in our basement and wait for Aunt Tilly to come back home, can't I?" I pleaded, "I can take care of myself," I knew I couldn't take care of myself, I couldn't even steal an apple from a tree in Niemeyers back yard without getting the butterflies in my stomach. But where was I supposed to stay, if not in Aunt Tilly's house, my home.

"I have to leave for Poland tomorrow," said Opa and lifted me up but put me down again because he had to cough, "I have to help dig trenches. The Russians are coming. Do you want to come along with me?" Oh, no, I didn't want to go where the Russians were coming, everybody knew that they did horrible things to children. I laughed when I imagined Opa digging deep trenches and the Russian soldiers marching along and then falling one after another into Opa's trench.

"And where is Michael?" I had finally found the courage to ask this most important question, the knowledge that I was married and did not know what my duties were had weighed heavily upon me ever since our wedding night.

"You don't know?" said Opa, "he is in Braunschweig in a Hospital. He caught pneumonia on their trip to that camp."

"What camp?"

"Did nobody tell you? Aunt Reinhard and the three boys are in a camp for evacuated city children in the Harz Mountains. Aunt Reinhard is helping out in the kitchen. Uncle Reinhard is missing in action, but I am sure he is still alive, he is my only son, he has to be alive. I bet you he is an American prisoner of war ..." He mumbled on and on, but I had no ear for him any longer. If Michael was so far away, and Aunt Tilly I-didn't-know-where, and Opa on this way to Poland and our basement not safe from more bombs, well, where was I supposed to go?

"Where do I belong now?" I interrupted him, "I have to belong to somewhere, don't I?"

"Oh sure, sure. But right now you have to try to stay alive. We can't worry about where we belong." He sounded so sad, it made me feel helpless and uneasy.

I didn't know what to say to cheer him up, finally I promised to let him in on a secret. He had always liked secrets.

"Michael and I got married the other night," I whispered into his earmuffs.

"You don't say!" he said in a voice that sounded most surprised, "You sneaky little devils! What made you think you two can get married without telling Opa about it? You can't get married without having a big party! Getting married without a big party, you should be ashamed of yourselves, you two. Wait until I get a hold of Michael."

Opa was his old self again, chuckling when he realized that he had just spanked a young bride and making fantastic plans for our belated wedding party. "When the war is over..."

"Do you think we'll belong here again after the war?" I asked while we walked back to the police station.

"Sure, sure, little angel. No matter where you live, this will always be the place where you belong. You aren't planning on settling down in some strange country, let's say Borneo or Kusemupuckel, are you?"

"No, when the war is over I'll join the circus, remember? And Michael and I, we'll live here and take care of you until you die."

There was a little restaurant across the street from the police station where old customers could eat a simple meal. The kitchen was used mainly now to cook for wounded soldiers who occupied a wing of the small city hall. We shared a bowl of pea soup. I remember that because with all his coughing and his nose running Opa couldn't keep his Kaiser Wilhelm memorial whiskers out of the spoon. It was the funniest meal of the war - and the last one I had with Opa. A week later he died. Good old Opa.

They managed to get me safely back to my Mother's house. I did not mind, after all, what was important was to stay alive, no matter where. I kept telling myself that every day, I also told my Sister that, because she was so shy and never like to leave the house and therefore the only thing she got to eat was what my

Mother could get for her. I tried to tell her that she had to learn to take care of herself.

I learned in a hurry. I learned that the safest way to obtain a slice of bacon or half a sandwich or whatever else looked desirable was to be friendly to a person, especially if the person was a man. Women were more realistic and not so easily charmed out of useful items. I knew the neighborhood kitchens and the larders better than the kids who had lived in that area all their life. And I knew the degree of generosity of each family. Sharing was not a matter of how much was available in a house, but of how much they were willing to share. It was obvious that most people had a lot more food than my Mother was able to come up with.

I also learned that when you were caught snatching an egg away from underneath a chicken or half a loaf of bread from a table near a window, people did not get as mad as they pretended to be, as long as you didn't steal more than what you could eat right away. An empty stomach seemed to have a right beyond the law.

I did not have to steal, not during the last months of the war, I did it mainly for practice and for other kids who were worse off than I or who were constantly hungry like my brothers. After the war the situation was different, but all through the cold winter of 1944 we managed rather well, although I have no idea where my Mother got the food from. I know where the wood for the kitchen hearth came from and the grass for the rabbits and the garbage we fed the pig and the chicken: We children were busy day after day collecting and gathering these things. Even on our way home from school we picked up little branches that the icy wind had broken out of the tree tops. The lower branches of every tree in town seemed to have disappeared over night. Looking for things was our play, our chore and our education. We had use for everything, from an old newspaper to bent nails. Some of the older boys had established proper warehouses in the basements of isolated ruins. I remember one of them in particular, Bulle Hollmann. He was fifteen or sixteen and known as a fat dummy. One day after school, he was still in school at that age because he had to repeat a year or two, he promised to show me all the things he had hoarded, and he promised to show me his secret place, but first I had to promise him that I would marry him after the war.

I had a sleepless night over this; I wanted to see his secret place so badly! I was flattered by his proposal and I was sure he would never ever ask another girl to marry him if I turned him down, poor Bulle. Finally I decided that the war was probably never coming to an end and that it was quite safe to promise stupid things like marrying Bulle Hollmann. And anyhow, I was on the safe side, because I was already married to Michael, but I didn't have to tell Bulle that, not yet.

The problem was that Bulle Hollmann had a secret plan all right, but what he really wanted to show me among all his collected lead pipes, wire, pots, and other treasures, was a mattress. He asked me what I thought of it. It looked fine to me, quite new and clean, in fact, but I sensed that he had something in mind that he shouldn't have, although I did not know what it was. We went to his hide-out three afternoons in a row, and each time he gave me a little present, each time he asked me to sit next to him on the mattress, and each time I waited for him to do the thing he wasn't supposed to do, whatever it was. I suspected that it had something to do with tickling a girl's private part, because Michael had been spanked for that once. But Bulle never even hinted at that, only on the third afternoon did he throw me on the mattress and himself on top of me. He was very heavy and out of breath, he sweated in spite of below freezing temperatures, he moved back and forth over me and rubbed his body against mine and cried "no, no, please, no." It frightened me.

The next day he didn't come to school, instead I was met by the catholic chaplain right outside the school door. Everybody was looking at me. We went inside the principal's office, where the chaplain asked me a lot of questions about Bulle and his hideout. He told me never to go with Bulle again to any place, Bulle did things at times that he felt sorry about afterwards, he said, and the Gestapo might take Bulle away one night. Did I understand?

Yes, I did understand: You couldn't share a secret with a catholic because he would sooner or later go to his priest and confess and blubber it all out. My own Mother had warned me once: "Don't trust a catholic! They can lie as much as they want to because all their sins are forgiven as soon as they confess them," she had said.

But on the other hand I had been frightened by Bulle's behavior, and I certainly did not want him to be picked up by the Gestapo because they put people in jail or kill them.

Bulle never mentioned our marriage deal again. Years later he married a distant cousin of mine and became one of the wealthier people in town. He built a fortune out of scrap metal, bought a part in a chocolate factory and opened a chicken farm, although to this day he can't read what he signs.

## Santita

This story was written while Helga lived in Alabama, around 1973-74. There is no indication that it was ever published.

Worst of all, she didn't know enough Spanish. She realized that the desk clerk was trying to tell her that the room she had reserved was occupied by somebody else and that there was simply no vacancy. She was too upset about the apparent bookkeeping error and the consequences it might have for her vacation to find the right words that would make it clear to him that she had to stay in this hotel and nowhere else. She couldn't even find her dictionary in the chaos of her handbag.

She didn't care in what kind of room he would put her up as long as she was here in the morning and entitled to take her place among the resident breakfast guests. Maybe he could arrange for her to sleep in the maids' quarters on the top floor. She was quite familiar with the hotel and most of the personnel because she had stayed here during last year's vacation.

"I sleep in room on top floor" she suggested loud and clearly in simplified English.

The clerk grinned and took her hands in his, "You sleep in my room, Senorita?"

"No, no, muchas gracias!" she hurried to say. They must have made some changes in who sleeps where.

His idea wasn't as bad, though, considering that he was on duty in the lobby until seven when she could get up and take refuge in the breakfast room. But then she knew that neither Alfonso nor Carlos would ever look at her again once they found out that she had been friendly with a night clerk. Societies have their rules and she was not about to revolutionize or come into conflict with the way of life on Mallorca.

She was very tired and disappointed. She could just foresee how all the schemes and plans that she had built in a year of dreams and wishing would crumble before they were given a chance to work. She could just see herself lying like a sardine on the beach, joining other tourists for occasional, well organized sightseeing trips. Oh no - she wanted more excitement than that, she needed to get involved in something hair-raising, a contract to the shallow serenity of her respectable, protected life back home in South Carolina, something she could dream about afterwards; she longed for moments of fear or passion, for tears of laughter or pain, for wild rides on wild horses in the dawn of the morning after a night of love. In other words, she longed for Carlos, the man who had filled last year's vacation with all the excitement she could live up to at that time.

How could she contact him if not through this hotel? Was God destroying her plans because he thought it was wrong for her to revive her relationship with Carlos now that she was engaged to Johnny? God, please, don't punish me for a sin I haven't even committed yet, she prayed, please, give me a chance.

"Angela!"

She knew that voice, that was Angelo, the charming tourist advisor, who counted his life's success in the number of girls that spent a night with him. He had entered through the revolving door. How flattering it was to be recognized by somebody. She ran toward him and they embraced. She had always denied him all intimacies and they had therefore remained good friends.

He had missed her at the airport, he said. He had been asked by Alfonso, the owner of the hotel, to pick her up and take her to an apartment he has rented for her in Palma. Somebody in the office had double booked the hotel and there were simply no other decent places with vacancies. Alfonso was sending his apologies for the inconvenience, he said.

That sounded very generous, but Angela knew there was a catch somewhere, however, she didn't care right now. She needed a bed and she had to keep the opportunity open to make casual contact with Alfonso, who in turn would bring Carlos to her.



The traffic was fast and noisy as they drove along the coast in the hour before sunrise. Angelo took Angela to an apartment high up in a building close to the shore. She fell asleep as soon as she saw the bed, wondering with the last effort what she was involved in, because Angelo, who spoke at least six languages well enough to gossip and lie in all of them convincingly, whom she didn't trust yet liked, who had always shown great affection for her due to the similarity of their names, this Angelo wouldn't be with her at this time of the night unless somebody considered it necessary to pay him well for his talent to talk anybody into doing anything.

When she woke up hours later she was alone. The apartment was decorated like a page out of a modern living magazine, too cold, too sanitary for her taste. But the view over the Bahia de Palma was overwhelming.

She found a note on the foot end of her bed telling her to expect Alfonso at seven o'clock and to dress for dinner. She was to take the other meals in the restaurant on the first floor and charge them to Alfonso. "Don't call Carlos," the note went on, "because he went to Pollensa for a few days." And then Angelo's very ornate signature.

If this wasn't a mess! She had planned on being asked out for dinner by Alfonso, but she had planned on arranging that in the more neutral atmosphere of his hotel while he made his daily good-will tour through the crowd of breakfast guests. He had asked her out last year, not only once; but last year she had refused, because she had not wanted to infuriate Carlos; but for this year she had planned on a little flirt with Alfonso as a message to Carlos. Her date would have been reported to Carlos by the next morning along with the other night-life gossip. Carlos would then have fallen in to a rage - he was so jealous and his pride was hurt easily - he would have stormed to the hotel and found her in her room or at the pool, better though in her room, there would have been a terrible scene, but then he would have calmed down and find another hotel for her and they would enjoy each other's company for two or maybe three unforgettable weeks.

But staying in Alfonso's apartment made it look like she had a proper affair with him, and Carlos would simply despise her and ignore her.

Although she didn't like to admit it to herself, she was programmed by her desire to meet Carlos. And even less than to herself could she admit to Carlos how much she had dreamt of him and his touch. To save herself the embarrassment of demonstrating her devotion, she had decided not to call or visit him outright and tell him that she had returned to Mallorca. Besides, she wanted to alert Carlos to the fact that he was not the only man in the world to find her attractive, men shouldn't take a woman for granted, and Carlos was, in spite of all his jealousy, a man who last year had taken it for granted that she was expecting him any time of night or day, even when he had announced himself for seven o'clock and actually come at nine or - worse yet - at six.

She had half a day before Alfonso would show up. Why had Angelo mentioned Carlos? He must have great intuition. She let the note sail under the bed to make it look like she hadn't found it. Just in case.

She had lunch in a snack bar down the road and strolled aimlessly through the harbor. Fighting with herself she finally rented a car and left town. She idled along the road to Lluçmayer, and driven by an irresistible force she turned off into a bumpy path which led to a rustic restaurant where tourists could also hire horses by the hour. It was one of Carlos' places. He lived on a ranch further North, but he spent a lot of time down here.

He was in Pollensa, the note had said, probably to see his two little sons, who stayed with his sister.

But there he was! Carlos! On a horse in the corral, straight and strong, his shirt halfway unbuttoned and his curls uncontrolled and longer than last year. She left the car, but she couldn't walk. He was a complete stranger to her, after all the intimate moments she remembered. He had retired from a career as a torero three years ago while his wife was slowly dying from cancer. Maybe he had at that time considered a come-back later on. He was now a man of wealth and influence and he had a treasure of experience with women.

How silly of her to come here! He had noticed her and directed his horse toward her, hesitatingly. She trembled, maybe he wouldn't recognize her, maybe he would just laugh about her devotion, maybe, certainly, he had found another woman, maybe his wife wasn't dead at all, maybe she had blown up her

relationship with him into something romantic that hadn't really existed except in her dreams. Russian roulette with five chambers loaded and one holding a chance for survival.

"Angela? I can't believe it." He looked down at her from the high horse.

"Buenas tardes," she said relieved, but still unable to control her heart pounding in her throat.

He whistled for Pablo, a stably boy, to take the horse. He shook her hand and smiled vaguely. They sat down in the shade of an oak. She chattered away about unimportant things and he helped her with her Spanish; he had always insisted on her speaking Spanish although he understood English quite well. He was easy going, laughed and teased her, but they were strangers.

"Are you married now," he asked as if it didn't matter.

"No, not yet," she said, "but I am engaged."

"And you travel on your own?" he laughed loudly. "You didn't write once, you didn't even thank me for the post card I sent to you from Seville."

She should have written, she knew that, but how could she explain to him that she had bitterly tried to wipe him out of her mind? He stood up and wiped the dust off his trousers.

"Have a nice time," he said as he walked her to the car. Well, that was the end of her dreams.

"Hasta la vista," she said with a brave smile.

"Let me know where you are staying. I might just want to go out with you one day. Remember I used to call you Santita?: he kissed her on the forehead and motioned her into the car.

She drove off. She didn't have the courage to tell him that she was staying in Alfonso's apartment, not now, when he had just called her Santita, the name that he had given her affectionately when she had told him what a good girl she was back home.

She stopped in a little church along the roadside, partly to find refuge from the heat and sunshine, partly to nourish that seed of optimism that his "Santita" had planted in her with wishful thinking.

A little later she found a room in a demi-pension in Ca'n Pastilla. Then she sped to Alfonso's apartment to fetch her suitcases before seven o'clock. Something was wrong with Alfonso's offer to her to stay in the apartment. Why had Angelo told her that Carlos was in Pollensa when he was at home?

There were people inside. There were Angelo and Alfonso and two gentlemen in dark suits. She didn't pay attention to their names when Angelo introduced them to her.

"Es aquélla la mujer?" asked one of them turning around to Alfonso.

"Si, si," he nodded. He poured some wine. Then he gave a sign to Angelo who took her into a corner and complimented her on her hair and hips.

Angelo signed deeply and said, "We need your help." They were expecting the arrival of a little boy from Germany any minute now and would she be so kind as to take care of the child for a few days, he asked. The child was the son of a German tycoon, a certain Mr. Braubach, who had sent his agents to ruin Mallorca, this beautiful island, by buying large areas of land and turning them into nudist colonies, health center, year-round pop festivals and the like. The problem was, he continued, that a number of patriotic people like Alfonso were of the opinion that Mallorca needed that land to develop an industry with local money and local entrepreneurs, so that the Islanders were not solely dependent on tourism. What bothered the people most, he said, was that more German money and more German people would ruin the personality of Mallorca.

There would be too many Bratwürstchen, too many St. Pauli beer bottles, too many low cut dresses. They were already teaching the horses to speak German, at least to understand it.

"How about the child," she asked.

"He thinks his father shouldn't impose his money on other people. He ran away from home and told his father that he wasn't going to come home until he withdraws all the offers to buy the land."

She didn't really want to babysit, she wanted to be free for Carlos, should he ever call for her.

"You lied on the note about Carlos being in Pollensa," she changed the subject.

"I did? Apropos Carlos. You know, of course, that Carlos is more or less the head of this patriotic group." He left her standing in the corner and went into the kitchen. She followed him. He didn't believe that it was a good idea to tell Carlos that she was asked by Alfonso to take care of the child, he explained further, Carlos didn't want to be bothered with details.

Here was her chance to become a part in a project that was important to Carlos! She had always admired the love he had for his country and his people, she had envied him for it. Working for his cause would bring her a step or two closer to him, he could no longer treat her like a stranger, she would spend her vacation working for a good cause, for something that was greater than she.

"When is the child going to come?" she asked eagerly.

Another man unknown to her walked in accompanied by a tall, skinny brunette with steel blue eyes. She was obviously embarrassed and blushed to a dark red.

"Es aquella el bambino." ask Alfonso with an expression of disbelief.

The young lady pulled her hair off and dropped her skirt. In her place stood suddenly a lanky young boy or man, hardly older than sixteen years, maybe seventeen.

"Two years ago, when we last saw him, he was but a baby." whispered Angelo, "that's why they wanted a woman to take care of him." They laughed, but only to each other.

It was Angela's duty to make sure the "child" was fed and wouldn't get bored and run away, explained Alfonso, they were allowed to leave the apartment and go to the restaurant downstairs, but only with Alexander, the boy, dressed and made up as *senorita*, because one had to expect that Alexander's father had his spies swarming around.

Soon she was alone with the "little" boy who was several inches taller than she was. He didn't like dressing like a woman, he said. His Oxford English sounded rather sophisticated. She felt sorry for him, being here and running around with a curly wig and a women's frock could create psychological problems in the most balanced person. They finished the bottle of wine, and he emptied the refrigerator before he went to sleep in the other bedroom.

Alfonso appeared on the scene again late the next morning and yelled at Alexander, that his father had let them know that if his son had decided to run away from home forever he was more than welcome to his decision. Alexander was neither disappointed nor surprised; he knew his old man, "Den alten Knacker." After some deliberation Alfonso asked Alexander to write a note to his father telling him that he had not left home voluntarily, but that he had in fact been kidnapped and that his life was endangered, unless all attempts to buy the land were withdrawn. Alexander signed enthusiastically. But when Angelo came minutes later to take "*senorita Alessandra*" out for lunch his good mood was gone. He refused to dress up in a skirt. Therefore Angelo left with only the note.

Alfonso didn't like Alexander's stubbornness and sent him like a naughty child into his room. Angela soon found out why. Alfonso had amorous ambitions addressed at her. She avoided his embraces and kisses as long as she could and finally bit him in the tongue. That sobered him up.

"You'd better act a little friendlier, you bitch," he hissed, "You are in the same boat with us and you need our goodwill to get out of this mess."

"What mess? That little bluff with the kidnapping? I don't think Herr Braubach will take it serious."

"It's no bluff, we had planned to kidnap him with all the trimmings, but then he volunteered, and now we act like he has been kidnapped. No bluff. You wait and see what happens. Read this note that the boy will sign next:

"Lieber Vater! Wenn Du Dein Angebot nicht bis sum 22. Sept., elft Uhr abends zurückgezogen hast, will man mir die Hehle aufschneiden und mein Blut in die Erde Mallorcas sickern lassen. Bitte, bitte, rette mich!"

They threatened to cut Alexander's throat if their demands were not met! They were senselessly fanatic! Guerillas, terrorists, Munich, Tel Aviv, Northern Ireland, all these terms flashed through her mind as she heard the man on top of her mumble words like "I love you, you love me too, just a little bit, be nice, only for a minute ..."

She managed to struggle lose and to flee into Alexander's room.

Alfonso left.

"I'll call Carlos and tell him about you!" she shouted after him. She almost stuck her tongue out. Alfonso came back and ripped the telephone cord out of the wall before he left again.

She tried to talk Alexander into running away with her, but he thought she was hopelessly exaggerating; that old man had only tried to frighten her, he said.

He was possibly right, but she simply had to go to Carlos and ask him about the truth of the situation. He should know whether the threat was a bluff or not. She did not want to see Alexander hurt, but she also did not want to ruin or minimize the chances for success for the patriotic Mallorians. She hoped sincerely that Alfonso had only tried to frighten her into a more generous mood for what he called love, because then she would have her chance now to let Carlos know that she was fighting along his side. It did not matter to her whether he would receive her coolly or a little friendlier; she had a reason to visit him, a justifiable question to ask him. She had always thought a working relationship between man and woman to be the best, at least now she believed that she had always thought so, with her head full of dreams about Carlos being hailed as a hero, blood sipping out of his temples and she, small and dirty from the gun battle, standing close to him. Dreams, dreams, she had to stop dreaming.

She had to leave Alexander unaccompanied and unsupervised and hoped that the TV set would keep him or at least her out of trouble.

Carlos was annoyed at her unannounced appearance on the ranch. He was just on his way to a business meeting, he said. She asked him, if he couldn't take her along like he had done last year. He did not answer but asked her into the house to have a glass of lemon juice with him. Maria, the old cook, joined them and wanted to know whether the senorita was staying for supper. She did not get a definite answer; Carlos was absentminded, hardly said a word, but his hands reached out for hers and held them tight. She chatted about Rome and made up stories about two women in the hotel she pretended to stay in.

The phone rang. Carlos walked into his office and she heard him shout something about his car being nothing but trouble and they shouldn't expect him at the meeting until later. He went on the veranda and called her. Now was the moment when she had to talk business with him. But he grabbed her and kissed her with a passion and gentleness of a man who has waited a long time for this moment. He swept her off her feet and took her into one of the guestrooms. Sounds from the life around the ranch house crept in through the closed blinds while Carlos and Angela celebrated their capacity to desire and to enjoy, to laugh and to be silent. When the bell told them that supper was ready, they had just dozed off into a satisfied slumber.

He was happy that she had come, he assured her while they got dressed, but she should never come out to the ranch again unless he had asked her to, he said very firmly, there were too many important business deals he was involved in right now.

"Do you have anything to do with the German man who wants to buy half the island?" she asked casually.

"Who told you about that?"

"A lady in the hotel. She knows this man and she thinks that you kidnapped his wife or son or something. She is crazy."



"Show me that lady, Angela! No, you stay out of this completely. Ignore everything you hear. We have the child, if you insist on knowing, but he came more or less on his own and he is really enjoying this little adventure."

"What's his name," she asked to make sure.

"I don't know, I have never seen him, or maybe some years ago. Does that matter? I know his father's name and this is all I have to know. Anyhow, Alfonso has rented an apartment for the boy somewhere and he has also hired a governess from England to take proper care of him. So don't worry, just stay out of this."

"I can't," she tried to sound factual, "I am the woman that is taking care of the boy."

He slapped her mercilessly, again and again. Then he dropped her on the bed and walked from the room. She realized only now that Alfonso's motive to let her live in the apartment was not to have her take care of Alexander, not to make up for a booking error in his hotel, but to win a round in his rivalry with Carlos for prestige and recognition. Carlos, whose relationship with Angela last year was well known among his friends and relatives, was deeply humiliated by her staying in a place that Alfonso paid for; unwillingly, at least almost unwillingly she had become Alfonso's accomplice. Carlos believed that she had volunteered for her position and he was not willing to look at the situation from any other point of view than that of a deceived lover. He ignored her efforts to explain the situation, and since she did not tell him the full truth anyhow, they argued with no chance for an understanding. Only when she resigned and let her tears run freely, did he soften his attitude and gave her his handkerchief to wipe her checks dry with.

It was dark when they finally made their way to Palma. She could fly to Madrid tomorrow or to Seville, she could leave Mallorca forever, she thought, but what was life back home going to be like, if she had to live with the feeling that Carlos has pushed her away. She could not leave yet. This afternoon, while they had played in bed, it had been like last year, just for a few moments. But now they were strangers again.

"Would you kill Alexander if you thought it was the only way to scare his father off the island?" she asked in a faked conversational tone. Carlos did not

answer, instead he turned his car into a side road and stopped near a cliff from where they had a great view over the bay. He sat down on a rock and motioned her to sit on an elevated root just below him and he placed her head between his knees.

The early autumn wind chased innumerable clouds across the sky. The round moon was trying almost in vain to throw some light on the earth. The air was vibrating with noise from the sea and the wind's play with the trees. They did not have to talk.

Angela senses that there was no answer to her questions. The hands that were gently stroking over her hair might well be the hands of a future murder; the hand that threw the hand-grenade and killed the Israelis in Munich probably knew the feeling of a woman's breast. Any answer, any promise that Carlos might give her now concerning the safety of the kidnapped boy would be meaningless and invalid as soon as it was said, because nobody knows what the next moment will hold. Like the wind and the moonlight, nothing is certain, nothing is constant. The molecules in her body were forever changing their constellation, she felt the time pulsing in the ground under her thighs. For a moment she was frightened because the world held so many mysteries.

"Love me, Carlos," she whispered. He stood up and led her by the hand back to the car.

A shadow fled from the car into the darkness of the little woods. Was it a common prowler, a would-be thief, or one of Braubach's spies?

Carlos started the engine, then he shut it off suddenly - a few hundred yards behind them another engine was just being started and then shut off. Carlos started the engine again and drove off like a haunted ghost, avoiding the major highways and thus the police.

It was almost morning. Alfonso seemed to tremble when he saw Carlos enter the apartment with Angela, but Carlos preferred to ignore him. So Alfonso turned against Angela and told her off for leaving Alexander alone; she was hired to do a job, he said, and for nothing else.

"How's the kidnapping trick working," she interrupted him.

"They can't find my father and therefore they can't deliver the note to him," explained Alexander. Apparently Mr. Braubach had left his house in Köln and disappeared. Alexander was very amused by the incompetence of his comrade-kidnappers. His father would never disappear for good, he giggled, he would pop up like a weed when and where nobody expected him to.

Angela was nevertheless worried. What would happen if Braubach's lawyers simply went ahead and signed all the contracts and bought the land before Braubach had even read the threat to this son's life?

Alfonso explained to Carlos, who pretended not to listen, that he expected his agents to call any minute now and tell him where they had found senior Braubach. They had found his secretary and sooner or later she would tell them.

"Call you how?" asked Alexander with an expression of disbelief, "remember, you've pulled the cord out of the wall."

Alfonso left, muttering obscenities and slammed the door behind him. Angela came out of the kitchen and formally introduced Alexander to Carlos. While the latter two were talking to each other, Angela joined Angelo in the kitchen to filter some coffee. The only person who would get a ticket for a plane for herself and possibly Alexander without arousing everybody else's suspicion was Angelo. Nobody could trust him, but everybody did. Angela asked him for help.

"Why don't you first discuss it with Carlos," he suggested.

"I am not sure whether he loves me or not. He may just say that he thinks it's a good idea for me to leave, and then I have to live with the assurance that he doesn't care about me. If I go home secretly, ..."

"I get you a ticket tonight. Anything to save a tourist from disillusion."

Carlos appeared in the door, suspicious of what was going on in the kitchen. He told Angela and Alexander to come with him - right now! Alexander quickly disguised himself and Angela had just enough time to grab her overnight case on her way out.

They drove to a ranch where Angela had never been before, there they changed to horses. It rained heavily. They did not ride along the roads or trails, because they did not want to be followed by cars. After what seemed to be hours they arrived at an old farm house that Carlos had recently bought. It was surrounded by trees and a few acres of land. The house was vacant and had very little furniture. There was a small corral for the horses.

"You stay here and don't you dare leave the house," said Carlos to them, "I'll be back later and bring you some food." He kissed Angela and gave her an encouraging pat on the behind. He left.

He trusts me to watch Alexander, she thought in a wave of happiness, but maybe he is only shutting me off and hiding me here from other men or from going home until he has more time to watch over me himself.

They found some matches in the kitchen and made a little fire in the hearth. They didn't really need the additional warmth, the sun had come out, and they didn't have anything to cook, but the crackling of the flames was comforting and soothing. They needed comfort, but not as much as food. They were hungry. There was water in the well, but was it drinkable? They boiled some of it in a tin washbowl and drank it.

"Doesn't your mother miss you?" asked Angela to the boy.

"She! I haven't seen her in years. She is an actress and she went to East Germany and turned into a communist. That's how much she hated my father."

They waited all day for Carlos. There was nothing else to do but to talk. Alexander was a very good companion, full of imaginative stories and hungry for adventure and experience. He like the hide-out, except for the increasing hunger and the skirt and wig he was supposed to be wearing but had long thrown into a corner.

"They didn't even let me take my razor along," he complained.

Angela offered hers to him, although she didn't think he really needed it.

"Use mine. As a girl you have to shave your legs, Alexandra. And don't forget your armpits." she teased him.

He grabbed the wig and threw it in her face and left the house. She knew she had hurt him, but she was too tired and too hungry to get up and apologize. She fell asleep on the floor. When she woke up with stiff shoulders, it was dark, the fire was dead, the moon shone through the little window and showed Alexander in the other room spread out comfortably on the only bed. He was wearing nothing but his swimming trunks, fortunately, it was a warm night.

"There is some room for you in here, too," he called without opening his eyes.

They slept side by side until a knock at the door made them jump up early the next morning. It was Carlos, who brought a basket full of food. It looked and smelled like he had raided the kitchen of a culinary restaurant. He was tired, he hadn't slept all night. While Angela and Alexander had dinner, lunch and breakfast all at once, he told them that they hadn't been able to locate senor Braubach and that one had to expect that he had his spies all over the island or that he would get the press or the police involved.

"Not the press, Lord, don't let the reporters find out," she prayed silently, "folks at home don't even know that I am on Mallorca."

"Something or another will happen tonight, Santita," said Carlos as he got on his horse.

Alexander and Angela sat in front of the little fire place until midnight waiting for somebody to come and bring them some news. The tension became unbearable. Angela suggested that they walk to another farm and try to reach Angelo on the phone and ask about tickets for a plane. But she was nevertheless relieved when Alexander called her a coward.

"Don't you love Carlos?" he asked.

"Sometimes, like this morning when he brought us the food," she answered. She wondered, why she refused to admit that she had never loved anybody as much as Carlos.

"Women!" Alexander shook his head, "I know a game," he said after a while, "I stand behind you and put my arms around your chest and you take a deep breath. Then I count to twenty and I bet at twenty you'll faint."

"And then?"

"That's the game. It works."

"It doesn't."

"Let's see."

He counted. As his body began to tremble he tightened his grip around her breast. She felt a great compassion and gentleness for the fevering young man. She let herself fall backwards and closed her eyes. He made love to her hastily and frightened by the power of his desire. She caressed and kissed him tenderly as he relaxed and fell in to a deep sleep.

When they had not received any news the next morning, Angela could not stand the tension any longer. She decided to ride off, somewhere, just anywhere. She saddled a horse.

"I bet I know where my father is," said Alexander. "I bet he stays with that prostitute. He went to her a couple of times when he wanted to get away from it all."

"Why didn't you tell us before, you nut?" she yelled.

"Because I was waiting for a chance to make love to you." She slapped him and then fled because he tried to hit her back. He chased her around the trees and they laughed and screamed like children and fell on the ground and wrestled, still laughing - until they froze in their motions when they noticed that Carlos had halted his horse almost over them.

"Saddle a horse, boy" he whispered. Alexander backed up into the corral, Angela did not dare move. Nothing in the world frightened her more than when Carlos looked at her with his eyes half closed and did not speak.

"Wait inside the house for me," he said finally. He ordered Alexander to ride in front of him and they disappeared in the little forest.

Angela left the house through a side door and saddled the other horse and jumped on. She wasn't sure about the direction, but somewhere further north she hoped to come across the stable where "that prostitute" used to board her horse and make new acquaintances last year. "That prostitute" must be Juanita, the best on the island, she had decided. She recognized a windmill and found her way a lot easier than she had hoped to.

The horse was fast and easily controlled, Angela wasn't sure whether she was propelled by the fear that Carlos might catch up with her or whether it was the fear that something might happen to Alexander. But one thing was sure, she was not going to leave the island right now, she felt too involved and had to see the outcome.

She saw Juanita a few hundred yards down the road near the stables: a blond in a black leather suit on a white horse, holding a black whip. She had not changed her image since last year: her appearance had never failed to impress Angela. She admired Juanita for her proficiency and her determination, she always seemed to know exactly what she wanted. Juanita, the mother of four children that were accommodated in expensive homes in Switzerland: Juanita, whose real name was Hannelore, who conducted her business in many languages, and the only woman who dared to spit on Carlos' boots. She had done so last year, and he had only shrugged his shoulders.

Their trails crossed. Juanita recognized Angela, and when she heard that Angela was trying to hid from Carlos, she almost fell off the horse with laughter.

"There is only one place where he would never go: my apartment. Let's go there." They left the horses at the stables. Juanita drove a white Mercedes.

Her apartment was decorated in black and white, in lacquer and leather. Angela felt plain, like a country pumpkin.

"Bübchen, hier ist Besuch Für dich," called Juanita into another room. A man appeared who couldn't be anybody but somebody's bodyguard. Behind him emerged another man, tall and stout, with steel eyes and a polite smile. He introduced himself.

"Braubach."

They shook hands.

"Where is my son?" he asked, "Since you left the apartment in Palma I lost track of you."

"I don't know," said Angela, but the truth seemed unbelievable.

"What do you want from me?" Mr. Braubach expected a message.

"They are going to kill your son if you buy the land," she said with conviction.

"They don't have the guts to do anything drastic, it would keep too many tourists from coming here next year."

Angela found herself in a rage against her will, "Man, your son is in the hands of kidnappers, they are fanatic patriots, maybe guerrillas or terrorists. When they get drunk with their ideals they lose all common sense, they gamble their lives and freedom for the cause. Don't you care about your son? What kind of a father are you anyhow!"

"That is besides the point. All this mick-mack is nothing but a primitive trick to raise the price for the properties involved." He seemed to be angry that she had nothing important to tell him.

So she said, "I spent two nights with Alexander, believe me, he is no longer a child. He promised to cut his wrist and to bleed to death on Mallorcan soil if you buy any more land. Nobody has to kill him."

Braubach was very upset and called her a bitch and a liar, asked her to disclose Alexander's hide-out or she would be sorry. She promised to try and find him and to give him a message if there was one.

"Tell him to come to the meeting my agents have arranged with these gangsters for tonight at "Tito's".

"If they let him go there he wouldn't be kidnapped any more. I don't know how that works with kidnapping, I am here just on vacation," she felt so incompetent, but Braubach ignored her doubts.



"And tell him also that I started the whole project because I wanted to establish a future for him somewhere where he could develop everything according to his own taste and ideas, you know, young people, holiday camp, pop festivals, nudist camps, and so on. Tell him that. I've never had a chance to talk to him about it."

She knew that she was being followed when she took a taxi to the farm house, but she did not know whether she was betraying Carlos or trying to rescue Alexander and thus saving Carlos from getting involved in a killing. She did not expect Alexander to be on the farm any longer but she hoped to meet Carlos there sooner or later, and she was willing to face him; she felt like a martyr.

It was obvious from a distance that there were a lots of people in the farm house. She walked the last few hundred yards. She stopped behind a tree to listen to the voices. She tried to recognize Carlos' voice, but she couldn't. Where was he? Who was in the house? A man came out and urinated against the wall, another joined him. Then they went inside again.

Suddenly Angela heard Alexander shout, "Ihr Scheiss Banditen! Let me go!"

They were doing something to him, Angela panicked and she rushed forward to help him, but she was suddenly apprehended by a man who must have been standing close to her. With her heart pounding in her throat and her abdomen burning with fear she was pushed into the house - men, smoke, the smell of wine and perspiration - and Carlos standing behind a chair on which Alexander was tied with some belts. Silence.

Angela felt penetrated by Carlos' black eyes, he looked surprised, yet warm and sad, in spite of all the eyes in the room that were directed toward her, she senses the waves of love that came from Carlos' eyes.

She wanted to ask him for forgiveness, she felt sorry she had slept with Alexander, she was sorry she had planned the affair with Alfonso, she was sorry she had betrayed the cause and led Braubach's spies on the trail to the farm house. She wanted to do something that might please Carlos.

"I've met senor Braubach. He asked me to tell you that he has dropped his plans to buy more land," she stammered.

"Por favor, repita en español!" shouted Carlos. Apparently some of the men did not understand English. She tried to translate. They got the message, but some of them seemed to be disappointed, even angry; one of them was Carlos. Maybe he knew she wasn't telling the truth?

After minutes of wild discussion everybody quieted down and look at Carlos for a comment.

"Don't trust the word of a foreigner," he said looking straight into her face.

She cried, she couldn't stop her tears. A foreigner, that's all she was for him. And he was right, she had just come here for a vacation. A foreigner, she had only thought of herself as a woman.

Carlos gave one of the men instructions to go to "Tito's" at midnight in his place. Then he told Angela he would take her back to Palma.

"I have the plane ticket that Angelo bought for you," he said after a long silent ride. He had found a parking place right outside the apartment building. "Do you want it?"

"I want to go back to the States," she muttered.

"Now that Braubach knows where to find his son you have done your job and you can leave."

"I wanted to keep you from killing him."

"Some of our men are no longer willing to accept a withdrawal of the deal, they want blood. Some hippies, most of them not even from Germany but from the States, have vandalized a store in Arenal last night. Some people want revenge." he said.

"Who knows what's going to happen at the meeting tonight, especially, if you are not even present. I want to go home, Carlos." She wanted to tell him that she loved him, but she couldn't say it, he might not believe her.

"Do you love me?" he asked her in the elevator. She refused to answer.

"Answer me, please!" he shook her.

"Does it matter? I am leaving, that's what matters, and now shut up!" She did not remember having ever spoken to anybody in such a harsh voice before.

Carlos was pale, he had the key to the apartment and locked it again after they had entered.

"Don't leave, Angela, stay here until this is over and I'll care for you like a goddess," it sounded like a command.

"Remember, I am a foreigner and I am going to leave as soon as you let me out of here!"

"You are a foreigner as long as you behave like one, but to me you are a woman right now and I love you."

"Then let me go."

"No! You love me too, but now your vacation is over and you go back to wherever you come from and you tell your friends about the lovely affair you had with a Spaniard. You are going to be a good girl for a few months until it's time for the next vacation. But I'll show you what you did by playing with my love for you."

He ripped her blouse off in shreds, seconds later all her clothes were torn and thrown into a corner, then he loved her, hurting her in every way he could, using all his skill and knowledge about women, all his imagination and strength to make her writher in pain. She cried to God to save her from this Satan. And then deliverance - she felt the warmth in her abdomen, his body heavy and she felt blood trickle down from his arms and back where she had scratched and bitten him.

Before he stood up he took her engagement ring off like a torero who takes a bull's ear for a trophy.

She covered her nakedness with a sheet, she felt bathed in shame. But why don't I hate him, she wondered? God, please, help me to hate him, Lord teach me

to hate him! But instead, she had the desire to please him, to live for him, on his terms. Was it too late?

"Don't ever come back," he said, "I didn't know I could treat a woman like that, but I had been hoping all year long that you would come back and stay for good. And when you came I was afraid that you would just stay for a few weeks and leave again. So I hesitated to believe in your love. But I nevertheless thought you loved me enough to stay here and share my life. I guess I was wrong. Just don't come back." He left.

He had his kill for the night, thought Angela, he has killed at tourist. Maybe she had been of some help to him after all, for she knew that after he had gone through a violent rage he was always less irritable, very understanding and open to compromise. He might have a calming effect on hot heads in his group.

She took a shower, but the feeling of shame wouldn't wash off, so she went back to bed and hid under the sheets. Finally she fell asleep.

When she woke up she smelled the aroma of fresh coffee. Her clothes or what was left of them were piled up neatly on the foot end of her bed, somebody had covered her with a blanket.

Angelo tiptoed into the room and waved a cup of coffee over her face.

"Don't tell me what happened last night," he said, "I'd rather leave that up to my imagination."

"Where is Alexander?" she asked.

"In Frankfurt, I hope. Carlos put him on a plane with the ticket I had bought for you. The plane left while senor Braubach was meeting some of Carlos' people at Tito's. You should have heard the comments when Carlos came into the meeting at about two o'clock and read a letter that Alexander had written to his father. He asked his father to get out of Mallorca for good because he, Alexander, would always feel unwelcome and would never be able to get along with people after one of them had seriously threatened to kill him."

"And Mr. Braubach?"

"He packed up too. He said his money was more appreciated in other places that rival Mallorca for tourists. I guess he is on his way to Tunis. They are not going home, you know, that money has to be invested somewhere. So they buy North Africa, or they build rockets for China or submarines for Austria."

"He should awaken an interest for scuba diving in Alexander and for underwater research; his old man might build him a nudist colony on the bottom of the ocean." she suggested.

"20,000 feet on the bottom of the sea. I myself would have loved for him to invest his money to increase tourism on Mallorca. Most people here do. May I mention the name Carlos?"

"If you have to."

"Do you expect him here?"

"No not really. Before I go to the airport I want to walk up to the church on top of the hill and do some thinking. Somehow I've messed things up so badly that I don't know any more what I want."

"I'll ask Maria to go along with you," said Angelo, "you can't go alone, you know, it won't be proper. I'll tell Carlos you went to church."

"O, no, don't. It's all over. Don't mention me to him!"

The two women knelt down in the darkness of the church, Maria fumbled around with her rosary while she observed the tourists walking through the aisles. Angela folded her hands and prayed; she tried to pray for a happy future with Johnny somewhere in South Carolina, but he was but a very faint image and she caught herself again and again praying for a chance to start all over again with Carlos. She would be honest this time, play it on his terms and either promise him to stay forever or not get involved with him at all. But there was no new beginning, there would be only dreams.

They left the church. Soldiers passed by in groups and judged the flocks of young girls, children chased butterflies, old women gossiped; Maria, too, stopped for a chat with an old friend. Angela strolled on.

At first she thought her imagination was fooling her, when she saw Carlos sitting on a bench just below her where the path came around the bend. He was leaning against a tree, looking out over the Bahia de Palma. She could turn around and take the other way back to Palma and avoid meeting Carlos, she could go home and try to forget an exciting experience. But she could also follow the path she was on and say to him: "I came because I love you, I've tried to hate you, but I love you."

She had a choice - or did she, for Carlos turned around and got up and called, "Santita?"

### **Danke Schön, Herr van Beethoven!**

Helga wrote numerous articles for the Schulhaus Report which was a bi-monthly newsletter published by the German-Texan Heritage Society. This article appeared in Vol 6#1, Jan-Feb 1999.

German was the native language of many classical composers, which adds to its significance in a way I was not aware of until my recent trip to Japan.

During a formal reception in Fukuchiyama given for us sixteen visitors from Texas we were asked to give the assembled hosts and town dignitaries the pleasure of hearing us sing the "Ode of Joe" from Beethoven's ninth symphony in the composer's native language. We were handed the text in German. We had never sung together before, most had only heard but never sung the Ode, and only three of us knew German. So all sixteen of us got on the stage and belted out a version of "Freude, schöner Götterfunnken ..." like no one has ever heard before. The hosts felt honored and expressed that they were happy to have guests who would master Beethoven's language. We felt that we had earned their respect. The initially guarded relationship between us Texans and the Japanese became more relaxed; the ice was broken.

During the following days I surprised the children in our host's home when I sang the German text to many of what they knew as "their" children's and folk songs. On the last day I played "Stille Nacht .." (Silent Night) on the piano. Their mother joined the children's admiration: "Oh, Helga-san even knows old Japanese Christmas song!"

### **How to make an Eternal Easter Bouquet**

This short article was published in the German-Texan Heritage Society newsletter Schulhaus Reporter Vol 5 #2, March-April 1998.

Take at least a dozen raw eggs and punch a hole into each end of each egg with a darning needle or other pointed tool. Put your mouth over one hole and blow the contents of the egg through the other hole into a bowl. This can be done over several days as you need eggs for cooking.

The hollow eggs are then colored brightly like other Easter eggs; red, yellow, blue, purple, green, etc.

Tie a thread to a piece of a toothpick and insert into one egg hole. Tie the other end to one of the branches cut from a freshly budding tree or bush that you arranged in a vase or pitcher. This bouquet will lend a joyful ambiance to your home. After the Easter season you can store the colored eggs in a carton for use season after season.



**Drawing done by Hans von Schweinitz**



## **Tic Tax Mühle**

This article about a board game was published in the German-Texan Heritage Society Journal Vol XVI #1 Spring 1994

Mühle is a board game for two people which is very popular in Germany. If you don't have a Mühle board you can easily copy the one shown here onto a square piece of paper. Each player needs 9 game pieces in his color, like those you might have from checkers. At the beginning of the game there are no pieces on the board. The players take turns placing the pieces on the crosspoints of the lines and later moving them from one point to another.

Each player tries to place his pieces in rows of three and to keep his opponent from doing the same. Each time a row of the three -a Mühle - is completed, a player can remove one of his opponent's pieces from the board, but not a piece locked in a Mühle except at the very end of the game.

When all 18 pieces have been placed on the board (and some perhaps already taken off by the opponent), the moving of the pieces begins. Taking turns each player can move one piece at a time on the line to a neighboring crosspoint trying again to create as many a Mühle as possible and as often as possible, confiscating a piece from the opponent each time a Mühle is formed or re-formed.

A superior player manages to place his pieces in such a way that a move from a piece in one Mühle automatically adds the third piece to a line of two, thus creating a Mühle with each move when the piece is moved back and forth. This constellation is called a "Zwickmühle" and is very desirable.

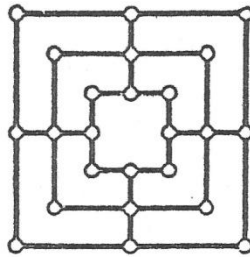
When a player has only three pieces left he can jump to any vacant place on the board at his turn which makes it easier to keep the opponent from forming a Mühle. However, every time he fails to prevent a Mühle, he loses a piece until he is pieceless and lost the game.

Players take turns in starting the game.

Rules on how to end the game vary from family to family. In my home the fastest ending happened when my mother said, 'Macht den Tisch frei, das Essen is

fertig.' (Clear the table, dinner is ready). The slowest version came later in the evening when my father said, 'Jetzt ist das aller-, aller letzte Mal, dass ich euch ins Bett schicke.' (This is the very, very last time that I'm telling you to go to bed.) In both cases we simply counted the pieces each player had on the board at the critical moment.

Since the game may be played by people of the female as well as the male persuasion, the word 'he' may be substituted with 'she' with the author's permission.



Mühle ist eines unserer ältesten Spiele, das im Altertum in derselben Form gepflegt wurde wie heute. Sein besonderer Vorsug liegt darin, daß es auch von ungeübten Spielern sehr rasch erlernt werden kann.

### **Was ist Pfingsten?**

This short article was published in the German-Texan Heritage Society newsletter Schulhaus Reporter Vol 3 #3, May-June 1996.

The seventh Sunday after Ostern (Easter) is Pfingsten (Pentecost), when der Heileig Geist (the Holy Ghost) descended upon the Apostles, or so the story goes. It is a popular weekend for Hochzeiten (weddings) and Wanderungen (hikes) through Wald und Feld (woods and fields). Some people decorate their Haus (house) and Ochsen (oxen), and some might even attend a church service. Please remember, Pflingstmontag is a Feiertag (bank holiday) in Deutschland.

### **We'd Better Stay Humble!**

This short article was published in the German-Texan Heritage Society newsletter Schulhaus Reporter Vol 3 #4, July-August 1996.

I knew that not everybody in the world is aware of the greatness of Texas, but I showed my surprise when I met a young man in Rome recently who had never even heard of Texas. However, I felt very small when he proudly told me the name of his home country: I had never heard of it, couldn't pronounce it, and now I don't remember it. Lesson: Travelling teaches you how little you know. Reisen lehrt dich, wie wenig hu weißt.

## Helga's Poems, Stories, and Articles: We'd Better Stay Humble!



Multiple poems, stories, articles, and other musings. Some are written in a mix of German and English. As told in one of the writings, English is not Helga's mother language. After reading some of these writings, the reader can begin to tell that Helga is developing her own style and becoming more proficient in English.