

# **HELGA'S CORNER**

## **Complete Collection**

by Helga von Schweinitz



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by  
Helga von Schweinitz

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Dedicated to:  
the memory of our Mother  
Helga von Schweinitz

# Introduction



This book consists of three of Helga's books, "Helga's Corner", "German and Germans", and "More of Helga's Corner". Three more articles written for Helga's Corner after Helga's death are included. At the end is a list indicating when each article was originally written by Helga.

From 1994 until 2017, Helga wrote articles for "Helga's Corner". The articles appeared originally in the Schulhaus Reporter in a regular column called "Helga's Corner" which is published six times a year by the German Free School Guild, a committee of the German-Texan Heritage Society, headquartered in Austin, Texas. In 2014 the Schulhaus Reporter was replaced by the GTHS Journal which is also published by the German - Texan Heritage Society headquartered in Austin, Texas.

The book "Helga's Corner" contained articles from 1994 to 2003. These articles are mostly musings about German Language and Culture.

Helga published a second book title "German and Germans". These articles are from 2003 to 2007, and are not-so-serious reflections with Vocabulary exercises. The articles appear with a matching vocabulary exercises on the opposing page. Encase you need the answers to this exercises, the answers have been included in one of the chapters herein.

"German and Germans" can be read and enjoyed by people who have *keinen blassen Schimmer* (not the faintest idea) of German. However, the vocabulary exercises are meant for people with some knowledge of German or at least with the wish they had some knowledge of German. The articles are opinion pieces.

The exercises can be done or ignored. They are meant to help the reader learn some of the new words he finds in the text. Writing them at least once

is supposed to improve memorizing them. Since I am not available to correct any mistakes you make, you simply have to live and cope with that. Many of the readers know German at least as well as I do. They can do the exercises to make themselves feel good.

The third book, "More of Helga's Corner" contains articles from 2007 to 2015.

Throughout all three books, Helga included German words of wisdom. These are also included herein, in no particular order. They are mostly used to take up white space between articles.

*Viel Spaß beim Lesen und Lernen!*

# FORWARD



In June 2019, Helga passed away. I am her daughter, Bettina. As I was going through her notes, I noticed that not all of her "Helga's Corner" articles were included in the three books that Helga published. So I thought I would put together a complete books of her articles. I have taken on Helga's (my Mother's) name as a writer's pseudonym, therefore this book lists her name as the author.

This book also includes a section with comments from her readers. Helga wrote the articles not just to amuse the reader, but also encourage them to think. She was successful, as can be surmized by her reader's comments.

Writing and teaching were a major part of Helga's character. At an early age, her teachers in Germany realized that she would make a good teacher. If another student was struggling, the teacher would ask Helga to assist her fellow student. After passing her Arbitur in 1957, Helga pursued a teaching certificate the Biedefeld University. But she took a detour, through Madison Wisconsin, and through marriage with two children, and eventually graduated Phi Beta Kappa from South Carolina University in 1972, fifteen years later.

Helga's first job as a Teacher was in Montgomery Alabama. She was hired as a foreign language teacher. The school administrator believed that since Helga was fluent in a foreign language (German) she must also know other foreign languages - such as Spanish. Helga did know German, English, and French, but had never studied Spanish. Helga liked a challang, so she took the job, and studied Spanish at the same time that she was teaching her students. When the family moved to Austin, Helga was hired again as a foreign language teacher, this time she taught German.

Helga also enjoyed writing. Already as a teenager, she had journalisctic articles published in her hometown, Herford Germany, local newspaper. As she moved around the world with her family, she continued to publish

articles in local papers. After the family retired in Austin Texas, she began to publish historical articles in specialized magazine and newspapers. She also had articles published in the Austin Newspaper, 'The American Statesman'. As I was going through her files, I found these articles and her research notes. I noticed that many of the ideas for these lengthy articles started with a kernel of an idea mentioned in one of her articles under "Helga's Corner". "Helga's Corner" began as a filler in the German Texan Historical Society newsletter the "Schulhaus Reporter". Later when it was included in the GTHS Journal, "Helga's Corner" evolved into a full opinion piece with an educational twist.

By writing "Helga's Corner", Helga could make use of her skill as a teacher and a writer. She enjoyed coming up with new subjects and anticipating the responses she might receive from the reader.

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## SAUERKRAUT

What do you call a mad German? A sour kraut. Wash your mouth.

The Chinese developed a way to marinate white cabbage and invented what became popular in Germany as “*Sauerkraut*”. Kraut can mean cabbage but it can also refer to other vegetables and especially to herbs. Kitchen herbs are *Küchenkräuter* or *Suppenkräuter*. Medicinal herbs are healing herbs, *Heilkräuter*.

Plural of *das Kraut* is *die Kräuter*. Many a household has a *Kräutergarten*, a herb garden just like many German pioneers had in America.

A popular part of the German line of beverages are the many types of tea (*Tee*) made of herbs (*Kräutertee*). While traveling in Germany you should try them. The most common *Tees* are *Pfefferminztee* to calm you down, and *Kamillentee* against indigestion. In a *Reformhaus* (a health food store) they have a *Tee* for whatever ails you, and many Germans prefer to cure themselves with a *Tee* rather than *Pillen* (pills).

What do you call a weed? *Ein Unkraut*.

Φ Φ Φ Φ

Gegen Dummheit ist kein Kraut  
gewachsen.

There's no herb that cures stupidity.

## SCHNAPS

Even if you don't care to drink it, you should know the word: *der Schnaps*. It is the generic German word for hard liquor distilled from berries, grain, flowers, herbs or other basics. It comes with many names like *Aquavit, Steinhäger, Enzian, Wacholder, Korn, Ratzeputz...*

To drink a *Schnaps (einen Schnaps trinken)* is woven into the fabric of German culture. A host may offer you *ein Schnäpschen* (form of endearment) as a welcoming gesture. In a restaurant a new friend might ask you to come to the bar with him to seal the new friendship with a *Schnaps*. It can be part of the ritual when somebody offers you to call him the familiar *du* instead of the formal *Sie*. You then drink to brotherhood, *Bruderschaft trinken*.

There are many words with *Schnaps* in them, the most common one is die *Schnapsidee*, which is an idea that is not yet well thought through, or a hare-brained scheme.

My grandmother's *Schnaps*, which she concocted secretly in our basement right after WW II in Germany, was highly valued by American GIs who had their liquor rationed. They came in the dark of night, loaded with bread, Spry, corned beef and other badly needed food stuff in exchange for "Oma's tea". She had acquired the necessary skills in Milwaukee where she had lived during prohibition. It saved us children from going to bed hungry too often.

Here's to you, Oma! *Prost!*

Φ Φ Φ Φ

Über Geschmack läßt sich streiten.

One can argue about taste.

## DIE HOSE

**Hose** (ho-ze) is the two-syllable German word for an item no American should have to go without: pants, trousers, knickers, panties, briefs, etc..

Bavarians usually use the word in the plural: **Hosen**. All Bavarians, as the world knows, wear a special kind of **Hosen**: **die Lederhosen** (leatherpants). Underneath they wear (I suspect) **Unterhosen** (underpants).

If you wear undies made of cotton, you are wearing **Baumwollunterhosen**.

What we call "pantyhose" (panty-stockings), Germans call **Strumpfhose** (stocking-pants).

For skiing one sports **die Skihose**, for watersports **die Badehose** and, as sweatpants, **die Trainingshose**.

Some men secure their trousers with **Hosenträger** (suspenders), and when their fly is open, you should avoid looking at their **Hosenschlitz**.

Of the woman who is the real man of the house, it is said: "**Sie hat die Hosen an**."

**Die Hose** - don't leave your home without it.

Φ Φ Φ Φ

Wer andern eine Grube gräbt,  
fällt selbst hinein.

He who digs a trap for other  
falls into it himself.

## SKAT

**SKAT** (pronounced skaht) is a game played by many Germans. It is a card game (*Kartenspiel*) for three players (*drei Spieler*). Each game starts with some bidding (*reizen*), and the highest bidder plays against the other two, but just for that hand. On many an evening two guys decide to play *Skat*, and the proverbial search for “The Third Man” (*der dritte Mann*) begins.

Although German is used with a sprinkling of French when playing *Skat*, words take on a different meaning: “*aus dem Schneider*”, “*der mauert*”, “*Grand mit Vieren*”, “*der Alte*” “*Durchmarsch*” are just a small sample of the *Skat* - language. Even behavior seems to be *Skat*-specific: bursts of excited, loud comments, slamming the fist holding a card on the table, playing into the wee hours of the morning, often in a pub, and then consuming a bowl of *Gulaschsuppe* or *Speck und Spiegeleier auf Roggenbrot* (bacon and fried eggs on rye) or some other sobering sustenance before going home.

I know of *Skat* tournaments and regular *Skat* club evenings in *Amerika*, but for a German in the old country his *Skatabend* is almost sacred.

*Skat* requires concentration and a good grasp of numbers. That’s why I have never been good at it. I only play when certain men in my life are so desperately in need of a third man that they ask me - a woman who can barely count the cards in her hand - to be “*der dritte Mann*”.

Φ Φ Φ Φ

Rom ist auch nicht an einem  
Tag erbaut worden.

Rome wasn't built in a day.



## BURG VS. BERG

In English you pronounce ...burg just like you do ...berg. That lead a certain Mr. Finkenburg to bark up the family tree of the Finkenberg clan. Relying on sound rather than on correct spelling, he found a great grandmother that wasn't his at all. What confusion!

**Burg** means castle - like in **Hamburg** (pronounced humboork); it can also refer to the community that developed around the castle. **Berg** means mountain - like in **Heidelberg** (pronounced hydelbarek); it can also be the name of the settlement near or on that mountain. There is a town called **Wittenburg** and another one called **Wittenberg**. Which one is the "Luther town"?

For ...**burg** you can remember Fredericksburg in Texas with its oompahh bands. For the ...**berg** sound think of how bare that nearby mountain is, the Enchanted Rock.

So many of you will always get it wrong, because if it can go wrong, it will. After all, isn't that Merphy's law?

Φ Φ Φ Φ

Was Hänschen nicht lernt,  
lernt Hans nimmermehr.

You can't teach an old dog new tricks.

## WAS IST DAS?

All too often someone says to me: I know only three German words:  
“*Ich liebe dich*” (I love you).

That's really nice. But here is an opportunity for these linguists to increase their vocabulary without really trying:

The following words are all preceded by “*das*”, one of the German translations of “the”. Das indicates that the noun (not the thing or person) is of the neuter gender.

<i>das Haus</i>	<i>das Sofa</i>	<i>das Auto</i>	<i>das Glas</i>
<i>das Gras</i>	<i>das Gas</i>	<i>das Radio</i>	<i>das Bier</i>
<i>das Gold</i>	<i>das Fräulein</i>	<i>das Ende</i>	

There are many words that are exactly like English words or close to it. You just have to look for them. Of course, they sound a little different in German.

Now say: „*Ich liebe das Sofa und das Bier.*”  
„*Ich liebe das.....und das.....*”  
„*Ich liebe das.....und das.....*”

Φ Φ Φ Φ

Liebe macht erfinderisch.

Love will find a way.

## YOU MUST IT RIGHT GET

You must the word order right get! In 1949, John P. began to translate a paragraph of a German novel. He is still hung up on the first sentence, because he has yet to find the verb.

In German, words of a sentence follow a sequence which can be quite different from the word order of an English sentence.

If the verb of a simple clause consists of two words (as in „He has seen the light“) the second part of the verb moves to the end of the sentence ("He has the light seen" = "***Er hat das Licht gesehen***").

Now, if you have seen the light, you will be able the following words in the right order to put: "***Meyer - Herr - mehr - Wasser - trinken - muss***". (Mr. Meyer must drink more water).

I want you a nice time wish. I hope that you enjoy German to learn.

Φ Φ Φ Φ

Rache ist süß.

Revenge is sweet.

## WHO IS WHERE?

*Wer ist wo?*

Most German question words (*Fragewörter*) are easy to learn:

*was* = what?

*wann* = when?

*warum* = why?

*wieviel* = how much?

*wessen* = whose?

*wie* = how?

*wer* = who?

*wo* = where?

"*Wo und wer?*" is easily mistaken to mean "Who and where?", although it means "Where and who?" Imagine your mother's face when you ask her "*Wer ist mein Vater?*", when all you want to know is where your father is at the moment.

Now take your *Kuli* (ballpoint pen) and fill in the blanks:

when= \_\_\_\_\_?      what= \_\_\_\_\_?

how= \_\_\_\_\_?      why = \_\_\_\_\_?

how much = \_\_\_\_\_?      who = \_\_\_\_\_?

whose = \_\_\_\_\_?      where = \_\_\_\_\_?

One question (*Frage*) that should always be asked and answered with accuracy when food poisoning breaks out: „Who ate what?"

In German, the language of philosophers, you should ask: "*Wann aß wer wo wessen was - und warum?*"

Φ   Φ   Φ   Φ

Man ist, was man ißt.

One is what one eats.

## KNÖDEL ANYTIME

In spite of Pizza Huts and Burger Kings sprouting all over Germany, the country is still offering a great variety of dishes that we rarely find in America. One of the specialties is the dumpling (*der Knödel*, also called *der Kloß*).

Recipes change from region to region, but most *Knödel* are made from one of four basic ingredients: raw or boiled potatoes (*Kartoffelknödel*), yesterday's white bread (*Semmelknödel*), grits (*Griesknödel*) or meat (*Fleischknödel*). The famous *Leberknödelsuppe* is a soup with *Semmelknödel* which have liver (*Leber*) mixed in.

*Kartoffelknödel* and *Semmelknödel* have to be eaten with lots of gravy or saucy meats like *Gulasch*, or with juicy vegetables like a mild *Sauerkraut*. They can be enhanced by mixing in fried onions and bacon, croutons, caraway seeds, etc. *Griesknödel* can be filled with prunes or other fruit and served in hot vanilla pudding (hmmhmmmmhmm!!)

One plump, bacon filled *Semmelknödel* in a bowl of broth at four in the morning when the party is over takes the edge off the hangover (*Kater*).

Just before my last trip to Germany my doctor told me to go on a diet. I picked the *Knödel-Diät* and was very happy with it.

Φ Φ Φ Φ

Es ist nicht alles Gold was glänzt.

All that glitters is not gold.

## NOBODY DIES

Nobody dies learning German. The word „*die*“ is one of the many translations of „the“. „*Die*“ rhymes with „she“, not with „shy“.

*Die* indicates that a noun is of the feminine gender - remember: not the thing is necessarily feminine, only the word. the girl is *das Mädchen*.

Do you recognize these German words? (The lonesome *e* at the end of some of the nouns is pronounced like the a in „Have a nice day“.)

*die Rose   die Maus   die Banane   die Bibel*  
*die Hand   die Maschine   die Laus*  
*die Oma   die Katastrophe.*

Most nouns that end with an *e* after a consonant are of the feminine gender. *die Liebe, die Schokolade, die Tasse, die Garage, die Margarine.*

Almost all nouns with the following endings are feminine:  
*-ung (die Übung); -tät (die Universität); -ion (die Station);*  
*-ik (die Grammatik); -schaft (die Botschaft)*

*Die Statistik sagt:* when in doubt about *der, die* or *das*, use *die*.

Φ   Φ   Φ   Φ

Erst besinn's, dann beginn's!

Look before you leap.

## DARE TO SAY DER

The German word „**der**“ is another one of the many translations of the English „the“. It rhymes somewhat with „dare“ and is said to indicate the masculine gender of a noun. That does not mean that the item is masculine but that the word is “masculine”.

*der Finger    der Film    der Garten*  
*der Mann    der Schuh    der Motor*  
*der Idiot    der Arm    der Opa*

You can guess that a noun might be masculine by considering the ending: *or (der Motor); us (der Kaktus); er (der Lehrer)* - especially if the *er* is added to the stem of a verb: (*lehren - der Lehrer; sprechen - der Sprecher*).

Here are a few verbs to practice with:  
*schreiben - der.....*  
*lesen - der.....*  
*hören - der.....*

There are other rules, but they are too unreliable. However, you can always dare to say **der**.

Φ   Φ   Φ   Φ

Die Tat wirkt mächtiger als  
das Wort.

Actions speak louder than words.

## SHOULD WE NEUTER THEM ALL?

The language of grammar has a major flaw: it uses the words feminine, masculine and neuter to describe the so-called gender of a noun. The origin of this practice may lie in prehistoric times, but for modern man it creates too much confusion.

Why is *der Tisch* (the table) “masculine” in German and “feminine” (la mesa) in Spanish? Why is there *die See* (the sea) and *der See* (the lake)? Why is *das Fräulein* (the unmarried woman) neuter? Why do you say: *Ich gehe in die Stadt. Ich komme aus der Stadt?*

We should remember that it is not the object that has a gender but the word for it, but who can keep all that in mind? In German you can simplify matters somewhat because you can make all nouns neuter, i. e. *das*-words. You simply add *-chen* or *-lein* or regional variations thereof like *-le* or *-li*. Let's neuter your mother: *die Mutter - das Mütterchen* or *das Mütterlein*, then let's neuter my brother etc....*der Bruder - das Brüderlein, der Tisch - das Tischlein*....

Although grammatically always correct, neutralization is not always appropriate. Therefore I challenge you all to come up with new words to be used instead of “masculine”, “feminine”, “neuter” and “gender” in the language of grammar.

Φ Φ Φ Φ

Ein Unglück kommt selten allein.

When it rains it pours



## DER - DIE - DAS RAT

Some good advice from Helga: If you don't know when to use *das*, *die* or *der*, don't worry. It's more important to use the right word following the *der*, *die* or *das*.

Our friend Anita travelled through Europe with a German cousin twice removed and admired the beautiful Baroque *Kirschen* (cherries) instead of the *Kirchen* (churches) they were visiting. She also told him that she wanted to spoil her *Koffer* (suitcase) with a hot bath. She meant to spoil her *Körper* (body).

Since *der*, *die* and *das* can change to *dem*, *des*, *den*, *denen*, *dessen* and so forth - depending on their function in the sentence - some not so dumb folks use either always *die* or an unspecified *de*.

As a teacher of German I urge you to study the fine points of grammar, but until you have mastered them, don't hesitate to babble away in German anyhow. But don't neglect to learn lots of vocabulary words so you don't offer your *Körper* to be searched instead of your *Koffer*.

Φ Φ Φ Φ

Was nicht ist kann noch werden.

Your day will come.

## FANTASTISCH

***Fantastisch!*** The German language is changing rapidly (***rapide***). Many of our English words with "ph" are used with the same meaning in German, but in many cases the "ph" changed to "f" in recent years. The photographer is ***der Fotograf***, the telephone is ***das Telefon***, a phantastic idea is ***eine fantastische Idee***, but a philosopher is still ***ein Philosoph*** - (as of this writing).

So, let's not take it too seriously right now. Let's be filosofical about it and ask ourselves, which words are now ph-words and which are f-words. Is it ***Physik*** or ***Fysik***? Is it just a ***Phase*** or a ***Fase*** the Germans are going through? Is it a temporary ***Phänomen*** or ***Fänomen***? I am a little phlabberghasted about it.

Just for the phun of it, look in the dictionary for words with "ph". Do they all look Greek to you? At the same time you'll be surprised at how much German you know.

Φ Φ Φ Φ

Hilf dir selbst, so hilft dir Gott.

God helps those who help themselves.

## DU, IHR, SIE - THOU, YOU

Thou don't have to ask yourself any longer whether to use *du*, *ihr*, or *Sie* for our English thou and you.

God, children, animals, family members, first name friends and any inanimate objects you might talk to are addressed with *du* (singular) or *ihr* (plural). "*Lieber Gott, du musst mir helfen.*" (Dear God, you have to help me.)

Adults whom we call by their last name or whose name we don't even know or whom we address by their titles are *Sie*-persons (singular and plural). "*Herr Pastor, Sie müssen mir helfen.*" (Pastor, you have to help me!)

The singular and plural *Sie*=you is always capitalized. It is actually the pronoun *sie*=they which is used as a polite way to address someone, a courtesy formerly reserved for kings and the likes. That's why *Sie*=you goes with the same verb form as *sie*=they. *Wo sind sie?* (Where are they)? and *Wo sind Sie?* (Where are you?)

*Du* is the old thou which God used when he gave the Ten Commandments to the English speaking world. But nowadays polite society addresses everybody with you (a variation of ye), actually as a plural entity which equals the German *ihr* =you all.

Translate this question: Who are you? (There are at least three answers).

Answers: 1. *Wer bist du?* 2. *Wer seid ihr?* 3. *Wer sind Sie?*

Φ Φ Φ Φ

Nach dem Essen sollst du ruh'n  
oder tausend Schritte tun.

After eating rest a while  
or take a walk for half a mile.

## FRESSEN

*Fressen, fraß, gefressen, er frisst.*

Although your pooch has impeccable table manners, his eating is not called „*essen*“ in German, but „*fressen*“.

You don't say „*Der Hund isst*“, you say „*Der Hund frisst*“. *Der Mensch isst, das Tier frisst.*

When human animals eat too much or in a sloppy manner, we say „*sie fressen*“. *Tante Frieda fraß wie ein Scheunendrescher* (Aunt Frieda ate like a threshing machine in a barn). *Sie war sehr dick*. (She was very fat).

Many Germans try to stick to a diet called „F.d.H.“ (eff-day-hah), which stands for „*Friss die Hälfte*“ and means „eat only half as much as you want to“. It works for my sisters.

Some all-you-can-eat restaurants are called „*Fress - Paradiese*“. However, I have not seen any in Germany, only in the good old USA.

Remember: *Der Mensch ist was er isst...*(and : *was er frisst*).

Φ Φ Φ Φ

Man muß die Feste feiern  
wie sie fallen.

You have to celebrate when you have  
the opportunity.

## IT'S IN

In German you have a great way to indicate that a person is of the feminine gender: you add "in".

***der Professor - die Professorin*** (the professor - the female professor);

***der Lehrer - die Lehrerin*** (the teacher - the female teacher);

***der Bäcker - die B..... ..*** (the baker - the female baker)

This is done mainly with professions, but also with nouns that are not actually an adjective turned into a noun:

***der Nachbar - die Nachbarin*** (the neighbor - the female neighbor )

***der Freund - die Freundin*** (the friend - the female friend, lady friend or not)

A note to genealogists: In some registries the "in" is even added to a woman's name:

***Robert Müller und Luise Müllerin.***

If you were told: "Your neighbor has an affair," wouldn't it be nice to know if it's the he-neighbor who's having an affair or if she is the one?

Φ Φ Φ Φ

Sei freundlich gegen jederman,  
dann sieht dich jeder freundlich an.

Be friendly towards everybody;  
then everybody will look friendly at you.

## DONNERWETTER!

The so-called four letter words have more than four letters in German, of course. Take "**Donnerwetter**" which can express anger or surprise. The basic translation is "thunder weather".

Germans in predominantly catholic areas tend to swear in religious terms, from the acceptable "**Himmel**" (heaven) to the Holy Family.

In the more protestant northern regions, references to the digestive system and the animal world are preferred: A mean guy is a "**Schweinehund**" (a swine hound).

Words with a sexual meaning are not as commonly used in German for their shock effect as they are in English.

The first and often only German word some American GIs enjoy learning is what in English is a four letter word beginning with "sh". It is now widely used in Germany and hardly shocks anybody anymore. However, like in English, it is enough to sound out just the first "sh" sound without completing the word, but when you think in German, you have to realize that the "sh" sound has three letters in German: "**Sch**..."

Now, *wasch* your mouth *aus*!

Φ Φ Φ Φ

Mann soll den Tag nicht  
vor dem Abend loben.

Don't praise the day before evening.

## A VISIT TO THE *UMLAUT*-GARDEN

“*Umlaut*” means “change in sound”. If an a, o or u are topped by two dots (*ä, ö, ü*) their pronunciation is changed. It's difficult to practice sound in writing, but no matter how you pronounce it, in writing you can always replace the dots by placing an „e” behind the vowel. *Händel* -

*Haendel*, *König* - *Koenig*,

*Müller* - *Mueller*.

Many German immigrants made the change from an *Umlaut* with dots to adding the e to the vowel when they moved here. However, some dropped the Umlaut altogether, like the Schutze family in Austin, Texas, which used to be the *Schütze* family, although the part of the *Schütze* family that settled in San Antonio is now the Schuetze family.

Other families that immigrated with an *Umlaut*, like the *Pörtner* clan, first changed it to Poertner and then dropped the o, not the e. That spelling kept the sound of the original name, like Pertner. Some members of the present generation don't even know that there was an o involved five generations ago.

Genealogists beware!

Φ Φ Φ Φ

Kommt Zeit, kommt Rat.

Time will tell.

## A SIGHT AT NIGHT

Is the neighbor's light in sight at night? Many German words with **ch** have a similar word in English with a silent gh or an f-sounding gh.

**acht** = eight; **rechts** and **richtig** = right; **hoch** = high; **lachen** = laugh; **nichts** = naught; **er dachte** = he thought.

Unfortunately, this relationship is not true for every **ch** (no matter how you pronounce it), but you can always give it a try:

**Nacht** =-----.

**Macht** =-----.

**in Sicht** =--- -----.

**Nachbar** =-----.

**Schlachthaus 7** =----- -----.

**Licht** = -----.

**Winter brachte Eis und leichten Schnee** = -----

-----.

Φ Φ Φ Φ

Kein Feuer, kine Kohle  
Kann brennen so heiß,  
Als heimliche Liebe,  
Von der niemand nichts weiß.

No fire, no coal  
can burn as hot  
As secret love  
of which no one knows naught.



## LIEBE - IS IT LOVE?

Love --- In English we make it, we fall in it, and we give it the value of zero in a game of tennis when we start scoring with love - fifteen. We can't translate these expressions literally into German. Germans don't say *Wir machen Liebe*. When a German falls in love he says *Ich bin verliebt*. And a game of tennis begins with *null - fünfzehn*.

If you are a man and a lover, you are not a *Lieber*, you are a *Liebhaber*. You use *lieber* when you prefer one thing over another: *Ich esse Butter lieber als Margarine*.

Too often we chirp "I love you!" which is embarrassing to a German who is not used to our culture. The German "*Ich liebe dich!*" is more sincere, rather intimate.

Poets beware: Love rhymes with dove - a peaceful image. *Liebe* rhymes with *Triebe* (driving urges, strong desires): *Die süßesten Triebe beflügeln meine Liebe*. (The sweetest desires give wings to my love).

And Meine *wildesten Triebe sind meine Schokoladen-Liebe*. (The wildest urges make me eat chocolate).

Φ Φ Φ Φ

Was man sät, das erntet man.

You reap what you sow.

## PAMPERS

“We pamper Grandma five times a day,” said our young German visitor. We had asked him to practice his English on us, and it soon became clear, that Germans had absorbed many English words, given them a different meaning thinking that they meant the same in both languages.

For us “Pamper” is a brand name of a disposable diaper. In Germany it now stands for any disposable diaper, and it is also a verb meaning to put a disposable diaper on a person (*Wir pampern Oma fünf mal am Tag*).

“Grandma has her own *handy*,” said our visitor. “Handy what?” I asked. It turns out, that a *Handy* is a cell phone.

“Grandma eats a lot of Philadelphia strength cheese since her fall.” “What is strength cheese?” “In Germany we now have a cheese called *Kraft* which means “strength” in English.” He was talking about Philadelphia cream cheese form Kraft.

“Grandma won’t let my brother Max into her house since he turned *Republican*.” Well, I know that a member of the German party of *Republikaner* is extremely right wing, a nationalist, so I had to describe American Republicans to him.

All that reminded me of a German ad for a vacuum cleaner (*Staubsauger* = dust sucker) which appeared in English which is so fashionable in advertising: “Nothing sucks like Electrolux”.

Φ Φ Φ Φ

Aller Segen kommt von oben.

All blessings come from above.

## IT'S SO ADVERBIAL!

Some of us handle adverbs real good, others do so really well. In German we don't have a problem with adverbs because we use a basic adjective as an adverb, without adding an ending or switching to another word:

Let's take „*schön*“ (beautiful): ***Zur Weihnachtszeit ist unser Schulhaus schön dekoriert.*** (At Christmas time our school house is beautifully decorated.)

Let's take „*gut*“ (good): ***Ein guter Motor läuft gut.*** (A good motor runs well.)

***Ist diese einfache Regel nicht einfach fantastisch?*** (Is this simple rule not simply phantastic?)

***Manche von uns sprechen Deutsch sehr gut, andere nicht so gut.***  
(Some of us speak German very well, others don't do so good.)

Φ Φ Φ Φ

Wer Arbeit kennt und sich nicht drückt,  
der ist verrückt.

If you don't shirk work,  
you are a jerk.

## AMUSINGLY DESCRIPTIVE

Some German words are so descriptive! You'll find a few of them in the left column and the proper English expressions for them on the right, but in the wrong order. Please, match the letters with the numbers:

- |   |                   |
|---|-------------------|
| 1. <i>der Staubsauger</i> (dust sucker)         | a. diarrhea       |
| 2. <i>die Glühbirne</i> (glow pear)             | b. alarm clock    |
| 3. <i>der Wecker</i> (waker)                    | c. typewriter     |
| 4. <i>die Hochzeit</i> (high time)              | d. honeymoon      |
| 5. <i>der Durchfall</i> (fall through)          | e. wedding        |
| 6. <i>das Taschenbuch</i> (pocketbook)          | f. secretly       |
| 7. <i>heimlich</i>                              | g. lightbulb      |
| 8. <i>die Flitterwochen</i> (tinsel weeks)      | h. paperback      |
| 9. <i>die Schreibmaschine</i> (writing machine) | i. bra            |
| 10. <i>BH</i> ( „bay hah”) (bh)                 | j. vacuum cleaner |

A little help: BH stands for *Büstenhalter* (bust holder). Don't tell anybody I used that word in my article.

These words make for delightful underholding (*Unterhaltung*) at a rooster tail party (*auf Deutsch: Cocktail Party*).

Φ Φ Φ Φ

Jedem das Seine.

To each his own.

## DIE SPINNT JA!

German has many phrases expressing that somebody is nuts, a little crazy, off the rocker.

Here are a few that can be used in polite society. It is also good to know that in casual German personal pronouns like “*er*” and “*sie*” can be replaced by the definite article, like “*der*”, “*dem*”, “*die*” etc., and “*ja*” and “*wohl*” are often added for emphasis.

*Der ist ja verrückt.*

*Die hat einen Vogel.*

*Bei dem piept's ja.*

*Die ist wohl nicht ganz bei Trost.*

*Der hat sie nicht mehr alle.*

*Die hat nicht mehr alle Tassen im Schrank.*

*Bei dem ist wohl eine Schraube locker.*

My favorite, short and to the point: *Die spinnt!*

There is a wordless gesture Germans use: If someone looks at you and tips with his index finger on his forehead, he is telling you that you have a little bird inside your head, that you are a bird brain. Don't give this signal - also called the driver's salute - to a German policeman (*Polizist*). He takes it as “*Beamtenbeleidigung*” which means “insulting an officer of the state” and is punishable by law.

Now underline and learn your favorite phrase and use it when appropriate.

Φ Φ Φ Φ

Was man schwarz auf weiß besitzt  
kann man getrost nach Hause tragen.  
Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

What you have black on white  
you can take home with confidence.

## HEIM - HEIMAT - GEHEIMNIS

*Heim* rhymes with time. Its basic meaning is home. You say: “*Geh heim!* (Go home)” or “*Ich bin daheim.* (I am at home)”.

Related words stir up deep emotions like *Heimweh* (homesickness) and *Heimat* (homeland, including landscape, culture, memories). Millions of Germans lost their *Heimat* in 1945 when they had to flee or were expelled from *Schlesien* (Silesia) , *Ostpreussen* (East Prussia), *Pommern* (Pommerania), and other areas east of the *Oder* and *Neisse* rivers which are now in Poland or Russia.

Some of the world’s major troubles are rooted in some peoples’ fight for their *Heimat*, see *Palestina/Israel*.

Strangely enough, *heim* is also in words like *geheim* (secretly), *das Geheimnis* (the secret), *Geheimdienst* (something like Secret Service or CIA), and *der Geheimagent* (secret agent).

To top it off, there is *heimlich*, which can mean homely as well as secretly, depending on context. But I hope there is nothing *unheimlich* about your *Heim* because *unheimlich* means awful, sinister, spooky. Yet we say *Unsere Lehrerin ist unheimlich nett* (Our teacher is awfully nice).

Φ Φ Φ Φ

Glücklich ist, wer vergißt,  
was nicht mehr zu ändern ist.

Happy is who can ignore  
what can't be fixed - not any more.

## VIEL GLÜCK!

Good luck charms bring viel Glück.

If by the end of this year you have not received the good luck you deserved, you should consider starting the coming year with some of the charms that help the Germans in the Old Country:

a pig (*ein Schwein*, like in *Ich habe Schwein gehabt* which means: I was lucky)

a chimneysweep (*ein Schornsteinfeger* who still comes to your house in a black suit, often with a black top hat.

a toadstool (*ein Fliegenpilz*; it has a red top with white dots)

a horseshoe (*ein Hufeisen*, with the open end up so the luck doesn't fall out.

These symbols are used as New Year's party decoration and also worn as jewelry pendants.

The *Fliegenpilz* is so pretty, that a nice painting or photo of one can adorn your wall and nobody will know why you have it there. I have a clay model in my garden und *ich habe immer viel Glück*.

Φ Φ Φ Φ

Was du heute kannst besorgen,  
das verschiebe nicht auf morgen.

What you can do today  
do not put off until tomorrow.

## WIE GEHT'S?

The simple German verb "**gehen**" (to go) has so many idiomatic uses and meanings that it is worth learning some of them.

Try to match a number with a letter for the correct translation.

- |                                      |                               |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. <i>Das geht nicht.</i>            | a. He cheats on his wife.     |
| 2. <i>Es geht gleich los.</i>        | b. I am doing fine.           |
| 3. <i>Er geht fremd.</i>             | c. How does that work?        |
| 4. <i>Das geht mich nichts an.</i>   | d. That won't work.           |
| 5. <i>Der Kaktus geht ein.</i>       | e. When will the plane leave? |
| 6. <i>Es geht mir gut.</i>           | f. The clock is wrong.        |
| 7. <i>Wie geht das?</i>              | g. How are you?               |
| 8. <i>Wann geht die Maschine ab?</i> | h. It'll begin soon.          |
| 9. <i>Es geht um die Wurst.</i>      | i. That's none of my business |
| 10. <i>Die Uhr geht falsch.</i>      | k. The cactus is dying.       |
| 11. <i>Wie geht's?</i>               | l. Now or never.              |

Lösungen:

a-3; b-6; c-7; d-1; e-8; f-10; g-11; h-2;  
i-4; k-5; l-9

*Geht das nicht einfach?* (Isn't that easy?!)

Φ Φ Φ Φ

Würden sind Bürden.

Great honors are heavy burdens.



## ZUNGENBRECHER

Let's practice some German tongue-twisters.

***Fischers Fritz fischt frische Fische. Frische Fische fischt Fischers Fritz.***

Fisher's Fritz fishes fresh fish. Fresh fish fishes Fisher's Fritz.

***Wir Wiener Waschweiber wollen weiße Wäsche waschen.***

We Viennese wash women want to wash white laundry.

***Wenn Max Wachsmasken mag, dann macht Max Wachsmasken.***

When Max likes wax masks, then he makes wax masks.

***Wenn mancher Mann wüsste, wer mancher Mann wär', gäb' mancher Mann manchem Mann manchmal mehr Ehr'.***

If some man knew who some man were, some man would give some man sometimes more respect.

The following version of *Fischers Fritz* is different from the one above. Can you find the difference?

***Fischers Fritz frisst frische Fische. Frische Fische frisst Fischers Fritz.***

Φ Φ Φ Φ

Besser ein Spatz in der Hand  
als eine Taube auf dem Dach.

A bird in the hand is better  
than two in the bush.

## HERZLICHEN GLÜCKWUNSCH!

Here are the most common ways to express your good wishes in German at different occasions:

Merry Christmas: *Fröhliche Weihnachten!*

Happy New year: *Ein Glückliches Neues Jahr!*

Happy Easter: *Frohe Ostern!*

Have a nice trip: *Gute Reise!*

Have Fun: *Viel Spaß!*

Happy Birthday: *Herzlichen Glückwunsch zum Geburtstag!*

If you want to mention the age of the congratulatee, you simply write the number with a period behind it: *Herzlichen Glückwunsch zum 29. Geburtstag!*

To wish a sick person a good recovery: *Gute Besserung!*

To sign off on a letter or send greetings on a postcard:

*Alles Liebe* (Love),

or

*Herzliche Grüße,*

Helga

Φ Φ Φ Φ

Wer den Schaden hat,  
braucht für dem Spott nicht zu sorgen.

He who suffers the damage,  
does not have to provide the sneers.

## IS A FRIEND EIN FREUND?

We often translate the word friend with *Freund*. However, they have different meanings within the cultural settings of the United States and Germany. In English I refer to hundreds of people as “my friends”. In German I have few people I call *Freund* (or *Freundin* for a female).

Most of the folks I know are *gute Bekannte* (good acquaintances). To be a *Freund* involves commitment, loyalty, and usually common experiences in the past. “Buddy” might be a good translation in some cases.

German literature has through centuries glorified the virtues of *Freundschaft* (friendship). In Schiller’s “Ode to Joy” (set to music by van Beethoven in his Ninth Symphony), you are invited to join in the jubilation if you are fortunate enough to be a friend’s friend, *eines Freundes Freund zu sein*.

Of course, in the world of German teenagers and love, words take on a different nuance. When I was seventeen I answered *ja* when my aunt Johanna asked me: “*Hast du denn schon einen Freund?*”. She understood my *ja* to mean “Helga is seriously dating”, and she advised me to leave school and learn something useful before entering motherhood - *Freund* as the committed boyfriend.

For 27 years, from the time aunt Johanna’s boyfriend moved in with her, to the day she died, aunt Johanna referred to him as her “*Bekannter*”.

Φ Φ Φ Φ

Andere Länder, andere Sitten.

Different countries, different customs.

## THE STREET WALKER

Many visitors from abroad are reluctant users of dictionaries. They think they know it all and thus invite countless misunderstandings. My neighbor, for example, told me that his German cousin twice removed had very athletic children because they were all attending a “gymnasium” full time; he did not know that a “*Gymnasium*” in German is a school with college prep classes from grades five to thirteen.

On a visit to Germany, one of Austin’s mayors wanted to cancel a speech on international commerce because in his final itinerary the word “*Hochschule*” (university) as the event’s sponsor was translated as “highschool”. His speech was not suited to that age group.

An elderly couple in our neighborhood invited their visiting German cousin Herbert to go fishing with them. “I go happy with”, he said, “but you have ein angel for me?” After some snickering and whispering they promised him an angel. On the day of the trip a gorgeous blond divorcee joined them. She spoke German and found out that Herbert had not asked for an angel but for a fishing rod which, in German, is *die Angel*.

And then there is Else, who was determined to see a “Street Walker” before returning to Germany. I suggested a discrete stroll on Austin’s South Congress Avenue where ladies of the night were rumored to be seen. Just in time Else’s host figured out that all she wanted to see was a certain bird, the “road runner”.

Φ Φ Φ Φ

Eile mit Weile!

More haste less speed!

## SCH.....SH

The sh-sound - like in flash - is produced in German by three different combinations of letters:

***sch*** (*Busch*)

***st*** (*s* before *t* at the beginning of a word or syllable: *still*)

***sp*** (*s* before *p* at the beginning of a word or syllable: *spinnen*)

*Die Schwester spielt mit dem Bleistift.*

Practice the sh-sound:

*stumm - spielen - Schweden - Spanien - Stiefel -  
schwimmen - schreiben - Stammbaum - schlau -  
verstehen - versprechen - bestellen - einsteigen*

And now, let's look at ***die Wurst*** (sausage). In high German you don't pronounce it "woorsht", because the ***st*** is at the end of a word, not at the beginning. Yet, you can speak with a bit of a southern dialect and say „***Das ist doch Wurscht***” which means: It really doesn't matter one way or the other.

Φ Φ Φ Φ

Des Menschen Wille ist  
sein Himmelmreich.

Man's will is his heaven.

## ACH, DU LIEBER HIMMEL!

The German noun (*der*) *Himmel* has two translations in English: 1. heaven 2. sky. That is an interesting theological and philosophical connection.

An overjoyed person is “*im siebten Himmel*”, wherever or whatever that is.

A warning to the speakers of German among you: When it's your time to go, make sure you go to the right *Himmel*. Otherwise you'll have to say: "*Ach, du lieber Himmel!*", which means „Oh dear heavens!".

Φ Φ Φ Φ

Gleich und gleich gesellt sich gern.

Birds of a feather flock together.

## ICH VERGESSE NICHTS

German psychiatrists advise us not to use the negative statement: “Ich kann mich nicht erinnern.” (I can’t remember). We should be more positive like in:

*Es fällt mir gleich wieder ein.* (I’ll think of it in a moment)  
*Es liegt mir auf der Zunge* (It’s on the tip of my tongue)

Instead of saying *Ich habe Ihren Namen vergessen* (I forgot your name) we should say:

*Würden Sie bitte Ihren Namen für mich buchstabieren?* (Would you please spell your name for me?)

Friends of mine recently moved to Sun City, a retirement community. Ever since, when they have a temporary lapse of memory, they say: “I am having a Sun City moment”.

There is a very good and honest translation (*Übersetzung*) for that Sun City reference, however, *ich kann mich nicht dran erinnern, es fällt mir gleich wieder ein, es liegt mir auf der Zunge*.

Φ Φ Φ Φ

Gut Ding will Weile haben.

A good thing wants to take its time.

## **SHE'LL BE COMING, HOLDRIO!**

We remember a sentence in a foreign language easier when we sing it. The Langenscheidt company has published a book with useful German phrases set to familiar tunes. My favorite is sung to the melody of “She’ll be coming ‘round the mountain when she comes...:

***Ich bin Ausländer und spreche nicht gut Deutsch.***

***Ich bin Ausländer und spreche nicht gut Deutsch.***

***Bitte sprechen Sie doch langsam.***

***Bitte sprechen Sie doch langsam.***

***Ich bin Ausländer und spreche nicht gut Deutsch.***

It means: “I’m a foreigner and don’t speak German well. Please do speak slowly.”

Some of you insert a yippi-eh after when she comes. The German equivalent to this cowboy’s yell is the German hunter’s ***holdrio*** after ***nicht gut Deutsch***:

***Ich bin Ausländer und spreche nicht gut Deutsch, holdrio!....***

After a trip to Germany one of my students reported that he remembered all the phrases he had learned as songs, but he had a hard time not to sing when he used them in a conversation.

Why don’t you try it, ***holdrio***! ?

Φ Φ Φ Φ

Wer wagt, gewinnt.

Nothing ventured, nothing gained.



## WHAT IS A GIFT AMONG FRIENDS?

When a German warns you of a "*Gift*", don't take it lightly. "*Gift*" is the German word for "poison". Here is a numbered list of English looking German words and in a different order is a lettered list of their actual English translation.

Your assignment is to match the numbers with the letters.

- |            |                     |
|------------|---------------------|
| 1. BAD     | A. RED              |
| 2. HOSE    | B. GRAVE            |
| 3. WAND    | C. BATH             |
| 4. HELL    | D. NOVEL            |
| 5. NUN     | E. TROUSERS         |
| 6. KIND    | F. COTTAGE CHEESE   |
| 7. TAG     | G. WALL             |
| 8. DIE     | H. BRIGHT           |
| 9. TELLER  | I. CHILD            |
| 10. NOT    | J. (FLOWER) BED     |
| 11. HUT    | K. WAS              |
| 12. GANG   | L. DAY              |
| 13. ANGEL  | M. HAT              |
| 14. GUT    | N. FISHING ROD      |
| 15. RAT    | O. WALKWAY          |
| 16. BALD   | P. PLATE            |
| 17. BAGGER | Q. THE              |
| 18. GRAB   | R. COUNSEL          |
| 19. ROMAN  | S. GOOD             |
| 20. TOTE   | T. SOON             |
| 21. QUARK  | U. DREDGING MACHINE |
| 22. WAR    | V. NEED             |
| 23. BEET   | W. DEAD ONES        |
| 24. ROT    | X. NOW              |

Answers: 1 - C, 2 - E, 3 - G, 4 - H, 5 - X, 6 - I, 7 - L, 8 - Q, 9 - P, 10 - V, 11 - M, 12 - O, 13 - N, 14 - S, 15 - R, 16 - T, 17 - U, 18 - B, 19 - D, 20 - W, 21 - F, 22 - K, 23 - J, 24 - A

Φ Φ Φ Φ

Wie gewonnen, so zerronnen

Easy come, easy go

## "MADE IN GERMANY"

German merchandise often displays the English words "Made in Germany". Why in English? The practice is based on a law passed in England in 1887 requiring all imports from Germany to be so marked. It was hoped that this would keep would-be purchasers from buying the items.

However, "Made in Germany" was soon regarded world-wide as an indication of superior workmanship and quality and thus was a boost to Germany's export.

I lived in Germany long enough to know that "Made in Germany" does not guarantee good quality, but it still evokes that expectation in many people.

How fortunate that the British required that the phrase had to be used in English, because in German - *In Deutschland hergestellt* - it might not have had the universal appeal.

Φ Φ Φ Φ

Wohltun bringt Zinsen.

Good deeds bring rewards.

## GIVE ME THE SPIEL

The German noun Spiel (*das Spiel*) has many meanings in English. Among them are:

1. play
2. game
3. gamble.

A *Spielbank* is not a bank for children with play money, it is a gambling casino, while a *Spielplatz* is a playground, and a *Fussballspiel* is a soccer game.

The verb "*spielen*" means to play and to gamble. In English we also use the word "spiel" to mean something like pitch. (She gave me the whole spiel on guild membership).

Spiel was probably schlepped into English from German via Yiddish.

Remember: In German the sp part of *Spiel* is pronounced shp, so the whole word is pronounced "shpeel".

Φ Φ Φ Φ

Morgenstund'  
hat Gold im Mund.

The early bird catches the worm.

## APOSTROPHES FOOL AROUND

One should expect the little apostrophe's function to be identical in English and German. Not so (*Pustekuchen*). "Ludwig's car" in English is "*Ludwigs Auto*" in German. No apostrophe, just an s added to the name. "Helga's corner" is "*Helgas Ecke*".

In old records and books you find several other endings indicating a possessive situation, like in "*Franzens Vater war Bürgermeister*". The son's name is not *Franzen*, but *Franz*.

In some old church records and other documents the Latin genitive endings are added to a German name or word like in *Christi Himmelfahrt* (Ascension of Christ).

German uses the apostrophe only to indicate that the vowel "e" is left out when the spoken language is reflected in writing. "*Wie geht's?*" stands for "*Wie geht es?*" "*Ich hab' die Nase voll*" (I have it up to here) stands for "*Ich habe die Nase voll*".

Of course, English has crawled into German, and now some Germans use the apostrophe like in English, especially in advertising.

Test for doing it correctly:  
Who's corner is this? It is H\_\_\_\_\_ corner.

*Wessen Ecke ist dies? Es ist H\_\_\_\_\_Ecke.*

Φ Φ Φ Φ

Frisch gewagt ist halb gewonnen.

A courageous start is half the victory.

## WHAT'S DAT?

What's dat? We know that German and English are linguistically related. Part of dat relationship is de fact dat many English words containing “th” have a “*d*” in German:

thin = *dünn*;      thick = *dick*;      thorn = *Dorn*;  
thunder = *Donner*;      thistle = *Distel*.

north = *Nord*;      leather = *Leder*;  
three = *drei*;      bath = *Bad*;      Heather = *Heide*

Can you find more th = *d* words in your dictionary or your memory?

By the way, what is the translation of “the” ?

Φ   Φ   Φ   Φ

Papier ist geduldig.

Paper is tolerant.

## INDEX ALERT!

Alphabetized indexes in German publications have changed. The other night I was looking for *München* in my new German road atlas and was startled: *Verflixt nochmal!* had they taken *München* off the map?

The *ü* used to be treated like a simple *u* for alphabetizing, and *München* used to be just below *Mummingen* in the index. After some searching I found *München* on top of the page well above *Muggensturm*. I realized then that the new German practice in indexing is to treat the *ü* as if it were spelled *ue*, although they still print it as *ü*.

This may turn out to be useful knowledge when you look for the name *Schütze* in the phone book on your next trip to the old country.

The same is true for *ä* (ae) and *ö* (oe) in indexes.

As if life and the German language weren't complicated enough without this new practice!!

Φ Φ Φ Φ

Wer den Pfennig nicht ehrt,  
ist des Thalers nicht wert.

If you don't respect the Cent,  
you don't deserve one Euro.

**OI - OI - OI -**

The "Euro" (*der Euro* = 100 Cent) has been the currency (*Währung*) of thirteen European countries since the beginning of 2002. It is important to know that in Germany one pronounces it "Oiro" and not "you row". *Eu* sounds like oi. *Deutschland* is "Doitschlund" and not Ditchland or Dutchland. "*Wieviele you rows kostet der Film?*" may not be understood by every German, neither in most other Euro-countries, because the only one where the natives speak English (sort of) is Ireland. Don't ask me how the Italians or Greeks pronounce the word.

Here are the countries in which you have to pay with Euro:  
Deutschland, Österreich, Belgien, Spanien, Finnland, Frankreich,  
Griechenland, Irland, Italien, Luxemburg, die Nederlande, Portugal and der Vatikan.

With all that simplification of currencies I expected all Euro coins (*Münzen*) to look alike, but *Pustekuchen!* (not so!). Each country proudly produces its own. Some coins minted in *Deutschland*, for example, feature the *Brandenburger Tor*. Do *die Griechen* sport *die Akropolis*? *Die Belgier* their *Männeken Piss*? *Was is auf den Münzen von Vatikan - der Papst?*

And how about Liechtenstein - should we expect a coin showing "*Der alte Herr von Liechtenstein*" dancing the polka around a beer barrel, *ja ja ja?*

Φ Φ Φ Φ

Morgen ist wieder ein Tag.

Tomorrow is another day.

## RISE AND SCHEIN

If you learn only one word today, you are earning your *Heiligenschein* (halo). As a noun the word is *der Schein*, as a verb it is *scheinen*. Both are homonyms, which means, they have a variety of meanings. There is *der Sonnenschein* (sunshine), *der Mondschein* (moonlight), and that glowing circle over your head, *der Heiligenschein*. *Die Sonne scheint* means The sun is shining. *Die Sterne scheinen hell über Texas* says The stars shine bright over Texas.

However, *ein Schein* can also be a certificate or a bank note. *Ein Führerschein* is a driver's license, *ein Hundertdollarschein* is a hundred dollar bill. Students earn *Scheine* for their courses to accumulate credits. To certify that you have donated all your earthly assets to the German-Texan Heritage Society, you ask for a *Bescheinigung*.

How paradox is it then that *scheinen* can also mean to give the appearance! *Der Ring scheint echtes Gold zu sein* means The ring seems to be real gold. We find the noun *Schein* in that sense in the often used phrase: *Der Schein trügt* (Appearance is deceiving).

By the way, that moonshine that your cousin's grandmother enjoyed was not called *Mondschein* but *schwarzgebrannter Fusel*.

Φ Φ Φ Φ

Wer zuletzt lacht,  
lacht am besten.

He who laughs last laughs longest.



## IST DAS NORMAL?

Most English words ending in “al” are used in German with the same meaning (normal = *normal*). However, they are pronounced with the emphasis on the *al*, as if it were normahl.

Say the following words in German with the stress on the last syllable and guess what they mean:

*international - formal - maximal - minimal - die Moral. national - Hospital - Ist das nicht optimal?*

Of course, they can have endings, but they keep the emphasis on the “al”:

*der internationale Konflikt  
optimales Wetter*

Sometimes the meaning can be a little different in German:

To total a sum is *zusammenzählen*.

I totaled my car is *Ich habe an meinem Auto Totalschaden angerichtet*.

(Considering the language problem, you’d better total your car in an English speaking country.)

Φ Φ Φ Φ

Kleine Ursache - Große Wirkung

Big oaks from little acorns grow.

## BIMBOS ARE DEPPEN

The pregnant chad - *das schwangere Papierrund*! It's history now, but for years to come we Americans will have to explain our presidential election of November/December 2000 to inquiring Germans. Here are the key words:

bimbos = *Deppen*; butterfly = *Schmetterling*;  
pregnant = *schwanger*; chad = (I could not find it in any dictionary, but I heard it is called *Papierrund*);  
ballot = *Wahlzettel*; dimple = *Grübchen*;  
lawyers = *Anwälte*; to count = *zählen*;  
to recount = *nochmal zählen*; election = *Wahl*;  
electoral college = *Wahlmänner*; president = *Präsident*;  
vice = *Laster*; vice president = *Vizepräsident*

After I had explained the events in Florida to my German brother-in-law, he asked me: "*Wer war schwanger?*" (Who was pregnant?) I answered in desperation: "*Siebzehn Anwälte, ein Papierrund und zweihundert Deppen.*" (seventeen lawyers, one chad and two hundred bimbos).

Φ Φ Φ Φ

Kleider machen Leute.

Clothes make the man.

## **DAS BAD CAN BE BAD**

The English word “bad” is an adjective like in “ I’ve bad news for you”. The German word “**Bad**” (pronounced baht) means bath and is used in words like **Badezimmer** (a room with a bathtub). It also means spa like in **Bad Homburg** or **Bad Kissingen**, towns where people spend several weeks taking the “cure”, **die Kur**.

With the **Kur** in most cases paid for by health insurance, **Kurgäste** (guests partaking in cure activities) have to drink evil smelling waters, be packed in mud, walk uphill, endure the sight of naked fellow patients in a sauna, and so on.

Doctors have hundreds of tortures they can prescribe. **Kurgäste** are to relax and recuperate from whatever ails them. Most **Bäder** (spas) offer groomed parks and outdoor concerts, cafes with sinfully tempting cakes, and afternoon teas with dancing. For these you try to win the favors of a **Kurschatten** (cure shadow), a person of the other sex with whom you spend relaxing hours of harmless flirting for the duration of the **Kur**.

Many spas feature a casino, a **Spielbank** with an elegant air, which attracts rich people, money launderers, the jet set and the international nobility. Among them are **Badenbaden** and **Wiesbaden**, with the word ...**bad** in the last part of the name.

I found a relationship between bad and **Bad** when I spent an evening in the **Spielbank** in **Bad Homburg**. I lost twelve Marks. And that was bad news.

Φ Φ Φ Φ

Wer nie sein Brot im Bette aß,  
weiß nicht wie Krümel picken.

Who never ate his bread in bed,  
knows not how crumbs can prick you.

## WILL THE FLESH BE WILLING?

The German „**Peter will fischen**“ does not mean „Peter will fish“; it means „Peter wants to fish“.

The variations of the German „**will**“ (***Ich will! Mein letzter Wille. Ich bin willig***, etc.) express a strong will to do something. Some quirk in the English language lets us use the same word „will“ in ”he is willing ...” as well as in “he will...” (as in “he is going to...”).

So, when a German says: „**Ich will bezahlen**“, don't assume that he will actually foot the bill. His flesh might say „**ich will**“ while his spirit might be whispering: “I will not!” Or the other way around. If he means to say „I'll pay“, he'll say „**Ich werde bezahlen**“ or simply „**Ich bezahle**.“

For more information study the **Verben : wollen** (***ich will, du willst, ...***) and **werden** as it is used to express the future.

Φ Φ Φ Φ

Wer sich auf seinen Lorbeeren ausruht,  
trägt sie an der falschen Stelle.

He who rests on his laurels,  
wears them in the wrong place.

## GUTE FREUNDE

Good friends - how do you keep them? Language offers the perfect tool for cultural misunderstandings.

If it is said of a German politician that „*Er ist liberal*“, it means that he believes in free enterprise, relatively free from government interference and support. Your German friend may have a good command of the English language, but he might still misunderstand you when you tell him where you stand concerning “liberals”.

If a German tells you that he is „*evangelisch*“, he is not part of an evangelical church American style. He is simply protestant - maybe Lutheran, maybe Calvinist, maybe a member of any number of Christian religions, but not a catholic.

It is also not wise to discuss taxes. The American income tax rate sounds so low to Germans in comparison to theirs. They get jealous. However, they don't know that we pay a lot of other taxes at a high rate - like property taxes - which they pay hardly worth mentioning.

Whatever you do, don't change the subject to cowboys and Indians. Germans tend to side with the Indians no matter what.

Φ Φ Φ Φ

Zu viele Köche verderben den Brei.

Too many cooks spoil the broth.

## LET VON BE GONE.

"I should of went fishing" said my neighbor when he saw his mother-in-law pull into his driveway. How can the little word "of" be so badly out of place, I thought.

In most cases the English "of" is *von* in German, but in expressions of quantity it is simply not used:

a glass of milk	=	<i>ein Glas Milch</i>
a liter of gasoline	=	<i>ein Liter Benzin</i>
a bottle of olive oil	=	<i>eine Flasche Olivenöl</i>
a cup of tea	=	<i>eine Tasse Tee</i>
two cups of coffee	=	<i>zwei Tassen Kaffee</i>
a bar of chocolate	=	<i>eine Tafel Schokolade</i>
a bag of fleas	=	<i>ein Sack Flöhe</i>
a barrel of beer	=	<i>ein Fass Bier</i>

a glass of beer = \_\_\_\_\_

a bottle of wine = \_\_\_\_\_ *Wein*

"That mother-in-law of mine really ain't so bad," continued my neighbor, "she's 220 pounds of love. How would you say that in German?"

"*Sie ist*", I said, "*zweihundert Pfund Liebe*". You couldn't of said anything nicer about her."

Φ Φ Φ Φ

"Morgen, morgen und nicht heute,"  
sagen alle faulen Leute.

"T'morrow, t'morrow, not today"  
that's what lazy people say.

## DAS MACHT NIX

The German word "***machen***" is related to the English "make", like in "***Du machst mich glücklich***". (You make me happy.) However, we often have to use other words to translate ***machen***: "***Das macht nix(nichts)***" means "It doesn't matter".

***Macht bitte diese Aufgabe: Welcher Buchstabe gehört zu welcher Zahl?***

Please, do this assignment: Which letter belongs to which number?

- |  |                                 |
|--|---------------------------------|
| 1. <b><i>Mach schnell!</i></b>               | a. Shut the door!               |
| 2. <b><i>Mach die Tür zu!</i></b>            | b. Take a photo of me.          |
| 3. <b><i>Mach die Augen auf!</i></b>         | c. Turn off the light!          |
| 4. <b><i>Mach ein Foto von mir!</i></b>      | d. Fritz is soiling his diapers |
| 5. <b><i>Was macht ihr heute?</i></b>        | e. Hurry up!                    |
| 6. <b><i>Fritz macht in die Windeln.</i></b> | f. The museum closes at noon.   |
| 7. <b><i>Wir machen eine Reise.</i></b>      | g. We're going on a trip.       |
| 8. <b><i>Er macht sich nichts draus.</i></b> | h. What are y'all doing today?  |
| 9. <b><i>Mach das Licht aus!</i></b>         | i. He doesn't care for it.      |
| 10. <b><i>Das Museum macht um</i></b>        | j. Open your eyes!              |

Die richtigen Antworten: 1-e 2-a 3-j 4-b 5-h 6-d 7-g 8-i 9-c 10-f

***Habt ihr alles richtig gemacht? Ja? Das macht mich glücklich!***

Φ Φ Φ Φ

Gottes Mühlen mahlen langsam  
aber sicher.

God's mills grind slowly  
but surely.

## TAKE OUT THE MISSTERY

Is **ß** a mi**ß**tery to you? German has a letter which is always pronounced like the „ss" in Miss or the „c" in nice: „**ß**".

If you don't have the **ß** on your machinery, you can type ss instead: „**Strasse**" instead of „**Straße**".

The German name for the letter sounds like „esstsett". Sorry you asked? Many words with **ß** have a t in their English translation: **Straße** (street); **weiß** (white); **heiß** (hot); **Nuß** (nut); **Fuß** (foot); **Schuß** (shot).

And now comes confusing news: The new spelling rules - once they are accepted by everybody - will suggest that the **ß** is used only after a long vowel like in **Fuß** and after a diphtong like in **weiß**, but not after a short vowel like in **Nuss**.

To write: "I know that one eats the dumpling hot", one used to write:  
***Ich weiß. daß man den Kloß heiß ißt.***

Now you write:

***Ich weiß, dass man den Kloß heiß isst.***

Nevertheleß, get a **Bleistift** and practi**ß**: **ßßßßß**

Φ Φ Φ Φ

Wer einmal lügt, dem glaubt man nicht,  
und wenn er auch die  
Wahrheit spricht.

Once a liar, always a liar.



## FALSCH E FREUNDE

*Falsche Freunde* are false friends.

Many words are similar in German and English, but beware of false friends: „*Gift*“ means poison (*Opa gab Oma ein Gift* = Grandpa gave Grandma a poison). A „*Kommode*“ is nothing to sit on - it's a chest of drawers.

When you are offered a „*Berliner*“ for breakfast, your host is not suggesting cannibalism - he is offering you a donut of the kind my supermarket calls a “Bismarck”. Kennedy was not a *Bismarck*.

A „*Kittchen*“ is a slammer . *Opa ist im Kittchen* = Opa is in the slammer.

The American traveler with limited command of German really should have a printed list in German of „*falsche Freunde*“ and learn them. Just like he should make a list of all the things he is allergic to and of the food he doesn't like.

Remember: *eine Angel* is not a female angel.

Φ Φ Φ Φ

Wie man sich bettet, so liegt man.

You've made your bed,  
now you must lie on it.

## SAND IN MOTOR!

Learning means memorizing, and you and I need all the help we can get. Let's be grateful therefore for all the words that are the same in English and German, including the following:

*Land, Sand, Ball, warm, Wind, West, Hotel, Bar,  
Auto, Restaurant, Start, Motor, Bus, Radio, Horn,  
Situation, Rose, Ring, Gold, Baby, Kindergarten, Statue, Vase,  
Arm, Hand, Finger, Pudding, Butter, Margarine, bitter, April,  
August, September, November, Podium, Bank, Tenor, Post,  
Tank, in, Gas, Marinade, Hamburger.*

You can find more of the "same-words" in the dictionary.

It's fun to make up meaningful sentences in English using several of these German words in each sentence, like: The *Tenor* put his *Hand* in the *Pudding* and drank the *Marinade*, while the *Pastor*....(well, keep him close to the *Amen* and away from the *Gin*).

Φ Φ Φ Φ

Wo man singt,  
da lass dich ruhig nieder.

Where people sing  
you can sit down in peace.

## IST ER BLAU?

You know, of course, that blue is *blau* in German, but that's true only when you talk about color.

When a German says "*Ich bin blau*", he is telling you that he is drunk. However, when he says "*Ich mache Montag blau*", he is telling you that he is not going to work on Monday, which may be related to our "blue Monday".

A very popular destination for a club's annual outing in Germany is "*die Fahrt ins Blaue*", the trip into the blue. This means that nobody - except, it is hoped, for the organizers - knows the destination. Most of these mystery outings take place in June, especially on Ascension Day. Some clubs even hire a horse and a wagon from a brewery for the ride, and heaven only knows what libations the passengers indulge in.

Quite often some of the revelers return from the *Fahrt ins Blaue* "*total blau*".

Φ Φ Φ Φ

Jeder kehre vor seiner eignen Tür!

Everybody should sweep in front of  
his own door.

## THE FUSED TOGETHER NOUNS:

There is no legal limit in German to the number of nouns you can string together to make one word. The limit is set by the intellectual capacity of the speaker.

The gender of a word like that is always the same as the gender of the last part of the fused word.

*der Wein* + *die Flasche* = *die Weinflasche* (the wine bottle).

*die Flasche* + *der Wein* = *der Flaschenwein* (wine that comes in a bottle)

*das Leder* + *die Hand* + *die Tasche* + *der Preis* = *der Lederhandtaschenpreis* (the price of a leather handbag).

The last word tells you what it is all about:

The often quoted *Donaudampfschiffahrtskapitän* is a captain (Kapitän). What else do we know about him? He captains a steamboat on the Danube.

Φ Φ Φ Φ

Für jeden Topf findet sich  
ein Deckel.

There is a nut for every bolt.

## WHEN YOU'VE GOT TO GO

"For gentle men only" said the sign on the door to the gents' toilet in the lobby of our hotel in Shiraz, Iran. Not everywhere do people try to accommodate the "English only" traveler.

"Toilet" or "Toilette", are words understood internationally, but not often used. If you are in need of public facilities in Germany, you might look for a big "**WC**" sign. It stands for *Wasser Closett* (water toilet).

Other words for women and men are: *Frauen - Männer; sie - er* (she-he); *Eva - Adam*; and many more, including pictures and symbols to be interpreted at some risk. Then there is "*Herren*", which does not mean „Hers". but „Gentlemen". It goes with "*Damen*", which means "ladies", dames or not.

In a private home you ask: "*Wo ist das Klosett (die Toilette, das Klo, das WC)*? Don't ask for the "*Badezimmer*" (bathroom), because that has a bathtub but not always a commode. How would you handle that?

In Portuguese the word is "sanitarios", and I whispered that word to our local tour guide in Brazil. He announced to the entire group: "You stay on the bus while I take Mrs. Helga to the sanitarium.

Φ Φ Φ Φ

Kümmere dich nicht um  
ungelegte Eier.

Don't cross your bridges  
until you come to them.

## IN DIE SCHWEIZ?

To complicate life, one has to use the definite article when talking about certain countries in German: Switzerland is *die Schweiz*, Turkey is *die Türkei*, Lebanon is *der Libanon*, and Iraq is *der Irak*.

We all know that *die* and *der* change to *des*, *dem*, *den*, *der*, *denen* and so forth if used in the genitive, dative, plural, or any other case. *Ich habe kein Bankkonto in der Schweiz. Amerikanische Soldaten sind in der Türkei stationiert. Beirut ist die Hauptstadt des Libanons.*

As far as *der Irak* is concerned, Germans had a problem in early 2003: not only did they have to decide whether or not to send troops there, they would have had to do it grammatically correct, of course. Headlines might then have read: *Deutsche Truppen marschieren in den (dem, der, des?) Irak* (German troops march into Iraq).

It's all so complicated (*kompliziert*), and it would be nice if we could just take a vacation in *der Schweiz* and not worry about *der. dem, des, den Irak*.

Φ Φ Φ Φ

Der Apfel Fält nicht  
weit von Stamm.

Like father like son.

## THE NEW SPELL ON SPELLING

It's hard to believe! Every few years a committee of so-called experts on spelling gets together in Germany and decides what official changes to make to German spelling rules.

Changes are based, it seems, on what mistakes are most often made and should therefore be made by everybody. The experts publish their judgment in a book called "*der Duden*", which is the authority on correct spelling.

The latest *Duden* has so many changes and (even worse) choices, that everybody is now condemned to be a poor and confused speller. The good old "*daß*" is now "*dass*"; the ace of hearts is now "*das Herz Ass*" (previously As); "*die Spagettis*" have lost their h, but the coffee harvest has gained an e: "*Kaffeeernte*".

If you are suffering from rheumatism, you now have the choice between "Rheumatismus" and "Reumatismus". I prefer mine the old fashioned way with *Rh*.

Φ Φ Φ Φ

Rast' ich, so rost' ich.

When I rest I rust.

## YOU IDIOM!!

When I first set foot on American soil, an immigrant with limited grasp of English, I saw a man with a cart selling little sausages (*Würstchen*) that he advertised as “hot dogs”. Horror! Shock! Nausea! Americans eat dog meat! They were even more uncivilized than their reputation. Had I not been penniless, I would have booked a return passage to Germany on the next boat.

My trouble was caused by misunderstanding an idiom, an expression that can - translated literally - scare a person witless.

Here are some examples. As you read them, imagine how they might be understood by a German:

- 1.virgin forest   2. great grandfather   3.midwife   4.German measles  
5.horse radish   6.french fries   7.chicken fried steak   8. the dog's mistress  
9.Excuse my French   10.They walk abreast   11.a black eye   12.She's in a jam   13.butterfly  
14.Bottoms up!

*Auf Deutsch: 1.Urwald   2.Urgroßvater   3.Hebamme   4.Röteln  
5.Meerrettich   6.Pommes Frites   7.paniertes Rindsfilet in weißer Soße  
8.Frauchen   9.Entschuldige den Ausdruck   10.Sie gehen nebeneinander  
11.ein blaues Auge   12.Sie ist in der Klemme   13.Schmetterling  
14. Prost!*

Φ   Φ   Φ   Φ

Man soll das Eisen schmieden  
solange es heiß ist.

Strike while the iron is hot.



## THE UNDERTAKER AND THE FLYING SAUCER

"Under" is related to the German "*unter*". You can easily understand words like *Untergrundbahn* (underground train), *Unterseeboot* (submarine), *Unterhosen* (panties, briefs) and *Unterrock* (a lady's slip).

Then there is the *Untertasse*, which means "under-cup" and refers to the plate under the drinking cup: the saucer. That leads us to the flying saucers, "*die fliegenden Untertassen*".

"*Unterschreiben Sie bitte*" does not mean „Underwrite please"; it means "Please sign".

That enterprising young German who presents himself as an "*Unternehmer*" (literally translated that would be an “undertaker”) is not an undertaker but an entrepreneur in an unspecified field, holding a highly respected place in society.

If one of your ancestors lived in Europe way back, he was most likely an "*Unterthan*", a subject of some king or prince, and therefore he had to be officially released from that relationship before he was given permission to emigrate. With that release he was no longer under the protection (*unter dem Schutz*) of the sovereign, and - on the other hand - your ancestor's foolish or criminal acts were no longer a blemish on the crown.

Φ Φ Φ Φ

Alte Liebe rostet nicht.

An old flame never dies.

## WANDERN

*Mein Vater war ein Wandersmann, und mir liegt's auch im Blut...* Who hasn't learned that song as a child or in German class? **Wandern** (to hike) is a favorite and serious pastime of many Germans. Properly dressed for the occasion, often carrying a **Rucksack** (backpack), they cheerfully populate the paths in the mountains and the woods, the moorlands and the flats along the coast.

In the olden days a young man had to go *auf die Wanderschaft* and learn how his trade was carried out in different regions of the country. Only then could he call himself a **Geselle** (journeyman). From that period comes the wealth of *Wanderlieder* like *Das Wandern ist des Müllers Lust.....*

You can **wandern** for a day or for weeks at a time, stopping overnight in **Herbergen** (hostels), **Scheunen** (barns) or **Hotels** (hotels).

**Wandern** also means to migrate. **Der Auswanderer** is the emigrant, **der Einwanderer** is the immigrant.

Nursing frozen margaritas in the shade of a Texas Oak in July, my once-German friends and I dream about going on a **Wanderurlaub** (a hiking vacation) *im Schwarzwald* (in the Black Forest). *Auf, du junger Wandersmann, ...*

Φ Φ Φ Φ

Ohne Fleiß kein Preis.

Without diligence there's no reward

## DELICIOUS AMERICANER

As a child I loved sinking my teeth into an *Amerikaner* (American). More about that later.

We use geographical terms to give names to items. You know of Hamburgers, Wieners and Frankfurters. However, the use of these terms can lead to misunderstandings. When a German offers you an *Engländer* (Englishman), he is talking about an adjustable wrench, an item we all need when travelling.

When it's Greek to you, it is *Böhmische Dörfer* (Bohemian villages) to the German. A *Nassauer* sponges on other people. John takes coal to Newcastle, Hans carries *Eulen nach Athen* (owls to Athens). When Americans say Let's go Dutch, the Germans have no clue to what that means. The very concept does not feel proper to them, and if they agree to it, they might say "*Jeder bezahlt seine eigene Rechnung*".

A *Römer* (Roman) is a long-stem wine *glas*, a *Pariser* is a condom, and a *Berliner* is a certain kind of a doughnut, also known here as Bismarck. Kennedy was no *Bismarck*.

The delicious *Amerikaner* is something between a cookie and a poundcake, but you can't buy it any longer by that name because the name became a victim of political correctness, I was told, along with the word for my beloved *Negerküsse* (negro kisses), which are chocolate covered marshmallows.

Politics in a German pastry shop (*Konditorei*) !

Φ Φ Φ Φ

Was man nicht im Kopfe hat,  
muss man in den Beinen haben.

What you didn't do with your head,  
you have to do with your legs.

## **DIE NACHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS**

A German-English Version of Clement C. Moore' s

The Night Before Christmas.

by Helga von Schweinitz

'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 Häubchen 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 aus dem Bett to see: Was ist 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 Mittag to the Dinge below.  
Als, was to my staunenden eyes should appear,  
but a Miniatur-Schlitten und acht kleine reindeer,  
Mit 'nem Kutscher so lebhaft, so alt und so klein,  
Ich wusste sofort: das muss Nikolaus sein!  
Und schneller als Adler, his coursers, sie kamen,  
Und er pfiß , und er schrie, und er rief sie bei Namen:  
"Nun, Däscher! Nun Tänzer! Nun Pränzer und Vixen!  
Auf, Komet! Auf Cupid! 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 hurricane fleuchen,  
Wenn sie meet mit a Hindernis, zum Himmel hoch kreuchen,  
So up auf das Hausdach 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 Kopf 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 cherry!

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 had 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 gab mir zu wissen, ich had 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 Schornstein 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!”



Mark Twain in  
*The Awful German Language:*

*...a gifted person ought to learn English in thirty hours,  
French in thirty days,  
and German in thirty years.*

## Reisen

**Deutsche reisen gerne.** Most Germans love to travel and have enough vacation to take several trips a year. They usually don't just want a change from everyday life, **einen Tapetenwechsel**. They prefer to travel with a purpose.

There is above all **die Bildungsreise** to give them an education; **die Weltreise** takes them around the world and makes them experts on international affairs; **die Kreuzfahrt** on a cruise ship lets them bathe in the feeling that the crew pampered them more than the other passengers. A **Reiseagentur** can book **Tagesreisen und Wochenendreisen**, day and weekend trips, under special themes like sampling beer and bread in Bamberg, or a **Fahrt ins Blaue**, destination unknown.

Now there is a revival of an old way of traveling: **zu Fuß pilgern**, to do a pilgrimage on foot. Being **ein Katholik** does not seem as important as being free of corns (**Hühneraugen**) and other ailments of the feet, because **der Pilger** will spend weeks or months hiking under often painful conditions and with unavoidable hardships to one of the many blessed places in **Europa** in order to find himself (**sich**) or his faith (**seinen Glauben**), a reason for being (**den Sinn des Lebens**) or whatever might move him. In the Middle Ages (**im Mittelalter**,) even persons of consequence **pilgerten**, often to do penance, as did king **Heinrich IV** on his **Bußgang nach Canossa** in 1077.

Many roads lead to Rome, of course, but another popular route for a pilgrimage is **der Jakobspfad**, the St. James pilgrimage, especially the 860 km long section running through northern Spain ending in Santiago de Compostela. Shirley McClain did it.

Should your physical condition or time restraints keep you from **zu Fuß pilgern** while in **Europa**, you can hop on a chartered train and zip to – for example – Lourdes in **Frankreich**. A father confessor (**ein Beichtvater**) is on board for the convenience of those who have sinned. Look for the compartment with a discrete red curtain in front of the door.

## Übung

### *Reisen*

Please fill in the blanks with German words taken from the text on the previous page.

- 1 Don't travel (on foot) \_ \_ \_ \_ if you have (corns)  
\_ \_ \_ \_ \_ .
- 2 (In the Middle Ages) \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ nobody took the train to Lourdes.
- 3 After spending two weeks in (France) \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ , you might be in need of a (father confessor) \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ .
- 4 Peter's grandmother gave him money for an (educational trip) \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ to Holland to study Dutch painters. He learned a lot about smoking marijuana.
- 5 I am forever trying to find (the meaning of life) \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ . Aren't you?
- 6 After a semester in Holland, Peter spent three months on a pilgrimage in Spain to find (himself) \_ \_ \_ \_ and something he could call his (faith) \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ .
- 7 I book my trips through a (travel agency) \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ , not on my computer because it has an attitude.

## Wo essen wir heute?

Many Germans like to eat out. Being invited for dinner to a friend's house is not as common as in the States. They often meet with friends in a **Restaurant**, which is a generic word.

With so many ethnic eateries available, they might say: **“Um sieben Uhr beim Chinesen (beim Italiener, beim Jugoslawen, beim Türken, ....).**

A respectable place to eat is usually **der Ratskeller**, which is not a rat cellar but a restaurant in the **Rathaus** (city hall).

For a quick fix (**Schnellimbiss**) you can treat yourself to a **Hamburger mit Pommes und Bier** at McDonalds or order **eine Pizza in Pizza Hut** (pronounced “pitsa hoot”). There is a German chain called **der Kochlöffel**; in many of those you can't sit down, you have to devour your food standing at a high table. For a quick, inexpensive **Tasse Kaffee** one stops **bei Tschibo**.

Many **Kaufhäuser** (department stores) have a self service restaurant (**Selbstbedienung**) buffet on the top floor.

Other restaurants call themselves **Lokal, Gasthof, Gaststätte, Raststätte** (along the **Autobahn**), or **Gaststube**. **Ein Gasthaus**, however, is a small hotel and often serves only breakfast.

Although **Gast** means “guest”, neither meals nor rooms are free. The sign **Zimmer frei** says “vacancy”, not free as in “at no cost”. Still, many **Gaststätten** and **Gasthäuser** have free parking for their guests and post a sign: **Für Gäste frei**.



Übung

**Wo essen wir heute?**

Depending on what you fancy for dinner, you choose the appropriate eatery from those mentioned in the previous article.

**Reis mit Garnelen in Sojasoße: Wir essen beim** \_ \_ \_ \_ \_.

**Ravioli und Chianti: Wir gehen zum** \_ \_ \_ \_ \_.

**Pizza auf amerikanische Art: Wir kaufen sie bei** \_ \_ \_ \_ \_.

**Abendessen im Rathaus: Wir bestellen einen Tisch im** \_ \_ \_ \_ \_  
\_.

***Turkey with all the fixin's: Wir essen beim T ü r k e n*** (just kidding).

---

What kind of a sign must you look for if you want the following:

Self Service: \_ \_ \_ \_ \_.

Free parking near a restaurant: \_ \_ \_ \_ \_.

A small hotel \_ \_ \_ \_ \_.

City hall \_ \_ \_ \_ \_.

## Ferien und Urlaub

Vacations and leave, *Ferien und Urlaub*, are almost treated like birthrights in Germany. Labor laws and traditions favor taking at least three weeks at a time to refresh body and soul from the stress of work. My brother, when he held an upper management position, was taking seven weeks of leave per year, 3 -2-2. Every other year he added a month *auf Kur*, in a spa, paid for by the national health system. However, when he did work, he gave it 100% and more.

School vacations do not all take place at the same time throughout Germany, but when they hit a region, entire companies, stores, even *Restaurants und Hotels* might close and hang out the sign: *Wegen Ferien geschlossen*. These weeks off are supposed to benefit your *Gesundheit* (health), therefore you travel, *du gehst auf eine Reise*.

Preferred destinations are wherever you can soak up *Sonnenschein*, cheap charter flights making it very affordable, *billig*. On Mallorca I found an entire hotel booked by *Senioren aus Berlin*, who preferred chef Antonio's *Erbsensuppe mit Frankfurter Würstchen* to any Spanish dish. In Playa del Carmen *in Mexiko*, fajitas are sold as *Geschnetzeltes*. On Thailand's beaches ladies offer massages described as "*Gut für Papa*".

Of course, many Germans have to plan all trips as *eine Bildungsreise* (an educational journey), be it to learn about *die Renaissance in Florenz* or to study hummingbirds, *Kolibris, auf Kuba*.

*Urlaub* is related to *erlauben*, meaning you are permitted to leave, which takes us to the English translation: leave. For some people that means leaving part of their normal self - maybe even some of their inhibitions - at home and taking the highly recommended *Ferien vom Ich*.

*Übung*

***Ferien und Urlaub***

Please copy the German translation of the following words or phrases from the preceding article. Remember, all German nouns are capitalized.

Good for daddy \_ \_ \_ \_ \_

vacations \_ \_ \_ \_ \_

leave \_ \_ \_ \_ \_

closed due to vacation \_ \_ \_ \_ \_

health \_ \_ \_ \_ \_

sunshine \_ \_ \_ \_ \_

seniors \_ \_ \_ \_ \_

educational journey \_ \_ \_ \_ \_

vacation from myself \_ \_ \_ \_ \_

hummingbirds \_ \_ \_ \_ \_

Cuba \_ \_ \_ \_ \_

pea soup with Frankfurter hot dogs \_ \_ \_ \_ \_  
\_ \_ \_ \_ \_

## Eine Kalte Platte

*Eine kalte Platte* is a delicious alternative to *Wiener Schnitzel*, *Bratwurst mit Sauerkraut* or *Rouladen mit Rotkohl* when you want to offer a genuine German meal, especially *zum Abendbrot* (for supper) or after midnight when hosting a small number of guests.

It is not like offering some quick sandwiches Anglo-American style.

For my *kalte Platten* I spread *Butter* on halved slices of various types of solid bread like *Pumpernickel*, *Bauernbrot* or some other *Brot* with a crust. Then I add a single layer of *Aufschnitt* (cold cuts), cheese or seafood. I don't put any bread on top so that the palate immediately experiences the taste of the top layer and is pleased and satisfied with a small amount.

Although the selection of cold cuts in American supermarkets is not as wide as in Germany, the deli sections offer enough choices: *Schinkenwurst*, *Zungenwurst*, *Fleischwurst*, *Blutwurst*, *Leberwurst*, and also different kinds of ham (*Schinken*) of which the smoked and uncooked *Westfälischer Schinken* is the most German. Everything should be sliced thin.

A *Käseplatte* features cheese, of course, and the seafood often consists of *geräucherter Seelachs* (smoked salmon) available in small packages, already sliced. *Kaviar* should be served only by hosts with a good *Kredit* rating.

*Kalte Platten* with some small plates on the table in the middle of a group of friends, eliminate the need for people to get up and help themselves from a *Buffet*, and everybody can be a constant part of the conversation - which, if it keeps with current German custom, would center on how Americans should straighten out their foreign policy. They have the additional benefit of not showing how much you actually eat, because you grab one little *Schnittchen* (slice) at a time as the evening progresses.

Übung

*Eine kalte Platte*

Unscramble the words in the left column. The answers are somewhere in the right column.

RABBENTOD	_____	<i>KALTE PLATTE</i>
WUTBLURST	_____	<i>SCHINKEN</i>
LATEK PATTLE	_____	<i>KAVIAR</i>
SCHALESE	_____	<i>ABENDBROT</i>
RUMPENPICKEL	_____	<i>AUFSCHNITT</i>
VARIAK	_____	<i>SEELACHS</i>
SCHIKNEN	_____	<i>WIENER SCHNITZEL</i>
NUTTISCHAF	_____	<i>KÄSEPLATTE</i>
REWEIN LENZTISCH	_____	<i>PUMPERNICKEL</i>
KÄSPALETTE	_____	<i>BLUTWURST</i>

## Wer ist der Vater?

Helping people researching their German ancestry often makes me the bearer of surprising, sometimes unwelcome, news. The identity of the mother (*Mutter*) is usually not in doubt. However, there can be a problem with the *Vater*, especially when we are looking at the first born child, *das erstgeborene Kind*. Truth be told, *wer war der leibliche Vater* (the biological father)? The folks in the old country had profound morals and ethics and pious intentions, but they used unreliable methods of birth control. Even if the wedding took place seven months before the birth of the child, *der leibliche Vater* could have been the son of the landowner, and the pregnant servant was then quickly married off to a farm hand.

Occasionally I see a document called a *Vaterschaftsbekennntnis*, which states that a certain man acknowledges that he is the father of the child born *unehelich* (out of wedlock) by a certain woman whose first and maiden names are given. If he later marries her, that fact is often hand written on the margin of the document. Most baptism entries in church records note whether a child was *ehelich* (legitimate) or *unehelich*. Legitimacy was obviously not taken for granted. (*Jakob, der eheliche Sohn des Abraham ...or ...Johanna, die uneheliche Tochter der Karoline...*)

Considering how much shame, ostracism and cruelty these children and their mothers often had to suffer, each case that comes to my attention makes me feel sorry for them.

When the father becomes a *Witwer* (widower) he may later become a *Stiefvater* (stepfather) to the children of his new *Ehefrau* (wife).

Most fathers agree with Germany's most famous humorist, Wilhelm Busch: To become a father is not hard; to be one, though, is very much so.

*Vater werden ist nicht schwer – Vater sein dagegen sehr.*

Übung

***Wer ist der Vater?***

Please select the right German words for the English "fatherwords" from the following list and write them twice next to English version.

***a) der Vater   b) Stiefvater   c) Großvater   d) Urgroßvater***

***e) Schwiegervater   f) Adoptivvater   g) der leibliche Vater   h) Stammvater***

***i) Vaterland   j) Vaterlandsliebe   k) Vaterschaft   l) Vatermörder***

***m) das Vater-unser   n) das Vaterhaus***

- 1) the father \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) grandfather \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) father-in -law \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) paternity \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) fatherland \_\_\_\_\_
- 6) ancestor \_\_\_\_\_
- 7) the Lord's prayer \_\_\_\_\_
- 8) great grandfather \_\_\_\_\_
- 9) adoptive father \_\_\_\_\_
- 10) stepfather \_\_\_\_\_
- 11) patriotism \_\_\_\_\_
- 12) paternal house \_\_\_\_\_
- 13) the biological father \_\_\_\_\_
- 14) high stand-up collar on a shirt \_\_\_\_\_

And then there is the Godfather: ***der Pate***

1/a 2/c 3/e 4/k 5/i 6/h 7/m 8/d 9/f 10/b 11/j 12/n 13/g 14/l

## **So'n Dingsbums.**

You know the story of Baron What's-his-name. He sat on a thingamabob and soon made a whatyemacallit on the moon. The story is, of course, a big you-know-what-I-mean.

The vague expressions I've just used are some of the kindest words in the English language, because they let us continue what we want to say although we can't think of the right words at that moment.

German is just as considerate, especially in casual conversation. Most of these expressions come from the word for thing: *das Ding* (pl. *die Dinge*) . To be even less precise you can use *so'n* or *so'ne* instead of the article. They all mean something like thingamabob.

*das Dings* (pl. *die Dinger*): *Mein Dings am Fotoapparat ist kaputt.*

*die Dinger*: *Ich brauche zehn so'ne Dinger für das Dirndl.*

*das Dingsens*: *Ich möchte so'n Dingsens für meine Tür haben.*

*das Dingsbums*: *Hast du mein Dingsbums irgendwo gesehen?*

*Dingsda*: (often used for a place name) *Der Vetter aus Dingsda*

(a popular operetta: The Cousin from What's-that -place)

*So-und-so*: *Frau So-und-so ist im Hotel zur Post.*

Back to the story of Baron Münchhausen. Er setzte sich auf so'n Dings und machte bald eine Dingsens auf dem Mond. Die Geschichte ist natürlich eine große Lüge, a big lie.

I hope this lesson taught you to glide right over an otherwise awkward moment when you want to introduce a person and you have forgotten the particulars: Just mumble something like: "Hier ist Frau von Dingsens aus Dingsda." Or : "Ich möchte Herrn Dr. Dingsbums aus Kassel vorstellen."



Übung

***So ´n Dingsbums***

Please, copy the following sentences, but replace the underlined word with one of the Dings-words.

***Der Filter an meiner Kamera ist kaputt.***

---

***Ich brauche einundvierzig so ´ne Perlen für die Kette.***

---

***Hast du mein Buch irgendwo gesehen?***

---

***Ich muss einen großen Tannenbaum für die Schule kaufen.***

---

***Seine Kusine aus Fürstenfeldbruch kommt übermorgen.***

---

***Herr Schreiner-Wintermann war Oberbürgermeister von Karl-Marx-Stadt.***

---

## **Der Kaffeeklatsch**

A typical Kaffeeklatsch is a small gathering of women enjoying an afternoon with Kaffee und Kuchen (coffee and cake) and a casual conversation which is often called Klatsch.

Die Damen ziehen sich nett an. (The ladies dress nicely). Die Gastgeberin (the hostess) has the opportunity to use ihr feines Silberbesteck, ihr gutes Porzellan und eine hübsche Tischdecke (her fine silver flatware, her good china and a pretty tablecloth). It is a socially accepted chance to get away from husband and children for a few hours.

Those early German pioneer women in America who could afford the luxury of a Kaffeeklatsch were fortunate indeed. Even today there are Kaffeeklatsch gaggles around, and I go to one of them regularly.

The verb klatschen has many meanings, including to clap and to applaud: Das Publikum klatschte drei Minuten lang (the audience applauded for three minutes). However, in the phrase Klatsch und Tratsch both words mean gossip. Klatsch und Tratsch can stand for malicious talk über andere Leute (about other people), but it can also be a casual, drawn-out exchange of useful or useless information.

Still another word with klatsch is klatschnass (soaking wet): Wenn die Damen beim Kaffeeklatsch im Garten sitzen wenn es regnet, dann werden sie klatschnass.

## Übung

### ***Der Kaffeeklatsch***

At a recent ***Kaffeeklatsch***, the ladies sampled too much of the ***Kirschlikör*** and got their words all scrambled . Please, unscramble them.  
The correct words are in the right nomenclature.

EFEFAK DUN HENUCK \_\_\_\_\_ ***GASTGEBERIN***

LORZEPLAN \_\_\_\_\_ ***KLATSCH UND TRATSCH***

SKANLECHT \_\_\_\_\_ ***KAFFEE UND KUCHEN***

RÜBE EDRANE LUETE \_\_\_\_\_ ***PORZELLAN***

STIBBELSECKER \_\_\_\_\_ ***KLATSCHEN***

SCHLAKT NUD SCHRATT \_\_\_\_\_ ***TISCHDECKE***

NACHTKLASSS \_\_\_\_\_ ***ÜBER ANDERE LEUTE***

TICKSCHEDE \_\_\_\_\_ ***SILBERBESTECK***

BERGSTAIGEN \_\_\_\_\_ ***KLATSCHNASS***

## Benimm dich!

A wave of interest in *gutes Benehmen* (good manners) goes through Germany these days. Television, night-school classes, company sponsored seminars and even private tutors for teenagers are in on this.

The following two behaviors are considered *schlechte Manieren* (poor manners) in most cultures:

*Man spricht nicht mit vollem Mund* . (Don't talk with your mouth full.)

*Man kaut nicht mit offenem Mund*. (Don't chew with your mouth open.)

When the rules of proper conduct are broken, a mother might say: "*Benimm dich!*" ("Mind your manners" or "Behave yourself").

Here are three examples how German *gutes Benehmen* differs from American good manners:

*Man hat beim Essen beide Hände auf dem Tisch*. (Keep both hands on the table when eating).

*Man schüttelt zuerst die Hand der Dame, dann die Hand des Herrn*. (Shake the lady's hand first, then the gentleman's). Don't shake only the gentleman's hand.

*Wenn ein Mann und eine Frau in ein Restaurant, eine Kneipe oder eine Bar gehen, geht der Mann zuerst in den Raum*. (When a man and a woman go into a restaurant, pub or bar, the man enters the room first.). My German brother-in-law doubts the chivalry of Texan men who send the 'ladies first' when entering an establishment while the whole world knows that in Texas flying bottles, fists and bullets might be welcoming a new customer.

And then there is doing the right thing at the wrong time (*das Richtige zur falschen Zeit tun*), like when my father put his hand on my mother's hip while we children were around. My mother would give him that forbidding stare and whisper: "*Rudi! Benimm dich!*"

Übung

***Benimm dich!***

Please, fill in the blanks in these statements about good and bad German manners.

You may look at the text on the previous page for help.

***Man spricht n \_ \_ \_ \_ m \_ \_ v \_ \_ \_ \_ Mund.***

***Man kaut nicht m \_ \_ o \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ Mund.***

***Beim Essen hat man b \_ \_ \_ \_ H \_ \_ \_ \_ auf d \_ \_ Tisch.***

***Wenn ein Mann und eine Frau in ein Restaurant gehen, geht der Mann z \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ in d \_ \_ R \_ \_ \_ .***

***Man schüttelt zuerst die Hand d \_ \_ D \_ \_ \_ , dann die Hand d \_ \_ H \_ \_ \_ \_ .***

***Wenn ein Kind mit vollem Mund spricht, sagt die Mutter: „Du hast s \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ M \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ .“***

***Wenn ein Mann schlechte Manieren zeigt, sagt die Frau: „Mann, b \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ d \_ \_ \_ \_ !“***

## Bitte, platzen Sie nicht!

Learning a language includes memorizing thousands of words of vocabulary, and we appreciate all the help we can get. Textbooks suggest that we learn clusters of related words. They point out that many nouns of the masculine gender are actually the stem of a verb: **der Rauch - rauchen** (the smoke – to smoke); **der Sitz – sitzen** (the seat - to sit).

However, this simple rule is a trap that can get you into trouble because, too often, the verb has no meaningful relationship to the noun which looks like its stem. Here are some false friends:

**weinen – der Wein** (to cry – the wine)  
**wachsen – der Wachs** (to grow – the wax)  
**stiften – der Stift** (to donate – the pen)  
**reisen – der Reis** (to travel – the rice)  
**streichen – der Streich** (to paint – the prank)  
**kriegen – der Krieg** (to get – the war)

*Der Sitz* and *der Platz* can both mean „the seat“. When you ask somebody in a crowded restaurant if you may share his table – which is okay in Germany – you can ask: “*Ist dieser Sitz noch frei? Darf ich hier sitzen?*” However, if you use *Platz* instead of *Sitz*, you should not ask: “*Ist dieser Platz noch frei? Darf ich hier platzen?*” If you say that, the person you asked might jump up and run away, because *platzen* means “to burst”, “pop” or “explode”. You were actually asking: “May I explode here?”

***Bitte, platzen Sie nicht an meinem Tisch!***

Übung

***Bitte, platzen Sie nicht!***

Referring to the text on the left, please write the German word on the line.

- 1 - *Ich möchte* (cry) \_ \_ \_ \_ \_.
- 2 - *Liebfraumilch ist ein deutscher* (wine) \_ \_ \_ \_.
- 3 - *Hier ist es sehr still; man hört das Gras* (grow) \_ \_ \_ \_ \_.
- 4 - *Hast du* (wax) \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ *im Ohr?*
- 5 - *Er muss nach China* (travel) \_ \_ \_ \_ \_.
- 6 - *Die Chinesen essen viel* (rice) \_ \_ \_ \_.
- 7 - *Darf ich hier* (sit) \_ \_ \_ \_ \_?
- 8 - *Ist der* (seat) \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ *noch frei?*
- 9 - (Smoking) \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ *verboten!*
- 10 - (Smoke) \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ *von Zigaretten stinkt.*
- 11 - *Der Ballon wird bald* (pop) \_ \_ \_ \_ \_.
- 12 - *Er hat einen guten* (place) \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ *in der Oper.*
- 13 - *Wir* (get) \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ *unsere Post jeden Tag ausser Sonntag.*
- 14 - *Der Bürgerkrieg war der* (war) \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ *zwischen den Nordstaaten und den Südstaaten.*

## Der Bleistift

Some people find learning vocabulary expressions easier when they are grouped around one basic word. Let's take **Blei** which rhymes with lie. It means lead (the metal).

**Der Bleistift** is a pencil (The first mass produced pencils were made in Nuremberg, Germany, in 1662). I thought **ein Bleistift** had **eine Mine aus Blei. Pustekuchen!** Wrong! Nowadays (**heutzutage**) **ist die Mine im Bleistift aus Graphit** mixed with other compounds.

**Blei ist ein schweres** (heavy) **Metall. Es ist giftig** (poisonous) as you can get **Bleivergiftung** from **Blei** in paint or water pipes or in wine decanters made of **Bleikristall**, or in goblets of almost pure **Blei** that led to the Romans' demise.

**Der Drehbleistift** is the mechanical pencil, even though it has a **Graphitmine. Der Bleistiftanspitzer** is used to sharpen the **Bleistift. Bleisoldaten** are collectors' items and are now made of tin to prevent **Bleivergiftungen** in would-be-generals.

An old German and Austrian New Year's Eve (**Silvester**) custom and party game is **Bleigießen**. (I found several sets offered on the internet by simply googling **Bleigiessen**). One guest after another smelts a small piece of **Blei** on a spoon over a candle. The molten metal is then poured into a bowl of ice cold water where it takes on a bizarre shape. In a wild discussion the other guests decide what this lead figure looks like, and the Master of Ceremony checks on a chart to find out, what this creation by Fortuna promises the owner for the coming year. Last **Silvester** my chunk of **Blei** turned into a little devil – **ein kleiner Teufel**. That meant: **Vorsicht!** Somebody is trying to seduce you!! **Mich verführen?**  
I am still waiting.



*Übung*

***Der Bleistift***

Please write the German words twice.

the pencil \_ \_ \_ \_ \_  
\_ \_ \_ \_ \_

mechanical pencil \_ \_ \_ \_ \_  
\_ \_ \_ \_ \_

nowadays \_ \_ \_ \_ \_  
\_ \_ \_ \_ \_

poisonous \_ \_ \_ \_ \_  
\_ \_ \_ \_ \_

lead poisoning \_ \_ \_ \_ \_  
\_ \_ \_ \_ \_

pencil sharpener \_ \_ \_ \_ \_  
\_ \_ \_ \_ \_

lead pouring \_ \_ \_ \_ \_  
\_ \_ \_ \_ \_

to seduce \_ \_ \_ \_ \_  
\_ \_ \_ \_ \_

## Der deutsche Baum

Germans have always loved and valued trees. They need a permit to fell a tree - even on their own property - if the circumference of the *Stamm* (stem) at the height of 1 *Meter* exceeds 80 *Zentimeter*.

*Der Tannenbaum (die Tanne)*, the pine tree, gained international importance by becoming the “Christmas tree”. Without embarrassment we sing :... *wie treu sind deine Blätter!* ...how faithful are your leaves! Have you ever seen a pine with leaves?

*Die Linde*, the lime tree, is close to the German heart. Most villages had a *Lindenbaum* in their center under which young men and women would meet - the stuff for many songs of love and broken hearts. In the Middle Ages the elders would come together *unter der Dorflinde* to hold court or counsel. Berlin has the famous avenue *Unter den Linden* which is lined with lime trees.

*Die Eiche*, the oak, is *das Symbol* of strength, age and tradition. The German state uses its leaves to present its values, like on some coins. *Die Eiche* has a long life, its wood is strong and beautiful. A big *Eichentisch* adds an aura of dignity to one's dining room.

*Die Buche*, the beech tree, lent its name to words like *Buch* (book), *Buchstabe* (letter) and *Bücherei* (library). Sticks (*Stäbe*) of the *Buche* were used to form letters, and it was easy to carve straight lines into *Buchenholz* (beech wood).

There is a trusted word of wisdom in German with regards to finding shelter from the *Blitz* during a thunderstorm: “*Eichen sollst du weichen* (avoid), *Buchen sollst du suchen* (seek). *Warnung!!!* Modern science tells us that the *Buche* is just as dangerous a shelter as the *Eiche*.

Übung

***Der deutsche Baum***

Please, name the German trees mentioned in the preceding article.

***die T*** \_ \_ \_ \_      **or**      ***der T*** \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_

***die L*** \_ \_ \_ \_      **or**      ***der L*** \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_

***die E*** \_ \_ \_ \_

***die B*** \_ \_ \_ \_

Please, translate into German:

1. Oh pine tree, oh pine tree! How faithful are your leaves! (oh = *o* in German)

---

2. Oaks you shall avoid, beeches you shall seek. Warning!!!

---

3. book, letter, library

---

4. Berlin has a famous avenue called \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ .

---

5. Before you hear *den Donner*, you usually see den \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ .

---

## Der Führer

*So nimm denn meine Hände und führe mich* is a line in a German hymn asking the Lord to take my hands and guide me.

*Der Reiter führt sein Pferd ans Wasser* can be said when the rider leads his horse to water.

...and lead us not into temptation appears in the German *Vater Unser* as *...und führe uns nicht in Versuchung*.

*Ein Führer* who works as a tourist guide is *ein Fremdenführer*.

Sometimes *führen* has a prefix and takes on a possibly negative connotation like in these examples: *Der Pastor verführte seine Assistentin*. (Gosh, I hope the Pastor did not seduce his assistant in the sanctuary), or *Du willst mich nur irreführen!* which is a good way of telling somebody that you think he is trying to trick you or lead you astray.

In most contexts, however, *führen* evokes a positive image, a leader or guide is taking care of the situation, you trust him.

What ingenious act of public relations was it then when in 1933 Adolf Hitler declared himself the *Führer*. He was not the *Präsident*, not the *Kanzler*, neither *König* nor *Kaiser*, he was - when I was a little girl in WWII Germany – *mein Führer*. If only he knew that the English were dropping these bombs on us all the time, I thought, he would tell them to stop it, after all, as *der Führer* he would know what had to be done to keep us safe.

Thus history has burdened one perfectly good word with such a dirty load, that I now hesitate to use this “F-word” in public. There are, however, *sehr gute Fremdenführer* all over the world who still allow the word *Führer* an aura of trustworthiness.

Übung

***Der Führer***

Please, fill in the blanks by referring to the preceding text.

*So nimm denn \_\_\_\_\_ und führe mich.*

*Der Reiter führt \_\_\_\_\_ ans Wasser.*

\_\_\_\_\_ *in Versuchung.*

*Der Pastor \_\_\_\_\_ seine Assistentin.*

*Hitler war Deutschlands \_\_\_\_\_ von 1933 bis 1945.*

*Wilhelm der Zweite war der letzte deutsche \_\_\_\_\_.*

*Ludwig der Zweite war \_\_\_\_\_ von Bayern.*

*Theodor Heuß war der erste \_\_\_\_\_ der Bundesrepublik.*

*Konrad Adenauer war der erste \_\_\_\_\_ der Bundesrepublik.*

*Ein Führer für Touristen ist ein \_\_\_\_\_.*

## Der Kater

While translating the diary of a well-known German settler in central Texas, I was wondering why, after years of good health, he suddenly kept waking up with a catarrh: “***Ich wachte wieder mit einem Katarrh auf.***”

His Great-granddaughter (**Urenkelin**) explained to me: “Don’t tell anybody. After grandpaw-paw had started to grow sorghum and made molasses, he also built a still. So he often woke up with a hangover which he called catarrh to make it sound more acceptable.”

I realized a connection to the German word for a hangover, which is **ein Kater** which may be derived from **Katarrh** and is easier to spell.

In Texas pioneer days, **Katarrh** might still have been used to describe anything from a cold (**Erkältung**) to allergies (**Allergien**) to a hangover (**Kater**).

**Kater** was originally the word for a male cat, but since many more people wake up in the morning with a hangover than with a male cat, you really have to second-guess a person who tells you: “***Ach, ich habe einen schrecklichen Kater!***”

Most remedies for a **Kater** include **frische Luft** (fresh air), **etwas Saures** like a **Rollmops** (something sour like a rolled up marinated herring filet), and **viel Flüssigkeit** (liquid) like **Tomatensaft mit Tabasco**, and, **natürlich, zwei Aspirin**.

When you see dozens of Germans trooping through the local forest on a Sunday morning, they may be on their **Katerspazierang** for the **frische Luft**. Some restaurants in the woods cater to these customers by offering the needed **Flüssigkeit** in the form of a nice, cool beer, **ein kühles Bierchen**.

Übung

***Der Kater***

Please write the German word on the line next to the English one. You may refer to the text on the left.

***Ich habe einen schrecklichen*** (hangover) \_ \_ \_ \_ \_.

***Du hast einen*** (male cat) \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ ***namens Hannibal.***

***Er hat eine*** (cold) \_ \_ \_ \_ \_.

***Sie hat*** (allergies) \_ \_ \_ \_ \_.

***Wir haben*** (tomato juice) \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ ***zum Frühstück.***

***Ihr habt*** (a nice cool beer) \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ ***zum Frühstück.***

***Sie haben eine*** (great-granddaughter) \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ ***namens Lorelei.***

***Ein*** (rolled-up marinated herring filet) \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ , (fresh air) \_ \_ \_ \_ \_

—  
\_ \_ \_ \_ ***und*** (two aspirins) \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ ***sind wie Medizin gegen einen Kater.***

## Der Schieber

The German verb *schieben* (pronounced “sheebn”) means ‘to push’, but the long vowel *ie* suggests that this is not a fast motion but a slow pushing as in *Ich schiebe mein kaputtes Auto*. (I push my broken car). A short, quick pushing is *schubsen*.

*Schieben* (*schob, hat geschoben*) has lent itself to so many idiomatic expressions that I can only mention a few of them here.

*Mein Onkel Willie war ein guter Schieber* means that uncle Willie was good at bartering on the black market. He once succeeded in getting me a pair of warm gloves in exchange for a little bag of cigarette butts I had collected from the streets.

*Mein Onkel Fritz schob eine ruhige Kugel bei der Stadt*. He was working for the city and took things very easy on his job.

*Mein Onkel Hermann* made the most pleasant use of the *Schieber* as a type of dance. He would hold a woman close enough that his and her clothes were touching – *mit Tuchföhlung*. Then, no matter what the rhythm of the music was – except for the slow waltz, *der langsame Walzer* – he would use only a step – step – step *Schritt* (*step*) to move his lady across the dance floor. No fancy footwork. Had he danced in Austin’s Broken Spoke he would have turned the Texas two-step into a *Schieber*.

Parties in Germany often last into the early hours of the morning. After midnight and ample libations, only a few people can manage to dance anything but the comfortable *Schieber*. Even the worst singers tend to sing along at that time, although the only text they know is *lalalala*.

*Schieben* – it’s such a good word. As they say about *das kaputte Auto*: If you love it, you push it: *Wer’s liebt, der schiebt*.



## Übung

### *Der Schieber*

Please translate the following phrases into German. The text on the previous page has all the terms needed.

I push my broken car.

\_\_\_\_\_

Willie was a good barterer on the black market.

\_\_\_\_\_.

Fritz took things easy while working for the city.

\_\_\_\_\_.

The slow waltz

\_\_\_\_\_

My uncle Hermann

\_\_\_\_\_

With clothes touching

\_\_\_\_\_

The broken car: if you love it, you push it.

\_\_\_\_\_ : \_\_\_\_\_ , \_\_\_\_\_ , \_\_\_\_\_ .

## Adelig.

Some German last names, like mine, ***von Schweinitz***, begin with ***von***, pronounced “fon”.

During centuries of feudalism in Europe, governments were structured like pyramids with a base of ***Untertanen*** (subjects) who had a variety of rights and obligations, and a ***Prinz, König*** or ***Kaiser*** at the top. Some men were chosen by the prince, king or emperor to fill the ranks in between. They were given more responsibilities and obligations than commoners in return for certain privileges. They were also allowed to embellish their names with a simple ***von*** or a title such as ***Freiherr*** (Baron) , ***Graf*** (Count), ***Herzog*** (Duke), and ***Fürst*** (Prince). The honor of being ***in den Adel erhoben*** (elevated to the nobility) was often based on heroic deeds in battle, on colonizing uncultivated land or on other acts of value to the royals.

Later on, titles of nobility were passed out to reward academic achievements, to make rich merchants socially acceptable at court, and to give very capable commoners a standing in polite society. Titles were passed on from the father to all of his legitimate offsprings - generation after generation.

Many families with “von” names, like the von Schweinitzes, have their origin in the early middle ages when they followed a call eastwards to the swamps along the Oder river. They were given land to dry out and cultivate and to establish settlements. They were given the title ***von*** to indicate that they were ***der Herr*** (the lord) and in charge of the place and thus responsible for the wellbeing of the people working on their ***Gut*** (estate).

These land owners became the ***Landadel*** (landed gentry).

As part of the Treaty of Versailles of 1918, German nobility lost the right to carry titles. The “***von***” however, became part of the last name. Consequently, in the U. S. I am listed under V (von Schweinitz or Vonschweinitz) even in the Library of Congress. In Germany the “***vons***” indicate the ***von*** by putting a ***v.*** behind the last name. In a German phone book you would find me under “***Schweinitz, v., Helga***”.

***Adel*** comes from ***edel***, meaning “noble”. In my interactions with many families ***vom Adel*** I noticed that not all people of nobility are noble in character and action. Being ***adelig*** (of nobility) really seems to mean that you are supposed to ***strive*** to be noble in character and action - just like everybody else.

Übung

**Adelig**

Please, find the proper person from this list and write his name on the line preceding the rest of the sentence. The answers are on the bottom of the page.

1. *Otto Fürst von Bismarck*
2. *Manfred Freiherr von Richthofen*
3. *Philip Herzog von Windsor*
4. *Kaiser Wilhelm der Zweite*
5. *Felix Graf von Luckner*
6. *König Ludwig der Zweite von Bayern*
7. *Prinz Albert von Sachsen-Coburg-Gotha*
8. *Carl Maria von Weber*

a. \_\_\_\_\_ *ist der Ehemann von Queen Elizabeth II.*

b. \_\_\_\_\_ *baute Schloss Neuschwanstein.*

c. \_\_\_\_\_ *war der letzte deutsche Kaiser.*

d. \_\_\_\_\_ *ist in Amerika als "Red Baron" bekannt.*

e. \_\_\_\_\_ *heiratete 1840 seine Cousine Victoria, Königin von England.*

f. \_\_\_\_\_ *war Reichskanzler und Ministerpräsident von Preußen.*

g. \_\_\_\_\_, *der "Seeteufel", kaperte im Ersten Weltkrieg viele feindliche Schiffe.*

h. \_\_\_\_\_ *komponierte die romantische Oper "Freischütz".*

a/3 b/6 c/4 d/2 e/7 f/1 g/5 h/8

## Der Meister

Everybody is or should be a master (*ein Meister*) in some skill or area of knowledge. A woman would be *eine Meisterin*.

While in the American system you can earn a Master's degree for academic studies at a university, the German "*Meister*" usually refers to a certified level of skill and knowledge in a craft or trade. A *Tischlermeister* (master carpenter), for example, has been a *Lehrling* (apprentice) for three years, then a *Geselle* (journeyman) for three years, and then he has passed rigid examinations to obtain a certificate called *Meisterbrief*. *Ein Meister* is well respected by society and takes positions of consequence in organizations like the *Industrie- und Handelskammer* (Chamber of Commerce).

Only a *Meister* can train a *Lehrling*. German folklore and folk songs tell of the importance of the *Meister* as being responsible for fortifying his young charges with high moral values in addition to the tricks of the trade. His wife, *Frau Meisterin*, does not have to have any skills but was usually praised for her cooking in the days of travelling journeymen.

*Meister* also means champion (*Max Schmeling war Weltmeister im Boxen*), *Meisterschaft* means championship or cup. That leads us to the most important word in the language of many a German: *die Fußballweltmeisterschaft*, the world cup in soccer which takes place every four years. An unusual display of flags and patriotism surfaces when the German team is among the best. You should go there for the excitement when it takes place in Germany.

If you excel in any field, you can call yourself a *Meister* of sorts. *Ich, z. B.* (I, for example), *bin Meisterin im Aufschieben* (a master in procrastinating).

*Übung*

***Der Meister***

***Als Onkel Ewald vierzehn Jahre alt war, wurde er*** (apprentice)  
\_\_\_\_\_ ***bei Tischlermeister Meyer.***

***Als Onkel Ewald siebzehn Jahre alt war, wurde er*** (journeyman)  
\_\_\_\_\_ ***bei*** (master carpenter) \_\_\_\_\_  
***Klostermann.***

***Von 1940 bis 1951 war Onkel Ewald in Russland und Sibirien.***

***1957 wurde Onkel Ewald*** (master) \_\_\_\_\_.

***Er war auch in der*** (chamber of commerce) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

***Als ich vierzehn Jahre alt war, machte Onkel Ewald einen Nähkasten***  
***(sewing box) ) für mich.***

***Onkel Ewalds Hobby war*** (soccer) \_\_\_\_\_. ***Er spielte links außen.***

## Es zieht!

**Ziehen: es zieht; es zog; es hat gezogen.** Remember that the German *z* is pronounced like *ts*. *Es zieht* sounds like “ess tseet” and means that there is a draft. It is important to recognize the expression when you gasp for fresh air in a crowded bus or train in Germany and you open a window a bit. Some fellow-passengers will fear catching a cold, pneumonia or even death from the fresh air they construe as a draft, and they’ll shout: “*Es zieht!!!*”.

The verb *ziehen* has so many meanings, that you might catch a nervous breakdown trying to learn them all. Here are just a few *Beispiele* (examples).

To pull: *Der Hund zieht mich aus dem Haus.*

To draw: *Siegfried zog sein Schwert.*

To move: *Ich bin nach Pflugerville gezogen.*

To haul: *Michael hat das Boot an Land gezogen.*

With prefixes, the translation possibilities seem endless. *Wir erziehen unsere Kinder, ehrlich zu sein* says that we raise our children to be honest. *Wenn ich zwei von sechs abziehe, habe ich noch vier* means  $6 - 2 = 4$ . *Eine Ziehmutter is a foster mother. Eine Ziehharmonika* is an accordion. In German you pull it apart to draw the air in, in English you squeeze that squeeze-box to get the air out.

What do you say to those who yell at you: “*Es zieht!!*”? With a smile and a strong American accent you let them know that nobody ever died of stinking: “*Okay, es ist noch nie jemand erstunken.*” Then you close the window.

Übung

***Es zieht!***

Please translate the following sentences into German. You may consult the text of the forgoing article.

There is a draft!\_\_\_\_\_

Siegfried drew his sword.\_\_\_\_\_

The dog pulls me out of the house.\_\_\_\_\_

Michael hauled the boat ashore.\_\_\_\_\_

I moved to Pflugerville.\_\_\_\_\_

We raise our children.\_\_\_\_\_

If I take two away from six, I still have four.\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Die spinnt!

German has many phrases expressing that somebody is nuts, a little crazy, off the rocker.

Here are a few that can be used in polite society. It is also good to know that in casual German personal pronouns like “*er*” and “*sie*” can be replaced by the definite article, like “*der*”, “*dem*”, “*die*” etc., and “*ja*” and “*wohl*” are often added for emphasis.

*Der ist ja verrückt.*

*Die hat einen Vogel.*

*Bei dem piept's ja.*

*Die ist wohl nicht ganz bei Trost.*

*Der hat sie nicht mehr alle.*

*Die hat nicht mehr alle Tassen im Schrank.*

*Bei dem ist wohl eine Schraube locker.*

My favorite, short and to the point: *Die spinnt!*

There is a wordless gesture Germans use: If someone looks at you and tips with his index finger on his forehead, he is telling you that you have a little bird inside your head, that you are a bird brain. Don't give this signal - also called the driver's salute - to a German policeman (*Polizist*). He takes it as “*Beamtenbeleidigung*” which means “insulting an officer of the state” and is punishable by law.

Now underline and learn your favorite phrase and use it when appropriate.



*Übung*

***Die spinnt!***

Although one has to be careful in whose presence one calls whom crazy, there are situations that just ask for such a comment.

The following English phrases are an attempt to translate the German phrases used in the preceding text. Try to match the German with the English.

She no longer has all cups in the cabinet.

---

He is crazy.

---

She has a bird.

---

It peeps in him.

---

He does no longer have them all.

---

He has a screw loose.

---

She is spinning.

---

Now pick out two favorites and copy them again to help you memorize them.

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## Frederick the Gross

My German class had read an anecdote telling how Frederick the Great, King of Prussia, sided with a common miller in a property dispute. One of my sometimes brilliant students asked me: “How come we Americans call him ‘Frederick the Great’, but the Germans call him ‘gross’ like in ‘*Friederich der Grosse*’?” That led to a lesson in which we marveled at the great number of English translations of the German word *groß* which can also be spelled *gross* if the keyboard has no *ß*.

great – *Peter der Große war Zar von Russland.*

tall – *Napoleon war nicht groß.*

large – *Brasilien ist ein großes Land.*

big (elder) – *Meine große Schwester ist kleiner als ich.*

big (size) – *In Idaho wachsen große Kartoffeln.*

grand – *Der Wolf fraß die Großmutter.*

with over 100 000 inhabitants – *Köln ist eine Großstadt.*

super – *Die Sowjetunion war eine Großmacht.*

whole – *Der Einzelhändler kauft vom Großhändler.*

This list goes on and on – just look in your dictionary under *groß*.

Newcomers to the English language often misunderstand the English ‘gross’ to mean ‘big’. I did so when my tax preparer grossed me out at the end of my first year in the USA by talking about my ‘gross’ income although I was making only one dollar an hour.

*Übung*

**Frederick the Gross**

Referring to the text on the left, please fill in the blanks.

*Napoleon war nicht* \_ \_ \_ \_ .

*Peter der Große war* \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ .

*Der Wolf fraß die* \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ .

*In Idaho* \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ *große* \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ .

*Der Einzelhändler kauft vom* \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ .

*Der Großhändler verkauft an den* \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ .

*Köln ist eine* \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ .

*Der Kölner Dom ist in* \_ \_ \_ \_ .

\_ \_ \_ \_ \_ *ist ein großes Land in Südamerika.*

*Unter Stalin war die* \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ *eine Großmacht.*

## Freund?

We often translate the word friend with **Freund**. However, they have different meanings within the cultural settings of the United States and Germany. In English I refer to hundreds of people as “my friends”. In German I have few people I call **Freund** (or **Freundin** for a female).

Most of the folks I know are *gute Bekannte* (good acquaintances). To be a **Freund** involves commitment, loyalty, and usually common experiences in the past. “Buddy” might be a good translation in some cases.

German literature has through centuries glorified the virtues of *Freundschaft* (friendship). In Schiller’s “Ode to Joy” (set to music by van Beethoven in his Ninth Symphony), you are invited to join in the jubilation if you are fortunate enough to be a friend’s friend, *eines Freundes Freund zu sein*.

Of course, in the world of German teenagers and love, words take on a different nuance. When I was seventeen I answered *ja* when my aunt Johanna asked me: “*Hast du denn schon einen Freund?*”. She understood my *ja* to mean “Helga is seriously dating”, and she advised me to leave school and learn something useful before entering motherhood - **Freund** as the committed boyfriend.

For 27 years, from the time aunt Johanna’s boyfriend moved in with her to the day she died, aunt Johanna referred to him as her “*Bekannter*”.

Übung

**Freund?**

Here are some quotations about friends and friendships. At the bottom of the page, copy the two quotations you like best and try to memorize them.

***Wem der große Wurf gelungen,  
Eines Freundes Freund zu sein,  
Wer ein holdes Weib errungen,  
Mische seinen Jubel ein.***

Friedrich von Schiller

Whoever has had the great fortune  
To be a friend's friend,  
Whoever has found a gracious wife,  
Add his jubilation to ours.

***Im Unglück erkennt man die Freunde.*** In misfortune you recognize friends.

Johann Gottfried von Herder

***Der Mensch hat nichts so eigen,  
So wohl steht ihm nichts an,  
Als daß er Treu´ erzeigen  
Und Freundschaft halten kann.***

Simon Dach

Man has nothing more special,  
Nothing suits him better  
Than showing loyalty  
And keeping a friendship.

***Ein leicht erwärmter Freund  
Wird leicht erkältet sein.***

Friedrich Rückert

A friend who warmed up easily  
Will easily get cold.

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## Die Gemütlichkeit

Even if you have a difficult time pronouncing this German word, you probably know what it means - at least what it means to you. You might remember an evening in the company of cheerful people, with relaxed conversation, maybe a few songs and a few mugs of beer. This is the standard American concept of *Gemütlichkeit*.

The base word is *das Gemüt*. The stem *-müt-* is related to the English word mood. *Das Gemüt* is the imagined place where your soul, your heart, all feelings and your disposition and your value system dwell. There are countless idioms using this word.

*Der lange Winter schlägt mir aufs Gemüt*, wrote my nephew Thomas, to tell me, that the long winter is dampening his spirit. As a child, I was popular with uncles and aunts because I was usually cheerful and had *ein fröhliches Gemüt*.

The adjective *gemütlich* can describe a person's character, but it more often relates to the cozy, comfy ambience of an event or a place, like sharing a casual dinner with good friends. *Wir waren bei Schmidts zu einem gemütlichen Abendessen*. The greatest compliment you can pay your hosts is *"Bei euch ist es immer so gemütlich."* Of course, a place can be *ungemütlich*, like when it is too *laut, kalt* and drafty (*es zieht!*)

The German-American *Gemütlichkeit* carries a lot of happy memories and tradition, some of them based on students at German universities toasting to wine, song and whatever else : *Ein Prosit, ein Prosit der Gemütlichkeit! Ein Prosit, ein Prosit der Gemütlichkeit!*

# Ein Prosit

Ein Prosit, ein Prosit der Gemütlichkeit

<http://singo.org>

Ein Prosit ein Prosit der Ge-

The first system of musical notation for 'Ein Prosit'. It consists of a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment (grand staff). The vocal line has a melody with eighth and quarter notes. The piano accompaniment features a steady eighth-note bass line and chords in the right hand.

müt-lich-keit. Ein Prosit ein

The second system of musical notation. The vocal line continues the melody, with a slight change in rhythm. The piano accompaniment maintains the same rhythmic pattern.

Pro-sit der Ge-müt-lich-keit.

The third system of musical notation, concluding the phrase. The vocal line ends with a quarter note, and the piano accompaniment provides a final chord.

## Der Kuckuck

*Der Kuckuck ist ein Zugvogel*, a migratory bird that lives mainly in dense forest areas and is seldom seen. Its simple two note call and its peculiar behavior have given the word **Kuckuck** many meanings in German life and language.

If you have money in your pocket when you hear the first coo-coo call in the spring on your stroll through the forest (*Waldspaziergang*), you'll have money all through the year. Children sing many *Kinderlieder* like *Kuckuck, Kuckuck, ruft's aus dem Wald...* You call **Kuckuck** when you play peek –a –boo.

However, *der Kuckuck* also gets involved in many troublesome aspects of life. “May the devil take you” can be said as *Soll dich der Kuckuck holen!* If you don't pay your debts, the bailiff, *der Gerichtsvollzieher*, will put pawn stickers on your furniture, and you can tell your friends: *Bei mir klebt der Kuckuck an den Möbeln.*

Since the hen of the “European Common Cuckoo”, the type that lives in Germany, lays her eggs in other birds' nests, there are erotic connotations. English has the “cuckold”, the man whose wife has an extra-marital affair (*Sie macht einen Seitensprung*). A child resulting from that affair is called a cuckoo's egg, *ein Kuckucksei*. Most American cuckoos, by the way, do build a nest for their eggs, but only a flimsy one.

And then there is the cuckoo clock. It has its beginning in 1737 in Schönwald in the Black Forest. Some new models can be set so that they don't coo-coo at night. The twelve *Kuckuck Kuckuck...s* of my old *Kuckucksuhr* at midnight can drive anybody to fly over the cuckoo's nest..



*Übung*

***Der Kuckuck***

The European common cuckoo lays her eggs in other birds' nests. I wonder if she ever checks on her chicks' wellbeing. Instead of worrying about the little cuckoos, let's concentrate on learning some German words. Please, look for the German translation of the listed words and phrases in the previous article. Write them down and say them out loud.

the cuckoo \_ \_ \_ \_ \_

a migratory bird \_ \_ \_ \_ \_

stroll through the forest \_ \_ \_ \_ \_

children's songs \_ \_ \_ \_ \_

bailiff \_ \_ \_ \_ \_

extra- marital affair \_ \_ \_ \_ \_

cuckoo's egg \_ \_ \_ \_ \_

cuckoo clock \_ \_ \_ \_ \_

peek-a-boo \_ \_ \_ \_ \_

For extra credit: When and where was the first ***Kuckucksuhr*** built?

---

## Ich bin am lesen.

Our spoken language varies from the way we write about something. We choose different words and often use verbs in forms not taught in school. An example in German is the use of the infinitive preceded by **am** to indicate that something is happening at that moment like the English ...ing does in: The dog is barking – **Der Hund ist am bellen** instead of **Der Hund bellt**. Another example (**Beispiel**): "Be quiet! I am watching the news." „**Sei still! Ich bin die Nachrichten am angucken.**” Regulation German would be "**Sei bitte still! Ich gucke die Nachrichten an.**"

Before my last visit to Germany I called my niece on a remote farm north of Berlin (**janz weit draußen**) who was almost due to deliver a baby. I knew a midwife (**Hebamme**) had already moved in with her. Eight-year old Stefan answered the phone shouting: „**Mama ist gerade ein Kind am kriegen.!**” Then he hung up. I knew it was happening right then and I sensed his excitement. Had he said: „**Mama kriegt ein Kind**”, he might have simply confirmed that she was pregnant.

We once spent a night in a barn in the Lüneburger Heide because a thunderstorm had stopped us bicycle tourists from pedaling to the next town. The farmer's dog began barking at four in the morning and was still barking at six when I wrote in my diary: **Der dumme Hund bellt seit vier Uhr!!!** However, I wrote this after I had vented my anger by calling the farmer on my cell phone (**Handy**) yelling: **Der blöde Köter ist seit vier Uhr am kläffen!** I would never write that language in my diary.

If somebody disturbs you while you are reading this, tell that person: „**Sei still! Ich bin Helga's Corner am lesen.**”

*Übung*

***Ich bin am lesen.***

Please, copy the German translation of the following words or phrases from the preceding text. If there is a choice between two phrases, choose one of them. If you are the type of person who finds it hard to make choices in certain situations (like I am), copy both versions.

The dog is barking.

---

---

I am watching the news.

---

---

mid-wife

---

Be quiet!

---

Mama is having a baby

---

---

the stupid dog

---

cell-phone

---

The stupid dog is barking since 4 o'clock.

---

---

I am reading

---

## Stroke

While spending long, quiet hours at my husband's bedside in the hospital, it occurred to me that the English word "stroke" has to be translated into German in an amazing number of ways. I am telling you a true story now using "stroke" in a variety of meanings:

Hans complains of a light headache, so I stroke (*streichle*) his head. Then he complains of blurred vision and slurs his speech, and I immediately have this stroke of genius (*genialer Einfall*), jump to the *Telefon*, dial 911 and yell: "My husband is having a stroke (*Schlaganfall*)!" With a stroke of luck (*mit viel Glück*) the *Ambulanz* arrives within three minutes.

Hans survives the massive stroke and is now recovering – slowly, like swimming for miles in rough water, one stroke at a time (*Zug um Zug*).

Then comes the moment when I have to tell the relatives in Germany about this stroke of fate (*Schicksalsschlag*). I use a vocabulary list I made of illnesses often mentioned in letters and old documents:

He had a stroke : *Er hatte einen Schlaganfall.* or: *Er hatte einen Gehirnschlag; Schlag; Apoplexie; Schlagfluß.*

While a *Schlaganfall* occurs in the brain (*im Gehirn*), one can suffer another type of "*Schlag*": a *Herzschlag* (heart-attack), also known as *Herzinfarkt*.

*Der Patient sagt "Vielen Dank" für all die Wünsche zur guten Besserung, und für die Karten, Blumen, Besuche, E-mails, Telefonanrufe, Schokolade und Tomatensuppe.*

## Übung

### Stroke

Find the German translation for the given English words in these syllables.  
The German words can all be found in the preceding text.

a – an – an - be – blu – che – de – ein – fall – fall- farkt – fe - fon - ge –  
glück – herz – in - ko – la – le - ler – ma – men – mit – ni – pe – ru - schlag  
– scho – su – sup – te - ten – to – viel

stroke (in the brain) \_\_\_\_\_

heart attack \_\_\_\_\_

with a stroke of luck \_\_\_\_\_

stroke of genius \_\_\_\_\_

flowers \_\_\_\_\_

visits \_\_\_\_\_

chocolate \_\_\_\_\_

tomato soup \_\_\_\_\_

telephone calls \_\_\_\_\_

## Ich bin ja so selig .

There are moments in life (*im Leben*) when we feel part of everything good in the universe, when we are experiencing utter bliss. The German adjective for that state of happiness is not *glücklich* but *selig*. An example would be the minute you take off your boots after a long hike. You say: **“Ach, ich bin ja so seeeelig!”** The word bliss does not have the sound quality, it is too short and can't be stretched out like *selig*, and let's not talk about the word utter.

*Selig* is related to *die Seele*, the soul, and thus indicates a connection to the spiritual. Savoring a soft boiled egg, *ein weich gekochtes Ei*, can be like eating soul food; it is for me – a combination of the mundane and the spiritual. However, *meine selige Mutter* is in English my late mother. When the pope beatifies you, that event will be your *Seligsprechung*.

*Selig* comes in many word combinations like *armselig*. *Ein armseliger Mensch* is a person to be pitied; the adjective makes no statement on the condition of his soul. The most intriguing word, however, is *Habseligkeiten*. The *Hab*-part means 'have', but ...*seligkeiten*? *Habseligkeiten* is “everything a person owns”. Does that say that owning something makes a person happy, *selig*? It does not usually refer to a house full of stuff (*Kram*) but to more manageable amounts as in: **1957 packte ich meine Habseligkeiten in einen Koffer und wanderte nach Amerika aus.**

I packed into that suitcase everything I considered necessary for survival in a strange land, including a book on the Italian Renaissance, a book with poems by Rilke, and Hemingway's *Der alte Mann und das Meer*. Assessing my *Habseligkeiten*, I thought: **Ich bin ja so selig, dass ich all diese schönen Dinge habe.**

# Übung

*Ich bin ja so selig.*

Please list a few things or situations that make you *selig*. Try to do it in German. Use a dictionary if you want to. Don't worry too much about correct grammar unless it makes you ***selig*** to have everything perfect.

[illegible]

## In pikanter Soße

“In spicy sauce” read the fine print on the lid of the imported can of **Brathering**. **Bratheringe** are fried herrings in a mild marinade, thus becoming **eingelegte Bratheringe**, a delicacy to my palate. Why would a German company spoil a **Brathering** by adding a spicy sauce? After opening the can and taking a bite of the fish I realized to my great joy that the company had made a mistake in translating. They thought “spicy” implied a well balanced blend of spices (**Gewürze**). To us Americans “spicy” has taken on the meaning of “hot,” as in “My doctor told me to lay off spicy food.” He was not talking about the cinnamon I mix with sugar and milk for my rice pudding.

**Scharf** is the German word for “spicy” or “hot.” **Drei-Alarm Chili ist zu scharf für mich**. Marinated or pickled food is called **eingelegt** or **sauer** and is usually much milder than the American versions.. **Eingelegte Gurken** are pickles; a **Sauerbraten** is a roast which is marinated before it is roasted.

Other words to look for in search of a tasty sauce are **würzig** and **pikant**. **Würzig** is based on **Gewürze** and promises a rich flavor, while **pikant** is almost asking for a gourmet to appreciate it. **In pikanter Soße** always awakens the **Feinschmecker** (gourmet) in me.

That translation error of the German company almost led me not to buy that delicious can of fish. It should have said “**Brathering in pikanter Soße**” on the lid.

I bought all of the three cans of **eingelegte Bratheringe** that were on the shelf of my supermarket last year. I haven’t seen any since.



*Übung*

***In pikanter Soße***

The following printed list is made up of German words from the preceding article.

The letters are not in the original sequence. Please straighten them out.

*KATPIN*\_\_\_\_\_

*ZERGÜWE*\_\_\_\_\_

*ESOß*\_\_\_\_\_

*BINGRATHER*\_\_\_\_\_

*MECKERFISCHEN*\_\_\_\_\_

*EUBANERRATS*\_\_\_\_\_

*KRUGEN*\_\_\_\_\_

*RAUSE*\_\_\_\_\_

*FARSCH*\_\_\_\_\_

*LEGGETINE*\_\_\_\_\_

*DIRE-MALAR LICH*\_\_\_\_\_

## Liebe Frau Helga.

Many people seem to think that I have an answer to every question. Here are the answers to some I found in my email:

“Dear Helga. Why are *Dirndls* sexy and *Lederhosen* dorky?” My comment is that sexyness is in the mind of the beholder. By design, *Dirndl* dresses draw attention to that part of the female anatomy which naughty Germans refer to as *Balkon*. Sometimes there is a cleavage, sometimes the protruding white blouse has that effect. As for *Lederhosen* - admittedly I grew up in North Germany and consider these pants not part of my culture but as belonging to alpine regions like Bavaria – I consider them only one step up from the fur wraps Neanderthal men were sporting. *Vom Fell zum Leder*, from fur to leather, is a small step. Many Bavarians have not yet advanced to spandex, microfiber or nanobritches. *Lederhosen* don’t have to be dry-cleaned or washed, which makes them economical garments for a man to wear and should have great appeal, sexy or not, to the *sparsame Hausfrau*, the frugal housewife.

“Dear Helga’s Corner. Are steins made to keep the beer cold?” My response: “*Nein, no, nein*”. Germans like their *Bier* at room or basement temperature. Steins are made to hold the beer until you drink it. *Stein* is the German word for stone. Most steins are stone ware. *Ein Maßkrug* is one of the German words for this mug, *a Maß* for short. *Der Deckel*, lid, keeps other people’s spit out of your *Bier*, and nowadays we see that protection on coffee mugs as well.

“**Liebe Frau Helga! Warum ist deutscher Kartoffelsalat warm?**” What Americans call German potato salad is an insult to a perfectly good vegetable and is served warm in Bavaria. You peel and boil potatoes, slice them, add onions, bacon drippings and vinegar and eat it before it gets cold. The more refined version has *Mayonnaise* and is kept cold. Remember, *die Kartoffel* is native to the Americas and was not popular in *Europa* until centuries after 1492.

Can you see this American tourist in Bavaria in his *Lederhosen*? He is gobbling up *warmen Kartoffelsalat*, gazes at the cleavage of a *Dirndl* and lifts a mighty *Maß. Prost*.

*Übung*

**Liebe Frau Helga**

Please, copy the German words and phrases printed in bold letters on the preceding page. Make sure you know what they mean.

Words from the 2nd paragraph: (sample: **Dirndl** - **Balkon** - ...)

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Words from the 3rd paragraph:

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Words from the 4th paragraph:

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Please, draw a lady in a **Dirndl** and a guy in **Lederhosen**.

## Lustig ist das Zigeunerleben!

Happy is a gipsy's life...This popular, cheerful song about gipsies (**Zigeuner**) says that their life is *lustig*, meaning cheerful and enjoyable. Their life is not "lusting" as my friend Pete had translated the word *lustig*.

The adjective *lustig* has many meanings: *eine lustige Geschichte* is a funny story; *ein lustiger Mensch* is a cheerful person. The noun *Lust* has many uses as well - and none of them means "lust" in the sense an American might find it in his heart.

*Ich habe Lust. ins Kino zu gehen* means "I feel like going to the movies". *Ein Lustspiel* is a comedy. *Die Wanderlust* is the hankering for the wide blue yonder.

Of course, even a German might be lusting and craving now and then for one thing or another. The word for that is *lüstern*. *Der Präsident lüstert nach...*whatever.

Since *Lust* and lust are linguistically related, there are overlapping words like *der Lustmolch* which is a man with a keen interest in women.

Not only **Zigeuner** are considered *lustig*, so are the people in the Austrian and now Italian area of the Tirol. A children's song tells us: *Die Tiroler sind lustig, die Tiroler sind froh, sie verkaufen ihre Bettchen und schlafen auf Stroh* - they sell their beds and sleep on straw. In other words, poverty makes them happy and carefree.

I prefer to identify with the **Zigeuner**, because the song about them continues by giving the reason for their happiness: they don't have to pay taxes to Cesar, the **Kaiser** (at least they didn't in the good old days) :... *brauchen dem Kaiser kein Zins zu geben. Fariah, fariah, ho!*

## Alle Vögel sind schon da

The image shows a musical score for the song 'Alle Vögel sind schon da'. It consists of four staves of music in G major (one sharp) and 2/4 time. The melody is simple and catchy, with lyrics written below each staff. The lyrics are in German and English. The first staff has the lyrics '1. Al - le Vö - gel sind schon da, al - le Vö - gel'. The second staff has 'al - le. Welch ein Sin - gen, Mu - si - zern,'. The third staff has 'Pfei - fen, Zwit - schern, Ti - ri - liern: Früh - ling will nun'. The fourth staff has 'ein - mar - schiern, kommt mit Sang und Schal - le.'

2. Wie sie alle lustig sind, flink und froh sich regen. / Amsel,  
Drossel, Fink und Star und die ganze Vogelschar / wünschen  
uns ein frohes Jahr, lauter Heil und Segen.

3. Was sie uns verkünden nun, nehmen wir zu Herzen: / Wir  
auch wollen lustig sein, lustig wie die Vögelein, / hier und  
dort, feldeus, feldein, singen, springen, scherzen.

All birds are already here/ All birds, all./Hear that singing, music making/  
Whistling, chirping, tirileering!/ Spring will now come marching in,/ Comes with songs  
and sounds.

How they all are merry now,/ Moving gay and nimble!/ Blackbird, thrush and finch and  
starling/ And the 'ntire flock of birds,/ They wish us a happy year,/ Lots of health and  
blessings.

What they all announce to us,/ We accept in our heart./ We would like to be as merry,/  
Merry as the little birds,/ Here and there, in all the fields,/ Sing, and dance, be happy.

This poem written by Hoffmann von Fallersleben in about 1839 for an old folk tune, is a  
staple in children's songs and makes the singers feel as *lustig* and happy as little birds in  
the spring.

## Mein Verein

**Ein Verein** (pronounced “fair ine”) is a club, society or organized group. Many German sports fans identify with a **Sportverein** in the same way Americans name their college as their favorite team. When the former teenage tennis star Boris Becker won at Wimbledon, his training and support came from his home-town **Tennisverein**.

My father played soccer for a **Fußballverein** called “**Spiel und Sport**” while he went to college. How great was then his disappointment when his son, my brother, decided to play **Fußball** in another local **Verein**! **Vereinstreue** (loyalty to your club) is a sign of good citizenship and sometimes runs in families.

Germans settling in other countries – be it in **Australien, Afrika oder Amerika** – took their love for **Vereine** along. They often founded a **Gesangverein** soon after their first harvest. Many of them are still viable choirs, with names like **Saengerrunde, Liederkranz, Beethovensor** and **Frohsinn**.

Next on the scene was often the **Schützenverein**, a shooting society. Its origin lies in the Napoleonic era, when German states were allowed only a small army. A **Schützenverein** offered many men the opportunity to be trained in the use of arms in a civilian setting.

Great enjoyment and loyalty are also found in **Vereine** cultivating local traditions like **Ostfriesenvereine**.

What **Verein** would I join in Germany? I would look for a **Deutsch-Texanischer Freundschaftsverein**, maybe similar to the German-Texan Heritage Society in Texas. However, the “Texans” in **Deutschland** would probably come in cowboy boots (**Stiefel**) and Stetsons to the **Vereinssitzung**.

*Übung*

***Mein Verein***

What type of *Verein* or *Club* would you join?

Pick one of the following clubs to match the person's talent:

***Gesangverein   Fußballverein   Tennisclub   Schützenverein  
Tanzclub   Wanderverein   Skiclub   Skatclub   Tischtennisverein  
Bergsteigerverein   Wildwestverein   Kegelclub***

Marianne loves to tango : \_\_\_\_\_

Willy fancies himself a good shooter: \_\_\_\_\_

Theodor itches to kick a ball around: \_\_\_\_\_

Mario thinks people love to hear him sing: \_\_\_\_\_

Boris loves a racket: \_\_\_\_\_

Hillary likes to climb: \_\_\_\_\_

Bill knocks them all over: \_\_\_\_\_

Karl says all Texans are either cowboys or Indians: \_\_\_\_\_

Hans and Hanna play ping and pong: \_\_\_\_\_

Jack of club is the best card in this club: \_\_\_\_\_

Ted enjoys going downhill fast: \_\_\_\_\_

Liz hikes over the hills and through the dales: \_\_\_\_\_

## Mudder gleicht die alte Katz

Following the first World War, many German-Americans spoke German without the benefit of having learned proper grammar or spelling. They wrote it down as they thought it might be understood by others. Present day descendants with even less knowledge of the language but armed with a dictionary, are trying to translate those old letters, diaries and church minutes. Here are some examples on which I was asked for a second opinion. You can try to do your own translation first, then look at the bottom of the article for my guesses at what they meant.

1 ***Unsere Mudder gleicht die alte Katz:*** Our mother looks like the old cat.

2 ***...dann kamen die trei Waisen aus dem Morgen land:*** ...then came the three orphans from the acre of land.

3 ***..., das unsere Amma gestern gestorben ist. Sie war Papa seine Mutter:*** ...that our nursemaid died yesterday. She was Daddy's mother.

4 ***Karl is nach Essen mit die fell von eine stink katze und einen gestopfte wash bärn für Emmas kinder:*** After the meal Karl is with the skin of a stinking cat and a darned wash bear for Emma's children.

5 ***Der Strom war weg, aber wir hatten nichts an und haben nichts gemerkt:*** The river was gone, but we were naked and did not notice anything.

6 ***Das Ruck grat brach, und er starb ohne Schmerzen:*** The jerk just broke, and he died without pain.

Helga's suggestions:

1 Our mother likes the old cat.

2 ...then came the three Wise Men from the Orient.

3 ... that our grandma died yesterday. She was daddy's mother. (*Amma* and *Omma* are regional pronunciations of *Oma*).

4 Karl went to the (town of ) Essen with the skin of a skunk and a stuffed raccoon for Emma's children.

5 The electricity was off, but we had nothing turned on and did not notice it.

6 The spine broke, and he died without pain.



## Übung

### ***Mudder gleicht die alte Katz.***

There is nothing very wrong with speaking and writing German the way one learned it at home in a foreign country, even if it is rather different from today's high German. However, the wrong selection of a word with several meanings can lead to astonishing misunderstandings – see the predicament with “like” meaning “similar” and “love”, and ***Strom*** meaning river and electricity.

Please, copy the corrected text and read it aloud.

*Mudder gleicht die alte Katz.*

***Mutter liebt die alte Katze.***

---

*...die trei Waisen aus dem Morgen land*

***...die drei Weisen aus dem Morgenland***

---

*Sie war Papas seine Mutter.*

***Sie war Papas Mutter.***

---

*...mit dem Fell von einem stink katze*

***...mit dem Fell von einem Stinktier***

---

*Der Strom war weg, aber wir hatten nichts an.*

***Der (elektrische) Strom war weg, aber wir hatten nichts angeschaltet.***

---

*Das Ruck grat brach, und er starb ohne Schmerzen.*

***Das Rückgrat brach, und er starb ohne Schmerzen.***

---

## Nüchtern?

German has some words with two or more different meanings. These words are mean, I mean: mean! One of those traps is **nüchtern**, which can mean „sober“, but also „having an empty stomach“. Here are some other examples with translations which can easily be wrong for the situation.

*das Rezept* = recipe; prescription  
*Bronchitis*.

*Der Arzt gab mir ein Rezept für meine*

The doctor gave me a recipe for my bronchitis.

*die Karte* = map; postcard

*Schick mir bitte eine Karte vom Hotel.*

Please send me a map of the Hotel.

*verlegen* = misplace; publish

*Der Verleger hat mein Buch verlegt.*

The publisher misplaced my book.

*Sie, sie* = you; she; they

*Sie riechen nicht so gut.*

You don't smell so good.

*Arme* = arms; poor people

*Nackte Arme sind in dieser Kirche nicht erlaubt.*

In this church naked poor people are not allowed.

*das Schloss* = palace; lock

*Der Fürst sammelt alte Schlösser.*

The prince collects old palaces.

*die Decke* = blanket; ceiling

*Liebling, die Decke ist schmutzig.*

Honey, the ceiling is dirty.

Imagine my embarrassment recently. I was resting on the couch, day-dreaming in German, when the phone rang: “Dr. Snor wants you to come in for a blood test tomorrow morning”. Intending to ask if I had to come on an empty stomach, I sure enough picked the wrong translation of **nüchtern** and asked her: ”Do I have to be sober?” Her reply was a long silence and then: “Ma’m? Will that be a problem?”

## Übung

### *Nüchtern?*

Please translate the following sentences into German and write them on the lines provided:

The doctor gave me a prescription.

---

They don't smell so good.

---

Naked arms are not allowed in this church.

---

The prince collects old locks.

---

Darling, the blanket is dirty.

---

I am sober.

---

## Nullen

A German's birthday can be as disastrous as a stock-market crash if it is a birthday ending in zero, **Null** - like in 50 or 60, or worse, in 70. (**der siebzigste Geburtstag**). **Man nullt** on that day and owes the world an unforgettable celebration. Tradition demands that the honoree of the day, **das Geburtstagskind**, pays for the party, **die Feier**.

Last **Juni** my brother turned 70. **Die schriftliche Einladung**, the written invitation, **kam im April**.

**Die Feier** took place in the town's largest **Garten-Restaurant** and began with **Champagner** at 11 in the morning. **Um 12** a hot **Büffet** called **Brunch**, with exquisite delicacies, was devoured, accompanied by speeches and skits performed by his bowling club, **von seinen Kegelbrüdern**.

**Mit vollem Bauch und vom Wein etwas wackelig auf den Beinen**, stomachs filled and their legs a bit unsteady from the **Wein**, **die Gäste** then strolled **im Garten** until **Kaffee und Kuchen** were served at **3 Uhr 30**. More funny skits, this time by his **Sauna** buddies.

The first **Cognacs**, **ein Schnaps**, **noch ein Schnaps** - and **die Bar** opened and **ein Fass Bier** was **angezapft** and a memorable dinner was served. Some of the 60 guests went home after dinner. Taxis and designated drivers had been arranged well in advance.

Later that month my brother had to spend a round, **einen ausgeben**, for the **Senioren Tischtennis Club**, the church choir and the banker in charge of his accounts.

**Warnung!!!** When you are fixing to **nullen**, don't plan to celebrate the day with friends and relatives in Germany.

*Übung*

***Nullen***

On the morning after my brother's 70th birthday party, my diary entries testified to my befuddled mind. Some words were hard to unscramble.

Please, give it a try.

You find the words spelled correctly in the preceding article. As you write them down, make a mental note of their meaning in English.

**t a g g e b r u s t** \_\_\_\_\_

**z i g s b e s t i e** \_\_\_\_\_

**e i f e r** \_\_\_\_\_

**f r i s c h l e i c h t a l e i n d u n g** \_\_\_\_\_

**k a e f f e** \_\_\_\_\_

**k n e u c h** \_\_\_\_\_

**s p a n s c h** \_\_\_\_\_

**i b e r** \_\_\_\_\_

**r i o s e n n e** \_\_\_\_\_

**w u n g a r n** \_\_\_\_\_

**l a c k e w i g** \_\_\_\_\_

**s c h i t t i n n e s** \_\_\_\_\_

**l u n n e l** \_\_\_\_\_

**n i e n e e u s e b a n g** \_\_\_\_\_

**b e t ü f f** \_\_\_\_\_

## Das Reißverschlussystem

***Meine Reise durch Deutschland im Juni und Juli 2008 hat mir viele gute Erinnerungen geschenkt.*** I really have so many good memories of that trip through Germany. ***Hier ist eine Liste*** of some words that evoke positive images:

***Freundliche und hilfsbereite Menschen.*** People were genuinely friendly and eager to help. Even Railroad employees ***in Uniform*** carried ***meine Koffer***. Teenagers offered me their ***Sitze im Bus*** .

***Die deutsche Fahne, schwarz, rot, gold.*** Until a few years ago many Germans considered waving a flag the first step towards dangerous nationalism. The world soccer cup in Berlin in 2006 changed all that. ***Schwarz, rot gold*** flies from *the Balkon*, from *Autos*, *auf T-shirts*, it's even painted on cheeks.

***Toleranz.*** The ***Fußballspiele***, soccer games, for the European cup were dominating life while I was there. All over Germany ***die Türken, die Spanier, die Polen*** all hoisted and showed off their national flags openly and with pride.

***Gastfreundschaft. Meine Gastgeber***, my hosts, all friends or relatives, were so warmhearted and generous! To be a good guest, you should stay for only two or three days, which I did. ***So ist man ein guter Gast.***

***Nicht meine Schuld . Niemand hat mir den Krieg in Irak in die Schuhe geschoben.*** It was a great relief that nobody blamed me, the American, for the Iraq war. They blamed Washington.

***Das Reißverschlussystem***, the system that functions like a zipper. The post- WWII generation that had to fight for everything they needed, is off the road, so to speak, and a more relaxed attitude towards living, problem- solving and especially driving has taken over. When a huge crowd in thousands of cars had to go home after watching Germany play against Spain on a big screen near the Rhine in Koblenz, the traffic on two roads had to be merged into a single lane. Patiently the drivers took turns entering that one lane, one from the right, one from the left, just like a ***Reißverschluss***. This seems to me to be ***das Symbol für das neue Deutschland***.  
***Ich freue mich auf meine nächste Reise nach Deutschland.***

*Übung*

***Das Reißverschlussystem***

Please translate the following English phrases into German using the text on the left as reference.

in June and July \_ \_ \_ \_ \_

good memories \_ \_ \_ \_ \_

my trip through Germany \_ \_ \_ \_ \_

friendly people \_ \_ \_ \_ \_

my suitcases \_ \_ \_ \_ \_

the German flag \_ \_ \_ \_ \_

black, red, gold \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ , \_ \_ \_ , \_ \_ \_ \_

the Turks \_ \_ \_ \_ \_

tolerance \_ \_ \_ \_ \_

my hosts \_ \_ \_ \_ \_

a good guest \_ \_ \_ \_ \_

not my fault \_ \_ \_ \_ \_

zipper \_ \_ \_ \_ \_

### **Wir täten schon wollen...**

There are verbs in English and in German that often annoy me either through their meaning or their irregular forms. Let's consider "to trust", *trauen* in German. "You can trust me", in *Du kannst mir trauen*, tells me not to trust that person, a red flag goes up. However, *Ich traue mich nicht* means I don't dare, and in the past tense that would be *Ich habe mich nicht getraut*. For you and me together it would be *Wir haben uns nicht getraut*, we didn't dare; no red flag.

I wanted to translate into English a quote from Bavarian humorist Karl Valentin (pronounced "Fallenteen") the other day. I had to deal with several irregular verbs with multiple meanings and with Bavarian grammar. After a sleepless night I gave up and thought I let my readers help me by sending me their version of a translation. (helgavs@aol.com)  
The verbs Valentin used in his famous lines:

like: We don't like that.	<i>Wir mögen das nicht.</i>
want: We want that.	<i>Wir wollen das.</i>
be allowed: We are allowed to.	<i>Wir dürfen das.</i>
would do: We would do that.	<i>Wir täten das.</i>
dare: We don't dare.	<i>Wir trauen uns nicht.</i>

Here are Valentin's two lines which describe a state of mind that so many of us choose to be in more often than *wir täten sollen*.

*Mög'n täten wir schon wollen,  
aber dürf'n haben wir uns nicht getraut.*



Übung

***Wir täten schon wollen...***

When the preceding article was first published, I, the author, was delighted at the great number of responses from readers who tried to find the full meaning of Valentin's saying. To calm down everybody's confused mind, let us now do some routine grammar exercise.

Please, copy the following sentences and also fill in the dotted lines.

***mögen:***    Wir mögen das.      Ich mag das.      Er mag das.

Wir mögen das nicht.    Ich mag das nicht.    Er.....

***wollen:***    Wir wollen das.      Ich will das.      Er will das.

Wir wollen das nicht    Ich.....      Er.....

***dürfen:***    Wir dürfen das.      Ich darf das.      Er darf das.

Wir dürfen das nicht.    Ich.....      Er.....

***tun:***    Wir täten das.      Ich täte das.      Er täte das.

Wir täten das nicht.    Ich.....      Er.....

***sich trauen:***

Wir trauen uns.      Ich traue mich.      Er traut sich.

Wir trauen uns nicht.    Ich traue.....      Er.....

## Wohnkultur

The verb **wohnen** refers to your place of residence and has among its many translations “to live” and to “reside”. **Frau Wagner wohnt in Bremen. Sie hat eine kleine Wohnung**, a small apartment.

**Wohnkultur** describes the way you keep your immediate surroundings. It is part of a life-style on which many Germans pride themselves. You present yourself through your choice of furniture, wallpaper, the latest appliances, lampshades, works of art and other visual testimony to your personality. None of them seems more important than the treatment of your windows. **Das Fenster** has to please not only you but all the people walking by the **Haus** you live in.

I once inherited a slightly neglected **Haus** in the small town of Bad Salzuflen. Before I spent a **Pfennig** on fixing the plumbing and other interior problems, I spent a **Vermögen**, a fortune, on beautifying the front of the house, mainly with **Blumen**, flowers.

I stuck **Geranien** in all the flowerboxes (**Blumenkästen**). **Gardinen**, expensive lace curtains, adorned the **Fenster** on the inside, but in the parlor they were only half-length, because on the wide marble **Fensterbank**, window-sill, I cultivated an eclectic collection of flowering potted plants, **Topfblumen**, and a **Kaktus** that never bloomed for me.

With a guy from the nursery I planted **Rosen, Jasmin und Rhododendron in den Vorgarten** (front yard).

Not until then was I finally ready to call the plumber.

I realized that the priorities in my **Wohnkultur** had been set by what is not really a bad standard – that of “What will people think of me?” - **Was sollen denn die Leute von mir denken?**

Übung

**Wohnkultur**

Please translate the words in parenthesis into German.

**Frau Wagner** (resides) \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ **in Bremen.**

**Sie wohnt in einer kleinen** (apartment) \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ .

**Ihre Wohnung hat viele** (windows) \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ .

**Frau Wagner liebt** (flowers). \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ .

**Sie hat** (potted plants) \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ **auf der großen** (window sill) \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ **im Wohnzimmer.**

**In den Blumenkästen wachsen** (geraniums) \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ .

**In Frau Wagners** (front yard) \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ **steht ein** (cactus) \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ . **Er ist krank.**

**Im Garten wachsen rote und gelbe** (roses) \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ .

**Der** (jasmin) \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ **duftet sehr gut.**

Name two of Mrs. Wagner's plants that do well in Texas:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Angst

**Angst** gripped Professor B. when he opened the 2008 year-end statement from his investment manager. The entire world was in a financial crisis. “My nest egg shriveled like a **Bratwurst** on hot coal,” he moaned, showing overwhelming **Weltschmerz** on his face.

“I told you not to invest in stocks, not at your age”, giggled his colleague beaming with **Schadenfreude**.

He blew his nose to collect himself. “**Gesundheit!**” she said and added “anyhow, money in the bank is a poor **Ersatz** for genuine happiness. Grasp the **Zeitgeist**, friend, toss the **Poltergeist** of old and trust our new president.”

After lunch Professor B. **schlepped** himself to his trusted old **Volkswagen** and drove out of town giving himself to the **Fahrvergnügen** no other car had ever given him. “For me, there is happiness in simply going somewhere, just anywhere,” he thought. Even in **Kindergarten** his mother had excused his wandering off episodes with an inherited **Wanderlust**.

Shifting down into second gear as he passed some sheep, the solution to America’s problems came to him: Our president must convince all people in crowded cities that they need more **Lebensraum**, that they have to spread out over the empty spaces in the mid-western states. That building boom might even force St. Nick to rehire **Donner** and **Blitzen** whom he had fired after last year’s poor Christmas sales.

Filled with new **Lebenslust**, Professor B. sang loud and unabashed: “**Mein Vater war ein Wandersmann...**”

Übung

***Angst***

Write the correct German word on the line next to the English word or phrase that comes close to a translation.

***Angst Bratwurst Schadenfreude Ersatz Lebensraum Blitz***

***Zeitgeist Volkswagen Wanderlust Kindergarten Weltschmerz***

lightning \_ \_ \_ \_ \_

enjoying other people's misfortune \_ \_ \_ \_ \_

an educational place for young children \_ \_ \_ \_ \_

substitute \_ \_ \_ \_ \_

sausage for grilling or frying \_ \_ \_ \_ \_

all the world's misery \_ \_ \_ \_ \_

the spirit of the times \_ \_ \_ \_ \_

folk's wagon with initials V and W \_ \_ \_ \_ \_

yearning to physically go somewhere \_ \_ \_ \_ \_

space to live in and to expand in \_ \_ \_ \_ \_

## Gesundheit

Good health (*Gesundheit*) is nothing to sneeze at. Germans wish you “*Gesundheit*” after you sneeze. Many of them also seem to be in a craze presently to work toward better health, creating no end of problems for themselves.

Those with enough money buy “*Bio* ...” which corresponds to our “organic”. *Bio-Äpfel*, *Bio-Bananen* and *Bio-Dill* are easy to find. However, if you insist on *Bio-Hähnchen* (organic chicken) and *Bio-Wein* when you travel, like some of my companions did, you might have to shop around for a while.

The worst experience during my recent trip to Germany was the fact, that most people ate only one (1) *Brötchen* for breakfast instead of the traditional two. I stuck to tradition.

Keeping *fit* through physical activity is another temptation to overdo it. My very own brother, 71, runs for 3 km before breakfast. My classmates at our reunion discussed their weekly regiments: *Nordic walking* which makes them swing two long poles like cross-country skiers. *Tennis*, *Schwimmen*, *Radfahren* (biking), *Gymnastik*, *Wandern* or *Golf*. That they did too much of whatever they did was obvious because they all complained of aches and pains and joint replacements.

I tend to keep exercise within reasonable limits, and so it filled me with satisfaction and comfort when I listened to their laments of *Tennis-Ellbogen*, *Herzinfarkt beim Tennis-Doppel*, *neue Kniegelenke*, *neue Hüften* (new knees and hips), and *Lendenwirbelsäulensyndrom* which is a lower back problem. I don't suffer from any of those maladies.

My 2009 trip to Germany taught me a lesson: Should I ever feel the urge to walk around Lake Pflugerville, about three miles, I know it is time to retire to my couch, munch on an organic apple and listen to classical music until the urge floats away. *Eine gesunde Kombination: eine Couch, ein Bio-Apfel und klassische Musik.*

*Übung*

***Gesundheit***

Please, write down six types of exercise (in German, of course).

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_

Write down four kinds of trouble caused by too much exercise:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

Write down four organic food items:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

## Die Teutonen

A Texas rancher asked me: “Can you help me find a wife for my son? We are millionaires with vast land holdings in two counties. Only condition is, she has to be of Teutonic extraction.” When I heard “vast land holdings” I was tempted to offer my daughter who wanted to raise horses on a big scale. But then I wasn’t sure about the full meaning and implications of “Teutonic extraction” and kept quiet.

Shortly after this encounter, “Texas Highways” magazine published an article about the German-Texans titled “Tracing Texas’ Teutonic Lineage” (Sept. 1993). That made it clear, that - at least in Texas - Teutonic can mean not only Germanic but also simply German. However, the German word *teutonisch* refers only to a particular Germanic tribe, *die Teutonen*.

The syllables *Teuto* are also found in the name *Teutoburger Wald* which is a stretch of forested hills in northern Germany where one of the world’s most important battles took place in the year 9 A.D.. *Hermann*, commanding the army of the Germanic tribe called Cherusci, defeated the advancing Roman army and stopped them from expanding their influence further north. *Hermann der Cherusker* lives on in folklore and is celebrated in two enormous monuments, one in the *Teutoburger Wald*, and a replica near New Ulm, Minnesota. The victorious *Hermann* is also the hero for whom German immigrants named a still active insurance company, the “Sons of Hermann”.

When *Hermann* fell in love with maiden *Thusnelda*, and when her father refused to give her to him, he kidnapped her and made her his wife. Somehow that led to “*Thusnelda*” meaning wife, like in: *Kennst du seine Thusnelda?* (Do you know his wife?)

I hope the son of the rancher with vast land holdings in two counties has found his *Thusnelda* by now, Teutonic or not.



Übung

**Die Teutonen**

The battle in the *Teutoburger Wald* in 9 A. D. between the Romans and the Cheruski inspired Joseph Viktor von Scheffel 1847 to this tongue-in-cheek ballad which is still sung and shouted by hikers and at parties. Most of the 15 verses are a gruesome description of battle scenes, so I print out only two. For the melody go to <ingeb.org>. This translation is by Randy Rupley.

<i>Als die Römer frech geworden,</i>	When some naughty Romans legions,
<i>Sim serim sim sim sim,</i>	Sim serim sim sim sim sim,
<i>Zogen sie nach Deutschlands Norden,</i>	Tried to conquer German regions,
<i>Sim serim sim sim sim,</i>	Sim serim sim sim sim sim,
<i>Vorne mit Trompetenschall,</i>	Leading with the trumpets call,
<i>Tä te rä tä tä tä,</i>	Tey ratey tey tey terey,
<i>Ritt der Generalfeldmarschall,</i>	Rode the General Field Marshall,
<i>Tä te rä tä tä tä,</i>	Tey ratey tey tey terey
<i>Herr Quintilius Varus</i>	Mr. Quintilius Varus,
<i>Wau wau wau wau wau wau,</i>	Vow, vow, vow, vow, vow, vow,
<i>Herr Quintilius Varus,</i>	Mr. Quintilius Varus,
<i>Schnäde räng täng, schnäde räng täng,</i>	Shnade uh rang tang,shnade uh rang tang,
<i>Schnäde räng täng de räng täng täng.</i>	Shnade uh ran tang darang tang tang.

<i>In dem Teutoburger Walde,</i>	Out in the teutoburger trees,
<i>Sim serim sim sim sim sim</i>	Sim serim sim sim sim sim,
<i>Hu! Wie pfiff der Wind so kalte.</i>	Huh! Whistling in the cold breeze,
<i>Sim serim sim sim sim sim</i>	Sim serim sim sim sim sim
<i>Raben flogen durch die Luft,</i>	Raven flying in the air,
<i>Tä te rä tä tä tä,</i>	Tey ratey tey tey terey,
<i>Und es war ein Moderduft</i>	The stench of death was everywhere,
<i>Tä te rä tä tä tä</i>	Tey ratey tey tey terey,
<i>Wie von Blut und Leichen.</i>	As if from blood and bodies.
<i>Wau wau wau wau wau wau,</i>	Vow, vow, vow, vow, vow, vow,
<i>Wie von Blut und Leichen,</i>	As if from blood and bodies.
<i>Schnäde räng täng, schnäde räng täng,</i>	Shnade uh rang tang, shnade uh rang tang
<i>Schnäde räng täng de räng täng täng.</i>	Shnade uh rang tangdarang tang tang

p.s. It was discovered just a few years ago that this historically important battle did not take place in the Teutoburger Wald but near Kalkriese, more than an hour of fast driving NE of the location of the Hermanns Denkmal which commemorates the event. The battle is now called *die Varusschlacht*.

## Dichter und Denker

Germans don't think of themselves as living in the "land of Krauts"; they say they live *im Land der Dichter und Denker*, in the land of poets and thinkers. Among themselves, though, they use special terms for certain groups of the population.

*Der deutsche Michel* is a term for the unpolitical, poorly informed, good-hearted, hard-working fellow. In cartoons he has a round face and belly, and he wears a sleeping-cap.

*Das Müller Lieschen* is the simple woman, not well educated, who gets her opinions and knowledge of the world by reading tabloids like *Das Bild*.

*Otto Normalverbraucher* is the average consumer.

*Die Wessis* is a derogatory name used by people in former "East" (*Ost-*) Germany for West Germans who bought up privatized properties and businesses in the east after unification in the early 1990s, when the *Ossis* did not yet have enough money to do so.

*Die Ostfriesen* are to Germany what the Aggies are to Texas. East Friesland (*Ostfriesland*) is a flat, low-lying region bordering the North Sea, and the *Ostfriesen* are the tribe or population living there. You can google *Ostfriesen-Witze* like this one on the Internet. „*Wieviele Ostfriesen braucht man, um ein Schiff zu taufen?*“ In Texas you would ask how many Aggies it takes to baptize a ship. *Antwort: „1001(Eintausendundeinen). Ein Ostfrieser hält die Flasche, 1000 (tausend)Ostfriesen werfen das Schiff gegen die Flasche.“*

Übung

***Dichter und Denker***

Germany is “***das Land der Dichter und Denker***”. Can you match the ***Dichter or Denker*** with one of their works? The answers are at the bottom of the page

***a Johann Wolfgang von Goethe*** \_\_\_\_\_  
(1749 – 1832)

***b Friedrich von Schiller*** \_\_\_\_\_  
(1759 – 1805)

***c Immanuel Kant*** \_\_\_\_\_  
(1724 – 1804)

***d Hermann Hesse*** \_\_\_\_\_  
(1877 – 1962)

***e Wilhelm Busch*** \_\_\_\_\_  
(1832 – 1908)

***f Friedrich Nietzsche*** \_\_\_\_\_  
(1844 – 1900)

***g Bertolt Brecht*** \_\_\_\_\_  
(1889 – 1956)

***h Günter Grass*** \_\_\_\_\_  
(1927 -

***1 Max und Moritz - 2 Das Glasperlenspiel - 3 Die Dreigroschenoper -  
4 Die Räuber - 5 Faust - 6 Also sprach Zarathustra - 7 Die  
Blechtrommel – 8 Kritik der reinen Vernunft***

a/5 b/4 c/8 d/2 e/1 f/6 g/3 h/7

### **Begin ever so Softly**

When a German word or syllable begins with an S which is followed by a vowel like in *Susie*, the S is soft like in *Zoozee*. *Susi singt sieben Solos* = *ZooZee zingt zeeben zolos*. A sentence (*Satz* = *zats*) with more meaning would be: *Im Senat sitzen sechs senile Senioren* = *Im zehnaht zitsen zex zeneele zenieren*.

What is the exception, you ask. Some Germans pronounce words they took from English like they would in English: for them *Sex* is pronounced sex and not zex. *Software* is software. But some speak of zex and zoftvare.

The S in other places is sharp like in *Das Gras ist nass*. The exception is the S before p, t, and ch. It turns into shp and sht and sch, like in *springen*, *stinken*, and *schwimmen* = *shpringen*, *shtinken*, and *shvimmen*.

Now say this with the proper S sounds:

*In der sandigen Sahara stand das Sofa von Soraya.*

### **Weise Worte**

*Wer über spitze Steine stolpert, soll nicht barfuß gehen.*

He who stumbles over sharp stones should not go barefoot.

^ (I made that up, Helga)

## Helgas Eckchen

(Helga's Dear Little Corner)

The German suffixes *-chen* and *-lein* can be translated as "little" as in *die Maus* - *das Mäuslein* or *das Mäuschen*. They can even be added to names, like in *Fritzchen* and *Gretelein* (short Gretel).

They are mostly used, however, as terms of endearment and are therefore difficult to translate. *Ein Gläschen Wein* is affectionately appreciated, no matter what the size. Both suffixes make all nouns and persons neutral gender: *der Finger*, *das Fingerchen*; *das Fritzchen*, *das Mariechen*.

In some cases, words with *-chen* or *-lein* have taken on a specific meaning: *das Fräulein* is the unmarried woman (no matter what size), *das Kännchen Kaffee* holds two cups of coffee, *das Mädchen* is a girl, endearing or not, and *das Brötchen* is that breakfast roll as German as *Kaiser Wilhelm*.

The special affection that exists between canine and human animals is expressed in the way German dogs address their master and mistress. *Das Herrchen* is the dog's master, *das Frauchen* is his or her mistress. Since our cocker by the name of Whiskey is bilingual, he comes to me lickedy-split when I call "*Komm, Whiskeychen, Frauchen hat ein Stückchen Wurst für dich.*" (Come, Whiskey dear, Mommy has a nice piece of sausage for you).

## Weise Worte

*Quäle nie ein Tier zum Scherz!*

Never hurt an animal for fun.

## Wir müssen updaten

Being living works of art, all languages are forever changing. On my recent visit to Germany I noticed that my efforts to find German words for everything we talked about were met with polite smiles. *Englisch* is invading *Deutsch*. That is actually nothing new; early German settlers in Texas said sentences like *Die Cow ist über den Fence gejump*t. Some expressions are pure German but translated from English in a way English-speakers would not recognize. Take the cell phone; it is not *das Zellentelefon* but *das Handy*, a word that does not even exist in English as a noun. Others are taken from English without changes, but sometimes the pronunciation is unexpected. The fax, for example, is *das Fax*, but it is pronounced to rhyme with bucks.

*Der Computer*, also called *der Rechner*, has a memory. I called it *das Gedächtnis*, but the proper word is *der Speicher*, like the place where my Oma stored old crates and furniture. To save is *speichern* in cyberspeak, but *sparen* when it comes to money. You can *speichern* many gigabytes on a *Stick* (pronounced shtick). To delete something is *löschen*, which in real life firemen do to fires.

A key is *die Taste* and has nothing to do with English 'poor taste', although you might find it difficult to hit the correct keys since the German computer has a different keyboard, *eine andere Tastatur*. Yet, the musical instrument we call keyboard is not called *Tastatur* in German but *das Keyboard*.

A mouse is *eine Maus*, the screen is *der Bildschirm*, and to click is *klicken*. Many English verbs are simply conjugated and given prefixes, like *verlinken*, *googeln*, *anklicken*, *faxen*. (But note: *Faxen machen* still means "to play the fool")

The good old e-mail turns out to be called *die Mail* (pronounced "male"), and to send an e-mail is *mailen* as in *Ich habe dir drei Mails gemailt*.

Our family has a German *Familien Homepage* with *Serverproblemen*. Speaking of problems: There is the problem with the Start function. In both languages you have to click on Start or *Start* to end whatever your computer is doing and to turn *das Monstrum* off.

## Das ist ja Spitze!

The noun *die Spitze* has many different meanings in German and many different translations in English, of course.

I asked Germans of the female persuasion what English word came to mind when I say *die Spitze*. Most of them said "lace". Guys, however, said something like "arrowhead" as in *Pfeilspitze*. A four year old bilingual know-it-all (*Alleswisser*) said "Zugspitze" which is the highest mountain in *Deutschland*, 2962 Meter on a clear day. The adjective *spitz* was connected by most people to a sharp pencil like in *Der Bleistift ist spitz*.

So, when *Spitze* is not used to mean lace as in *belgische Spitze ist kostbar* or *Arsenik und Spitze ist der Titel einer Kommödie*, then it usually refers to something pointed or somebody or something at the front, on top, in the lead.

*Hier sind ein paar Beispiele:*

*Ein spitzer Bleistift (sharp pencil) ist nicht stumpf.*

*Clinton und Obama waren die Spitzenkandidaten (front running candidates) der Demokraten.*

*Spitzensportler (top athletes) trainieren viel.*

Many word combinations have taken on a life of their own: *der Spitzbube* is the rascal, *der Spitzname* is the nickname, *der Spitzbart* is a pointed beard (remember Lenin?), *spitzfindig* means subtle. *Der Spitz* is a Pomeranian (dog), *der Spitzel* spies....Dictionaries offer a long list.

How would you translate *Der Händler will Spitzenware kaufen*. Does the dealer want to buy top quality merchandise or lacy items? We *wissen* it not.

One easy and popular way to make frequent use of the word *Spitze* is by casually weaving it into a conversation about pleasant events as you would the English "great!" or "cool!". And if you feel talkative, you expand your joyful exclamations to *Das ist ja Spitze!* Your conversation partner will think you are *absolut Spitze*.

### **We'd Better Stay Humble!**

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 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 du weisst.*

### **Thirty Days Has ...**

Which *Monat* is missing in the following list? (It is spelled in German as it is in English):

*Oktober - Dezember - April - Juli - Mai - März -*

*Februar - September - Juni - August - Januar*

Please draw lines (in your mind) from the German to the corresponding English *Wochentag*. There are (8) of them.

*Montag - Dienstag - Mittwoch - Donnerstag - Freitag - Samstag -  
Sonnabend - Sonntag*

Saturday - Wednesday - Monday - Sunday - Saturday - Friday - Tuesday -  
Thursday

### **Weise Worte**

*Auch unverdientes Brot macht satt.*

Undeserved bread fills you up too.



## Der Bulle

The cow is *die Kuh*, the calf is *das Kalb*, the ox is *der Ochse*. Many words describing basic life in our agrarian past are similar in English and German. However, the English and the Germans split ways over bulls and steers. Readers with an expressed or a latent interest in animal husbandry know that a bull is a sexually matured bovine whereas a steer is a castrated young bull. In German, *der Bulle* is a male bovine, but not necessarily the type used for breeding; *der Stier* is a bull with all functions intact, used for breeding and in a *Stierkampf* (bullfight). Oxen and *Ochsen* are both castrated - sorry - so that they can peacefully pull carts and ploughs and be served as hamburgers.

We have many expressions using bulls as images, but we can't translate them literally into German. The bull in the china shop is *der Elefant im Porzellanladen*. If the president takes the bull by the horns, we say *Die Präsidentin packt den Stier bei den Hörnern*.

Since Germany was not invaded by the Normans as England was in 1066, the language did not suffer the impact of French which introduced the refined words beef, pork, mutton and veal for dead flesh. Cattle of any persuasion is *Rind* in German. *Rindfleisch*, therefore, is the meat of cattle, dead or alive.

Germans like to use animals to describe fellow humans. *Du dumme Kuh* is hardly an insult any more, unless you talk to me. When you don't know what to do next you say *Ich stehe hier wie der Ochs' vorm Berge*.

(I stand here like an ox before a mountain).

To refer to a policeman as *der Bulle* is not an insult at all. My favorite TV show is *Der Bulle von Tölz*.

Don't try to translate our "b. s." or simply "bull!". Just say *Unsinn!* (nonsense) and control your anger.

Then there is the papal bull which is female in German: *die Bulle*. But that is another story.

## Der airbag

*Der airbag?* It looks and sounds wrong to me, but I found it printed this way in a German publication: an English noun given a gender but not capitalized like a German noun should be. *Die mail* (when it means e-mail), *das meeting*, *der service...* are more examples. *Das Handy* (cell phone) has been around long enough to feature a capital H.

With modern German I am never sure about what is correct, neither are my friends and relatives in Germany who have to cope with the language every day.

Foreigners trying hard to say everything in German and translating English terms literally, run into problems more serious than spelling. "*Mein Taschenbuch ist gestohlen! Polizei!*" shouted James at a bus station. Only strange looks from other passengers. A *Taschenbuch* is a paperback book, but James had translated pocketbook, his word for billfold, literally, and nobody really cared enough to call the police about a stolen *Taschenbuch*.

Since he tends to be politically liberal back home, James called himself *ein Liberaler* during a discussion in Berlin. For Germans *ein Liberaler* is a right winger promoting free enterprise with little government control. So whatever liberal solutions James suggested for the economic problems of the world (*die Weltwirtschaftskrise*), they did not make much sense coming from a *Liberaler*.

To calm myself down and not worry about the pitfalls of language, I often retire to reading *das Horoskop*. Horoscopes are reliable, at least as far as major expressions are concerned. Mankind is divided into twelve groups based on celestial coordinates at the time of birth. English has given each group a Latin name; German uses down-to-earth German words. Taurus is *der Stier*, Aquarius *der Wassermann*, a child born on the 25th of December is a Capricorn, *ein Steinbock*. My niece twice removed, a single mother, can continue to call herself a *Jungfrau* (Virgo) even after the birth of her second son. Well, in this era of *texten*, *doppelklicken und forwarden* strange *Happenings* occur.

## Herforder Deutsch

Language is the perfect tool for creating misunderstandings and misery. However, it can also be used to provide solutions – by means not necessarily of what you say but of how you say it, as I found out last year.

Johann, *mein Computer*, must have misunderstood my command because he had not sent off the application I had filled out to reserve a rental car for two weeks in my home town, Herford, in eastern Westphalia. When I tried to pick up my car at the agency, there was none available – no reservation had been received. “*Da könn’n wir ja nix für,*”(It's not our fault) said the lady behind the counter, in the *Herforder Deutsch* which I hadn't heard for so long.

I decided to try the “I’m one of you folks” trick and fell into the local dialect to describe my predicament.

“*Wo ich doch hier bin, wollte ich mit unserm Oppa annen Dümmer. Unser Oppa der is nich mehr so gut aufe Beine, schläft bis in die Puppen, stüsskert den ganzen Tag im Pölter inner Kammer rum, klöhnt mal mit’m Kriegskameraden an der Strippe oder glotzt für sich hin wie ’n Spökenkieker. Aber ohne Karre wird da ja nix von. Scheibenhonig!*”

“*Mönsch, Sie sind ja von hier weg! Wir Herforder müssen doch zusammenhalten!*” was the pleasant reaction of the agent – “we Herforders have to stick together.”

Ten minutes later I was driving a car off the lot. The manager was in Mallorca, so they let me use his car. It wasn't what I had said but how I had said it.

When I came home to Texas I gave this *Herforder* text to my computer to translate into English with the help of “[translate.google.com](https://translate.google.com).” The result was not even funny – *es war absoluter Quatsch*.

I wonder how many of my human readers understood the text. Here it is in English.

“Since I am here, I wanted to drive to Lake Dümmer with our grandpa. Our grandpa is no longer so good on his feet, sleeps into the late hours, stumbles around in his bedroom in his pajamas all day, chats occasionally on the phone with a war buddy or stares like somebody seeing ghosts. But without a car it won't be possible. Sh-t.”

## Ein Hammer

While many English words have been absorbed by the German language, we also have to take notice of new German words and phrases that have recently become popular.

My *Favorit* is *der Hingucker* (pronounced "hincooker"). *Hingucken* means to look over there. *Ein Hingucker* is something that makes you look at it, an eye-catcher. *Das neue Auto in lila und gelb ist ein echter Hingucker.*

*Das Schnäppchen*, something you snap up quickly, is a "bargain", appreciated in all cultures. *Die Reise nach Namibia für 899,00 Euro ist ein Schnäppchen.*

*Stehen* in its sense of "to prefer" instead of just "to stand" is important to be aware of. *Ich stehe auf Latex*, said the interior decorator while she was sitting on a leather couch. She was talking about the material of her tight trousers.

Have you ever tried to explain Velcro in German? It threw me off balance. I had not realized that this Swiss invention of hooks and loops is known in the USA by its brand name. In German it is *der Klettverschluss*. *Eine Klette* is a bur, *ein Verschluss* is a locking device. It does make sense and it is all German.

*Multikulti* is the word to use when you want Germans to argue among themselves. It refers to the multitude of cultures that make up today's society in Germany. Most people are proud of the tolerance shown there towards different lifestyles, languages and religions. However, since the German education system has scored alarmingly low on international tests, a lively discussion goes on about being intolerant enough to propose that all children be taught German starting early in life, no matter what language is spoken at home. This means a new definition of *Multikulti* for some people. It depends on how *politisch korrekt* they want to be at that moment.

Then there is *der Hammer*, an old word meaning "hammer" in English. But now you can express "great!" "How mean!" "I really like it!" or "I really didn't expect that" by shouting out: *Ein Hammer!* with the appropriate expression on your face. Maybe "wow!" would be a good translation.

## Der Eintopf

Browsing through some old books at our library's sale, I read that Adolf Hitler declared one Sunday of every month as *Eintopfsonntag*. Families, restaurants and even vendors in public places were supposed to serve *ein Eintopfgericht* (a one-pot-dish) on that day with profits going to charity. That elevated this meal from the once-a-week favorite of common people to being accepted in the highest circles of urban society.

As a child in Germany during and after WWII,

I loved the *Eintopf* which my *Oma* (grandmother) served at least every Saturday - *sonntags nie* - (never on a Sunday). It usually consisted of *Reste* (leftovers) including *Kartoffeln* (potatoes) from Friday, *Gemüse je nach Jahreszeit* (vegetable according to season), some *Fleisch* (meat), but not much, some herbs and *eine Zwiebel* (an onion). All of that went into a big pot of beef stock, lid on top, and after a few hours the aroma of this soupy stew brought people to the kitchen table, often unexpected guests as well.

There is such a variety of *Eintopf* dishes! *Erbsensuppe* (pea soup) and *Linsensuppe* (lentil soup) and other thick soups made of *Hülsenfrüchte* (legumes) are available all through the year and said to be good for the brain.

My favorite to this day is a one-pot dish called *Schnippelbohnen*. I have never found it offered here in the States. It consists mainly of diagonally sliced green beans which are placed with layers of salt in a stone pot for weeks until they turn lightly sour, just like Sauerkraut. German supermarkets offer *Schnippelbohnen* in cans, and some restaurants feature them in their *Eintopf* section on the menu.

*Eintopf* is now considered a convenient, healthy choice for meals that are meant to feed and satisfy many people without fanfare. My home town church celebrates Founder's Day every year in late November with nothing but hefty portions of *Grünkohl mit Wurst* (Kale with sausage). A tasty fundraiser.

*Oma* managed to serve some type of *Eintopf* several times a week after the war even when there was hardly anything to put into the pot. She had almost 30 years of experience with preparing meals on good and bad days by the time Hitler became a German citizen and - a few years later - declared the *Eintopf* fit for Sunday dinner.

## Die Zivis

At the time of this writing, *Februar 2011, die Bundesrepublik Deutschland* still has *die Wehrpflicht* (military draft) for young men. That creates a big pool of gentlemen who, though fit enough to become *Soldaten* in the *Bundeswehr*, are smart enough to convince the authorities that their conscience won't let them bear arms.

They don't have to flee to *Kanada* or go underground: They can serve their time as civilians (*im Zivildienst*) as so-called *Zivis* in hospitals, nursing-homes, the forest service, orphanages ... the list is long. I experienced their usefulness when my husband was in a rehab clinic for mobility-impaired patients in Germany a few months ago. Many an elderly woman there enjoyed just looking at these healthy guys in their neat white suits. They lifted heavy patients with ease from the *Bett* into the *Rollstuhl* (wheelchair), they wheeled patients into a park for fresh air and sunshine.

*Meine Tante Hilde*, slightly demented *im Alter von siebenundneunzig* (at age 97), adored and loved *Zivi Oliver* in her nursing-home and thought he was her *Enkelsohn* (grandson). He even played her favorite songs on the piano for her to sing along to. One of my nephews fed and cleaned paralyzed stroke victims in the *Krankenhaus* (hospital), another one drove an ambulance.

*Zivis* get about 600 euros per month, I was told – not a living wage. Most of them have to live at home.

Now comes *das Problem!* *Deutschland* is about to do away with the draft and thus loose *die Zivis*. Who will replace these affordable helpers?

*Ein soziales Jahr* (a year of social service) for men and women *wird diskutiert* (is being discussed). The chief physician in a sports clinic with mainly male patients is working on another proposal, at least for his clinic: Import a few dozen of those poor but physically well endowed, cheerful beauties he met on the beaches of Brazil. He told me: „*Mokkabraune Mädchen machen müde Männer munter.*“

## Der Slip

Once the "unmentionables", we can speak of them nowadays - even in polite society - as panties, briefs, knickers, bloomers and whatever else comes to mind. However, beware of what you call various undergarments in German when you have to shop for them after you landed in Berlin or Frankfurt and your suitcase didn't.

*Ein Slip*, you should know, is not the skirtlike piece of underwear but a pair of panties. A slip is *ein Unterrock* (but not if it was a Freudian slip).

To slip is *schlüpfen* in German; so you might assume that *der Schlüpfer* is the slipper. *Pustekuchen!* (that's not so!) *Schlüpfer* is another word for the *Slips* that are panties. Slippers are *Schlappen* or *Pantoffeln*. *Verwirrt?* (confused?) You can simply use the basic words *der Unterrock* (underskirt), *das Unterhemd* (undershirt), *die Unterhose* (underpants) (with *Unterhöschen* as a term of endearment).

These garments are collectively called *Unterwäsche* (underwear). Linguistically, *Wäsche* has to do with washing, and our anthropological curiosity wonders why English-speaking people use the verb "to wear" in connection with underwear, while speakers of German are more concerned to emphasize that the garments need to be washed eventually.

You may find yourself in a situation where you have to buy a bra. "Bra" is a short version of a French word which very few Americans can spell or pronounce (and which doesn't mean the same thing in French anyway). Germans have not yet completely accepted it as part of their language. They use an abbreviation of the German word *Büsten-Halter* (bust holder), which is *der BH*.

The problem with buying a *BH* or any other piece of *Unterwäsche* is finding the right *Größe* (size), because designations for them are different from ours. Look for the fitting-room, *die Anprobe*.

## Wohlfühl-Urlaub

*Der Urlaub* is the vacation. Most Germans have to give their *Urlaub* a theme or purpose. Since trying to become fit and to feel well is in, magazines advertise opportunities to indulge in such noble efforts like *Wohlfühl-Urlaub in einem Wellness Hotel in der Toscana*. *Wohlfühlen* means to feel well. A few years ago they would have talked about a *Wellness-Urlaub*, but there is a new trend to use more German words. They should try a little harder.

Ads include *Akupressur*, *exotischer Joghurt (mit h)*, *Dinkelflakes* (spelt), berries in *Beeren-Shakes*, *cremen für den Lifting-Effekt*, *kalorienreduzierte Dips mit Sticks*, *orale Pillen für die Vaginalflora* and *Nordic Walking für den Stoffwechsel* (metabolism). Highly recommended is to eat a lot of *Bio-Sprouts* (organic sprouts).

One has the impression that topics concerning *Gesundheit* (health) and *Medizin* were developed in *Amerika* and that therefore so many English words crept in. However, the areas of science, medicine and a healthy life style used to be dominated by Germans to such a degree, that if you studied medicine or pharmaceuticals in the USA, you had to take courses in German.

Here are some names - *man kann sie alle googeln*: *Bayer* (Aspirin), *Robert Koch* (bacteriologist); F.L. "*Turnvater*" *Jahn* (gymnastics educator); *Sebastian Kneipp* (hydrotherapist); *Dr. Ferdinand Herff* (German immigrant to Texas who was the first to sterilize his hands and instruments before an operation).

The long history of *Homeopathie in Deutschland* is still continued by physicians and pharmacies specializing in this popular long-term treatment.

When you have the sniffles on your next visit to Germany, enter a pharmacy called "*Homeopathische Apotheke*". You'll love the attention and all the tinktures, pills, teas and aromas they'll recommend. -----*Gesundheit!*

## Weise Worte

*Einigkeit macht stark.*

There is strength in unity.



## Der Tante-Emma-Laden

This has nothing to do with the famous merchant family which claimed Osama bin Laden. *Der Laden* is simply German for "the store".

*Emma* used to be a very common name, and many people had an aunt they called *Tante Emma*. Somehow, maybe one can google it, the little grocery store in a neighborhood became known as *der Tante-Emma-Laden*. That sets it apart from the larger *Supermarkt* and major chains like "Aldi".

These little *Läden* can be part of a chain as well, like the "Edeka" in my old neighborhood. *Um 7 Uhr morgens* my husband walked there for *frische Brötchen*, those crispy buns that make Germany so special. Some neighbors combined that stroll with taking their dog for his constitutional. Later, on the way home from work, some *Schampoo*, *ein halbes Pfund Butter*, *zwei Heringe* und *eine Illustrierte* (magazine) might have been the purchase.

*Sehr wichtig* (very important) is its role as a source of neighborhood information. I had inherited a house from an uncle and listed it for sale (*zu verkaufen*) with an agent (*Makler*) in that area. After three months he had not yet found a *Käufer* (buyer). In my American "do-it-yourself" way I flew to Germany and told the manager of the *Tante-Emma-Laden* down the road from my uncle's house that it was *zu verkaufen*. I had a *Käufer* (buyer) that same evening. *Fräulein Hellmann*, I was told, living in an apartment across the street from that house, was expecting a baby from her new *Partner* (rumored to be Russian but hopefully not involved *mit der russischen Mafia*), and they were talking marriage. *Sie bezahlte bar*, cash!

Maybe our new convenient store at the gas station down the road can become my little *Tante-Emma-Laden* here in Pflugerville, Texas.

## Weise Worte

*Was hilft laufen, wenn man nicht auf dem richtigen Weg ist.*

What good does running do, if you are on the wrong path.

*Deutsches Sprichwort*

## Die Wurst

When a German takes a bath and then goes to have supper, he goes from *Bad* to *Wurst*.

*Wurst*, (voorst, often pronounced voorsht), sausage, is indeed a favorite for *Abendbrot*, with its many varieties sliced as cold cuts or smeared on some hefty bread. The mere thought of *Leberwurst* and *Teewurst* makes me *hungrig*.

Recipes were developed centuries ago to preserve mainly pork and beef with salt and spices and stuffed into washed intestines. They vary regionally and from butcher to butcher.

The most venerable symbol of German fast food is *die Bratwurst* - if grilled over coal it is *die Rostbratwurst*.

In the 1950s, when I was a penniless German teenager, and meat was not on our table every day, vendors at some street corners spread a powerful whiff of *Bratwürste* being grilled. That made me save the *Pfennige* I earned until I could buy one. It came and still comes with a *Brötchen und Senf* (hard roll and mustard). These days you can choose curry sauce instead of *Senf* and call it *Currywurst*.

Some *Bratwurst* vendors are now mobile, carrying the grill and supplies in front of their tummy, walking in pedestrian zones. Handicapped persons (*Behinderte*) in wheel chairs have that grill on their lap.

A hot dog is "a little sausage", *ein Würstchen*. Bologna is simply "meat sausage", *Fleischwurst*, and usually comes in a circular shape. Cut into pieces, tossed in oil, vinegar and chopped onions, it is served as *Wurstsalat*. Our butcher put a nice chunk of *Fleischwurst* into my hand whenever I - as a child - went there to pick up our *Sonntagsbraten* (Sunday roast).

A word as common as *Wurst* has taken on many other meanings, of course. *Das ist mir Wurst* means that I don't care one way or another.

On a slow day when you just putter around the house, you mumble to yourself: *Ich wurstele nur so im Hause herum*.

One special feature of the *Wurst* is often mentioned in a conversation: *Alles hat ein Ende, nur die Wurst hat zwei*. Everything has an end, only the sausage has two.

## Existentialismus

If you want to wax eloquent in German and give the impression of being well educated, make frequent use of words that end in *-ismus*. You know their meaning from English: *Existentialismus* = existentialism; *Kapitalismus* = capitalism. They are all of the masculine gender (*der Nationalismus*), and when you pronounce them, the stress is on the *-is* (the *s* is sharp): *der Alkoholismus*.

Please note: When within a conversation you compare one *-ismus* with another *-ismus*, the emphasis is on the first syllable: “*Ja, ja, ja, Monotheismus versus Pantheismus!*” and then you roll your eyes and head for the table with the appetizers. You might suggest a more puzzling topic, such as *Kommunismus versus Pessimismus*.

Besides rehashing recent and long-ago soccer games, many Germans idle their time away by discussing highly theoretical topics of no consequence. *Pazifismus in Washington? Nein, nie, never. Nudismus im Pentagon? Quatsch.*

My first deep interaction with *-ismen* (*Plural von -ismus*) occurred when I fell in love with the new French teacher in my school, Herr Dr. Gieseling. I was seventeen, he was fresh from the university. He taught an elective course on Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, which meant that he presented *Existentialismus* and hinted at *Nihilismus und Atheismus und Individualismus*. Of course, I never revealed my adoration to him. I have since married and hardly ever dream of a secret encounter with Dr. Gieseling, but the ideas he implanted in me in this course are still active in my mind: One does not exist except in that moment when one launches oneself out of one's self and is one's true self, or something like that.

I am still waiting for that moment – or did I miss it when it happened?

## Weise Worte

*Alles in der Welt lässt sich ertragen, nur nicht eine Reihe von schönen Tagen.*

Everything in the world can be endured, except for a sequence of beautiful days.

*Johann Wolfgang von Goethe*

## Pfanni

If you are entertaining an interest in potato dumplings, read to the end. German has at least 76 words that begin with the letters *pf* like in *Pfennig* and *Pfund* (penny and pound). Many non-Germans find that hard to pronounce, so they leave out the p: “*fluecken*” instead of “*pfluecken*” (to pluck).

However, if you leave out the f, you almost have the English word for many of them. That is a great tool to increase your vocabulary. *Der Pflug* = plough; *die Pfanne* = pan; *die Pfalz* = Palatinate; *der Pfad* = path; *der Pfeffer* = pepper; *die Pfeife* = pipe; *die Pflaume* = plum; *pflanzen* = to plant; *das Pferd* = ?? (Is there an English word for horse beginning with p?) *die Pflicht* = looks like it should mean plight, but it means duty, obligation - makes me wonder.

It seems extremely difficult for Americans to cope with an l after the pf: *pfl*. Since I live in Pflugerville, Texas, I often receive mail addressed to Phlugerville or Plugerville. Pflugerville was founded by the Pflueger family from Oldenburg. The *pf* issue is like a logo for the little town since everything beginning with an f is now beginning with *pf*. There is the local newspaper, the “Pflag”, the Pfarmers Market, the 5 K Pfun Run and the Pfourth-of-July Pfirework on you know what day. Showing no respect for German grammar, Pflugerville features an annual Deutschen Pfest with three days of pfun for the entire pfamily. As a loyal resident, I now begin my Christmas letters with *Pfroehliche Weihnachten*.

A German company by the name of “Pfanni” which makes very good mixes for potato dumplings and potato pancakes (*Kartoffelknoedel* and *Kartoffelpfannkuchen*). For its products to be properly acceptable in English speaking countries, they changed the name on the export boxes to “Panni” - without the f – because people pronounced the real name “Fanni”. There are few wives who would offer their hubby something for dinner that sounds like “fanny dumplings”.

## Weise Worte:

*Dem Glücklichen schlägt keine Stunde.*

When you are happy, you ignore time.

## Das public Viewing

Strolling through Herford, my home town, in June of 2012, I noticed signs with an arrow pointing to the market square before the *Rathaus*. The words on the signs were “Public Viewing”. Who died, I thought, imagining a person of stature lying in state. Then I saw the same signs in Wiesbaden a day later and inquired about the mysterious person lying in state in two towns for public viewing. “*Das ist wegen dem Fußball*“, I was finally told. I knew Europe was gripped by the fever of one of those all important soccer championships: *die Europameisterschaft im Fußball*. The games were played in *Polen und in der Ukraine*. It has developed into a *Kult* for mainly young Germans to watch the games on big screens by gathering in public places where they suffer the agony of defeat or the bliss of victory of their team together with hundreds or thousands of other *Fußballfans* - with “fan” being adopted into German. Again I had been tricked into interpreting a new German phrase with the original American meaning. *Public Viewing* means that the public gets together to watch an event on big screens. (*Viewing* is a noun and capitalized.) It is not a matter of national pride, but rather enjoying a big get-together. After the game *Deutschland gegen Italien* my family happily celebrated Italy’s victory with bottles of Chianti because the Italians had been the better team.

This misunderstanding made me think of the thousands of words that have recently been absorbed into German, but I also reflected on English words that have been used for generations without any fuss: Public toilets are found by looking for the letters *WC*. That stands for “Water Closet”, Germanized to *Wasserklosett*, which is then shortened to *Klo*. *WC* maintains the English *C*. (A plumber named Crapper allegedly invented the flush toilet). The useful phrase to learn is *Wo ist das Klo?*

*Das Make-up* is *Verschönerung durch kosmetische Mittel*. You can say *Helene trägt ihr Make-up sehr dezent*. *Made in Germany* is very much a German phrase ever since Britain’s Marks Act of 1887 required it to be stamped on everything manufactured in Germany. It is so much easier to use than *In Deutschland hergestellt* and easier understood by the people of the world, who soon took it to mean as much as “of very good quality”, *beste Qualität*.

The English language has helped Deutsch to be very flexible and alive. But we don’t want German to one day lie in state for public viewing. *Das wäre nicht cool*.

## Die Currywurst

“Californians Discovered German Food” said a recent newspaper article. It did not mention *das Wiener Schnitzel* (a veal or pork cutlet beaten into a large, flat filet, salted, peppered, breaded and fried), nor *die Schwarzwälder Kirschtorte* (Black Forest cherry cake with a lot of whipped cream and a shot or two or three of *Kirsch-Likör*). It did not talk about *die Leberknödelsuppe* (liver dumpling soup), nor about *Sauerbraten* (marinated beef roast). It raved about *die Currywurst*.

Curry is a mix of spices originating probably in *Indien*. Its *Aroma permeates* certain neighborhoods in England, which are home to groups of Indian or Pakistani *Immigranten*. It became a common addition to many an otherwise tasteless English dish. A British soldier stationed in Berlin introduced the powder to a lady friend shortly after WW II. She added it to ketchup, which was also new to Germans, and: *Mensch Meyer!!!* (vow!), she had created something soon to be known as *Currysoße* (curry sauce). Poured over a *Rostbratwurst* (grilled bratwurst), it soon made *die Currywurst* one of the most popular fast foods in Germany. *Bratwurst* was already a staple in the German diet as soon as meat became available after the war, and brats can now be found in American stores.

You can create your own version of *Currysoße* if you don't find it in your *Supermarkt*. You should actually start by making your own ketchup. One of the *Rezepte* says, you first take four boiled tomatoes out of a can and squash them with your bare hands into a pulp into a saucepan. Try it – it gives life a new dimension.

I can imagine *Kalifornier* squashing *Tomaten* to get to their individualized *Currywurst*, but when I, living in Texas, can't resist the urge to have one, I zip to “Das Café” in downtown Pflugerville near Austin, plant myself at one of their four tables and order a *Wurst* with fries on the side: “Eine Currywurst mit Pommes, bitte.”

## Weise Worte

*Man liebt einen andern nicht, wenn man nichts von ihm annimmt.*

You don't love a person if you don't accept anything from him.

## Die Ehre

In most situations you can translate *Ehre* with “honor”. To honor is *ehren*, and honest is *ehrlich*.

However, Germans have some uses of the word that are different from American words in certain settings: Mary is the president of the tennis club; it is a volunteer position. *Maria ist Präsidentin des Tennisvereins; das ist eine ehrenamtliche Position*. As you see, if a German volunteers to do something without pay, (s)he considers it an honor (*eine Ehre*) to be allowed to serve that way. They feel that people put their trust in them when they serve as *Kassierer* (treasurer) or *Schriftführer* (secretary) or when they hold any other official position in your club, church or other affiliations. *Das Rote Kreuz* (Red Cross) und *die Heilsarmee* (Salvation Army) offer good opportunities to work *ehrenamtlich*. Texans have the German-Texan Heritage Society which is in need of more folks to help *ehrenamtlich*. ([www.germantexans.org](http://www.germantexans.org))

America is known as the land of volunteers, and Germans often marvel at what gets done here which in Germany usually the government pays for – like Meals on Wheels, *Essen auf Rädern*.

There is another translation of volunteer: *freiwillig*. The volunteer firemen are *die Freiwillige Feuerwehr*. *Soldaten in der Bundeswehr sind Freiwillige*, just as soldiers in the American Armed Forces are volunteers. They were not drafted, and they are paid.

A German *Voluntär* is an intern learning a trade.

*Ehre* is a concept which changes its meaning depending on the culture and time period to which it refers. You might have read about the father in a Muslim country who killed his daughter after she was raped. He wanted to restore his family's honor. Christian Europe had many different interpretations of *Ehre* through the years: If you have an ancestor who has *Vater unbekannt* (Father unknown) on the birth certificate, you might have blue blood in your veins, because generations ago the *Ehren-Kodex* of a Prussian officer who was of noble blood, demanded that he not stoop as low as marrying the girl or woman bearing his child, if she was a commoner. *Heutzutage* (nowadays), if a man gets a girl pregnant (*schwanger*), he might marry her to make an “honest woman” out of her. That is a phrase not used in German.

Speaking of *Ehre* – *Es war mir eine große Ehre, <Helga's Corner> für den Schulhaus Reporter zu schreiben*.

## F K K

*Frei-Körper-Kultur* (free body culture) means running around naked and elevating it to a cultural event. It happens in homes, but in Germany also in public within dedicated areas called *F K K*. We have nudist camps and parks in America, but they are not frequented by as many people as in Germany. Austin, that weird town in Texas, has “Hippy Hollow” where clothes are optional, but few straight folks venture there. In Germany there is no snickering (*kichern*) when you hear about a couple spending their vacation in a nudist resort. The best of them are along the German coast of the Baltic Sea (*Ostsee*), where during socialist times many beautiful stretches of beach were reserved as “*F K K Strand*”, and they are kept as such after Germany united.

Other areas are not officially dedicated for that life style, but one uses them in beautiful weather. A group of Texan high school students were sightseeing in Munich one sunny day in July when they ambled in the part of town where in the fall the *Oktoberfest* takes place. There is an extensive lawn, *die Wies'n*. The young Texans soon realized that they were surrounded by naked bodies of both sexes and all ages lying on the grass. Obviously, locals were taking advantage of the healthy sunshine and exposed as much skin as possible. The poor teenagers were embarrassed and did not know where to direct their eyes. One of the boys told me years later that he still feels guilty about seeing what he could not avoid to look at.

All creatures great and small (*die großen und die kleinen*) are born naked, even the Baptists, but culture wraps us in concepts of what is proper. On a trip along the Adriatic coast of *Jugoslavien* with American friends, we checked into an elegant hotel and went to the pool for a before-dinner-splash. *Mensch!!!* Everybody in and around the pool was nude (*nackt!*), and they all talked German. I realized then that the three big letters “*F K K*” over the entrance indicated the nature of the hotel to German tourists. One of our guys, John, decided that he was not going to sit on a chair where most likely one of those shameless (*schamlos*) *nekkit* guys had sat with a bare bottom. So we all checked out and moved to a “decent” hotel (*ein anständiges Hotel*).

“They should at least act Christian like: wear a fig leaf (*ein Feigenblatt*) like Adam and Eve”, preached John. “Actually, two *Feigenblätter*, one for the front (*vorne*), one for behind (*hinten*)”.



## Wauwau

You would be wrong if you assumed that animals have the same language all over the world. Just listen to a German shepherd bark. Der Schäferhund in Berlin bellt “wau wau”, his cousin in Washington barks “wuff wuff”.

Germany is a country of dog lovers. In many restaurants dogs are welcome. They settle down under the table close to their owner's feet, and usually they are served a bowl of water. Some stores, even major department stores, supply water bowls and leash hooks so dogs can be comfortably left outside for a while. A sign might say *Für den lieben Hund* (For the dear dog).

A popular breed is *der Dackel* (dachshound or Wiener dog). *Dackel* are considered intelligent (*intelligent*). My own *Dackel*, Schnapsi, is an exception. In the wee hours of the morning he tenderly walks all over my body and then sniffs my face to find out if I am still asleep. He is too dumb (*dumm*) to realize that he is waking me up. Or is he?

German dogs would, of course, not have a mistress or a master. They have *ein Frauchen und ein Herrchen*, terms of endearment of Frau and Herr.

You are aware of the close relationship between humans and their pets. *Kinder* (children) call dogs *Wauwau*, and *Wauwaus* return the hugging and kissing whenever needed and they understand a troubled soul without asking for an explanation.

A few months ago, our friend Freddie was our house guest (*Hausgast*) for a few weeks. Born in Dresden, Germany, he had emigrated to *Kanada* as a young man and is spending his retirement years visiting old friends around the world. Tired after a long flight from Toronto, he slumped on the couch. Within a few seconds, our *Schnapsi* jumped on his lap (*Schoß*) and whined and licked and rubbed and sniffed Freddie and acted as if he had just found a long lost loved one. Freddie stiffened up, but then he wrapped his arms around the animal and called out: “*Mein Wauwau, mein Wauwauchen. Komm, mein lieber Wauwau!*” They embraced and were inseparable for the rest of the evening, Freddie hugging and stroking happy little Schnapsi and almost crying with emotion.

Later I found out that our friend, now in his mid-seventies, had survived the fire bombing of Dresden in 1945. While more than 35,000

people had died in those two nights, he and his mother had escaped, but his little doggie, his *Wauwau*, had not. Or had he? In the chaos of looking for safe shelter, food and grandfather, the boy did not ask his mother about the fate of the dog. He was afraid of the answer. Our Schnapsi brought those traumatic days back to Freddie, and the pent-up mourning for the loss of his *Wauwau* found relief. Our *Dackel* lapped up with great appreciation all the affection that our friend now bestowed on him in memory of his *Wauwau* of years ago, and they took long walks together every day of Freddie's visit.

Schnapsi *ist reinrassig* (a pure bred), but a *Promenadenmischung* (alley mix) can be just as lovable. *Der Pudel, der Terrier, der Spitz und die Dogge* are often mixed with handsome results.

Dog poop used to be a major problem on sidewalks in German towns, but new laws have improved that. One is supposed to pick it up. Another law limits how many dogs you want to have, because you have to pay a *Hundesteuer* (dog tax) for each one.

It is time to stop writing because Schnapsi is nibbling on my toes telling me that we must *Gassi gehen*: he wants to take me for a walk for his constitutional. (I'll pick it up, of course, like a good German-American *Frauchen* should).

### ***Weise Worte***

*Jeder muss den Mut der Überzeugung haben.*

Everybody must have the courage of conviction.

*Alexander von Humboldt*

## Das Bratkartoffelverhältnis

Was ist das denn!?

*Bratkartoffeln* are fried potatoes, *das Verhältnis* is the relationship. I'll talk about the meaning of that combination later.

Let's first look at *die Kartoffel* (potato). Introduced in Prussia by Frederick the Great (*Friederich der Große*) in the 18th century, it became the most satisfying and popular staple in Germany. A few years ago, too many German restaurants offered them mainly in the form of French fries, *Pommes frites* or simply *Pommes*. This year, 2013, I found my soul food again on the *Speisekarten* (menus) as *Salzkartoffeln* (peeled and boiled in saltwater), *Kartoffelsalat*, *Kartoffelbrei* (mashed), *Folienkartoffeln* (baked in foil) and *Bratkartoffeln mit Speck und Zwiebeln* (fried potatoes with bacon and onions). *Pellkartoffeln* (boiled in their skin) are often served at home, but rarely in restaurants.

If a young man has a relationship (*ein Verhältnis*) with a young girl which includes that he frequently goes to her house at suppertime when *Bratkartoffeln* are often served to use up the leftover *Salzkartoffeln* from an earlier meal, he has then a *Bratkartoffelverhältnis*. It usually means that he is well accepted by the girl's parents. Parents might go to the movies (*ins Kino*) later in the evening to give the young people a chance to be alone to play cards or to do a puzzle or whatever they can think of. I was rather surprised in recent years when I realized that in Germany the *Bratkartoffelverhältnis* often means that the guy spends the rest of the night in the girl's room with her parents' blessing.

In the olden days (*in früheren Zeiten* when I was young), intimacies were forbidden fruit and passionately enjoyed. Two years before he met me, Hans, my husband, then a strapping young German man of 21, had a *Bratkartoffelverhältnis* with Liesel in Wiesbaden. He decided to emigrate to *Amerika*, and Liesel was to follow him as soon as he had established himself. But Liesel never joined him and sent him a Dear John (*Lieber Hans*) letter. So he married me.

About nineteen years after his departure from Wiesbaden, we invited Erika, an international student from the university, for Thanksgiving. She told us that she was from Wiesbaden and knew nothing about her father other than that he was an American with a German background. When she

mentioned her mother's name, an alarm bell rang in Hans' memory box, and he frantically calculated the months from his last evening with Liesel to Erika's date of birth. It turned out that Erika was born eleven months (*elf Monate*) after Liesel's and Hans' *Abschiedsabend* (farewell evening). *Sie war also nicht seine Tochter*, not his daughter. *Nur der liebe Gott weiß, warum in der Nacht „nichts passiert ist“*. (Only the Good Lord knows why „nothing happened” that night. And that's how the lowly *Bratkartoffel* makes history.

***Weise Worte***

*Die Engel, die nennen es Himmelsfreud;  
die Teufel, die nennen es Höllenleid;  
die Menschen, die nennen es - Liebe*

The angels, they call it delight in heaven;  
the devils, they call it grief in hell;  
people, they call it - love  
Heinrich Heine

## Deutsch auf hoher See

While crossing *den Pazifischen Ozean* on the “Star Princess” recently, my ears were delighted to hear so much German spoken on the high seas. These *Passagiere* had flown to Los Angeles non-stop over the *Nordpol* and boarded the *Schiff* the next day. They seemed to travel in families, not as an organized group. Having plenty of leisure time, I tried to listen in on their conversations to figure out, from which area of Germany they came. When they talked to me, they tried to speak high German, but among themselves, their local dialect dominated.

An elderly couple at our dinner table had grown up in the same low-income housing project in Berlin. They got married and immigrated to the USA where he made millions in real estate. One evening he was late for dinner. His wife angrily hissed: “*Wat haste denn so lange inne Spielbank jemacht?!“* “*Dat jeht dir nüscht an,*” was his response, and they switched to accent free American. (“What did you do in the casino for so long?” “That’s none of your business”)

Rähschen uff Hawaii?! Da hätten wir ooch in Dräsdén bleiben können. (Rain in Hawaii?! (For that we could have stayed in Dresden.) I remembered that folks from Saxony have a tendency to complain, but with humor. They toured Pearl Harbor with umbrellas brought all the way from home.

When a tall, handsome gentleman greeted me at the breakfast buffet with *Moin Moin*, I knew he was from *Hamburg* and had wished me a good morning. I said *Hummel Hummel*, and he responded with *Mors Mors*. That is a greeting one can’t translate. We both preferred an early breakfast while our spouses slept *bis in die Puppen* (until late). He asked if I had time *zum klönen* (to chat), and since I understand the *Hamburger Platt* pretty well, he enjoyed *snacken wie bei miene Modder* (talking just like at my Mother’s), drinking three cups of *Tee*.

A couple from Bavaria, both retired teachers, switched easily from their version of high German to how they talk at home, a language I have trouble understanding. One day near the pool, she tried to convince him of something she had just read in a magazine. He kept shaking his head, and finally he slowly got up from his lounge chair, and, as he dove into the water, he shouted *Schmarrrrrrrrn!!!!* That is Bavarian for nonsense. The word - not its meaning - reminded me of the delicious Austrian dish *Kaiserschmarren*, a torn up pancake made with lots of eggs, and I rushed to the buffet on deck 14 and ordered me one right there *auf hoher See*.

## O wundervolle Runkelrübe

*Deutschland, das Land der Dichter und Denker.* I see the greatest poet and thinker in Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749 – 1832). Whether Faust argues with Mephisto about the meaning of life, or a *Knabe* (boy) learns that roses have thorns, the simple language with *Rhythmus und Reim* (rhyme) lifts Goethe's readers' spirit.

For a while I read a poem by Goethe every evening before closing my eyes. I also read the English translations in the same book. Du liebe Zeit! Some translations are admirably good, but others!:

“*Sah ein Knab' ein Röslein steh'n*  
Urchin saw a rose – a dear“  
„*Seht den Felsenquell*  
See the mountain spring  
*Freudehell*  
Flash gladdening”

*Balladen* are a favorite of mine. Besides having *Rhythmus und Reim* they tell a story: *Wer reitet so spät durch Nacht und Wind?*

Or *Es war ein König in Thule.....*  
There lived a king in Thule.....

Recently I come across too many poets who can't even rhyme, not to mention *Rhythmus*.

Ein Gedicht als Exempel :  
*Früh am Tage, spät*  
Early in the day, late  
*am Morgen.*  
In the morning.  
*Und?*  
And?

In search of good folksy poems I dug up some old magazines like *Die Hausfrau* and also nostalgic regional publications written for the generation that includes many thousands of refugees from parts of Germany which were given to Poland or Russia after WW II like Silesia (Schlesien). Speaking of

down to earth: In *Jahrbuch der Schlesier 2014* I read that a man in *Schlesien*, F. C. Achard, discovered that a certain beet could be turned into sugar and would therefore abolish slavery in the sugar cane industry with all its cruelty, and thus it would spread peace on earth.

An ode to this humble vegetable was then created and began with this poetic first line:

*O wundervolle Runkelrübe.*

***Weise Worte***

*Das Leben lehrt uns, weniger mit uns und andern strenge zu sein.*

Life teaches us to be less strict with us and others.

*Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832)*

***Weise Worte***

*Spinne am Morgen bringt Kummer und Sorgen. Spinne am Abend,  
erquickend und labend.*

A spider in the morning brings sorrow and worries. A spider at night is refreshing and comforting.

## Die Torte

*Eine Torte ist rund* just like a pie, but it is usually bigger around. This example of baked goods is so popular in Germany, that it comes in uncountable varieties and has no real translation in English.

On the second or third day after my arrival in Germany I am always drawn into a *Café* or a *Konditorei* for a piece of *Schwarzwälder Kirschtorte*, the Black Forest Cherry Torte, which is a divine creation including cherries (*Kirschen*), chocolate cake, whipped cream and more whipped cream, grated chocolate, and a shot of *Kirsch* which is a liquor made of guess what. The *Likör* is poured over the *Torte* to keep it moist. Children and American teetotalers have to blow over their piece twice to get rid of the alcohol.

Birthday cakes are *Geburtstagstorten* with a smooth coating like *Marzipan* oder *Buttercreme* which can be beautifully decorated.

Very colorful (*bunt*) are the easy-to-make *Obsttorten*. You bake or buy a plain *Tortenboden*, which is the bottom of a Torte-to-be, and cover it with fruit like a slice of *Ananas* (pineapple) in the center, and other fruit around it. This is your opportunity to use up that can of sour cherries that has graced your pantry for two years (*oder noch länger?*). Then you smother everything with *Tortenguss*, a jello like sweet, transparent substance. *Schlagsahne* (whipped cream) adds to the enjoyment of the day.

When in *Amerika*, I replace *Torten* with pies for which I have no German word. Pecan pie, pumpkin pie and apple pie a-la-mode represent American cuisine quite well.

Being an American with German upbringing, which would I choose to eat when somebody offered me a piece of Key lime pie and *ein Stück Schwarzwälder Kirschtorte*? Of course, I would eat *beide*, both of them.



## **Simplification!**

It's so simple! Most English words that end in "-tion" are also used in German with the same or similar meaning. opposition = *Opposition*; station = *Station*; complication = *Komplikation*. . . They are always feminine (die) and, as nouns, they are always capitalized; *die Nation*, *die Situation*. . . They are always pronounced with the stress on the "on" and rhyme somewhat with "see-own". Now, take your *Bleistift* and write down ten new German words you never knew you knew.

1) *die Po. . .* 2) *die Dis. . .*

## **Weise Worte**

*Sag deinem Freund nicht, was dein Feind nicht wissen soll. (Arabian)*

Don't tell your friend what your enemy is not supposed to know.

## **Weise Worte**

*Humor ist wenn man trotzdem lacht.*

It is humor when one laughs nevertheless.

## Feiern

*Feiern* is the plural of (*die*) *Feier*; the verb *feiern* means to celebrate, to party, to turn into a fest, to observe, to enjoy. The urge to *feiern* is embedded in the German soul. “*Man muss die Feste feiern, wie sie fallen.*” That seems to be the guiding principle of German social life. One has to celebrate whenever there is an opportunity.

There are official *Feiertage*, comparable to our bank holidays, but there are so many more of them: The Mondays after Easter and Pentacost (*Ostermontag und Pfingstmontag*), the day after Christmas (*der zweite Weihnachtsfeiertag*), *Tag der deutschen Einheit* (3. Oktober). Other days off from work and with schools closed vary from region to region, especially where most people are catholic. Then there is the *Fasching* season with *Rosenmontag* as the culmination of a season of wild parties and many a day when no work gets done due to hangovers (*Kater*) and sheer exhaustion (*Ich bin ja so kaputt!*) from dancing, singing, yelling, marching and eating and drinking too much. *Karneval* (*fashing*) is being *gefeiert besonders in Köln und Mainz mit großen Paraden*. Flirting is an accepted ritual during *Karnevalsfeiern*. There is nothing like snuggling up to your son's soccer coach who is tabu for the rest of the year.

Nowadays one finds reason to *feiern* that were not known before. My brother's sister-in-law *feiert den “Moment des Wohlfühlens”*, when she feels well, with a *Glas Pfefferminztee*. *Meine Freundin Gisela schrieb: “Sonntags bleibe ich zuhause und feiere die Einsamkeit.”*

*Heute hat es in Austin, Texas, geregnet. Das muss man feiern. Prosit!*

## SH!

This is the time to learn some German words with the sh sound - like in flash. That sound is represented in German by 3 different letter combinations:

(1) sch (*der Busch*): (2) s before t and (3) s before p, in each case at the beginning of a word or syllable (*die Station*, *Oma spinnt*).

*Die Waschmaschine, der Schuh, die Sonne scheint, ich schwimme oft, das Schwein stand im Stall, das spanische Schiff schleppt, frische Fische nach Schweden.*

*Das Spiel* = play, game; *die Spielbank* = casino; *der Schmuck* = jewelry, decoration; *der Spiegel* = mirror; *das Spiegelei* = fried egg (to go with *Speck* = bacon); *der Stamm* = stem; *der Stammbaum* = pedigree, family tree.

*Schon* = already; *schön* = nice, beautiful; *schmal* = narrow; *schnell* = quick(ly); *schade!* = what a pity!

n.b. The flash on your camera is "*der Blitz*". "*Die Flasche*" is the bottle. Do you see any connection between flash and *Fasche*? Now - take your pencil (*Bleistift*) and write (*schreib*) down all the German words you have found in this article that have the sh - sound.

## O Jay!

Oh, Jay! There was at least one thing to learn from the O.J. Simpson trial: Defense lawyers talked about a "redacted" version of the Fuhrman tapes. Webster's says "to redact" means something like to edit.

Now you know why the German translation of "editor" is "*Redakteur*".

## Illustrierte

*Illustrierte* are magazines illustrated with lots of pictures. An Example is “*Frau im Trend – die aktuelle Info-Illustrierte*”. Others call themselves *Magazine* like „*tina – Das Premium-Frauenmagazin*“. Many *Magazine* share the same topics: *Klatsch und Tratsch* (gossip) about people of reputation. Tennis star Boris Becker is still making headlines with “*Neuer Sex-Skandal!*” *Der Fürst und die Fürstin von Monaco erwarteten 2014 ein Baby*. Soraya, who had a German mother, bled ink for decades on every paper that didn’t resist, but now she is hardly mentioned any more since she died in Paris in 2003.

One could think that death keeps people out of the News. For most of us that is true. But not for Adolf Hitler. It is assumed that he died in 1945, and much has been talked and written about him ever since, mostly in the past tense. Then came the reputable German magazine “Stern” with its 22 April, 1983 edition. *Stern* is not one of those *Klatsch und Tratsch* weeklies. It is known and appreciated for in-depth articles based on reliable sources. So when the “Stern” printed the first part of “*Hitler – Tagebücher*” (Hitler diaries) which – so it was explained – had recently been discovered, most readers were surprised about Hitler having written a secret diary, but “Stern” was a respected *Illustrierte* and was trusted. The talented forger was Konrad Paul Kujau.

Most *Illustrierte* feature several *Kreuzworträtsel* (crossword puzzles), often covering entire pages. The level of knowledge required depends on the expected level of education of the average reader. Everybody knows the name of a big river in *Ägypten* with three letters, but only a few *Deutsche* can tell you the *Geburtsort* (birth place) of George Washington. Nowadays Sudokus are as *populär* in *Deutschland* as in *Amerika*, usually considered somewhat Japanese, but a lady now in her nineties told me she did them as a child in Düsseldorf as *Neuner Puzzle*. Many husbands buy several of the many weekly *Illustrierte* for their wife, because they want to do the *Kreuzworträtsel* before she studies recipes for a *Sauerkrautdiät* oder *Biersuppe*.

*Illustrierte in Europa* tend to follow the trials and tribulations of royalty and upper nobility. Didn’t the *Fürst von Monaco* marry Grace Kelly, who was not blue-blooded? Does *König Willem – Alexander von den*

*Niederlanden* suffer from *Drepressionen*? One should not forget that many European countries are monarchies of some sort.

Instead of subscribing to a German *Illustrierte*, I'll soon *abonnieren* a *Zeitschrift*, a magazine that presents cultural, political and general interest subject. "Focus"? "Der Spiegel"? "Stern" after all? As they say in Germany: *Da muss ich erstmal googeln*.

### **Weise Worte**

*Das Leben lehrt uns, weniger mit uns und anderen strenge zu sein.*

Life teaches us to be less strict with us and others.

*Johann Wolfgang von Goethe*

## Ruf mich doch mal an!

*Ruf* rhymes with the English spoof. *Er ruft* means he calls or he is calling. We ask: "Who is calling?" when we want to know who is calling us on the phone (*Wer ruft denn an?*) As with most frequently used words, *rufen* has many meanings and uses.

Common words like *rufen* have countless prefixes, suffixes, word combinations, nuances and meanings. *Ruf mich doch mal an* was once an advertising slogan for a phone company and might now have something suggesting texting. (*Kannst du mir texten?*)

*Der Anrufbeantworter* is the answering machine which records an *Anruf* and plays a message. I love it when I have to call many people with a short bit of information. Texting messes everything up, at least for me.

There is *der Beruf* (profession,), *der gute Ruf* (good reputation), *das Berufungsgericht* (appeals court), *der Nachruf* (obituary), *der Aufruf* (proclamation) ...the list is too long for this publication.

Past tense of *er ruft* is *er rief*. I bought a plate in an antique shop in Texas which shows a youthful, happy soldier, a drummer, and the words: *DER KOENIG RIEF UND ALLE ALLE KAMEN 1813 – 1913*. I wonder, what the Koenig - in 1913 it was the Kaiser - *rief*, to make even my *Opa* (father of 5) march off to war in 1914.

*Berufen, die Berufung*, reminds me of Otto Hofmann, a Texas native with excellent command of German, who was known world-wide for his skill and knowledge concerning pipe organs. He was in his eighties when he was interviewed and filmed for a documentary. He called me while the film crew was packing up: "Helga, *ich habe endlich entdeckt, zu was ich berufen bin: Ich bin dazu berufen, ein Schauspieler zu sein.*" He had just discovered that his calling was to be an actor. He passed away a year or two later, keeping his claim to fame and his *guten Ruf als Organist und Orgel Spezialist*.

## Damals

*Damals*, in those days.....everything was better. Well, not really; it was different, *es war anders*. Let's go back to the years after WWII.

*Damals*, *Kaffee und Butter* could be contraband, *amerikanische Zigaretten* could buy you a warm winter coat or land you in jail. Black market access to a doctor in the British Occupational Forces could supply you with *Penizillin*, which saved my little brother's life after his *Blinddarm*, his appendix, had burst.

*Damals*, im Jahre 1492, als Kolumbus um die Welt segeln wollte, he didn't know about *Amerika*. He thought, *er sei in Indien gelandet*. Die *damaligen Eingeborenen* (natives of those days) *von Amerika nennt man deshalb Indianer*. But *heutzutage* (nowadays) they are also *Amerikaner*, *wenn sie in den USA leben*. Die *Eingeborenen von Indien sind Inder*.

*Damals*, after WWI, there was not enough food available in *Deutschland*. However, there was a good supply of *Steckrüben*, a kind of a big turnip which grows well in the heavy clay soil of *Norddeutschland*. My mother told me, that she had to eat *Steckrüben* for two meals a day. Those were the *Steckrübenjahre*. Can one buy *Steckrüben* in einem *amerikanischen Supermarkt*?

*Damals*, als ich ein Kind war, we had few toys, *keinen Fernseher*, *keinen Rechner* (computer), *kein Handy* (cell phone). *Wir hatten aber viel Zeit und viel Fantasie*, and therefore we played a lot of tricks (*Streiche*) on people. Z. B: Sitting on a bench in front of our house, my brother and I would point at a passing lady's skirt and giggle: "*Tante, dein Unterrock guckt hinten raus*." (Auntie, your slip is showing in the back.) The lady would then walk with a wobble. We *Kinder* thought we were so wicked and naughty! Our mother, however, watching us from the upstairs kitchen window, enjoyed the spectacle.

*Damals*, when there were not enough clergymen in Texas to fulfill the need for marrying, baptizing and burials, the "Whiskey Priests" arrived on the scene and sprinkled a touch of Christianity on going-ons.

## Gehört

*Das gehört sich nicht.* That is not proper behavior.  
*Das gehört mir nicht.* That does not belong to me.  
*Das habe ich nicht gehört.* I have not heard that.  
*Das gehört in den Keller.* That belongs in the basement.

As is obvious, the word *gehört* has many meanings.

People ask me "What does *geho*, *geho* with two dots *r t* mean in English?" When I answer "You mean *gehört*? I need to hear it in context." Many callers conclude then that I am too nitpicky for their needs

There are many participles as well as infinitives starting with *ge*, and I love to let my mind play with finding them....braten, briet, gebraten; raten, riet, geraten - o lala! geraten? Er hat mir geraten, den Braten langsam zu braten. So ist der Braten gut geraten. *geraten = advised; geraten = to turn out good.*

*Weißt du, wie alt ich bin? Dreimal darfst du raten. Wenn du es richtig geraten hast, rate ich dir, es nicht zu verraten.*

*Wenn jemand intensiv hört, sagt man in English "he listens". Im Deutschen kann man sagen er horcht. If the little boy does not listen to what he is told, sagt man er gehorcht nicht.*

The word *horchen* brings to mind a popular folksong with a compelling marching rhythm:

*Horch was kommt von draußen rein.  
Hollahi, hollaho  
Muss wohl mein fein's Liebchen sein.  
Hollahihaho*



### **Was ist Pfingsten?**

The seventh Sunday after *Ostern* (Easter) is *Pfingsten* (Pentecost), when *der Heilige 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: *Pfingstmontag* is a *Feiertag* (bank holiday) in Deutschland.

## Der Ersatz

A basic translation of *Ersatz* is ‘replacement’; not the act of replacing something, but rather the thing that serves or can serve as a replacement or substitute. Most *Autos* have four tires (*Reifen*) and a spare tire. That spare is called *Ersatzreifen*.

A man with a spare tire around his waist does not have an *Ersatzreifen*; he has a *Bierbauch*, a beer belly. My uncle Hermann sported a respectable *Bierbauch* which preceded him all the way to the Russian front in late 1944. His personal *Schneider* (tailor) had to create a *Uniform* that fit him. *Onkel* Hermann was not really fit to fight, but he was considered useful for digging trenches, so he was drafted (*eingezogen*) and sent to *graben*. It was a dangerous assignment, so close to the front. An *Ersatz* for a fallen soldier could be found easily as long as there were living male bodies around, 15 years old or older, even much older.

*Onkel* Hermann was by trade a wholesaler of *Schokolade, Bonbons und Pralinen*. However, these delicacies had become very hard to get, so he had to deal in whatever he could buy as *Ersatz* to keep his business going. Somehow he had found a supplier of *Dujardin*, a liquor, which kept him and several neighbors in good spirits.

Sugar was rationed and at times not available, so we had to find an *Ersatz* for it. For home use as sweets, we dried apples, plums or neighbors pears that were hanging over the fence.

Two other things were in high demand: *Zigaretten und Kaffee*. There was no *Ersatz* for *Zigaretten*, so my father, a law abiding Prussian civil servant, had created a spot in the vegetable garden where his illegal *Tabak* thrived in secrecy, and was then dried in the attic behind a stack of old mattresses.

Luckily, *meine Mutter und meine Oma* did not smoke, but a cup of *Kaffee* was the highlight of the day when they got one. It had to be *richtiger Bohnenkaffee* made of real coffee beans, not *Ersatzkaffee* (also called *Muckefuck*) made of roasted barley or other grain. We children drank cold *Muckefuck* in the summer, because it is a good thirst quencher (*Er löscht den Durst so gut*).

The important little word with *Ersatz* is *oder* (or).

*Man nimmt Vanille oder Vanilleersatz. Man backt mit Butter oder mit Butterersatz wie Margarine.*

*Ich habe einen Ersatz gefunden für Fitnesstraining in dem Sprichwort,*  
a wise saying indeed:

*Nach dem Essen sollst du ruh'n oder tausend Schritte tun.*

That means, after a meal you can rest as *Ersatz* for walking those miserable thousand steps.

## Tripping in Germany

If you want to find out about a country, go there and get sick or injured. Last April, I flew to my hometown in Deutschland, Herford, stumbled (*stolperte*) on the sidewalk and fell flat on my face, had injuries (*Verletzungen*) and got sick (*wurde krank*) and *landete im Hospital* a few days later. Fortunately (*Gott-sei-Dank*), I had *eine gute Reiseversicherung* (travel insurance) and no broken bones. My face was blue, red and purple and featured a pattern of sparkling skin abrasions. *Eine Ambulanz brachte mich ins Hospital.*

I shared a room with a lady from a little village nearby. I never knew how resourceful I can be when circumstances require. That lady couldn't sleep at night and was given two sleeping pills (*Schlaftabletten*). But she didn't take them and asked me to throw them *ins Klo* (into the toilet). *Natürlich habe ich die Pillen selbst geschluckt*, took them myself and flushed the commode to pretend I had disposed of the pills. I know one should not flush pills down the drain, and I had only acted "as if", *als ob*. *Dann waren wir beide glücklich. Meine Zimmernachbarin grunzte die ganze Nacht, aber ich konnte etwas schlafen.*

Supper, *Abendbrot im deutschen Hospital*: It consisted of a slice of rye bread (*Roggenbrot oder Graubrot*), a cubic cm of Butter, *eine Scheibe Fleischwurst* (bologna) und *etwas Velveta*. Many Germans eat only *eine Scheibe Brot zum Abendbrot*.

I am too Americanized and wanted real food and felt deprived while in the *Krankenhaus*.

The funniest and most embarrassing aspect of the experience was my *Nachthemd*, my nightgown. Since I was literally picked up from the street, I had to do with one of those gowns the *Hospital* generously hands out to poor people that come in as patients. These things open to the back, and you have to use at least one, but better two hands to keep your derriere private.

I have traveled a lot in my almost 80 years, and I managed to cope with many an odd situation. One of them occurred deep in the desert of Saudi Arabia. We were on a bus to go shopping in an oasis. The driver stopped half way there and announced "pee pee", We all found a place behind the dunes and also discovered a group of nomads, men, women and children. They were packing up, and then all of their women went to one

side and squatted down to relieve themselves. All of them bared their bottom in full sight of the men. Our American men didn't know where to look.

If you want to get sick or injured in a foreign country, don't chose Saudi Arabia, because many Saudis consider your misfortune Allah's punishment for something you did or didn't. Been there, done that. But they have wonderful bread in abundance, which I remembered fondly when I chewed that one single slice in the hospital at supper time in Germany.

## Das Löffelchen

Some babies are born with a *Silberlöffel* (silver spoon) in their mouth, or so the saying goes. Those poor mothers! I have never heard that said in Germany, but many babies in Germany are given a little *Silberlöffel* as a present, usually by their baptisms (*Taufe*) or at some other occasion early in life.

This *Silberlöffelchen* normally has the child's name on the handle and is a treasure to be kept through generations. I have by way of inheritance a *Silberlöffelchen* with the name "Rudi" on it. Rudi was paralyzed from the day he was born, but my father, who was Rudi's godfather (*Patenonkel*), gave him a silver spoon with his name on the handle, and it was used a few times to feed him. Whenever I see this little spoon in my display cabinet, I am so grateful for being born healthy.

Speaking of spoons, I am reminded that a German *Teelöffel* is a teaspoon, however, the spoon you use for eating soup (*Suppe*) is an *Esslöffel*, which is important to know when the *Rezept* asks for *zwei Esslöffel Essig* (vinegar). Germans don't measure in cups, but that is another story. *Zwei Tassen Zucker* means different amounts to different folks. They prefer *Kilo*, *Gramm*, *Pfund*, or fractions thereof. The German *Pfund* is about 10% more than the American pound is the same as *ein halbes Kilo*. Go figure. If you are anxious to experience utmost frustration, try to bake a cake according to a German recipe. It is a collection of measurements that mean nothing to us here in the good old USA. Examples: My pound cake (*Topfkuchen*) contains *ein Päckchen Backpulver*, *ein Päckchen Vanillezucker*, *ein Fläschchen Mandelaroma* und *geriebene Zitronenschale nach Bedarf*. How much is *ein Päckchen*?

Back to *Löffel*. There are *Löffel* made of flesh and blood. They are the ears of hares. That leads to the expression *Du kriegst gleich was hinter die Löffel!* which a mother might yell at her misbehaving son threatening to slap him.

It bothers me that I can't think of a word that rhymes with *Löffel*. *Löffelchen*, however, has many rhymes because an o can change to an ö. *Kartoffel Kartöffelchen*, *Pantoffel Pantöffelchen*.

*Silberlöffel* have the disadvantage of having to be polished occasionally or stored in special ways. I have many drawers full of inherited silverware. Who wants to inherit it from me? One set has the family crest of the von Tresckow relatives on each piece, the one who tried to assassinate Hitler. That, at least, has historical value to a point. That, oh gosh, also reminds me that my children gave me almost a hundred little tags to attach to items of family history significance, because all my knowledge dies with me. I should begin tomorrow with the pretty porcelain bowl I won in a bicycle race in my home town when I wasn't expected to win, and the trophy was a soccer ball. The judges ran into a nearby store and bought that bowl for me, a girl, *um Himmels Willen*. This may not be family history, but to me it represents part of me, and it enforced my conviction, that I was somebody of significance. Two years later I was elected president of the student council without having campaigned for the office.

And now some serious advice: Don't eat a boiled egg with a *Silberlöffelchen*.

## Freude

Joy! Pleasure! Happiness!

J. S. Bach, Amadeus Mozart. Ludwig van Beethoven and other composers created Musik with Freude in mind and in the title. If you had piano lessons, you must have hacked away at Bach's An die Freude or van Beethoven's version of a poem by Schiller: fis fis g a a g fis e, Tochter aus Elysium. I couldn't find Elysium on the globe, so it must be in outer space; maybe the Tochter called Freude is dancing with Jonathan Livingston Seagull. Nowadays, reality takes on a previously unimaginable, almost divine existence.

Psychiatrists advise us to always have something we look forward to like in: Ich freue mich auf das Abendessen. That is easy for me, a daily Freude, because I am always looking forward to the next meal or snack. Might that be the reason why I am considered to be a happy person? It certainly is the cause of the twenty extra pounds of me that need not be there. It's probably a well designed trade-off. It is still polite to say to somebody you just met: Es hat mich gefreut, Sie kennengelernt zu haben. Usually you shake hands when saying that.

There are houses in Germany that are legal houses of prostitution. They are referred to by many different names I can't mention here, but one acceptable name is Freudenhaus. The employees pay income tax and have very frequent medical exams.

On a trip to Japan with a group of Austin, Texas, "Friendship Force" club members, our hosts - Japanese local dignitaries - asked us to sing for a special treat the "Freude" song in van Beethoven's native language. Only two of our Austin group knew German, but to the Japanese we all looked alike, typical Caucasians, so we must all know German, of course. They were polite enough to provide each of us with the German text. Except for two of us, the group had no clue about how to pronounce the words, but the same was true for the Japanese listeners. Everybody smiled, and Freude was the atmosphere in the banquet hall.

When the Berlin Wall came down, many folks broke out in a song, but they replaced the word Freude with Frieden, which means peace. So they sang: "Friede, schöner Götterfunken..... ", peace, sparkles of the Gods...



## Nullen

*Null* is German for zero. English has the expression “null and void”.

So you might think that the verb *nullen* means to turn into zero.

*Pustekuchen!* Not at all! *Die Null* does not exactly turn you into anything special and doesn't morph you into Nirvana or beam you into heaven, but it can cost you a lot of money if you live in Deutschland.

The reason for that is that *nullen* tells everybody that you are celebrating a birthday that ends with a zero, a *Null*.

An ordinary *Geburtstag* is rarely ignored, and it is the person with the birthday who has to pay for everything. A birthday ending in a zero, a *Null*, demands special attention. When my brother turned sixty (60), we all expected him to throw a big party in a restaurant with a delicious buffet. For the money he spent on that event he could have bought a condominium on Mallorca.

For me, the most memorable 70<sup>th</sup> birthday happened in 1944. A distant relative in the village of Oettinghausen invited everybody who could make it – with air raids and bombings we never knew what the next day would bring - for *Kaffee und Kuchen*. The coffee was not made of coffee beans but of roasted barley and was called *Muckefuck* which rhymes with book. We felt safe from the bombs while in the village, but on the way home to town in the street car, planes dropped bombs here and there and seemingly everywhere. We got out of the street car because it would not run without some lights on.. My mother threw me and my brother into a ditch and covered us with her body. We made it home eventually– wet but alive.

When I did my most recent “nulling” (80), my friends and family honored me as if had achieved something. Well, in a way I had. I had survived several attempts by other people to kill me: like when I was seven, and Allied bombs turned my neighborhood into ruins; or when my husband and I drove in a jeep through the desert of Saudi Arabia and local boys felt that I was a Christian whore dirtying their sacred soil. Stones were their weapons until my husband threw some back at them with excellent aim.

*Nullen* is a great excuse for getting those old photo albums off the shelf (a good opportunity to do some dusting there). Just don't ask me why the door to an out-house has two *Nulls*. 0 0 .

"Nullen" was the last Helga's Corner and published in the Fall 2017 issue of the Journal.

Φ Φ Φ Φ

ENDE GUT, ALLES GUT

All's well that ends well

## Comments received on some articles

Helga enjoyed receiving feedback on anything that she wrote. The following are a small sample of comments and correspondence that she kept. The only negative issue that she kept, had to do with her article on dirndles and lederhosen. I could not find the original letter from the couple who took offense, but based on Helga's response, she really had her feelings hurt. Despite always having a positive personality in public, in private she was very sensitive to other people's perception of her.

Just a note to tell you how much  
I enjoy - "Helga Corner".  
Always read it -  
This month - I got especially  
tickled for I had learned the  
word "Ding" - from my mother  
long ago and still do - <sup>use it</sup> everything  
"Es ain Dingens"  
Keep up the good work.  
Hope to visit with you in  
Rockne in March - we first  
met in Waco -

Dear Helga,  
Thank you so much  
for your wonderful book.  
We are enjoying it very much  
and cherish it because you  
wrote it! Fondly, . . . .

Helga

I love your Helga's Corner —  
Crockett had a <sup>as a young man</sup> yellow cat — growing  
up and called it "Kater" it was male.

Now we have a male yellow  
cat — Named Kater — I wasn't sure  
how it was spelled.

and yes we all have had  
~~Ein~~ SchrecklickerKater!

Keep up the good work

November 14, 2003

Dear Helga,

Many thanks for taking the  
trouble and time to mail your book to  
Bill and me. Every month we enjoy reading  
"Helga's Corner". Thank you too for  
autographing the book. I can't claim to  
personally know many authors.

Hope to see you sometime at the  
Christmas Market.

Liebe Frau Silwen 'h'  
Thank you so  
much -  
Viele Dank -  
Das Buch  
ist toll!

I'm enjoying reading  
your booklet. It's  
unique.

Thanks for sending  
it.

Helga,

Thanks for sending  
the book and for  
the kind inscription.

Liebe Helga:  
Habe so viel Spaß an  
Helga's Corner, bitte  
schicke mir noch 2 Exemplare  
Branchen bestimmt  
später noch mehr f.  
Weihnachtsgeschichte.  
Finde H.C. nicht nur  
primär sondern auch  
sehr instruktiv.  
Viel Spaß f. 25-jährigen  
Jubiläum. Herzl. Gruss auch  
an Hans Lisa

Hello Helga,

I just finished reading the latest edition of the Schulhaus Reporter, and as always, I got a good chuckle from Helga's Corner. Lots of one's selves there! Enjoyed the Weise Worte too.

Helga, I must tell you once again how very much we enjoyed having you as our guest at Austin Woman's Forum. You were a delight! Informative. Entertaining. And so pleasant to get to know. I honestly think that each member approached me after the meeting and told me how very much they enjoyed the program ... how much they enjoyed you! Marci's and my best efforts could not have come close to such a positive reaction!

**Helga's Corner – Musings about German Language and Culture**  
by Helga von Schweinitz

Book Review by Ron Hunka

A magazine editor to whom I once submitted a book review asked me if I knew either of the authors. It was against the publication's policy to have someone review works of people he or she knew. Therefore, I confess that I know Helga von Schweinitz from several years' attendance at the *Stammtisch* at the German-Texan Heritage Society. I have learned from that experience that Helga is a gifted storyteller in two languages. Although I have not read every *Helga's Corner* column in the *Schulhaus Reporter*, I have read enough of them to see that her storytelling talent carries over into her writing as well. I have particularly enjoyed those columns that provided insight into the German language.

One of my favorite columns in this book is titled *Should We Neuter Them All?* It begins with the statement, "The language of grammar has a major flaw: it uses the words masculine, feminine, and neuter to describe the so-called gender of a noun." When I saw this column in the newsletter originally I was somewhat fascinated by the notion that the gender was the gender of the word and not the object represented. Pursuant to this idea, by and by, I began to see some applications of the principle. For example, I noted that there are three words in German for cathedral and that each of them is a different gender—*der Dom*, *die Kathedrale*, and *das Muenster*. But the cathedral by any gender remains the same building.

*Schnaps* displays another facet of Helga's columns, the understated, warm, personal anecdote. In this column, Helga describes what schnapps (two *p*'s in English, one in German) is, explains its cultural significance, and then goes on to tell us how her grandmother in Germany made schnapps after the war to barter for food with the American soldiers to keep the children from going hungry "too often". With the briefest mention, she evokes the memory of a loved one who alleviated the suffering of children in the terrible days after WWII.

Other columns in *Helga's Corner* for me have simply been helpful with my German. For example, I finished reading this book just before a recent trip to Switzerland, Austria, and Germany. In *Delicious Americaner*, I learned that the pastry we call a *bismarck* in the U.S. is called a *Berliner* in the German speaking world. Even though I had lived in Germany as a soldier I had never heard this term. When my family and I were returning to the Zuerich airport to fly home, we stopped at a convenience store for a coffee and a breakfast snack. My daughter who does not speak German looked in the pastry case and told me that she wanted one of those pastries that I recognized as a bismarck. They looked good to me too. "Zwei Berliner, bitte" I requested, recollecting an old observation that whenever one learns a new word it shows up shortly and remembering where I learned this particular example.

I looked forward to more of Helga's little columns and the insights that lurk within.



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[info@germantexans.org](mailto:info@germantexans.org)

August 19, 2008

[REDACTED] Texas [REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]:

Thank you for sharing your thoughts about the Helga's Corner column in the last Schulhaus Reporter. I was very sorry to hear that you found it offensive. The intention was for it to be humorous. We do our best to provide interesting and entertaining articles and information in our publications. As you can imagine, it is impossible for us to please everyone with our editorial choices, so we use our best judgment and move forward from there.

There were also some corrections Mrs. [REDACTED] had mentioned in her letter. I appreciate them being pointed out. Both the *Journal* and the *Schulhaus Reporter* are compiled by volunteers who donate large amounts of their time to produce these publications for our members. Sometimes mistakes are made, and if they are called to our attention, they can be corrected.

I have passed a copy of your letter on to Helga von Schweinitz so that she, as the author, can respond to you as well.

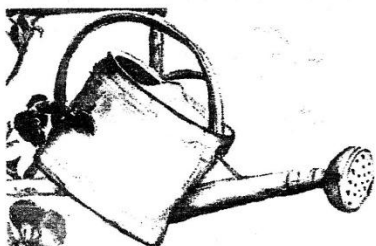
As per your request, I have cancelled your membership. I am very sorry to lose your participation in the organization, and hope you will reconsider. If so, please let me know and I'll be happy to reinstate your membership.

Sincerely,

Eva Barnett  
Executive Director

Promoting awareness and preservation of the German cultural heritage of Texas





15 August 2008

Dear [redacted].

There is nothing I can do about your misunderstanding of my "Helga's Corner". I expect a certain amount of intelligence combined with some sense of humor from my readers.

You mentioned your service in the US Army. I appreciate what you did for our country. I know of the sacrifices required of the soldiers and their families because my husband served for 20 years in the US Air Force.

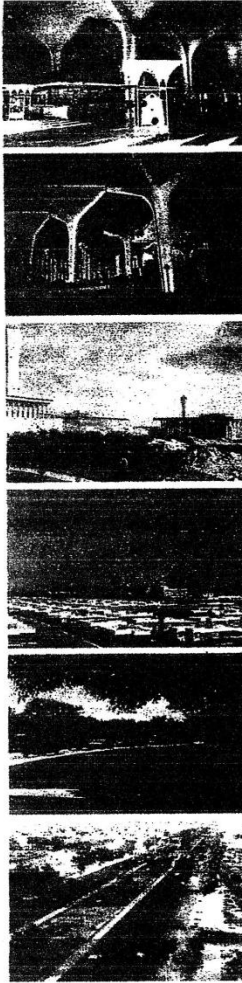
I am also aware of your frequent substantial donations to the German-Texan Heritage Society which were always welcomed.

I am sure it was your intention to hurt me when you wrote your letter. Your rudeness has done its work. I am very hurt.

Helga von Schweinitz

p.s. I did not receive your letter until yesterday.





Pflugenville, d. 15. 8. 2008

Sehr geehrte Frau [REDACTED],

gestern erhielt ich einen Abzug des Briefes von Ihrem Mann an mich und von Ihrem Brief an Frau Barnett. Sie haben sich viel Mühe gemacht, mich zurechtzuweisen. Sie können offensichtlich den Hauch von Satire in dem maßlos übertriebenen Artikel nicht erkennen. Die Gabe der Schmungelns - auch über sich selbst - ist nicht jedem in die Wiege gelegt.

Im Mai erhielt GTHS einen Brief mit acht Fragen. Der Schreiber lebt in Indiana. Als eine meiner vielen ehrenamtlichen Funktionen bei GTHS beantwortete ich die Fragen in einem langen Brief. Die Fragen kamen mir aber derartig vorangenommen vor, dass ich sie eigentlich schon lustig fand, wie z. B. : "Why does leatherhosen come to be seen as non-fashionable (re: dorky), while the 'dirndl' has come to be seen as sexy". Da ich persönlich nicht als sexy angesehen werden will, wenn ich mein Dirndl trage, schrieb ich ihm : "sexiness is in the mind of the beholder." Von den acht Fragen habe ich dann einige für Helga's Corner benutzt.

• Dhahran airport and Alkhobar

Ich möchte aber nicht noch mehr Zeit damit verbringen, auf Ihren Brief einzugehen. Wenn Sie mit meinen anderen Veröffentlichungen und mit meiner Arbeit für Tobranz und deutsch-amerikanische Freundschaft bekannt wären, hätten Sie für ihr Schreiben vielleicht einen zivilisierteren Ton gewählt. Sie haben mir sehr wehgetan und dafür sicher große Befriedigung gefunden.

Helga von Schweinin

مطار الظهران - جامعة البترول بالظهران - الخبر الظهران - شارع بالخبر  
Dhahran airport, U.P.M. Dhahran, Alkhobar, Dhahran, Alkhobar boulevard.

Photographed by Basem S. Saleh

## Published date for each article

Issue	Title
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 4 #1 Jan-Feb 1997	A sight at night
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 2 #4 Jul-Aug 1995	ACH du lieber Himmel!
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 11 #5 Sep-Oct 2004	Adelig (What's in a Name?)
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 3 #5 Sep-Oct 1996	Amusingly Descriptive
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 16 #2 Mar-Apr 2009	Angst
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 2 #2 Mar-Apr 1995	Apostrophe's foolin' around
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 8 #6 Nov-Dec 2001	Begin Ever So Softly
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 12 #4 Jul-Aug 2005	Benimm dich!
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 8 #1 Jan-Feb 2001	Bimbos are Deppen (The Pregnant Chad)
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 12 #6 Nov-Dec 2005	Bitte, platzen Sie nicht!
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 8 #2 Mar-Apr 2001	Burg vs Berg
Journal Vol 37 #3 Fall 2015	Damals
	Dare to say Der
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 9 #5 Sep-Oct 2002	Das Bad can be bad
Journal Vol 35 #4 Winter 2013	Das Bratkartoffelverhältnis
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 17 #2 Mar-Apr 2010	Das is ja Spitze!
Journal Vol 38 #4 Winter 2016	Das Löffelchen
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 5 #6 Nov-Dec 1998	Das macht nix
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 19 #4 Fall 2012	Das public Viewing
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 15 #5 Sep-Oct 2008	Das Reißverschlussystem
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 8 #3 May-Jun 2001	Delicious Amerikaner (Geographically speaking)
	Der - Die - Das Rat
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 17 #4 Jul-Aug 2010	Der airbag
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 15 #6 Nov-Dec 2008	Der Bleistift
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 17 #3 May-Jun 2010	Der Bulle
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 16 #5 Sep-Oct 2009	Der deutsche Baum (Der Baum)
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 18 #1 Jan-Feb 2011	Der Eintopf
Journal Vol 38 #1 Spring 2016	Der Ersatz
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 15 #3 May-Jun 2008	Der Führer
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 12 #2 Mar-Apr 2005	Der Kaffeeklatsch
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Schulhaus Reporter Vol 11 #1 Jan-Feb 2004	Der Meister
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Journal Vol 36 #1 Spring 2014	Deutsch auf hoher See
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 15 #1 Jan-Feb 2008	Dichter and Denker
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 19 #45 Nov-Dec 2012	Die Currywurst
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 20 #1 Winter 2013	Die Ehre

## Helga's Corner the Complete Collection

(last in Reporter)

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Schulhaus Reporter Vol 8 #5 Sep-Oct 2001  
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Die Gemütlichkeit  
Die Hose  
Die Nacht Before Christmas  
Die Spinnt (Helga's Corner "Die Spinnt Ja!")  
Die Spinnt Ja!  
Die Teutonen (Teutonic Confusion)  
Die Torte  
Die Wurst  
Die Zivis  
DONNERWETTER!  
DU, IHR, SIE - THOU, YOU (DU-YOU-IHR-SIE-THOU)  
Ein Hammer  
Eine Kalte Platte  
Es zieht!  
Existentialismus  
  
F K K (Frei - Körper - Kultur)  
FALSCHER FREUDE  
Fantastisch!  
Feiern  
Ferien und Urlaub  
Frederick the Gross  
Fressen  
Freude  
Freude  
Freund? (Helga's Corner "Is a Friend ein Freund?")  
Gehört  
Gesundheit  
Give me the spiel  
Gute Freunde  
Heim - Heimat - Geheimnis  
Helgas Eckchen  
Herforder Deutsch  
Herzlichen Glückwunsch (Herzliche Grusse!)  
Ich bin am lesen  
Ich bin ja so selig  
Ich vergesse nichts (The Sun City Moment)  
Illustrierte  
In die Schweiz? (IRAK)

## Helga's Corner the Complete Collection

Schulhaus Reporter Vol 14 #5 Sep-Oct 2007	In pikanter Sosse
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 1 #6 Nov 1994	Index Alert!
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 10 #1 Jan-Feb 2003	Is a friend ein Freund?
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 2 #5 Sep-Oct 1995	Its Das Normal (Is this normal?)
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 2 #1 Jan 1995	It's in ...
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 4 #3 May-Jun 1997	It's so adverbial!
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 5 #3 Jul-Aug 1998	Knodel Anytime
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 7 #1 Mar-Apr 2000	Let von be gone (When the "von" is gone)
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 1 #6 Nov 1994	Let's Visit the Umlaut-Garden
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 10 #3 May-Jun 2003	Liebe - Is it love?
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 15 #4 Jul-Aug 2008	Liebe Frau Helga (Mail)
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 11 #2 Mar-Apr 2004	Lustig ist das Zigeunerleben
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 6 #1 Jan-Feb 1999	Made in Germany
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 15 #2 Mar-Apr 2008	Mein Verein
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 14 #3 May-Jun 2007	Mudder gleicht die alte Katz (The Jerk)
	Nobody Dies
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 13 #6 Nov-Dec 2006	Nüchtern? (Sober in the Morning)
Journal Vol 39 #3 Fall 2017	Nullen
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 16 #3 May-Jun 2009	Nullen
Journal Vol 36 #2 Summer 2014	O wundervolle Runkelrube
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 2 #5 Sep-Oct 1995	Oh Jay!
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 9 #4 Jul-Aug 2002	oi - oi - oi
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 7 #5 Sep-Oct 2000	Pampers
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 19 #3 Summer 2012	Pfanni
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 16 #1 Jan-Feb 2009	Reisen
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 9 #3 May-Jun 2002	Rise and Schein
Journal Vol 37 #2 Summer 2015	Ruf mich doch mal an!
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 5 #2 Mar-Apr 1998	Sand in Motor (Learning means memorizing)
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 7 #1 Jan-Feb 2000	SAUERKRAUT
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 3 #4 Jul-Aug 1996	Sch - sh (Sh!)
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 9 #1 Jan-Feb 2002	Schnaps
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 3 #4 Jul-Aug 1996	Sh!
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 6 #4 Jul-Aug 1999	She'll be coming...holdrio!
	Should we neuter them all? (Should We Neuter them once and for All?)
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 8 #4 Jul-Aug 2001	Simplification!
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 2 #3 May-Jun 1995	Skat
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 10 #4 Jul-Aug 2003	So'n Dingsbums
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 11 #6 Nov-Dec 2004	Stroke
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 11 #4 Jul-Aug 2004	Take out the mystery
	The FUSEDTOGETHERNOUNS
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 1 #4 July 1994	The new spell on spelling
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 4 #6 Nov-Dec 1997	

## Helga's Corner the Complete Collection

Schulhaus Reporter Vol 9 #6 Nov-Dec 2002	The Street Walker
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 5 #5 Sep-Oct 1998	The Undertaker and the Flying Saucer
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 2 #1 Jan 1995	Thirty days has ...
Journal Vol 38 #3 Fall 2016	Tripping in Germany
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 3 #1 Jan-Feb 1996	Viel Gluck! (Good-luck charms bring viel Gluck!)
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 10 #5 Sep-Oct 2003	Wandern
	Was Ist Das?
Journal Vol 35 #3 Fall 2013	Wauwau
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 3 #4 Jul-Aug 1996	We'd Better Stay humble?
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 14 #2 Mar-Apr 2007	Wer is der Vater?
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 2 #6 Nov-Dec 1995	Wer ist blau? (Ist er blau?)
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 5 #3 May-Jun 1998	What is a "Gift" among friends?
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 2 #1 Jan 1995	What's dat?
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 7 #3 May-Jun 2000	When you've got to go (When You've Gotta Go)
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 5 #1 Jan-Feb 1998	Who is Where?
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 4 #5 Sep-Oct 1997	Wie Geht's
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 3 #3 May-Jun 1996	Will the Flesh Be Willing?
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 17 #1 Jan-Feb 2010	Wir Mussen updaten
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 16 #4 Jul-Aug 2009	Wir täten schon wollen...
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 10 #6 Nov-Dec 2003	Wo essen wir heute?
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 18 #4 Jul 2011	Wohlfühl-Urlaub
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 13 #2 Mar-Apr 2006	Wohnkultur
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 3 #6 Nov-Dec 1996	You idiom!
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 2 #4 Jul-Aug 1995	You must it right get
Schulhaus Reporter Vol 7 #4 Jul-Aug 2000	Zungenbrecker

## Answers to Exercises or Übung

### *Reisen*

Please fill in the blanks with German words taken from the text on the previous page.

- 1 Don't travel (on foot) **zu Fuß** if you have (corns) **Hühneraugen**.
- 2 (In the Middle Ages) **im Mittelalter** nobody took the train to Lourdes.
- 3 After spending two weeks in (France) **Frankreich**, you might be in need of a (father confessor) **Beichtvater**.
- 4 Peter's grandmother gave him money for an (educational trip) **Bildungsreise** to Holland to study Dutch painters. He learned a lot about smoking marijuana.
- 5 I am forever trying to find (the meaning of life) **den Sinn des Lebens**. Aren't you?
- 6 After a semester in Holland, Peter spent three months on a pilgrimage in Spain to find (himself) **sich** and something he could call his (faith) **Glauben**.
- 7 I book my trips through a (travel agency) Reiseagentur, not on my computer because it has an attitude.

### **Wo essen wir heute?**

Depending on what you fancy for dinner, you choose the appropriate eatery from those mentioned in the previous article.

**Reis mit Garnelen in Sojasoße: Wir essen beim Chinesen.**

**Ravioli und Chianti: Wir gehen zum Italiener.**

**Pizza auf amerikanische Art: Wir kaufen sie bei Pizza Hut**

**Abendessen im Rathaus: Wir bestellen einen Tisch im Ratskeller.**

**Turkey with all the fixin's: Wir essen beim T ü r k e n** (just kidding).

What kind of a sign must you look for if you want the following:

Self Service: **Selbstbedienung**.

Free parking near a restaurant: **Für Gäste frei**.

A small hotel **Gasthaus**

City hall **Rathaus**.

### *Ferien und Urlaub*

Please copy the German translation of the following words or phrases from the preceding article. Remember, all German nouns are capitalized.

Good for daddy **gut für Papa**.

vacations **Ferien**

leave **Urlaub**

closed due to vacation **wegen Ferien geschlossen**

health **Gesundheit**

sunshine **Sonnenschein**

seniors **Senioren**

educational journey **Bildungsreise**

vacation from myself **Ferien vom ich.**

hummingbirds **Kolibris**

Cuba **Kuba**

pea soup with Frankfurter hot dogs **Erbsensuppe mit Frankfurter Würstchen.**

### ***Eine kalte Platte***

Unscramble the words in the left column. The answers are somewhere in the right column.

RABBENTOD	ABENDBROT
WUTBLURST	BLUTWURST
LATEK PATTLE	KALTE PLATTE
SCHALESE	SEELACHS
RUMPENPICKEL	PUMPERNICKEL
VARIAK	KAVIAR
SCHIKNEN	SCHINKEN
NUTTISCHAF	AUFSCHNITT
REWEIN LENZTISCH	WIENER SCHNITZEL
KÄSPALETTE	KÄSEPLATTE

### ***Wer ist der Vater?***

Please select the right German words for the English "fatherwords" from the following list and write them twice next to English version.

***a) der Vater   b) Stiefvater   c) Großvater   d) Urgroßvater   e) Schwiegervater  
f) Adoptivvater   g) der leibliche Vater   h) Stammvater   i) Vaterland   j) Vaterlandsliebe  
k) Vaterschaft   l) Vatermörder   m) das Vater-unser   n) das Vaterhaus***

- 1) the father: der Vater
  - 2) grandfather: Großvater
  - 3) father-in -law: Schwiegervater
  - 4) paternity : Vaterschaft
  - 5) fatherland: Vaterland
  - 6) ancestor: Stammvater
  - 7) the Lord's prayer: das Vater-unser
  - 8) great grandfather: Urgroßvater
  - 9) adoptive father: Adoptivvater
  - 10) stepfather: Stiefvater
  - 11) patriotism: Vaterlandsliebe
  - 12) paternal house: Vaterhaus
  - 13) the biological father: der leibliche Vater
  - 14) high stand-up collar on a shirt: Vatermörder
- 1/a 2/c 3/e 4/k 5/i 6/h 7/m 8/d 9/f 10/b 11/j 12/n 13/g 14/l

### ***So 'n Dingsbums***



Please, copy the following sentences, but replace the underlined word with one of the Dings-words.

**Der Filter an meiner Kamera ist kaputt. *Das Dings an meiner Kamera ist kaputt.***  
**Ich brauche einundvierzig so'ne Perlen für die Kette. *Ich brauche einundvierzig so'ne Dinger für die Kette.***

**Hast du mein Buch irgendwo gesehen? *Hast du mein Dingsbums irgendwo gesehen?***  
**Ich muss einen großen Tannenbaum für die Schule kaufen. *Ich muss einen großen Dingsbums für die Schule kaufen.***

**Seine Kusine aus Fürstenfeldbruch kommt übermorgen. *Seine Kusine aus Dingda kommt übermorgen.***

**Herr Schreiner-Wintermann war Oberbürgermeister von Karl-Marx-Stadt. *Herr So-und-so war Dingsbums von Dingsda.***

### ***Der Kaffeeklatsch***

At a recent ***Kaffeeklatsch***, the ladies sampled too much of the ***Kirschlikör*** and got their words all scrambled . Please, unscramble them.

The correct words are in the right nolum.

**EFEFAK DUN HENUCK: KAFFEE UND KUCHEN**

**LORZEPLAN: PORZELLAN**

**SKANLECHT: KLATSCHEN**

**RÜBE EDRANE LUETE: ÜBER ANDERE LEUTE**

**STIBBELSECKER: SILBERBESTECK**

**SCHLAKT NUD SCHRATT: KLATSCH UND TRATSCH**

**NACHTKLASSS: KLATSCHNASS**

**TICKSCHEDE: TISCHDECKE**

**BERGSTAIGEN: GASTGEBERIN**

### ***Benimm dich!***

Please, fill in the blanks in these statements about good and bad German manners.

You may look at the text on the previous page for help.

***Man spricht nicht mit vollem Mund.***

***Man kaut nicht mit offenemMund.***

***Beim Essen hat man beide Hände auf dem Tisch.***

***Wenn ein Mann und eine Frau in ein Restaurant gehen, geht der Mann zuerst in den Raum***

***Man schüttelt zuerst die Hand der Dame, dann die Hand des Herra. Wenn ein Kind mit vollem Mund spricht, sagt die Mutter: „Du hast schlechte Manieren.“***

***Wenn ein Mann schlechte Manieren zeigt, sagt die Frau: „Mann, benimmdich!“***

### ***Bitte, platzen Sie nicht!***

Referring to the text on the left, please write the German word on the line.

1 - ***Ich möchte*** (cry) weinen.

2 - ***Liebfraumilch ist ein deutscher*** (wine) Wein.

3 - ***Hier ist es sehr still; man hört das Gras*** (grow) wachsen.

4 - ***Hast du*** (wax) Wachs ***im Ohr?***

- 5 - *Er muss nach China* (travel) reisen.
- 6 - *Die Chinesen essen viel* (rice) Reis.
- 7 - *Darf ich hier* (sit) sitzen?
- 8 - *Ist der* (seat) sitzt *noch frei?*
- 9 - (Smoking) rauchen *verboten!*
- 10 - (Smoke) Rauch *von Zigaretten stinkt.*
- 11 - *Der Ballon wird bald* (pop) platzen.
- 12 - *Er hat einen guten* (place) Platz *in der Oper.*
- 13 - *Wir* (get) kriegen *unsere Post jeden Tag ausser Sonntag.*
- 14 - *Der Bürgerkrieg war der* (war) Krieg *zwischen den Nordstaaten und den Südstaaten.*

### ***Der Bleistift***

Please write the German words twice.

the pencil der Bleistift

mechanical pencil Drehbleistift

nowadays heutzutage

poisonous giftig

lead poisoning Bleivergiftung

pencil sharpener Bleistiftanspitzer

lead pouring Bleigießen

to seduce verführen

### ***Der deutsche Baum***

Please, name the German trees mentioned in the preceding article.

*die Tanne* or *der Tannenbaum*

*die Linde* or *der Lindenbaum*

*die Eiche*

*die Buche*

Please, translate into German:

1. Oh pine tree, oh pine tree! How faithful are your leaves! (oh = o in German). O

Tannenbaum, o Tannenbaum, wie treu sind deine Blätter.

2. Oaks you shall avoid, beeches you shall seek. Warning!!! Eichen sollst du weiche,

Buchen sollst du suchen. Warning!!!

3. book, letter, library: Buch, Buchstabe, Bücherei

4. Berlin has a famous avenue called **Unter Den Linde.**

5. Before you hear *den Donner*, you usually see den **Blitz**

### ***Der Führer***

Please, fill in the blanks by referring to the preceding text.

*So nimm denn meine Hände und führe mich.*

*Der Reiter führt sein Pferd ans Wasser.*

*Führe mich nicht in Versuchung.*

*Der Pastor verführte seine Assistentin.*

***Hitler war Deutschlands Führer von 1933 bis 1945.  
Wilhelm der Zweite war der letzte deutsche Kaiser.  
Ludwig der Zweite war König von Bayern.  
Theodor Heuß war der erste Präsident der Bundesrepublik.  
Konrad Adenauer war der erste Kanzler der Bundesrepublik.  
Ein Führer für Touristen ist ein Fremdenführer.***

### ***Der Kater***

Please write the German word on the line next to the English one. You may refer to the text on the left.

***Ich habe einen schrecklichen*** (hangover) Kater.  
***Du hast einen*** (male cat) Kater ***namens Hannibal***.  
***Er hat eine*** (cold) Erkältung.  
***Sie hat*** (allergies) Allergien.  
***Wir haben*** (tomato juice) Tomatensaft ***zum Frühstück***.  
***Ihr habt*** (a nice cool beer) ein kühles Bierchen ***zum Frühstück***.  
***Sie haben eine*** (great-granddaughter) Urenkelin ***namens Lorelei***.  
***Ein*** (rolled-up marinated herring filet) Rollmops, (fresh air) frische Luft ***und*** (two aspirins) zwei Aspirin ***sind wie Medizin gegen einen Kater***.

### ***Der Schieber***

Please translate the following phrases into German. The text on the previous page has all the terms needed.

I push my broken car. Ich schiebe mein kaputtes Auto  
Willie was a good barterer on the black market. Willie war ein guter Scheiber.  
Fritz took things easy while working for the city. Fritz schob eine ruhig Kugel.  
The slow waltz Der langsame Walzer.  
My uncle Hermann. Mein Onkel Hermann.  
With clothes touching. Mit Tuchföhlung.  
The broken car: if you love it, you push it. Das kaputte Auto: Wer's liebt, der schiebt.

### ***Adelig***

Please, find the proper person from this list and write his name on the line preceding the rest of the sentence. The answers are on the bottom of the page.

- a. Philip Herzog von Windsor ist der Ehemann von Queen Elizabeth II.***
- b. König Ludwig der Zweite von Bayern baute Schloss Neuschwanstein.***
- c. Kaiser Wilhelm der Zweite war der letzte deutsche Kaiser.***
- d. Manfred Freiherr von Richthofen ist in Amerika als "Red Baron" bekannt.***
- e. Prinz Albert von Sachsen-Coburg-Gotha heiratete 1840 seine Cousine Victoria, Königin von England.***
- f. Otto Fürst von Bismarck war Reichskanzler und Ministerpräsident von Preußen.***
- g. Felix Graf von Luckner, der "Seeteufel", kaperte im Ersten Weltkrieg viele feindliche Schiffe.***

***h Carl Maria von Weber. komponierte die romantische Oper "Freischütz".***

a/3 b/6 c/4 d/2 e/7 f/1 g/5 h/8

### ***Der Meister***

***Als Onkel Ewald vierzehn Jahre alt war, wurde er*** (apprentice)

***Lehrling bei Tischlermeister Meyer.***

***Als Onkel Ewald siebzehn Jahre alt war, wurde er*** (journeyman)

***geselle bei*** (master carpenter) ***Tischlermeister Klostermann.***

***Von 1940 bis 1951 war Onkel Ewald in Russland und Sibirien. 1957 wurde Onkel Ewald*** (master) ***Meister.***

***Er war auch in der*** (chamber of commerce) ***Industrie-und Handelskammer.***

***Als ich vierzehn Jahre alt war, machte Onkel Ewald einen Nähkasten*** (sewing box) ***für mich.***

***Onkel Ewalds Hobby war*** (soccer) ***Fußball. Er spielte links außen.***

### ***Es zieht!***

Please translate the following sentences into German. You may consult the text of the forgoing article.

There is a draft! Es zieht!

Siegfried drew his sword. Siegfried zog sein Schwert.

The dog pulls me out of the house. Der Hund zieht mich aus dem Haus.

Michael hauled the boat ashore. Michael hat sein Boot an Land gezogen.

I moved to Pflugerville. Ich bin nach Pflugerville gezogen.

We raise our children. Wir erziehen unsere Kinder.

If I take two away from six, I still have four Ween ich zwei von sechs abziehe, habe ich noch vier.

### ***Die spinnt!***

Although one has to be careful in whose presence one calls whom crazy, there are situations that just ask for such a comment.

The following English phrases are an attempt to translate the German phrases used in the preceding text. Try to match the German with the English.

She no longer has all cups in the cabinet. Sie hat nicht mehr alle Tassen im Schrank.

He is crazy. Der ist ja verrückt.

She has a bird. Die hat einen Vogel.

It peeps in him. Bei dem piept's ja.

He does no longer have them all. Der hat sie nicht mehr alle.

He has a screw loose. Bei dem ist eine schraube locker.

She is spinning. Die spinnt!

Now pick out two favorites and copy them again to help you memorize them. Die spinnt!

Der ist ja verrückt!

## Frederick the Gross

Referring to the text on the left, please fill in the blanks.

*Napoleon war nicht* groß.

*Peter der Große war* zar von Rußland.

*Der Wolf fraß die* Großmutter.

*In Idaho* waschen *große* Kartoffeln.

*Der Einzelhändler kauft vom* Großhändler.

*Der Großhändler verkauft an den* Einzelhändler.

*Köln ist eine* Großstadt.

*Der Kölner Dom ist in* Köln.

*Brasilien ist ein großes Land in* Südamerika.

*Unter Stalin war die* Sowjetunion *eine* Großmacht.

## Freund?

Here are some quotations about friends and friendships. At the bottom of the page, copy the two quotations you like best and try to memorize them.

Helga choose:

<i>Der Mensch hat nichts so eigen,</i>	Man has nothing more special,
<i>So wohl steht ihm nichts an,</i>	Nothing suits him better
<i>Als daß er Treu´ erzeigen</i>	Than showing loyalty
<i>Und Freundschaft halten kann.</i>	And keeping a friendship.
<i>Im Unglück erkennt man die Freunde.</i> In misfortune you recognize friends.	

## Der Kuckuck

The European common cuckoo lays her eggs in other birds' nests. I wonder if she ever checks on her chicks' wellbeing. Instead of worrying about the little cuckoos, let's concentrate on learning some German words. Please, look for the German translation of the listed words and phrases in the previous article. Write them down and say them out loud.

the cuckoo der Kuckuck

a migratory bird ein Zugvogel

stroll through the forest Waldspaziergang

children's songs Kinderlieder

bailiff Gerichtsbollzieher

extra- marital affair Seitensprung

cuckoo's egg Kuckucksei

cuckoo clock Kuckucksuhr

peek-a-boo Kuckuck

For extra credit: When and where was the first *Kuckucksuhr* built? 1837 in Schönwald

## Ich bin am lesen.

Please, copy the German translation of the following words or phrases from the preceding text. If there is a choice between two phrases, choose one of them. If you are the type of

person who finds it hard to make choices in certain situations (like I am), copy both versions.

The dog is barking. Der Hund bellt. Der Hund ist am bellen.

I am watching the news. Ich gucke die Nachrichten an. Ich bin die Nachrichten am angucken.

mid-wife. Hebamme

Be quiet! Sei still!

Mama is having a baby. Mama kriegt ein Kind. Mama ist ein Kind am kriegen.

the stupid dog. Der dumme Hund. Der blöde Köter.

cell-phone: Handy

The stupid dog is barking since 4 o'clock. . Der dumme Hund bellt seit vier Uhr. Der blöde Köter ist seit vier Uhr am Kläffen.

I am reading. Ich bin am lesen.

## Stroke

Find the German translation for the given English words in these syllables.

The German words can all be found in the preceding text.

stroke (in the brain): Schlaganfall

heart attack: Herzinfarkt

with a stroke of luck: mit viel Glück.

stroke of genius: genialer Einfall

flowers: Blumen

visits: Besuche

chocolate: Schokolade

tomato soup: Tomatensuppe

telephone calls: Telefonanrufe

## *Ich bin ja so selig.*

Please list a few things or situations that make you *selig*.

Try to do it in German. Use a dictionary if you want to.

Don't worry too much about correct grammar unless it makes you *selig* to have everything perfect. Helga's suggestions:

ein weich gekochtes Ei

ein gutes Beefsteak, gegrillt

Himbeeren mit Vanille eis

Umarmung von Enkelkindern

Landung nach einem langen Flug

## *In pikanter Soße*

The following printed list is made up of German words from the preceding article.

The letters are not in the original sequence. Please straighten them out.

KATPIN PIKANT

ZERGÜWE GEWÜRZE  
ESOß SOßE  
BINGRATHER BRATHERING  
MECKERFISCHEN FEINSCHMECKER  
EUBANERRATS SAUERBRATEN  
KRUGEN GURKEN  
RAUSE SAUER  
FARSCH SCHARF  
LEGGETINE EINGELEGT  
DIRE-MALAR LICHİ DREI-ALARM CHILI

### **Liebe Frau Helga**

Please, copy the German words and phrases printed in bold letters on the preceding page.  
Make sure you know what they mean.

Words from the 2nd paragraph: (sample: **Dirndl - Balkon** - ...) Dirndl, Lederhose,  
Balkon

Words from the 3rd paragraph: Nein Bier, Stein, Maß, der Deckel

Words from the 4th paragraph: Warum ist, deutscher Kartoffelsalat warm? Mayonnaise,  
Europa

Please, draw a lady in a **Dirndl** and a guy in **Lederhosen**.

### **Mein Verein**

What type of *Verein* or *Club* would you join?

Marianne loves to tango : Tanzclub

Willy fancies himself a good shooter: Schützenverein

Theodor itches to kick a ball around: Fußballverein

Mario thinks people love to hear him sing: Gesangverein

Boris loves a racket: Tennisclub

Hillary likes to climb: Bergsteigerverein

Bill knocks them all over: Kegelclub

Karl says all Texans are either cowboys or Indians: Wildwestverein

Hans and Hanna play ping and pong: Tischtennisverein

Jack of club is the best card in this club: Skatclub

Ted enjoys going downhill fast: Skiclub

Liz hikes over the hills and through the dales: Wanderverein

### **Nüchtern?**

Please translate the following sentences into German and write them on the lines  
provided:

The doctor gave me a prescription. Der Arzt gab mir ein Rezept.

They don't smell so good. Sie riechen nicht so gut.

Naked arms are not allowed in this church. Nackte Arme sind in dieser Kirche  
nicht erlaubt.

The prince collects old locks. Der Fürst sammelt alte Schloösser.

Darling, the blanket is dirty. Liebling, die Decke ist schmutzig.  
I am sober. Ich bin nüchtern.

### ***Nullen***

On the morning after my brother's 70th birthday party, my diary entries testified to my befuddled mind. Some words were hard to unscramble. Please, give it a try.  
You find the words spelled correctly in the preceding article. As you write them down, make a mental note of their meaning in English.

t a g g e b r u s t Geburtstag  
z i g s b e s t i e siebzigste  
e i f e r Feier  
f r i s c h l e i c h t a l e i n d u n g schriftliche Einladung  
k a e f f e Kaffee  
k n e u c h Kuchen  
s p a n s c h Schnaps  
i b e r Bier  
r i o s e n n e Senioren  
w u n g a r n Warnung  
l a c k e w i g wackelig  
s c h i t t i n n e s Tischtennis  
l u n n e l nullen  
n i e n e e u s e b a n g einen ausgeben  
b e t ü f f Büffet

### ***Das Reißverschlussystem***

Please translate the following English phrases into German using the text on the left as reference.

in June and July im Juni and Juli  
good memories gute Erinnerungen  
my trip through Germany meine Reise durch Deutschland  
friendly people freundliche Menschen  
my suitcases meine Koffer  
the German flag die deutsche Fahne  
black, red, gold schwarz, rot, gold  
the Turks die Türken  
tolerance Toleranz  
my hosts meine Gastgeber  
a good guest ein guter Gast  
not my fault nicht mine Schuld  
zipper Reißverschluss

### ***Wohnkultur***

Please translate the words in parenthesis into German.

***Frau Wagner*** (resides) wohnt ***in Bremen***.



*Sie wohnt in einer kleinen* (apartment) Wohnung.

*Ihre Wohnung hat viele* (windows) Fenster.

*Frau Wagner liebt* (flowers). *Blumen*.

*Sie hat* (potted plants) Topfblument *auf der großen* (window sill) Fensterbank *im Wohnzimmer*.

*In den Blumenkästen wachsen* (geraniums) Geranien.

*In Frau Wagners* (front yard) Vorgarten *steht ein* (cactus) Kaktus. *Er ist krank*.

*Im Garten wachsen rote und gelbe* (roses) Rosen.

*Der* (jasmin) Jasmin *duftet sehr gut*.

Name two of Mrs. Wagner's plants that do well in Texas: Rosen, Kaktus

### Angst

Write the correct German word on the line next to the English word or phrase that comes close to a translation.

lightning *Blitz*

enjoying other people's misfortune *Schadenfreude*

an educational place for young children *Kindergarten*

substitute *Ersatz*

sausage for grilling or frying *Bratwurst*

all the world's misery *Weltschmerz*

the spirit of the times *Zeitgeist*

folk's wagon with initials V and W *Volkswagen*

yearning to physically go somewhere *Wanderlust*

space to live in and to expand in *Lebensraum*

### Gesundheit

Please, write down six types of exercise (in German, of course): Tennis, Schwimmen, Golf, Radfahren, Wandern, Gymnastic.

Write down four kinds of trouble caused by too much exercise: Herzinfarkt, Tennis- Ellbogen, kaputte Kniee, kaputte Hüften.

Write down four organic food items: Bio-Äpfel, Bio-Dill, Bio-Hähnchen, Bio-Wein

### Dichter und Denker

Germany is "*das Land der Dichter und Denker*". Can you match the *Dichter or Denker* with one of their works? The answers are at the bottom of the page

a *Johann Wolfgang von Goethe* *Faust* (1749 – 1832)

b *Friedrich von Schiller* *Die Räuber* (1759 – 1805)

c *Immanuel Kant* *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (1724 – 1804)

d *Hermann Hesse* *Das Glasperlenspiel* (1877 – 1962)

e *Wilhelm Busch* *Max und Moritz* (1832 – 1908)

f *Friedrich Nietzsche* *Also sprach Zarathustra* (1844 – 1900)

g *Bertolt Brecht* *Die Dreigroschenoper* (1889 – 1956)

h *Günter Grass* *Die Blechtrommel* (1927 -

## Back Cover



Helga's Corner, the complete collection, is a bundle of short articles about the German language and culture published over the years in the Schulhaus Reporter and Journal editions of the German-Texan Heritage Society. They all have a tongue-in-check quality and a humorous twist.

While some articles are Helga's irreverent reflections on certain aspects of German life, other are actually short lessons with multiple choice questions to answer.

To fill in some of the white spaces, you will find a German proverb and its English equivalent, not always a literal translation. Other white spaces are filled with 'Words of Wisdom'.

Most of these articles were originally published in Helga's three original books: "Helga's Corner", "German and German", and "More of Helga's Corner". Other articles have never been published in book form.