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DENI SCANLON, Youth Editor

BHS Youth in Germany Writes of Experiences

(Editor's note: Martin Weinrich, son of Mr. and Mrs. A. S. Weinrich of Vora, Iowa, and a senior from Birmingham high school, is an American Field Service foreign exchange student in Germany this year. The following story is a condensation of a letter from him written to Birmingham school friends.)

By MARTIN WEINRICH

A few days after my last big letter, my AFS parents returned from their vacation, and I moved to where I now am, with the Reichelt family in Lohausen, a suburb in the north of Dusseldorf. My family here consists of my parents, Dr. and Frau Reichelt, and Hanna, Tilmann, and Wolfgang.

Dr. Reichelt is more or less an accountant for various business firms, but I can't describe his occupation exactly, because there isn't a good English word for it, and the word "accountant" isn't much more accurate than the others.

BOTH parents come originally from Berlin, which is a big help, as it means we all speak High German in the house, just as everybody does in the school, instead of the Rhine dialect, which is practically unintelligible.

Hanna, 19, is the eldest of the children. She has spent a year as an AFSer in Rochester, New York, and can speak English better than I can (at least it seems that way, but we don't speak English together very often). Hanna plays piano quite well.

TILMAN is 17, almost 18, and Wolfgang is 16; so I'm right between the two in age. In school, I'm most interested in Physics and Math. Outside of school, he's interested in electronics and radio astronomy, and I'd like to do Wolfgang's extra-curricular interests

center around chemistry and the dancing class we attend together on Monday nights.

THIS doesn't take into account the most important "extra-curricular activity" of all, however. Never in my life have I been to more concerts, operas, movies, and, in general, been exposed to more culture, than here in Dusseldorf. In six weeks I've been to one museum, two concerts, two plays, four movies (The Bridge on the River Kwai, The German, of course, was one of them), and two operas. When you figure in trips, meetings, and above all school, that makes me pretty busy.

AS FOR the German school system, there's a real problem facing me. Where on earth do you start?

The impression I'd received in the States was that every German child, after he'd reached the age of six or so, had to take a "Trennungstest" (separation test), and that if he managed to struggle through, he would spend ten or fifteen years in utter misery working like a dog to pass a fantastic number of fantastically difficult courses, so that he could study at a university.

If he didn't pass—then he was irretrievably doomed to spend the rest of his life sweeping streets. This, of course, was utterly false.

WHAT are German schools like then? Every German child attends a Volksschule (elementary school) for four years, at the end of which he takes a qualifying test to enter the Gymnasium. If he does not succeed the first time he takes the test, he may try twice more, although it is not required. If he does not go to the Gymnasium, then he spends four more years at the Volksschule and, usually, several more years in a trade school.

THE school year starts at Easter and summer vacation lasts about a month. School is held, of course, six days a week, but doesn't last the whole day as in the United States but, for example, only from 8:15 to 1:20.

EACH "class" is assigned a "Stammklassenstimmer" (home room), and the individual students come to the class in that room, instead of the other way around, as in the States. The only exception to this general rule are foreign language classes and natural science classes. I have not seen any students wearing a school uniform.

THE students at the Gymnasium definitely do not dress sloppily, but by Birmingham High standards, they dress very informally. In summer, shorts—especially Lederhosen—are very popular. Open, brown leather sandals are often universal—almost—and in warm weather are often worn without socks.

But loud shirts, polished cotton slacks, and white bucks are definitely out. Bluejeans are very popular, and not at all disapproved of by the teachers. Therefore, the tendency is to show up in school wearing blue jeans or slacks, but nothing inbetween. You go to one extreme or the other, so to speak.

GERMAN children, as a rule, are much louder and wilder among themselves than American children. This carries over well into the upper classes—sometimes as high as Obersekunda (12 years old). This difference is very pronounced. I believe, and Hanna agrees, that it's the result of separation of the sexes. So co-education has very definite advantages—even from the teacher's point of view.

THE Germans have an amusing name for what in America are called "hoods"—they call them—"die Halberstarken," "the half-strong ones." You hear it about them, but you hardly ever see them. Perhaps one reason is the German family—in Germany it is a stronger unit of society, and the parents have a much bigger say in their child's activities, both in and outside of school, than in America. Perhaps another reason is the German school system, since there is less of the drive to "be a social success," since boys and girls attend separate schools, and since there's not so much pressure to "grow up in a hurry."

OUTSIDE of these differences, pupil-teacher relations are nearly identical in the two countries. There are good teachers and bad

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"Everyday Biology, Adventures in Modern Lit, Chemistry and You, Using Latin, New Plane Geometry, Frontiers of Astronomy, Modern Physics . . . where is my lunch?" Shirley Smith, BHS senior, hunts for her possessions amid the pounds of books scattered on tables in front of the cafeteria. It's a custom for students to leave all books out of the lunchroom during the noon hour. Usually, they have no trouble locating their things.

ones, both in Germany and in the United States; there are noisy classes and quiet ones; there are teachers disliked and teachers highly respected. German classes are on the average about as orderly as American classes.

Most of the time things go pretty smoothly, but I've been in class in both Germany and in America where paper gliders go flying all over the place, and where the teacher looked as if he'd like to do something but couldn't decide what.

THE pupils themselves would be quite normal Americans, if they lived in America. They definitely know much more out-and-out science, or language, or what not than their American equivalent. But, I was surprised, and a little bit disappointed, to find that they were not correspondingly more original thinkers than their American counterparts.

I suppose I'd expected them all to be intellectually the equivalent of the average college graduate, and when they weren't, it came as something of a surprise.

FOR the first time in my entire

CYO Plans Dance For Teenagers At St. Michael's

SOUTHFIELD — "The Autumn Hop," a stag and drag teen-age dance, sponsored by the South Oakland District Catholic Youth Organization (CYO), will be held Nov. 29 at St. Michael's social hall, Code and Ten Mile roads.

The "casual" dance is scheduled from 8:30-11:30 p.m.

ROBIN Seymour, Detroit-area disc jockey (WKEM Radio), will be host for the evening. The CYO's South Oakland district is St. Hugo of the Hills, Our Lady of the Lakes, Guardian Angel, St. Michael's, Our Lady Queen of Martyrs and St. Bede's.

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