

Student Finds Berlin Bears Host of Conflicts

Editor's Note:

The following excerpt is from a letter written to her family, the Herbert Lugers of 17861 Beechwood, Beverly Hills, by Jean Ann Lugers, an American Field Service exchange student who is spending a year in Hunsdorf, Germany. Hunsdorf is a town of 25,000 population located on the North Sea near the Danish border. There she lives with a German family, the Eilrichs. The trip to Berlin was arranged for Jean Ann and another exchange student, Kirsten Grimsrud from Wisconsin by the AFS. Miss Lugers was graduated from Groves last June. She left last August under the new full year AFS scholarship and will return this coming August in time to take up her studies at the University of Michigan.

I HAD a wonderful time in Berlin—it's a beautiful and ugly city—both together. . . . We just gaped at the beautiful clothes in the windows—I've never seen such beautiful things—it's really a fashion city. . . . The next morning we took a bus ride to tour the city, which would have been great except for the fog. When we saw Brandenburg Gate no one could tell it was there—oh, well. One thing we couldn't miss—the wall "die Mauer". We saw it and drove along it and stopped at "interest spots" . . . and also visited a section where the people have a lead window and a picture exhibition of the horror that has gone on. . . . you could go right up to the wall and still not believe that men could do something so indescribably wretched.

WE SAW people looking over and crying—everywhere there were wreaths and flower bouquets stuck into the wall for those who are "dead" to West Berliners—also there were big wooden crosses with piles of flowers for those who had really died trying to escape. Even where the wall is blocks of concrete hastily put together with dripping cement with coils and piles of barbed wire thrown around the top and broken stones and glass and metal in a layer along the top.

THERE IS also a "dead man's area" along it on the east side. (That's supposed to keep the West out.) What a lie—it looks a little more like keeping the East in! Then, painted words on the west side like: "We will never forget your murder" "in your name" "Think on Eichman" etc. Tragic. But, then, like Kirsten said, she can't see why the W. Berliners make a business from the wall. She said she saw so many post cards with pictures of dead people, the crosses at the wall, and so—how terrible of our W. Berliners. . . . Anyway, the sight of the wall plus the movies we saw about it, really sickened me.

TO GO ON, that afternoon we heard a speech over the situation but I couldn't understand (too much political vocabulary) and besides it was too long. The next morning we heard another speech which wasn't quite so bad because we saw some good movies with it. The first night we also went to the theater and saw "My Patrie" in German. They used the Plattdeutsch or street German for Elin's cockney accent and it was. . . . so funny. . . . Then the next night we went to the Opera—my first opera. It was in. . . . one of the finest modern theaters I've seen. . . . The sets were just gorgeous—costumes, too.

AS FOR the opera itself, well, don't know. Sometimes it was beautiful and, there's no doubt, it was well-sung but you know opera. Thursday morning we went to the Dahlem Museum where we saw. . . . paintings by Corregio, Van Eyck, Titian, Rubens, and Michelangelo. At about 12:15 an AFS returnee (West German but studying in Berlin) and her brother picked us

up with their VW (just Kirsten and me) and we took off for a trip. . . . to East Berlin. . . .

AS YOU know, Berlin residents and students cannot go through but these two, being West Germans, just sort of forgot to bring their Berlin student cards with them so all was AOK. Another rule is that West Germans and foreigners cannot go through the same checkpoint by car so the brother drove through alone and met us later.

We three took the U-Bahn or underground subway. These subways run in a network under the city and most of them have been cut in half by the wall. The one we rode on goes straight through a sector of East Berlin, but it only stops once before coming out again into West. All the other stations are closed and dark and look like morgues. . . .

WE WERE the only ones who got off in the Communist territory—again it was quiet and unreal. We went through the authorities with no problem. . . . And all met again on the surface and in another world. West Berlin is a city not without ugliness—despite the abundance of beautiful new buildings (theaters, university, government buildings, churches, and apartment houses are fantastic) there are still many ugly reminders of the war—bombed buildings, huge rubble piles, empty treeless sectors filled with junk, huge churches and train depots only half standing. But this situation takes time to repair.

HOWEVER, in East Berlin it looks like war was just one day—everything looks so dead and old and "rubbly". . . . We drove along Stalin Allee—the main street cut in half by the wall at Brandenburg Gate (now it's renamed Karl Marx Allee). The buildings there are really odd—Moscow style. They were built for the most part between 1954 and 1956 but already the facings are falling off and they look odd. We went to Check Point Charlie and also saw Brandenburg Gate from the East side. . . .

WE ALSO stopped to look in store windows. The meat stores are virtually empty—only a few small pieces of the cured meats and five sausages hanging from the ceiling racks. In West Berlin (and Hunsdorf that matter) there are rows and rows of sausages and smoked meats hanging on the racks. Then we saw the prices on canned goods like meat—some can over seven marks (almost \$2). The fresh fruits, meats, and vegetables are all reasonably priced, but it's the fact that there is no choice or quantity that makes it so horrible.

WE DROVE to the Soviet Monument for war heroes and read the inscriptions honoring those who fought and conquered Hitler's tyrants—(rather ironic, huh?) This thing was really quite a monstrosity, but then they have quite different artistic tastes in sculpture and architecture. All over on all the buildings in the city there were Red signs proclaiming the GDR (German Democratic Republic) to be the first German peace state and praising the Communist regime. I guess the leaders feel the people need a little convincing. . . .

BUT THEN as you know, East Berlin is also used as a showcase for the West to see how well the GDR lives—so naturally there are good things too: a new theater (nice, but no comparison to West Berlin), and some new apartment buildings. I can say I tried to be open-minded about the thing, but I could still find no common ground between Berlin's two halves. . . .

We went to the old museum where they have the beautiful displays of Roman, Greek, and other ancient art and architecture. It was one of the most fabulous museums I've ever seen. . . .

BUT ALL this museum and the many other buildings, theaters, churches, etc. that ones made up a great part of Berlin's (and all Germany's—and all Europe's) cultural activity is now lost to the Western World. No more can we drive through Brandenburg along the busy avenue that was once pre-war Berlin's main artery of life. That sounds a little sentimental, but when you've been in a city so alive, so excitingly vibrant as West Berlin and suddenly come to a dead stop at a wall and taken a glimpse into the world on the other side, but realized you can never really cross that barrier, then you know. Then you can realize that all the wall is made not only of bricked up windows and iron barred doors and concrete and cement and glass and barbed wire. Then you see: it's a wall built of morbid cruelty in the hearts of men. . . .

WE RETURNED to West Berlin by U-Bahn with no difficulty. . . . The strip light shown in the dark as we pulled away to the take-off strip. The sky was turning pink-orange, blue on the east side, but the city was still dark. All of a sudden we were on the strip and in position and then the engines roared up and we were speeding faster and faster down

lights winking, tilting at queer angles beneath us. I WAS sitting just ahead of the wing and I had a perfect view. Behind us the sky was now all rosy with the new sun above, the pale blue sky still held a few stars and below, the beautiful city of Berlin lay quiet in the peace of early dawn. You could never guess from something so beautiful that there could ever be such ugliness beneath—but that was Berlin. I guess that was a suitable way to end my visit.

Richard J. Wilson of 19669 Riverside Drive, Birmingham, has been named by Gov. Romney to the State Board of Pharmacy for a term expiring in 1967. Wilson is president and general manager of the Wilson Drug Co., a Birmingham institution founded by his father 40 years ago, with a branch in Bloomfield Hills. He is a past chairman of the Michigan State Pharmaceutical Association's executive committee.

Wilson is a member of the board of directors of Birmingham Savings and Loan; a past president of the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce; and 1956 recipient of the Jaycee Distinguished Service Award. The Birmingham Eccentric Classified pages offer you a fine opportunity to sell your unwanted household goods.

February 7, 1963 THE BIRMINGHAM (MICH.) ECCENTRIC 5-CC
Rochester Church Sees Hawaii Films
University Presbyterian Church of Rochester will observe its fifth anniversary Sunday, with Hawaii night at Meadowbrook Elementary School beginning at 6:30 p.m. Nat Reiss of Birmingham will show a color film on Hawaii. Reiss, who was a professional cameraman with 20th-Century Fox, owns a sound systems store and records his annual vacations in film and sound. Everybody's heart is open, you know, when they have recently escaped from severe pain, or are recovering the blessing of health. —Jane Austen If a good face is a letter of recommendation, a good heart is a letter of credit. —Edward George Bulwer-Lytton



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New Manager
New president of the Michigan Press Association is John H. Baldwin, business manager of the Traverse City Record Eagle and publisher of the Manistee News-Avocate. Elected at the 95th annual meeting of MPA, Jan. 25-26, at Kellogg Center, Baldwin succeeds James M. Tazewell, publisher of the Alma Record.