

Christmas 1991

Dearest Friends,

Once again the Christmas season is upon us. Christmas in Germany brings with it all sorts of new things to cope with. We've been so busy trying to get family gifts ready to mail from Germany that we sort of forgot that Christmas cards need to be mailed early, too. We were told that packages had to be mailed from here by the 2nd of December if we wanted to be sure that they would arrive at their destination in time for Christmas. We were *mostly* successful. This card is probably arriving after the holidays, but the thought was there!



The Vogt family is doing well. Nineteen-ninety-one was a year of intense decision and change for us. Aside for an occasional "down" day, we're enjoying our stay in Germany and look forward to travelling and seeing as much of Europe as possible. Even in our short few months here, we've managed to travel through the Black Forest, to München, Rothenburg, and many castles. On business, I've travelled to Belgium and the Netherlands (Holland), and will probably return to Naples Italy before too long. Our opportunities are really what we make of them. We just have to keep striving.

Our home in Germany is starting to really feel like *our* home. It took a while for the boxes to be emptied and for everything to be arranged, but we're pretty much settled now. One thing we are sorry we didn't make more of an effort to pack was more of our family Christmas decorations. We figured that we would be able to add to our collection of Christmas decorations with stuff from Europe, but the stuff over here is not much different from what we're all used to in the States, and the prices are no bargain. It also turns out that we miss the familiar decorations we have grown up with. We brought a select few of the Christmas tree ornaments (mostly the kids' ornaments they have collected these past eleven years or so), but not nearly enough of them. Oh, well! Live and learn.

We were surprised to find out that our van is less of a "sore thumb" on the roads over here than we thought it would be. On top of all the U.S. vans brought over by military folks, Chrysler has recently begun selling American cars over here. There's a dealer in Stuttgart, and one can buy a German "Chrysler Voyager" over here that looks exactly the same as our van, except for the size of the license plate, and the speedometer goes a lot higher! The Germans love mini-vans as

much as the Americans do!

We had our first overnight family guest for the weekend after Thanksgiving (our first family guest was Jim Foley, husband of Gene's sister Betty, who swooped through Stuttgart on a business trip back in October while we were still staying in a hotel). Maureen Foley, Betty and Jim's daughter, has been studying in England for a semester, so she came to visit us for Thanksgiving. We picked her up at the München Airport on Friday, the 29th, and drove back to Stuttgart. Our first stop was at a wonderful restaurant we found while we were living in a hotel, called the WaldSchatten (literally, The Shady Woods), but we all know it as "Vera's place." We ate family-style, which meant we were all in pain when we were through. Vera takes care of her friends.

Saturday we cooked a turkey with all the fixin's, and while it was cooking, we took off for downtown Stuttgart. Stuttgart is in the middle of a "Weinachtsmarkt" festival. Down in the center of town, off the "Schloßplatz," hundreds of vendors have set up booths selling Christmas things and festive food and drink. "Weinachts" means Christmas, so the "Christmas Market" is in full swing right through December 24th. The five of us went elbow to elbow with billions of other people. We had the traditional hot spiced wine, called "GlüheWein," and bratwurst mit brot, and we generally had a fine time in spite of the hordes.

After that, we headed home to Möhringen for a traditional Thanksgiving feast with all the trimmings. We had to back off on the size of the turkey, though, because the German ovens over here are so small!

Our Christmas will be quiet on the day itself. We will exchange gifts, and open our stateside packages, and probably get together with folks we know here for a meal. Having Christmas smack dab in the middle of the week makes it difficult to go anywhere without taking more vacation days that we would like to, but that's okay, because four days after Christmas, Lynn's mom comes to visit for two weeks! We are all looking forward to that visit a lot! We'll take the week of New Year's and travel around the area. The kids want to show her the Black Forest, because they loved that trip we took so much. All in all, it will be a lot of fun and we're pretty excited about it all.

The children are both doing well. Megan is eleven now, and in the sixth grade at the ISS (International School of Stuttgart). She really loves school, and is doing quite well in her classes. The school itself is small, so she is not "lost in the crowd" like she might have been at a big middle school. She loves her teacher, and her class has only eight students in it, so its more like a family than a school. She still reads about twelve books a day (if we let her), and is enjoying being a foreigner in a foreign country.

In her own words:

As Dad said, I really love school and I've made lots of new friends.

When I first came to the ISS there were five girls other than me in the class. One of them moved back to the States recently, and I miss her very much. The others are really nice people to be with.

My two best friends are an Australian girl named Zissa, and an American girl named Chelsea. Another girl is from England and her name is Sarah. There are four boys in my class; Dean, Bert, Matt, and Ian.

Dean is from Israel, and the rest are from America, I think. My teacher's name is Mrs. Ekmann-Bower, and she is a very good teacher.

All the kids in my class are really good friends to be with. The thing I really like about Germany is the architecture, which is really beautiful. It reminds me a lot of the Roman columns that we studied in Gateway Class back in Woburn. Something I really hate about Germany is that I can barely speak German and I feel really "cut-off" when Germans speak to me and I can't understand a word they're saying. I'm really looking forward to going to Lego-Land in the summer (Editorial Comment: We never promised, we just said "We'll See."), and learning to ski in the Alps (Editorial Comment: The health insurance is paid up). I'm also looking forward to when my grandmother comes and we can go back to the Black Forest. Bye for now! Love, Megan.

Audrey is nine, and is in the fourth grade at the ISS. She is also doing well in school, and likes it almost as much as Megan. Audrey had the misfortune of two calamities since she has been here. In October she missed two weeks of school with a bad case of strep throat that bordered on Scarlet Fever it was so bad. She was taken to the hospital (while Gene was off on a business trip, which made matters worse), but did not have to stay overnight. While she was out sick, though, her teacher, whom she loved dearly, had to leave and go home to England permanently. She has a new teacher now, and she loves her too, but it has been an adjustment losing a teacher in mid-year.

She is now back on an even keel.

In her own words:

Hi! Germany is great. It's a bit cold right now and there's a lot of heavy, heavy frost. Some mornings it can be slippery. Our house is small but it has four levels, and I feel at home here. School is great. I've made a lot of friends. Some of them can be kind of bossy and some of them are really great friends. There's only four of them, because that is all the girls in the class. One is from Colorado, and her name is Ashley. Another one is from Australia, and her name is Amy. Another one is from Finland, and her name is Meri. The last one is from here in Germany, and her name is Dotti.

One boy is Dustin, and he can be a brat. The other boys I don't want to talk about. I really like the castles in Germany, and the country is pretty. I don't like the fact that we don't get much snow here in Stuttgart, and the yards are very small. I hope to get to visit more castles real soon, and maybe go to the Alps. Bye for this year. Love, Audrey.

Lynn is well. She has set up her workshop and has been making dried

flower arrangements, just like back in the States, for a few weeks now. She enjoys it a lot, and is also so very good at it. She could probably make some serious dough at it, but it takes all the fun out of it when you have to make 250 of them all alike. That's a great way to wreck a hobby real quick.

She's also been on the forefront of our immersion into life in Möhringen. She shops at the local markets, and spends time at the school (this week she spent one whole day making gingerbread houses with the 4th grade), and generally keeps us all sane. I've got my office work to keep me in touch, and the kids have school, but Lynn is pretty much on her own for the day, and I don't know how she does it some days. It's not easy.

Lynn and I are still taking German lessons. We've made it up to "German II," but I think that's due as much to longevity as to skill. We're getting there, but its slow. This is not going to be a "Speak Like A Native In Six Weeks" kind of thing. I suspect we will be learning right up until the last day here. I just want to be able to read instructions and understand the mail I get from time to time ("Sehr geehrter Herr Vogt, beigefügt erhalten Sie Ihre ADAC-Clubkarte. Bitte unterschreiben Sie die Karte auf der Rückseite. Die Clubkarte is drei Jahre gültig, wenn der Mitgliedsbeitrag jedes Jahr bezahlt wird...."). I'll send a translation after we finish German XXII.

Work is going well. I'll be coming up on five years with MITRE in August of this year. Seems like only yesterday I was leaving teaching to start work with this little company called Betac. It is a small world, though. Betac has an outpost here in Stuttgart, and the guy manning it is a friend from the Colorado Springs office. Also, the Associate Department Head here at MITRE-Stuttgart was at Betac in the Burlington office when I was there. Folks in our line of work never get too far apart.

Working for MITRE here in Europe is very different than working for MITRE back in the corporate headquarters in Bedford MA. The biggest difference is that, with only 14 people in the office, there is no place to hide when the inevitable crisis strikes. We all have to pitch in and get the work done. We (MITRE) work in a technical advisory role for the U.S. Armed Forces European Command (EUCOM) on many of their intelligence-related projects. With the current state of transition of U.S. Forces in Europe, there is a lot of technical advice needed, even though the number of troops is decreasing. The good news is that we have more work than people for the foreseeable future, so we will all be gainfully employed for a while. The bad news is that we have more work than people for the foreseeable future, so we all have to do extra for a while. I'm working as technical liaison from EUCOM to NATO on two fronts (Allied Forces Central Command - AFCENT - in Brunssum, The Netherlands; and Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe - SHAPE - in Mons, Belgium), and with a DARPA program as technical liaison in Europe. The work is challenging and it is broadening my experience and horizons, and the people in the office

are a great bunch of people to work with. Everyone has been great with this new arrival and all his dumb questions.

That's all from here. We hope you all have a wonderful year, and may peace and prosperity be yours for 1992. Don't forget that you all have a bed waiting for you in Germany when you come to visit. We have a guest bedroom all set up and waiting for visitors, and the queen-size fold-out couch is in the family room. We even have two nice German cots waiting for visitors, so we have beds for six extra overnight guests, and a seventh could sleep on the couch in the living room if needed. And that doesn't even count the sleeping bags we brought! Come visit us! We're waiting!

Nine years left in the century, folks!

Love,
Lynn, Gene, Megan, and Audrey

P.S. Just as a reminder, you can send mail to us through the regular old US post office. It costs 29 cents per letter, just as if we were in the US of A. The address is (note, this is a bit different from the first posting of the address):

Lynn & Gene Vogt
HQ USEUCOM
Unit 30400, Box 746
APO AE 09128

If you feel the need to send a letter air mail, the german address is:

Herr und Fraü Vogt
Balingenstraße 9
7000 Stuttgart 80 (Möhringen)
Deutschland (Germany)

And last but not least, if you want to REALLY burn money fast, you can call us by dialing the following clump of numbers:

011-49-711-717-0663

011 gets the international connection, 49 gets Germany, 711 is the area code for Stuttgart, and 717-0663 is our number! Don't forget we're six hours ahead, so don't call at night (9:00 PM Eastern Time is 3:00 AM our time!).

Love,
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