

December, 2009
Editor: Ann Kimmel

*Merry
Christmas!*



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The Sister Cities Scoop

Lichtenfels

Vandalia

Prestwick



A Personal History of the Berlin Wall

REMEMBER WHEN.....

There was a WALL IN BERLIN, and a MINE-FIELD FENCE around the Eastern 1/3 of Germany? That was the part of Germany that was given the ludicrous name of German Democratic Republic or GDR by the Soviets. Of course, it was anything BUT Democratic.

Well, lest we forget.....it has now been 20 years since the WALL was cracked open and came tumbling down, the FENCE around the so-called GDR was abandoned, and the struggle to reunify Germany after 40 years of forced separation began.

Susie and I happened to be in Berlin in July, 1961, only a month before the world awoke to find the Soviets had, overnight, walled off their sector of the city.

We spent nearly a week that year in Berlin and got to know the city pretty well. There were still a few ruins from the war left in West Berlin, which was by then already a thriving metropolis surrounded by the dismal reaches of East Germany. East Berlin was still pretty much rubble, except for the one street they allowed tour buses to drive down which was lined with Hollywood-style store fronts that were supposed to fool the tourists! You could travel easily between East & West Berlin that July, but you could also really feel the tension along the border. We rode the S-Bahn from our Youth Hostel (yeah, we qualified then to stay in youth hostels!) which ran parallel to the border, with alternate stops on either side. There were VOPO's (East German border guards) on the trains with AK-47's trying to intimidate any East Berliners from getting on the train. We sensed that we were in the midst of a powder keg, but had no idea that the WALL would go up in less than a month, and seal these people off from the world for a generation.

Much later, after the LICHTENFELS / VANDALIA Sister City Partnership came to be, many of us visited LICHTENFELS between 1977 and 1989 when the infamous BORDER with its barbed wire, mine strip, and watch towers were only 15 km away from our beloved Sister City. On each VISIT the Lichtenfels Committee arranged for a tour of the "Border". One year I remember in particular, BILL SHANER was our President, and he brazenly walked up to the FENCE in

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Check out Vandalia Sister Cities online at www.Vandaliasistercities.org

Second Annual Vandalia Christmas Tree Lighting

The Christmas Tree lighting will take place at the Vandalia Rec Center on Friday, December 4 at 6:00 p.m. Entertainment provided by the Vandalia-Butler Schools with a special appearance by Santa Claus. The tree will be lit by special guest George Viars. The event will be emcee'd by the city's Communication Manager Rich Hopkins.

Mr. Viars is asking all attendees to bring a canned good to help stock the Vandalia Food Pantry.

Gemütlichkeit 2010

There are host and co-host openings on the 2010 Gemütlichkeit signup for February and November. Please call Ellen at 667-6558 or sign up at the December Christmas party if you are interested in hosting a Gemütlichkeit.

Christmas Celebration

Don't forget to RSVP by December 2 for the Christmas Party which is being held on December 9. Appetizers will be served at 6:15 with dinner at 7:00. It will be held at F & S Motorcycles party room, 7220 N. Dixie Drive. The price is \$15.00 per person which includes appetizers, meal, dessert, drinks and entertainment. The dinner will consist of salad, Italian lasagna or beef stroganoff, green beans with ham, rolls with butter and assorted desserts. Please RSVP to Sandy Hibner at whibner@woh.rr.com or 890-4078 with your entrée choice.

Membership

REMINDER: It is time to renew memberships for 2009. For your convenience, you can pay at the December party or mail the dues to Thea Chiles, 1037 Marcellus Dr., Vandalia OH 45377. Dues are \$20 for families (children under 18) or \$10 for single memberships. Thanks, Thea

New Members

Please welcome the following new members to Sister Cities:

Bret & Marge Flinn, 1022 Mystic Ln, Vandalia, 937-260-7196, mflinn45@gmail.com.
Jodi Tinney, 1151 Bailey, Vandalia, 614-917-8041, joditinney@hotmail.com
Stacy Pacifico, 1034 VanArden Dr., Vandalia, 937-657-0135, pacifico@hotmail.com

November Officer & Board Member Elections

The following members were elected at the November general meeting:

President: Harvey Kimmel
Vice President: Lizz Kunz
Secretary: Ellen Hazel
Treasurer: Julia Ware
Board Members: Anna Mae Daum
Tracy Schaffner

Congratulations to all!

Food Pantry Running Low

The local Food Pantry is running low on food. We are asking everyone to bring at least two items to the Christmas Party for this worthwhile cause. The items must be non-perishable and please make sure that the expiration date has not expired.

Social News

The next social trip is in the planning stages. The plan is to have lunch at the Hofbrauhaus in Newport, KY, followed by a visit to the National Underground Railroad Freedom center in Cincinnati. We will then go to Aglamesis Brothers ice cream and candy parlor. This will probably be scheduled for a Saturday sometime in 2010. If you are interested, please let me know what dates are good or bad for you. Also, new ideas are needed. Let me know places you would like to visit or activities that would be of interest. Contact Rick Schieltz at raschieltz@aol.com or at the next Sister Cities meeting.

Peace thru People

Berlin Wall (Continued from page 1)

full view of the armed VOPO's in the tower, and placed a big blue and white (Bavarian Colors of course) BALLOON BUTTERFLY on top of the fence and waved to the guards who were looking at us with their binoculars.

On another VISIT, HERR LAATZ took us by bus into BERLIN where we could view the WALL up close and personal. We saw memorials to the many people who were shot to death trying to get over the WALL near the Reichstag.

In 1989, I happened to be our President when we went to LICHTENFELS for the VISIT in June. All spring, there had been reports coming out from behind the IRON CURTAIN about East Germans escaping through Czechoslovakia into Hungary, and on across the weakly fortified border between Hungary and Austria. I made a speech that June in the SCHUTZENHAUS in LICHTENFELS and noted that "There are now cracks showing in the wall, and before very long, the WALL will come tumbling down and Freedom will flood in." I got huge applause and many tears from the LICHTENFELSERS that day, but they thought it might not happen in their lifetimes. Well.....only FIVE months later it happened!!!! WOW! The euphoria of that night will live forever in the hearts of all who can remember it.

It has been a tough slog to reunify Germany since that glorious day. "There are still one out of eight Germans in both East and West who say reunification was a mistake! People in the West have had to pay high taxes to fund services and infrastructure in the East, and people in the East, even today, only earn on average, 70 percent of Western incomes." (quoted from Heike Göbel of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*). "Still, seven out of eight are solidly committed to being one German Nation. Despite these differences, German unity is a reality, even if, as in a garden there will always be more work to be done to keep it going." (quoted from Richard Schröder of *Das Tagesspiegel*). Brigitte Fehrle of the *Berliner Zeitung*, says, "Soon enough differences between East & West will fade away. An entire generation has grown up that never experienced either East or West Germany. They may have an entirely different take on how we handled reunification, and what mistakes we made going about it. The youth will judge us. Let's hope their verdict is kind!"

So for us in VANDALIA, let's take a moment to remember and continue to give our love and friendship to our brothers & sisters in LICHTENFELS, and let them know we are proud of them for a job well done.

Wayne

Save the Dates

Here are several important dates for you to note on your calendars:

Board Meeting:

December 2 at 7:00 p.m.

Christmas Party:

December 9 at 6:15 p.m.

F&S Harley-Davidson
7220 North Dixie Drive

Deadline for January's Scoop articles is December 28th.

Happy December Birthdays!

Connie Karns5
James Metzler.....7
Bob Schaffner8
Bob Chiles11
Julia Ware.....15
Linda McGuire.....17
Aaron Burke.....20
Larry Ryan25
Lee Kunz.....26

Freida's Sunshine Report

Thanks to Freida Sippel, a little sunshine was sent to brighten someone's day:

Stacy Pacifico and Greg Flick were married on November 14th. Congratulations!
Thea Chiles has been in the hospital.

Please report news on our membership to Freida at 898-4754.

From Ann & I, to our Sister City Members and our friends in Prestwick and Lichtenfels, we wish you a safe and Merry Christmas!

Harvey