

Berlin

January 1983 to September 1991

By Allen Lawless



I arrived in Berlin on January 11, 1983. Everything I'd heard about Berlin – from Paul Hazlip, flute player in the 18th Army Band; Mike Holbrook, horn and Mark Conway, sax, both from the 1AD Band – suggested that it was a good assignment and “unique” to other Army bands. I would later hear this word “unique” over and over again. But for now, as I flew into Tegel Airport in the French sector in Berlin, I could see that the city was far bigger than any other I'd served in to date. And while it was winter, it was clear that a substantial part of the city was allocated to forest and trees. I thought to myself while the plane taxied to the terminal that this would not be like Manhattan – no skyscrapers, no abusive waitresses, no potholes, no wacko taxi drivers, no inordinate problems on the scale of New York City. I was later to learn that there were indeed problems, but the nature of the city, its relationship with the Allies and the continuing occupation status that the city was still under, insulated us from those problems to a great extent.

Jim Lindly, my boss-to-be, brass group leader, and cowboy from Texas, greeted me at the gate. He was enthusiastic in welcoming me. I felt as if I belonged already. This was a good feeling. By contrast, somebody had screwed up at the Department of the Army and failed to notify the 2AD Band that I was coming. When I wandered in that day in March, 1982, nobody had a clue I was coming. I didn't expect a welcoming committee, but usually the Army is better at notifying the gaining command that a career soldier is coming.

We drove some 30 minutes out of the airport and south. Once into Charlottenburg within the British sector, we drove past the Funkturm, first opened in 1926, and the Messengelände, site of many concerts, festivities, and conferences. The space-age layout of the massive building named “ICC” (International Congress Center) looked like a huge, pregnant cruise ship alongside the AVUS, Berlin's only real autobahn and site of previous Grand Prix auto races. A spectator stand still denotes a turnaround point of the race course.

Upon exiting off the AVUS (“Automobil und Verkehr

Übungsstraße”, a German acronym which translates to “Automobile and Traffic Training Road”), we drove easterly into the Grunewald on Hüttenweg, a principal thoroughway of the Grunewald. The Grunewald is one of Berlin's significant forests and it features mile after mile of walking trails, ponds, and even a nude beach. After about a mile, Hüttenweg led to what clearly was an American hub of activity. American cars featuring USAREUR license plates were visible, as was Turner Barracks, home of F Company, 40th Armor, Cole Sports Center, and what looked like a shopping center.

We continued on past this area, known as “BB”, and picked up several side streets. Eventually we pulled into Andrews Barracks and after a rudimentary ID card check, drove over to the band building.

Building 909, Andrews Barracks, had been home to the 298th Army Band since 1951. The building had been a hospital during the time when SS troops of the Nazi regime were stationed on the small kaserne in Lichterfelde, a sub-district of Steglitz. The building was located in the northwest corner of the kaserne, at the corner of Basler Str. and Finkensteinallee.

I grabbed my stuff out of Jim's car and we went inside. First order of business was to meet the First Sergeant, Lou Hurvitz. Lou was a smaller man, with glasses, which did not conceal a significant intelligence. After handshakes, he invited me into his office.

He wasted no time. He politely, but firmly, informed me I needed a haircut. This was true since I hadn't seen a barber since I'd left Ft. Hood some weeks previously. He nevertheless welcomed me and introduced me to others who were in the area including John Gerdling (Woodwind Group Leader and Admin NCO), Carol Heron (clarinet section leader and Admin Clerk), Bob Brinkofski (Tuba Section Leader and Supply Sergeant) and Dan Steger (Trombone Section Leader and Operations.NCO). Everyone made me feel welcome.

My barracks room had already been set aside, so I signed for a key and linen and schlepped my stuff up to the room. Later, I'd sign for the furniture, but I needed that haircut that First Sergeant Hurvitz indicated. Somebody pointed out where the barbershop was, so I went over and got my haircut, returning about an hour later.

By this time, it was about 1500 hrs and I was feeling

pretty tired from a long flight spiced with crying babies and other noisemakers, eliminating any possibility of sleep. Nevertheless, I ran into Ralph Cuellar, Saxophone Section Leader, in the stairwell. Ralph asked me if I'd be interested in a beer after work and I readily agreed. He exchanged glances with Dan Steger and they both nodded in unison and said, "Mom's."

"Mom's", aka "Die Kastanienecke," was a typical Berlin Kneipe, or neighborhood bar. The building was old, constructed probably in the Twenties since that part of Berlin had not been badly damaged in WWII. There was the bar on the right side of the front room, with a J-hook on one side. Various gambling-type machines were mounted to one wall but their garish lights and occasional sounds failed to extinguish the group of mostly men that were, along with we three, crowding into the establishment following a normal workday.

While waiting for our beers (Löwenbräu from Munich, no less!), I took a look around. The back room featured a few tables and some decrepit chairs. It was less noisy than the front room, so that's where we headed since we wanted to talk and get to know each other a little bit. Cigarette smoke filled up the front room and I could see that years of smoke had yellowed the walls considerably. A door led to a hallway which presumably led to the restrooms. The entire place had a comfortable, well-worn atmosphere that had seen many Berliners. I had the distinct feeling that not many Americans frequented this bar and to that comment, Ralph and Dan both answered in the affirmative.

That suited me just fine, since I had taken some trouble in getting a rudimentary knowledge of German during the Ansbach assignment, though I couldn't hold a candle to either Dan or Ralph, who had introduced me to "Mom" aka Waltraut, the proprietess, in fluent German. She smiled demurely and welcomed me, returning to her work. I knew I was in good company because

I loathed the idea of being just another GI in Germany, who usually bellyached about just about everything that wasn't American and complained about being there to begin with. Already, things were shaping up nicely. I felt welcome in the band, the leadership appeared to be competent and understanding, and I had a couple of guys who felt towards Germany the same way I did.

After a couple of beers and some storytelling, I definitely began feeling the effects of no sleep the previous night, so I asked to close it up for the night. Dan and Ralph agreed, so we piled in the car and went back to the barracks. Ralph got out with me and walked over to his quarters, which were located just south of the band building and outside the kaserne. Dan had an apartment

uptown somewhere, so he headed home. I went to my room and crashed, but not before unpacking at least some of my stuff in preparation for the duty day to come.

Besides myself, there were three other euphoniumists. With me, that made four. The band was authorized only two. So how was I able to get to this relatively prestigious assignment when there really was no slot for me? I later

learned through 1SG Hurvitz that my former bandmaster from the 2nd Armored Division Band at Ft. Hood, Gareth Mark, had talked me up as being a pretty solid euphonium player and a pretty good organizer. That made me feel good, although I found out some months later that Mr. Mark had found it necessary to leave military service.

Duty in Berlin was wonderful. During the winter, the slow season, things were done in a leisurely way. Everybody got up generally at about 0600, got ready for work, and cleaned the building. By 0900, the band would rehearse concert band and would knock off at about 1130. Lunch occurred from 1130 to 1300, after which the stage band or a small ensemble might rehearse while others not involved in those rehearsals would work in their extra jobs, i.e., supply, admin,



training. I don't remember the band doing a lot of PT during that time, although we certainly took the twice yearly PT test, as required. By 1600, the band was done for the day.

The band, however, had a glut of junior NCOs, of which I was one. I fully remember that of roughly 40 personnel, the band had 13 staff sergeants. Ordinarily, staff sergeants were not expected to pull Charge of Quarters (CQ). This was considered to be an extra duty to be pulled by junior personnel in the rank of SGT-E5/Specialist-5 and below. It amounted to answering the phone, taking messages, making security checks, and alerting the band leadership in the event of emergency. Since the band had so many staff sergeants, we were also included on the duty roster to pull CQ. We weren't fond of it, but it came up infrequently enough to not be a huge issue. Since we were expected to remain awake throughout the night (a somewhat difficult task if you worked all day and starting pulling CQ after the evening meal), we got the next day off.

My own methodology for staying awake was to make frequent security checks – in other words, to keep moving around. This would help after the American Forces Network (AFN) TV programming signed off for the night. We were fortunate in having a nice TV and VCR available to the CQ during the evening. Some barracks guys (sometimes called “rats”) would also watch TV at the CQ area.

The worse part of CQ was answering repeated personal phone calls. There was inevitably one guy who was associated with a dozen people or more and they all would call at some point during the evening. The unwritten expectation was to go up to the person's room and let him/her know there was a phone call. One or even two of those during a night of CQ was one thing, but repeated calls was a pain. It meant trooping up and down the stairs and when you did that, you were expected to lock three doors to prevent unauthorized entry of the building.

Of course, there were days in which the band had a gig to play, and certainly on weekends on occasion. When those occurred, the band usually got comp time by having Monday or another available day off.

Speaking of training, a tall, dark-haired SP5 named Mitch Kaufman, guitar player for the band, approached

me within a day or two after I'd arrived and without fanfare calmly announced that I would be going to the Primary Leadership Development Course (PLDC). He didn't ask me if I'd already gone – he'd already done his homework and determined that I had not. He explained that it was a requirement, that as a somewhat senior staff sergeant, I had to go and that the list was prioritized by date of rank. My name was put on the list up toward the top.

So in May, 1983, I found myself going to Kransberg, Germany, to take part in a four-week, relatively intensive “leadership” school, which was a euphemism in how-much-abuse-can-you-absorb-without-blowing-a-gasket.



This particular school was run by the 3rd Armored Division out of Frankfurt, but the actual school was located in Kransberg, Germany, in an old castle that dated from the 11th Century. In June, 1945, elements of the U.S. Army seized the castle

and converted it, temporarily, as a jail for war criminals. One of the prisoners was, until the Nürnberg Trial, Albert Speer, Hitler's favorite architect. Later the castle was converted for use as an NCO Academy and stayed such until after my own experience there.

The town of Kransberg and the castle by the same name was located in the middle of nowhere, north of Frankfurt. We found out just how remote it was when I, along with a few others from Berlin, disembarked from the Frankfurt duty train with our required uniform items, weapon, and other niceties, and boarded 2½ ton trucks for the sojourn north.

We arrived and clambered off the trucks, being hounded every step of the way by the cadre. I laughed, thinking it was ridiculous. But these guys were serious and I realized that in order to survive, I'd have to keep my thoughts to myself. Essentially, this "leadership" school was designed to tear you down and build you back up as a leader. This was similar to basic training with respect to the harassment you were expected to absorb, just more advanced when it came to the technical side of things.

I was assigned Roster #120. When they told me and I repeated it, I made the fatal mistake of saying, "Roster Number One Two Oh." I was quickly corrected and when my impatience flared at this trivial, ridiculous thing, the cadre was quick to jump down my throat. Oops, better think about this some more, I thought. (Funny how one remembers things like this, eh?)

It was the usual fun and games. Barracks rooms, 6 to a room, squeezed in like sardines. Of course you didn't much care, since you spent precious little time in your bunks anyway. The pecking order eventually established itself and the newly appointed "leaders" had the dubious pleasure of figuring everything out and "leading" a bunch of guys who were usually senior to them. But lest I lend the impression of total cynicism, the group did pull together and get the job done. There was the usual fraying of tempers caused by stress, but generally speaking, everybody passed the course.

The final field problem was tough. In order to pass the course, the student had to – alone and without help – negotiate a compass course in pouring rain, which encompassed about 3 miles, off the beaten path and squarely into the woods. The course had to be completed within 3 hours. I made it with about 30 minutes to spare and it was tough going the entire way.

Nevertheless, I was glad to have gone to Kransberg. It was a delightful location and we, after a couple of weeks of lockdown, were able to go into the small village for a meal and a couple of beers. The area reminded me of Bavaria and the castle itself reminded me of days long since gone. But when the 2½ ton truck came to take the few of us back to the Frankfurt main train station for the overnight trip back to Berlin, I was glad it was over.

Shortly after arriving in Berlin, I became friends with Mitch Kaufman, the guy who was going to send me to PLDC. Mitch was a few years older than I, but he was divorced and lived in a small apartment near the



Botanischer Garten S-Bahn stop, about a mile and a half away from Andrews. He was required, however, to maintain a room in the barracks; his small room was next to mine. One evening when he was around in the barracks, I explained to Mitch that my divorce had come through. We both realized that we were in ideal situations – that we were relatively young, single, and we had an entire city to explore. Uppermost in our minds was the gentler sex. We would occasionally go out on the town – discos where still where the ladies went and the better ones attracted better candidates. The term we used, perhaps not too politically correct but nonetheless accurate, was "doggin'." We were looking for female companionship and it was as simple as that. Mitch introduced me to a disco in downtown Zehlendorf, a neighboring district, and that's where I met Carola. Carola and I became an item over the next couple of years, but the relationship died. I simply wasn't ready to settle down – I was having too much fun in this very cosmopolitan and energetic city.

There were many acquaintances, many dates, many occasions. In short, it was my "wild time." It is a time that was fascinating, fun, and certainly dangerous. AIDS had become a problem to the point that the Berlin command directed that all soldiers undergo a blood test. In

1985, two bandmembers came up positive for the AIDS virus. They were whisked out of Berlin within hours after notification and



sent back to the States for treatment. One of them later died, is my understanding.

I came back to Berlin after PLDC having missed the Allied Forces Day parade, but in time to do the Brigade Review and the Independence Day ceremony. The Brigade Review was essentially the Independence Day warm-up and I'd been off my horn for a little more than a month. I had to get with the program pretty quickly.

However, every two years the band would support battalion-level change of command ceremonies, particular for the infantry battalions and Combat Support Battalion. In 1983, the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Battalions of the 6th Infantry Regiment comprised the infantry core of the Berlin Brigade. These battalions were redesignated as the 4th, 5th, and 6th Battalions of the 502nd Infantry Regiments in 1984, in keeping with Army directives to realign the Army toward a regimental system.

The blanket leave period in summer was one of two two-week periods during which band members were encouraged to take leave. It was not a requirement, however. I often did not take leave, choosing instead to find alternate dates to take my vacation.

By this time, I was fully entrenched as the assistant supply sergeant for the band. Bob Brinkofski, tuba section leader and supply

sergeant, had relinquished his position in preparation for his re-assignment to the band at Ft. Monmouth, NJ. Dave Keller, bassoon player and double-reed section leader, then took over and began training me, his new assistant in performing the following duties:

- ◆ Prepare and update hand receipts for equipment, uniforms, furniture items
- ◆ Prepare and submit for approval requisitions for equipment, expendable materials, and uniforms
- ◆ Prepare and submit documentation for turn-in of equipment, furniture, and uniforms
- ◆ Maintain property books and supporting documentation files
- ◆ Perform laundry runs for turn-in of linen and uniforms (dress blues and greens only)
- ◆ Arrange for tailoring of uniforms for newly arrived band members
- ◆ Prepare for regular inspections of documentation and property books by G-4

This was a good job for me. Once I understood how things were done, I enjoyed keeping track of things and issuing new equipment when it was received. Then, when Dave Keller himself left for his next assignment to Ft. Meade, MD, and I became supply sergeant, it was my shop to run as I saw fit. My own assistant was Wayne Sink, clarinet player. Wayne was an interesting person – a former band director, he was a bit older than I. He and his wife were professionals in every sense of the word and I enjoyed having Wayne's support. The supply clerk was a young, energetic, and impetuous Mike Conwell, flute player. Mike performed his supply duties with a zest and zeal that were contagious and he was singularly responsible in maintaining the good rapport the band had with Supply and Services Division, the organization that supported the band and other units within the Berlin Brigade.

In 1984, decisions were made that were to impact the entire band. The band had occupied Building 909 continuously since 1951. Prior to that, the building had sustained its last complete renovation in the 1930s when the Nazi regime expanded the Hauptkadettenanstalt Lichterfelde (essentially the Prussian version of West Point) to incorporate more real estate toward the rear of the kaserne. Consequently, the building was run down and in need of a complete renovation. Wires hung from some areas. The plumbing stank, particularly off the male latrine on the first floor. In general, the building had been only superficially maintained since the early 1950s and so, the decision was made for a complete and total renovation. The building would be completely gutted, leaving only the shell. Then, all internal systems would be built from the foundation up, leaving a brand-new building.

Since the building was protected under German law as an historical building (Denkmalschutz), the exterior of the building could not be altered in any way. But the interior would be completely updated.

One of my responsibilities was to inventory and organize the move of all band equipment, furniture, and organizational property. A chief concern was weapons and security of the weapons that were stored in our arms room. Similarly, tactical equipment that the band had (not much) was also a concern, to include the field equipment issued to each soldier – referred to as “TA-50”. All of this equipment had to be moved to Building 904, which was located about 100 meters to our south and perpendicular to our own building. The band would occupy the westernmost section of Building 904 with barracks rooms available on the 2nd and 3rd floors, and rehearsal space, offices, supply, and other activities located on the 1st floor. The 1st floor actually stepped down a few steps from street level. As in Building 909, the CQ area was located just inside the entrance to the building.

All of this had to be done while the band performed its mission. While some duty time was dedicated for this move, much of the preparation occurred after duty hours. It was an extremely hectic time for me personally, but I had excellent support in Wayne and Mike. Needless to say, we got the job done and the band settled into Building 904 in late 1984 while Building 909 was being renovated. The entire process was expected to take about a year.

I moved my own belongings over to my own room on the 2nd floor, to include the refrigerator, sofa and coffee table I had inherited from the last occupant. It was a pretty good arrangement and I was comfortable. I remember buying a new stereo during this time, complete with new Cerwin-Vega speakers, which I still own as of this writing (2005).

In 1985, I attended a supply course at the Army’s training center at Vilseck, Germany. I drove down myself for the two-week course, traveling through East Germany along the autobahn toward Helmstedt. I checked into my room in preparation for the two-week course.

The course was a good one and I learned a fair amount. Since the band maintained its own property books (as opposed to having a large hand receipt), I was familiar

with most of the material. But there were some things I wasn’t aware of so I was able to take back that information and apply it in my supply work.

Toward the end of the 1985 summer, I realized that I needed to get started with my college education. I had made no effort up to that time (other than a blown effort to take an English course while at Ft. Devens) to further my education. My plan was to take it slowly, as my schedule and work allowed. I took the required English course for all degree programs and thoroughly enjoyed it. I got a final grade of an “A” and since I’d had such a good time in the rather fast-paced course (the semester was less than two months long in the University of Maryland system in Europe), I thought I’d do it again the next semester. Staying with English, I took an expository writing course and again did very well, getting an “A”. Figuring I was on a roll, I then took my only math class, an algebra course. This one kicked my butt. I easily put in an hour of study every evening when I wasn’t attending class, plus I went for extra tutoring and exercises on Saturday. With all that work, which was far more than I had had to do in any of the previous two English courses, I was only able to pass the course with a “C”. This was a very rude awakening and it definitely taught me that college was not a cakewalk.

Following this course, I signed up for a Geography course. The instructor stated at the outset that she graded on a curve, that there were going to be only one or two students to get an “A”, four or five to get a “B”, that most of the remaining students would get a “C” and that there would be a few failures. She stated this without knowing who was in the class, what their interests were, and without regard to academic ability from anyone. After this rather rude introduction, most of us looked at each other and shrugged our shoulders. We’d be able to respond at the end-of-course critique. When it was all over, I got my “C” and along with many others, blasted the instructor with our own critiques. I believe I gave her a grade of “D” due to her unavailability and unwillingness to answer questions and to her own questionable teaching ability.

This whole episode had soured me a good bit, so I didn’t take any more courses for a few semesters. When I finally came back around, I took a beginning genetics course. This one frightened me so badly that I dropped the course after only a couple of weeks. I decided I really didn’t need to know all that much about how one

black and one dog can yield a certain percentage of spotted dogs. I just didn't care that much.

So I then began taking the beginning German classes. These were fundamentally easy for me, due to my own study, and even though my attendance wasn't stellar, I was still able to pull off a "B" in the second of four courses. I dropped the third course due to less-than-wonderful attendance. This class did take a trip to East Berlin to see one of Berthold Brecht's plays, after which we went to a restaurant and had dinner. I had agreed to participate in this class event and while I had dropped the course, I wanted to attend the play.

Personal computers were starting to come into vogue and I took a number of computer seminars. These were



offered at the Andrews Barracks Education Center, so it was just a matter of attending the seminar on Saturday and Sunday and completing a project.

All in all, however, I failed to take real advantage of the very generous educational offerings in Berlin. Many courses were being offered with tuition being paid for by the command. All the student had to do was to buy books – and while these were expensive and generally usable only once, the cost really couldn't be lower. But I had arranged for my military education to be evaluated and by the time my time in Berlin was over in 1991, I had close to two years of college.

Part of my education evaluation included the award of the German Linguist MOS suffix. This was awarded following my successful completion of a Defense Lan-

guage Institute (DLI) test. I laughed when I found out the results. Back at Ft. Devens, when I was cooking, I was "selected" to go down and take a DLI test on foreign language aptitude. This test involved evaluating a person's ability to work through a fake language and ostensibly measure noun, verb, and tense construction. The language looked as fake as it really was. According to the test proctor, I failed miserably. It would appear that either the DLI test was flawed in some way or my language aptitude had grown.

All of this activity in no way prevented me from seeing some of the cultural events within the city. While I had a healthy appreciation for classical music, I'm ashamed to admit I never saw the Berlin Philharmonic perform. Herbert van Karajan was in the twilight of his career at that point, so I should've made the effort to see him and the Philharmonic perform in the Philharmonie, the rather esoteric, though acoustically wonderful, concert hall in the eastern part of the Tiergarten, very close to the former Potsdamer Platz. Neither did I see any operas, but I never learned to appreciate opera either. In the Philharmonie, however, I did see the Canadian Brass perform. I was somehow perhaps even cruelly satisfied to hear Ronald Romm struggle with the famous "Carnival of Venice" solo. He just couldn't get the triple-tonguing timed correctly with his fingers. The result was gibberish that came dangerously close to crashing and burning. It was good to see that from the standpoint that Ronald was human and could err.

The Quasimodo, a jazz club located on Kantstr. and not far from the Ku-Damm was a favorite club to see live performances. Some notables included a very young Wynton and Branford Marsalis, both of them on the stage at the same time. They both were fabulous players but their collective egos and the arrogance also shined through. Dizzy Gillespie also graced the stage and while his playing wasn't nearly as precise as it had been in years past, his attitude was refreshing. Paul Dixon, alto and bari saxophonist with the 298th, greeted him on the way to the men's room. "Hey, Diz! Great to see you!" Dizzy turned around and he grinned. "Hey, how you doin? Where you from?" Paul answered, "I'm from North Dakota." Dizzy thereupon physically shivered and exclaimed, "North Dakota! Damn! I've been to that cold-ass place!" Then we all three managed to make it into the men's room at the same time and I can say with a certain amount of satisfaction that I had the

privilege of pissing next to Dizzy Gillespie.

I also caught Lew Soloff, former trumpeter with Blood Sweat and Tears, in the Quasimodo. I got a great seat, no more than 5 feet away from Lew. I could see that he was playing on a very old Bach Strad, so between sets I called out to him, “Hey, Lew! Are you playing on a Mount Vernon Bach?” (For those who might not know, Vincent Bach trumpets were made in Mount Vernon, NY, in the early 1950s and were prized instruments for many professionals for many years. Evidently Lew felt the same way.) He looked up, surprised at my question, and nodded. Lew performed with only a piano player as a sideman. Lew’s written music consisted of school-type notebook paper upon which he’d written some chord symbols. That was it – he had clearly memorized the heads of the charts he played and the chord symbols were all he needed to solo on.

Lou Donaldson, alto saxophonist, also graced the stages of the Quasimodo. Aside from being a classical bebop saxophonist equally home in the blues, Lou sang a few tunes as well. That was a fun gig and Lou had a good time as well.

The Quasi also brought in the incomparable BB King. BB, with his entire band, pretty much packed the stage and it was a rockin’ gig. It was a full house and the crowd didn’t want to let him go.

Johnny Griffin, tenor saxophonist, also came in. Johnny had some troubles that night, as I recall. I think he’d had too much to drink.

One of the last gigs I saw in the Quasimodo was one from Chet Baker. Chet was himself a trumpeter with the 298th Army Band in Berlin from 1947 to 1948 and it was quite clear that he was in the twilight of his life. Never completely able to shake a heroin habit, Chet was just a wisp of a human, thin and frail. His face was lined with age, though he wasn’t horribly old. He never smiled, since he had no teeth. Even so, he perched on the edge of a beat-up wooden straight-back chair, crossed his bony legs and leaned forward with his forearms on his knees. He played a couple of sets accompanied by a piano player only. Chet was noted for being an ear-only player and thus had no sheet music on stage at all. A few months after this gig I read in the paper that he had died in Amsterdam under mysterious circumstances.

Something about either falling out of a motel room or having been pushed.

The blues were making a comeback and along with that, John Lee Hooker filled up a dark, dirty club on the oth-



er end of the Ku-Damm called the Metropol. This former theater, largely unchanged in more than 40 years, featured a large stage and a completely open audience area with no seats. It was painted flat black everywhere which was supposed to cover the dirt, but didn’t really. Nevertheless, John Lee played the blues and sang with the passion he’d always had. At one point during the performance, some idiot in the audience gently tossed a bottle of some kind of booze on the stage, presumably to “share” some of the contents with the guys on stage. This being in the middle of a song, John Lee signaled for his guitar player to solo while he thought about what to do. When the song ended, John Lee berated the crowd telling us that he and his band had traveled over 5,000 miles to perform for us and that any further episode with the booze bottle would result in the concert ending rather suddenly. There were no more incidents.

The ICC was also the site of a wonderful concert featuring Al Jarreau. Al was in his prime that night and the atmosphere was electric. The only bad part was the warm-up act – Chaka Khan, an untalented awful artist who had no business being on stage.

The Waldbühne, an outdoor amphitheater located in the Brit sector up near Olympic Stadium, also featured some great concerts. Robert Palmer, Crosby Stills and Nash, and Billy Joel all entertained enthusiastic crowds. Getting home from the Waldbühne was always a challenge – 20,000 people crowding onto buses, the U and S-Bahns. But in the summertime, in the late evening, it

was part of the experience.

The band and the entire Berlin Brigade incurred a shock when Major Arthur D. Nicholson, an officer with the U.S. Military Liaison Mission (USMLM) was shot and killed by a Soviet sentry in 1985. The resulting investigation indicated that Major Nicholson was in a permitted area within East Germany and not in an unauthorized area, as the Soviets had initially charged. The tension that this tragedy evoked was palpable and real. While no alert was called, the band was called upon to perform a number of ceremonial functions for the memory of Major Nicholson. For example, the band performed an honor guard at Tempelhof airport while his remains were placed aboard an aircraft to take back to the States for burial in Arlington. And secondly, the band performed a ceremony to dedicate the Berlin American library as the Arthur D. Nicholson Memorial Library. As we later learned, the entire incident was handled diplomatically. This by no means was the end of tragic circumstances. The next year, another USMLM soldier was wounded in yet another assault by a Soviet soldier.

Another sobering and devastating event which characterized the continuing problem of terrorism in Germany was the April, 1986 bombing of the LaBelle disco in the Friedenau subdistrict of Steglitz. One soldier was killed outright, along with a Turkish woman, and another soldier died later from his injuries. This attack prompted an immediate security clampdown. The attack on the Frankfurt PX in November, 1985, along with this event also prompted a sizeable effort to restrict entry into Truman Plaza and other American facilities. The band was called upon to assist with the tightened security measures. We formed squads and teams and assisted the 6941st Guard Battalion in checking vehicles upon entry into Andrews. The band's work continued for about a week until relieved.

In early 1986, I found out that I had made the promotion list for Sergeant First Class. The Army band proponent had restructured the rank structure within Army bands, eliminating the Group Leader military occupational specialties (MOS) 02P (brass), 02Q (woodwind), and 02R (percussion). This essentially freed up the staff sergeants who were feeding into only one MOS, a particular problem for brass players since all Army bands were predominantly comprised of brass players. The following table illustrates an approximate MOS distribution in the band at the time:

MOS	MOS Description	Quantity Authorized
02B	Trumpet player	5
02C	Euphonium player	2
02D	Horn in F player	3
02E	Trombone player	3
02F	Tuba player	3
02G	Flute/piccolo player	3
02H	Oboe player	1
02I	Clarinet player	5
02K	Bassoon player	1
02L	Saxophone player	4
02M	Percussion player	3
02N	Piano player	1
*02U	Electric bass player	1
02Z	First Sergeant	1
034	Bandmaster	1
	TOTAL	37

*Electric bass MOS authorized in 1986

As a result, the promotion list featured a whopping 23 staff sergeants, far more than in any previous year. My own sequence number was 2 of 7 euphonium players. I would be the second euphonium player on the list to be promoted that year. While it couldn't be entirely predicted when the promotion would become effective, experience told me that it would probably be toward the end of the year. I wasn't wrong – my date of rank was 1 Dec 86. I had been a staff sergeant for six and one-half years, a long period of time, but it could have been much longer had it not been for the reorganization of the SFC group leader MOSs previous mentioned.

First, however, the renovation of Building 909 was completed in the late spring of 1986. Doing things essentially

in reverse, we put together a plan to turn in all of our old furniture and submit requisitions for new furniture and to have all of these transactions duly documented. All new furniture had to be delivered to the newly renovated building, and I had to again arrange for transportation and move of the music library, supply room, and other substantive areas of the band. This time, though, we had the benefit of a brand-new elevator and this helped us immeasurably in moving the 30-odd fully stuffed filing cabinets of music up to their new home on the 3rd floor.

My new barracks room was in a secluded corner, down a short hallway, on the southeast corner of the building. This would be a short stay, however, since my promotion was only a few months away. Upon promotion to Sergeant First Class, I would then be eligible to take housing in the Bachelor Enlisted Quarters and thus vacate the barracks. This was a new-found level of privacy and I was very excited at the prospect of finally leaving the barracks and the rules and regulations concerning same. For example, if I had a visitor who was not an ID card holder, I had to sign the person in at the front gate. The person had to surrender his/her Berlin ID (called "Ausweis") before entry was allowed. Furthermore, there were time restrictions – generally, the person had to leave by midnight. This cramped my style somewhat, so I was happy to be confronted with a situation that would permit other arrangements when it suited me and my guest.

After my promotion, I checked with the housing office and they assigned me bachelor enlisted quarters near Breitenbachplatz on Schlangenbaderstr. These quarters, efficiency apartments really, had been leased for use by senior enlisted. My own apartment consisted of a small living area, a sleeping nook, a small kitchenette, and a small bathroom. It was small but it was mine and I needed nobody's permission to entertain guests. I finally felt like an adult human being and not like a child. However, due to changes made at the Housing Office, they moved me out of that efficiency apartment into an even smaller efficiency. This one didn't even have a bedroom nook. The bed was one of those fold-down deals. The kitchenette was tiny, as was the bathroom. Plus, the entire apartment was located up on the 5th floor of this building. The building basement had the washers and dryers, but the small PX that had been there was closed down.

Located nearby was a small Kneipe owned by Betsy, an American. I would frequent the Kneipe, especially after work. It was great talking with Betsy who also made a mean potato salad. In fact, it's the recipe I use to this very day using leeks and fresh dill. Also just down the street was a terrific Greek restaurant. Their food was fabulous, especially the Zatziki, the yogurt-based, heavy garlic and cucumber staple.

By this time, I was involved with Anke. We had met through a fellow band soldier who himself had tried to date her. She wasn't interested in him, but she and I did hit it off very nicely.

Along with the promotion, I was selected to attend the Advanced Non-Commissioned Officers Course (ANCOC) in early 1987. It was decided that I would vacate the supply room as supply sergeant and when I came back from ANCOC, I would take over supervising the duties of Operations and Transportation. These shops



were already well run, having Dave Olszyk, bassoon and double-reed section leader, already doing an excellent job as Operations NCO; and Jamie Hillen, fellow euphoniumist, equally competent in Transportation. So I prepared to go to ANCOC.

ANCOC would take me first to Ft. Eustis, VA, for the so-called "common-core" element (about four weeks) and then to the SOM for the "technical-track".

Flying back to Michigan first, I took a couple days of leave and then set out for Virginia early one February morning. I borrowed my Dad's beat-up, rusted-out 1975

van for the trip. I remember getting sleepy in Ohio, so I pulled off the road and napped for about 30 minutes. It got so cold that I couldn't sleep long, so I pressed on through Pennsylvania and down into



Maryland. In Maryland, I noticed that the battery was discharging and then the van quit completely. I got it towed into a Dodge dealer and after checking the van over, I had them put a new alternator in it and set out again. The new alternator re-charged the battery and I had no more difficulty with the van for the rest of the time I had it.

The travel and the car trouble did take some time so it was about 11:45 P.M. when I finally signed into the Ft.

Eustis portion of ANCOC. Had I been 15 minutes later than I was, I would've theoretically been AWOL. But I made it in, they assigned me to a room with a private bath, and I awaited the next day which arrived far sooner than I wanted.

My ANCOC class had, in addition to my tech-track buddies who would later go to the SOM with me, other soldiers from other MOSs. Ft. Eustis was the transportation center of the Army, therefore there were many transportation-type guys who were getting common core training as well. It was fairly painless although we did have to march to class. Perhaps the most useful class I took involved getting a taste of WordStar, a word processing program that was fairly new. In fact, personal computers were just coming into vogue and while I used WordStar as a glorified typewriter, I could see that this was something that would be useful.

All Army training involves the taking of a PT test. This was no exception, so we took a PT test at both Ft. Eustis and at the SOM.

At the SOM, the focus was on conducting an ensemble/stage band and being able to identify pre-planted errors written into the music. The exercise was timed and the student had to find a minimum of seven errors in 10 minutes of rehearsing an arrangement that had the

errors written into the part. While I had no trouble with the stage band section, I did have to re-test with the concert band arrangement. But I passed it the second time and while I didn't take a lot of the training seriously, passing that particular part of the course was mandatory to complete the course. And that, of course, was important. In no way did I want to go back to Berlin having failed ANCOC.

Just after completing ANCOC, a good friend Gabi Lenga (who worked at the Public Relations Office of Berlin G-5) flew into Norfolk. I picked her up and the airport and we meandered our way back to Michigan in the van. We stopped off in as many towns named "Berlin" as she could find. After arriving back in Michigan, she continued on her vacation and I returned to Berlin – the real Berlin, of course!

Greeting me upon my arrival in Berlin were Anke and my good friend Ross Maser. It was great to be back home again.

Another good friend of mine, Dick Naujoks, took over the supply room from me. His heart really wasn't in it, but he really was into music and personal computers. He brought his Apple II and his AT clone into work and I began to see how these adorable little boxes could make life easier and frustrating, all at the same time. Dick convinced me that computers were the wave of the future and since I had a lot of money to spend (after the Army settled up with me after ANCOC), I went ahead and ordered \$3,500 worth of XT clone computer and about \$300 worth of 24-pin dot matrix printer. I managed to get some software – some of that Wordstar stuff that I'd seen at ANCOC – and some other stuff and I was doing the floppy shuffle.

The floppy shuffle got old in a hurry, so I decided to buy a hard drive for the XT clone. I spent well over \$300 for this Seagate RLL drive that porked out at over 30 MB. Man, this was heaven. I could even

run a utility menu program and have several programs available to me on the yellow monochrome monitor. I began writing, which was something I enjoyed. And computers made writing much easier than it had been.

Eventually Dick and his wife Sharon left Berlin. He and Charles W.T. "Frogg" Consaul had taught me a lot about computers and just to keep touch, I wrote to Dick a lot while he was at his last assignment before retirement. He wasn't thrilled about Ft. Sheridan, IL, but it was close to home and family so he put up with the crap for the year until he retired. He did so and moved to San Antonio, where Sharon's mother lived.

After ANCOG I began my distance running again, since I couldn't do much of it except for one volksmarch in Yorktown, VA, site of the 1781 final battle of the American Revolution. Part of the 10 km course (which I did twice) wound around the old battlefield. So I continued running the Berlin Rundwanderweg, a series of 10 separate volksmarches ranging in distance from 10 km to 29 km. I wound up doing the Rundwanderweg seven times, totalling 1,400 km, by the time I left Berlin in 1991.

I should take a moment and describe the sport of volksmarching, which is a component of the more universal "Volkssport". Volkssporting got its start in Germany in the mid-Sixties and provided the populace with a way to stay physically active by working toward specific goals of numbers of kilometers accomplished and the number of events in which the person participated. This discipline eventually found its way across Europe and indeed, the rest of the world. The sporting activities featured consisted of walking/hiking, swimming, cycling, and cross-country skiing. For example, the volksmarching participant would buy two books – one for events and the other for kilometers. As each event is completed, an entry is made into both books and thus, the participant is awarded credit for the activity. The wonderful thing about Volkssporting was that the activities were entirely self-paced. A person could walk, run, or stroll a volksmarching event, having most of the day to complete the walk.

Running volksmarches (usually about 10 kms an hour, perhaps a bit quicker) became a great way for me to maintain my weight and to remain physically active. Running a couple of hours has a way of burning off a lot of calories and while keeping weight off was always a struggle, it was much easier doing it this way.

The Rundwanderweg, a different type of volksmarch in that the courses were available at any time during the day, requiring no formal setup and organization to manage the course on a given weekend. The courses were predetermined and stayed set. Participating in the Rundwanderweg was entirely self-driven and ideal for my training purposes since 8 of the 10 courses started and finished at an U-bahn or S-bahn station. This meant that I could take this form of transportation directly to the start point, or drive, and proceed from there, regardless of the time of day or day of week. To participate in the Rundwanderweg, a person would purchase a booklet for DM 15. This booklet described the routes in words and how to negotiate each trail. Also included were labels which were to be inserted into the "canceling" machine located at each public transportation stop. The machine would stamp the label with the date and time and the name of the station. Upon completion of the course, the participant would again insert the label into the "canceling" machine, again denoting the date, time, and location. The label would then be affixed into the designated spot in the booklet, certifying completion. Also as a means of proving that the participant actually completed the trail, checkpoints in unknown locations would be visible. These would typically be metal signs stamped, license-plate style, with numbers. These numbers would also be entered into the booklet to prove that the participant was actually "there". Occasionally, however, the signs were either well-hidden or the signs themselves had been stolen by pranksters. This was not generally a problem – I was never denied credit for a course I completed, though I may have missed the checkpoint.

A couple of these courses stand out. The longest course, Course #7, 29 km, started at U-bahn Dahlem Dorf. The course took one into the Grunewald and eventually out onto the Havel River. At the Grunewaldturm (also called the Kaiser-Wilhelm Tower), I'd run up the hill and back into the Grunewald. Some kilometers later, I'd cross under the AVUS and head east down Huttenweg where I once again dive back into the Grunewald, skirt the edge of the nude beach, and head back toward Clayallee and U-bahn Dahlem Dorf. It was an exhausting course, but a very nice one since virtually all of it was in the woods or alongside water.

Another favorite course was Course #1, 20 km, which started along with two other courses up in Tegel. This

course was flat and fast and I could be done within 90 minutes. Yet another course was Course #4 which started up in Berliner Forst Spandau. This course also led through the woods and eventually came out alongside the Wall which separated West Berlin from East Germany. The guard towers were in plain view while I went jogging alongside the Wall.

As previously stated, the routes were done entirely on the participant's schedule and thus could be done during the week, as opposed to organized volksmarches usually taking place on weekends. But Berlin

would also be the site of the organized, weekend volksmarches and while relatively rare, I would participate in those as well. They provided a welcome change of pace from the more defined Rundwanderweg. Face it, after you've done a course a couple of times, you begin to know it pretty well. Even still there were a few surprises along the way. For example, Course #3, 21 km starting in Tegel, featured a checkpoint that was a restaurant. In the window of the restaurant was propped a checkpoint sign. Of course, I'd have to stop, read the number, and record the number in the booklet.

The restaurant was on the fringes of the Tegelerforst and overlooked a beautiful harbor filled with small boats and other pleasure craft. The front yard of the restaurant featured a number of things including tables to enjoy a nice meal outdoors and a few white geese. Now everybody knows that geese are territorial, especially in the springtime when they're nesting. I did my usual thing and stopped in front of the restaurant, simultaneously trying to walk past the geese and extract my booklet and a pen from my waist-pack. They would have none of that. I was clearly an intruder, so one of them actually inflicted a pretty good-sized welt on a bare leg. I figured I didn't need to know the number that badly, so I proceeded on my way, nursing my leg.

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Another time, early one morning doing Course #8, 24 km, I found myself deep in the Grunewald. I rounded a corner and encountered a wild pig, affectionately called "Gruney Pigs". These pigs were nothing to trifle with, however, and were definitely dangerous. This particular one was especially so since it was a sow with a number of her piglets. Needless to say I stopped and began backing up slowly. In no way did I want to antagonize her or interfere with her or her brood. Eventually she moved off the trail and into the woods. I could then proceed on my way.

The guys who got me into volksmarching had come and gone while I was doing the Rundwanderweg. They – principally David Lytner, horn; and Dave Olszyk, bassoonist, were insane. Lytner was into doing mega-miles having done the 100-kilometer jaunt in Davos, Switzerland, while he was stationed with the 33rd Army Band in Heidelberg. Olszyk wasn't too far behind him. Anyway, these guys were principally responsible with me breaking out of my 40-minute run.

It wasn't long before I did my first marathon in 1988, covering the 42 kilometers, 195 meters in a little more than 4 hours. The wonderful part about doing volksmarch marathons is that the courses are usually held in the woods. Very little is done on roadways or streets. You can simply relax, jog the course at your own pace, and enjoy the smells and the sounds of the deep woods. There is nothing like it.

I ran the Berlin Marathon in 1988. It was largely a miserable experience due to the incessant rain and the fact it was held strictly on city streets. Even still, I managed to hook up with an older lady, easily in her fifties, who had come to Berlin to run this race. She was amazing – running along easily and tirelessly. I had developed a really nasty blister due to my wet feet and wet socks at about the 10 km point, so I wasn't in my best form, but we managed to run about 30 km together. About a mile from the finish point on the Ku-Damm, I stretched out and finished a few blocks ahead of her. My time was 4

hours, 32 minutes. All things considered, it was a good effort. I got a nice T-shirt out of it and a chance to allow my foot to heal for about a week.

The next year would not only change my life forever, but also that of most of the world. The Berlin Wall fell on November 9, 1989. I was privileged to see it happening, up close.

But 1989 was eventful from a personal standpoint. Anke and I got married in June. We had the Berlin civil ceremony in the Standesamt in Zehlendorf and we had a church wedding in a small church in Plön, West Germany. Anke's father Wilfried, a career officer in the German Heilsarmee (Salvation Army) performed the ceremony. We had a thoroughly delightful reception on the grounds of a family friend. The number of invitees was numbered easily 100 or more, but my own family did not attend. This was enormously disappointing, but my mother was in poor health and she could not travel easily.

After the wedding and we returned to Berlin, Anke and I were assigned government quarters in the BB area on

Flanaganstr. This was a comfortable arrangement since we were close to the American shopping area, the U-Bahn, and work was only 10 minutes away. But eventually we chose to live on the economy, so we leased an apartment in Lichterfelde on Ostpreußendamm. This brought me even closer to work and it was also close for Anke, who would take the bus about 10 minutes to her new assignment after her completion of the Berlin Police Academy. Her precinct was in Lankwitz, just on the other side of Lichterfelde.

come especially strident in expressing their opposition to the East German regime, particularly on October 9, 1989. On that date, over 100,000 protesters assembled in Leipzig and shouted, "We are the people!" The East German government did nothing to quell the voices. It wasn't very long before the whole thing erupted for all of us when the East German government actually announced in a press conference that the travel between East and West was now permitted. The whole thing came off like a bureaucratic blunder, which it really was. The official who did the announcing did so without really knowing what it was he was announcing – he was attempting to answer a question and wound up saying more than he perhaps should've. It didn't much matter, because the cat was out of the bag. East Berliners began streaming across the Wall on that fateful Thursday.

The last person killed trying to cross the Wall didn't know, of course, that he was to be the last to die. In April 1989, the young man was machine-gunned while trying to escape to freedom. He should've waited. In little more than seven months, the Wall would come down and the Cold War would end.



On November 9, 1989, the Wall came down. There were little rumblings of something going on, but it wasn't till my then-wife and I were just on the way out of the city to spend a weekend away from the hustle and bustle of Berlin when we heard about it. Our first reaction was to hurry. The borders would be totally blocked and we had no desire to spend hours at either the Soviet checkpoints at Drewitz or Marienborn, or even at Checkpoints Alpha and Bravo waiting on traffic. We simply wanted to get out of the city and spend a relatively quiet weekend in Celle, located northwest of Braunschweig.

So we drove west, maybe just a hair faster than the maximum allowable speed of 100 km per hour. Leaving Berlin, traffic was about normal. We had no indication from the Soviets at their checkpoint that things were hopping. Just shove the flag order with ID cards paper-clipped to it in the tray underneath the slot (always did wonder what lay on the other side of the painted glass) and stare at the photograph of Mikhail Gorbachev on the Wall. Curious thing about that photograph. When he first came to power, the official photograph as posted in the shabby, rundown checkpoints had been touched up to reveal no birthmark on his forehead. Later, as Gorbachev's glasnost and perestroika became popular in

The political changes sweeping Europe weren't heavily on my mind, but I was conscious of them. Protesters, while always a part of European politics, seemed to be-

the West, the Soviets decided to leave the birthmark in the photograph. I found that interesting. Maybe the Soviets really were trying to change their secretive ways.

I don't remember any other Allies trying to leave the city at the same time as we. It wasn't till we neared the border at Helmstedt that the much-despised Trabis and Wartburgs (small, cheaply made eastern-block cars powered by smelly, two-stroke engines) made their presence known. But they were out in force, all heading west with us. Rich East Germans, all heading toward the forbidden land. As it turned out, we only waited about an hour at the border. We had expected a longer wait, but we had escaped early.

In West Germany, cars from all nations, mostly eastern block, poured across. The drivers of these vehicles from Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Rumania and mostly, East Germany, drove slowly, blocking traffic while rubber-necking at everything. It appeared that these people, most of them certainly seeing West Germany for the first time, were absolutely enthralled and probably a bit scared. They looked everywhere and anywhere. It was clear, though, that they felt strange, even a bit foreign, in a country that spoke the same language as they. Shopping, at least for the immediate future, wasn't possible. They hadn't the right kind of money.

That didn't last long. On Friday, November 10, 1989, people from the East were out in force, buying, curiously enough, as many bananas as they could afford. Soon, there wasn't a banana to be found anywhere near the East German border. Other food items were purchased too, of course, but the hands-down favorite was bananas.

We enjoyed our weekend in Celle, and soon it was time to head back to Berlin. We packed up and left, fully expecting an absolutely jammed Checkpoint Alpha, just outside Helmstedt. We must've found a lull in the action, because we didn't have to wait long before processing through. Of course, being stationed in Berlin always helped. The MPs could trust us not to screw up

and wind up in the wrong line, presenting travel documents to the East Germans instead of the Soviets. More than once I hand-carried a shotgun envelope with an MP report in it (yeah, I peeked) about some poor GI who got confused at the border and wound up in the wrong lane. Invariably, that mistake cost him a few months' restriction from travelling the Helmstedt-Berlin Autobahn.

The next day at work, all hell was still breaking loose. The Wall was down and people were streaming over by the tens of thousands. An already crowded city was becoming absolutely choked with humanity. And people were chipping at the Wall. We bandsmen, along with all other soldiers, were told not to hammer at the Wall. It still belonged to the government of East Germany and if we were caught, it meant serious consequences. So we had to sneak at it. On Tuesday, a buddy of mine and I drove to Zehlendorf and parked the car a discreet distance from the Wall, just a few blocks from Teltower Damm, the main drag of Zehlendorf. Armed with hammers and a cold chisel, we attempted to hide behind bushes while chipping away. There were still guards in the towers, located only about 100 meters from us, but they did nothing to interfere. They just looked at us, as always, through their binoculars. German civilians



on the West side were openly hammering away. No problem for them, but it was trouble for us if we were caught. The US Commander of Berlin had put out an edict that since the Wall belonged to the East Germans, the West didn't own it. It was just too politically sensitive to tacitly allow U.S. servicemen to do what the West Berliners and others were doing openly. But, flagrantly violating the USCOB's order, we got several

nice samples each and headed back. We didn't want to overdo it. Within a few weeks, the reality of the situation became obvious to even the USCOB and the order was quietly rescinded.

What followed over the next two years (until September, 1991, when my assignment in Berlin ended) was nothing short of a miracle. The political changes which were forthcoming would amaze us all-Berlin's status

as an occupied city would end, Reunification of both Germanys would take place, and the city that had a flavor all its own would change forever. As a bandsman, I was involved in many politically-flavored events. These ranged from providing musical support at a newly-created breach in the Wall, just down the street from my apartment in Lichterfelde, to performing at the ceremony which “gave away” Checkpoint Charlie to a German museum. (former Outpost movie theater). Several years later I found out that an up-close video shot of me playing my instrument graced the opening scenes of a German documentary of Reunification.

It was an exciting time to be in Berlin, yet also somewhat sad. Gone forever would be the city as many soldiers and airmen knew it—a cosmopolitan city in which we Americans weren’t necessarily instantly identified as GI’s (except in the immediate neighborhoods surrounding McNair Barracks and Andrews Barracks). Girl Watcher’s Corner, the “downtown” district of Zehlendorf, would return to its normal name—the corner of Berliner Strasse and Teltower Damm. The PX complex was razed, the duty train was stopped, and many of the housing areas were no longer flavored by American families.

Although German Reunification was a welcome sight for political as well as moral reasons, we all lost a little of something when The Wall came down on that November day in 1989.

The immediate aftermath of the Wall coming down was



numbing. Instantly, the city was filled with journalists, politicians, and other gawkers. Anke had an extremely hard time because the city was simply overwhelmed with refugees. It made for a logistical nightmare to provide these people a place to stay and food to eat. The Berlin Polizei was tasked with providing the necessary security and support throughout the city.



Initially, I wanted to stay away from Pariserplatz (the location of the Brandenburg Gate) and the other principal locations of the Wall. The crush of humanity and the hassle of getting in and out of there would have been too much. Plus I could see all that I wanted to see on CNN – the 24-hours news channel recently made available to us in Berlin. So at first I avoided the mecca of the city – the Brandenburg Gate. There was plenty of Wall to see elsewhere. But in December, my in-laws and I did make a trip to Pariserplatz and we walked on the Wall.

The diplomats and the politicians began conferring and it became obvious that some significant changes were going to occur within a few years. The “Two Plus Four” talks (the WWII Allies (U.S., Britain, France, Soviet Union) plus the two German nations) would begin on May 5, 1990, and would essentially lay out the framework for the eventual reunification of Germany. All the same, at my level as the Operations Supervisor of the 298th, things weren’t that apparent at that time. It was business as usual, although there was some talk about how the band could support the political changes.

With the influx of refugees and even those simply wandering through the Wall and visiting West Berlin later to return home, the city was crowded more than usual. One facility they seemed to be drawn to like a magnet was the discount food market Aldi, which was conveniently located right around the corner from our apartment on Ostpreußendamm. In fact, the store was often jammed making our own shopping experience less than handy.

I referred to these folk, perhaps not so delicately, as “Eastie Beasties.” In fairness, they were overwhelmed by the changes and the new permissions granted to them. I could instantly spot them on the street. They walked slowly, looking around constantly, as though they couldn’t believe they were in the forbidden West. Their clothes were generally plain and of poor quality; their behaviors were tentative and hesitant. In many respects, they personified people with new-found freedom. Disbelieving, they emerged from their dank cell, blinking in the bright sunlight of the new age.

The people coming over from the east were doing so from the opening of the Wall, located a half-mile from our apartment on the west end of Ostpreußendamm. We in the band actually went there to play the “unofficial” opening of that particular section of the Wall. While we generated happy music and fanfares and theme songs like “Berliner Luft”, these people stepped out of the 1940s and into the 20th century. For them, time had stood still for better than 40 years. This was evident in the condition of their infrastructure, their homes and their communication capabilities. It was quite clear when one drove into Teltow and other semi-rural areas surrounding Berlin that the east was in bad shape. Streets, buildings, and even public transportation were archaic and in disrepair. By contrast, West Berlin was

modern and clean.

The Wall had done far more than separate two nations. It had also separated two nations, formerly identical in their approach and in their culture. Forty years of cultural separation resulted in significant problems for both former nations. Things were moving quickly – perhaps too quickly. First, the formal monetary, economic, and social union between East and West Germany became official on July 1, 1990. Finally came the formal reunification of both East and West Germany on October 3, 1990. The real effects on both nations were traumatic and instantly palpable.

First, former workers from East Germany were almost instantly out of work. This massive unemployment led to the expected financial crises for those who no longer had an income. They, quite naturally, turned to the West German government for assistance. The costs were staggering. West Germans paid the bill.

Once East Germans began heading west for employment, it was quickly apparent that their skills were not up to modern technological requirements. Nevertheless, the government formed policies that encouraged companies to hire East Germans, often to the detriment of their West German counterparts. Unemployment was already high in West Germany; reunification made it worse. This, coupled with the communist-inspired cultural expectations of East Germans – namely, that the government was the answer to all problems, that hard work did not procure benefits on a personal level, and that all one had to do was hold out his hand and financial support would magically appear – did not sit well with West Germans at all. Resentments grew as the tax burden grew and the unemployment problem ballooned.

Many West Germans told me verbatim, “Put the damned Wall back up again.”

All of this went on underneath the glowing reports and the warm ‘n fuzzies as reported by the media. While these were problems that may have been considered temporary and surmountable in time, they were real and they hurt.

But yet another crisis loomed on the horizon. In August, 1990, Iraq invaded Kuwait. CNN once again became a focal point for many of us. Security tightened.

President Bush said, "This will not stand." American Army divisions stationed in Europe began mobilizing for deployment to the Persian Gulf region. All of a sudden, war seemed like a very real possibility.

All of these international events went on while the band was called upon to support the reunification efforts. Quite clearly, the band was a political tool for U.S. interests. We played at various venues in support of refugees (a practice that had been done in the earlier years of the band, particularly in the Fifties and early Sixties when the influx of refugees into West Berlin was at its peak) and in support of more artistic functions. In particular, I remember attending a meeting in which the band would support a cultural activity near the Siegessäule (Victory Column). It was just a question of finding out what the requirements were and it was pretty clear that the organizers really didn't know how the band could support their effort. I worked with them in identifying and resolving the usual logistical concerns (parking, tickets, meal support) and explained what the band would perform, given certain conditions. It was a successful meeting, though the organizers were certainly harried.

The band began expanding out into East Germany to perform. We played a small town south of Berlin, about 10 miles from the southern portions of West Berlin. The band accepted an invitation to perform there and per the usual methodology of the day, the full concert band performed. Following a short break, the stage band performed. This performance, historically significant because it was the first time the American Army had presented itself in East Germany since WWII, occurred in spring, 1990. But big things were brewing in the Persian Gulf.

On January, 17, 1991, the U.S. Air Force unleashed its attack on Iraq. Over the next month, thousands of sorties would be flown to decimate Iraqi command and control centers, radar sites, and other targets of opportunity. The effort was integral in erasing the Iraqi ability to wage war. In late February, the ground assault commenced and 100 hours later, President Bush declared an end to offensive operations.

The air war prompted unprecedented security precautions in Berlin. The 42nd Engineer Company parked a combat engineer vehicle (CEV) at the front gate of Andrews Barracks and the band began performing a secu-

urity mission by placing personnel inside this very cold vehicle. It should be noted that at no time was ammunition provided to the CEV; no small arms ammunition was provided to band soldiers who manned the back gate of Andrews and the roving patrols which checked on the perimeter of Andrews. It was a 24-hour operation. We had broken down into platoons with our own areas of responsibility and the band performed this mission for about a month until it became clear that there was no imminent threat to our facilities or to our people.

Other soldiers, likely from the infantry battalions, performed security missions around the housing areas and other sensitive locations. While Berlin had seen a significant tightening of security due to the LaBelle disco bombing in 1985, the retaliation raid on Tripoli, Libya in 1986, and other terrorist threats, the first Gulf War swept all of us into a full-blown security-oriented force. All musical operations were suspended and we simply pulled our assigned security mission. It was tough, but it could have been much, much worse by having gone completely tactical. As it was, we pulled our shift and went home.

The first order of business was to report in and draw weapons. Secondly, we would have a formation and the Op Order would be given. Any new information would be disseminated at that time, questions, if any, would be answered, and it was time to hit the streets. Communication was by walkie-talkie and was generally problematic. Being a senior NCO, my job was to ensure my people were well-supported and that any problems or issues were immediately investigated. I spent a fair amount of time at the band hall, but I also went out to check on people, particularly during the night. Soldiers went out in pairs, never alone. This was to facilitate watchfulness and to reduce the fatigue factor. Soldiers would be less inclined to want to sleep if they had a buddy with them.

About 15 minutes prior to shift changeover, the roving patrols would come in and turn in weapons. The next shift went out to the back gate and to the CEV to replace those soldiers. They, in turn, would come in and turn in their weapons. Tactical equipment (Kevlars, web gear, personal equipment) would then be secured until their next shift and the soldiers would go home. All in all, not too bad. There were no significant events throughout this period of executing the security mission.

One of my tuba players, Jeff Harper, was assigned on temporary duty to the 1st Armored Division in Ansbach. He was needed to flesh out their tuba section, so the 298th Band commander, CW3 Ronald E. Bucher, ordered him to go. Jeff was seriously involved with a young lady and he had some difficulties in saying goodbye to her at the 11th hour. I came in from home to talk to him about it and he seemed okay after that. Jeff did go to Ansbach and deploy with the 1st AD Band to the Persian Gulf. He served honorably and faithfully there, returning after the ground war was over and the situation stabilized.

My own circumstances were rather frustrating. My time in Berlin was scheduled to end in February, 1991. After over eight years, I was on orders to go to the 3rd Armored Division Band in Frankfurt. The 3rd AD was also one of the combat divisions slated to go to the Persian Gulf, so the Army instituted a “stop-loss” policy which intended to reduce instability and personnel fluctuation in certain units. In short, I would not be permitted to leave Berlin until the “stop-loss” policy was lifted. My orders were canceled.

I was disappointed. While I had no real desire to go to the Persian Gulf, I did want to leave Berlin. I simply had been there too long. I was stale and I was ready for my next assignment. I was not happy with the band

commander, who, I felt, spent too much time with administrative matters involving trouble with people and not nearly enough time with the band. On the other hand, I thoroughly enjoyed the leadership of First Sergeant James “Dutch” Perry, who made it a priority to train his senior NCOs in leading others, in effect, powering down. I had more stick time, i.e. was permitted to conduct the band, at that time than I’d ever had and I had lots of room to maneuver and lead my own areas of responsibility. I learned that communicating my intentions was the course of action to take, rather than seeking permission to do that which I thought I should do.

So I continued to serve best I could under the circumstances. The Gulf War ended and the homecoming of soldiers enjoyed the media spotlight not seen since the end of WWII. Some schlocky but emotional tunes like “God Bless the USA” by the country singer Lee Greenwood became popular. Patriotism was evident and palpable in even the staunchest liberals. The nation was holding its head up high and the military enjoyed a time, indeed a validation, that it hadn’t seen since the end of Vietnam. If it weren’t for the fact I was still in Berlin, I was happy to be a soldier.

Eventually stop-loss ended and I could once again begin the fight to stay in Germany. Since my orders to the 3rd AD Band had been canceled, I was subject to return-



ing to the States, a prospect that made my blood run cold. Since Anke was a newly trained police officer, but trained in Berlin and not the other West German States, we also had to see if there was a chance to get her a reassignment to West Germany as well. After some phone calls and some political dickering, I secured an assignment to the 8th Infantry Division Band, located in Bad Kreuznach, or “BK”. BK was located southwest of Mainz in the Rheinland, an area I did not know well. The next step was to seek an assignment for Anke.

Through contacts in Einhausen, a small town that the 298th had supported over the years by playing an annual autumn festival, we were able to get Anke’s file in front of some very influential people within the Polizei Presidium in Wiesbaden. Anke secured an assignment to the Hessen Polizei, with duty in Wiesbaden. This meant a commute for her of about 30 minutes, which was a decent commute and not too stressful.

Finally, in September, 1991, Anke and I left Berlin. She rode her motorcycle down there a couple of weeks prior to me leaving and survived the trip. I stayed in a room alternatively with friends of ours, Randy and Elvira Hamilton and then the Salvation Army in Friedenau, since we had vacated our apartment on Ostpreußendamm some weeks earlier. I even stayed for a final few days in the band barracks. It was a hectic, stressful time for all of us.

Thus ended my tour in Berlin. For eight years and nine months in duration, it was without a doubt the best assignment of my career, full of gratifying and challenging events. There were some dark moments, mostly caused by myself, but in the whole I am proud to have served in the “Outpost of Freedom.”

There is a Berliner idiom that has stuck with me over the years: “Ich hab’ noch einen Koffer in Berlin.” Translated literally it means, “I still have a suitcase in Berlin.” That means, of course, that the effect of having lived in that wonderful, marvelous city still has an impact on me to this day. My dreams are still tinged with life and work in Berlin and this after some 14 years of leaving there.

Life does indeed go on, but there is something to be said for appreciating and holding on to the past. I sincerely hope you have a measure of how meaningful this assignment was for me.