

# The Old Country vs The New Country

By: Letha Mack and Julie Lewis

Marie Stender came from the old country, Bergusnen, Germany, in 1926. Her husband (Bill) came out of World War I in 1919. Although they were friends in school they did not get married until 1921. They were born and raised in the same settlement even though Marie remarked, "He's three years older."

Marie heard of America from a friend of theirs in Germany. They had a brother living here. "He's a Mr. Thams," she said. "He lived on a ranch known as the 7N Ranch, and that's how we came, he sponsored our trip. There was my husband, Marianne, and myself. Marianne (our daughter) was three and a half years old, and now she is Mrs. William Appel.

"In Germany the land goes from father to son, and that's the way it goes on. The oldest boy always gets the farm, unless there is an older daughter. On our farm we raised barley, oats and wheat, and potatoes. We milked a lot of cows and raised a lot of hogs, like on any farm. We was just right on the North Sea. We never really fished the North Sea because there was not enough time. We did eat eel a lot though. An eel looked alot like a snake. Three feet long and about three inches around. It was delicious!"

Letha Mack and Julie Lewis, (your authors) asked Marie if she was ever afraid of the Russians. She replied, "They was just like other people, their soldiers were driven into the war, just like the German soldiers. They couldn't help it. So no, we weren't afraid of the Russian people."

The worst hardship Marie has ever seen was during the war. Her father and brother both fought in World War I, and she remembers wars as being "terrible". The women had to do all the work, because the men went to fight.

Marie farmed and went to many social gatherings. At the gatherings, she knitted. "The women had to do alot of sewing and knitting. We knitted sweaters and stockings and caps-all that for the soldiers. We sent our knitting to the Red Cross, and they'd distribute it. If you wanted your own son to receive your work, then you could send it to them, otherwise we had to go through the Red Cross."

School in the "old" country was different from today. "Every Wednesday in school the girls had



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to do sewing and knitting, the boys had to do athletic things. In school, we found out things in the junior high that you have here in the high school." In Marie's school they attended nine years before going to high school. She studied much of the same classes we do here in school. She had reading, writing, arithmetic, etc. "Every month we had a test, just like a report card and they would send it home with you to the folks. You had a lot of homework, just like here."



Activities in the "old" country were somewhat different, too. "Well, for the kids there wasn't much trouble. The kids didn't get out like they do here now." Before the war their life was not hard, and it had many bright spots. They danced and had parties and did some card playing. Many big family gatherings were held and picture shows were often seen. "When we got old enough we always went by ourselves to dances, shows, etc. We never had chaperones."

As we sat reminiscing with Marie Stender about her life in Germany we learned that the people in that country speak both high Deutsch, and low Deutsch. But those in the city spoke only high Deutsch (German). "High Deutsch is where you had arithmetic, reading, and writing. Low Deutsch is very similar to English. We speak it on a farm. When we came here it was easier to speak English. Low Deutsch is very similar to English. For example, milk in English, we say milch' in low Deutsch."



On Sunday morning it was off to the Lutheran Church for Marie. "Where we came from, maybe 40 miles from us there was Catholics and Jews. We had a Lutheran Church right in the middle of our settlement. It's still there. It was built in 1812. It is still a beautiful church. I imagine it would hold about 1000 people. All the churches in Germany are beautiful. I imagine 1200 and 1300 hundred people, something like that, attended the church. Now it's in the thousands.

*"All we had to do was work,  
that's all we knew!"*

"See, there is all farming where I come from. Houses over there have hay and grain, everything is in a house. The housing is down below, and the hay and grainaries are up in the loft. And on one side is the living quarters, and on the other side is the barns. Houses in Germany have so many storks, they settle on the houses every spring and leave in the fall. They make a nest on top of the houses, and stay awhile, then leave."

Being THREE WIRE WINTER residents we wondered about winters in Germany. "Well, we didn't have snow where we came from, we have so much rain, it rains and freezes, and the streets are just like ice," recalls Marie.

Language barriers were hard to overcome. "Communication was so different, 'cause we didn't know the language. We didn't even know what "yes" and "no" mean. It was very different. But we made it!

"We came over by a big liner ship, it had 3 classes. We went on a ship to New York, (then it was called Ellis Island), but it is not there no more. And then we came on a train to Denver, there's where we met some friends and then we came by train over the Corona Pass. Years ago they had a Moffat route. There was two feet of snow out there, and that was something we had never seen, 'cause in Germany we always had rain. We came by train to Oak Creek, the rest of the way by wagon."



The new country surrounding's were quite unfamiliar to Marie. The whole trip lasted nineteen days, "We read a lot on the ship, played games, danced, and had picture shows, but we never went to them because Marianne was still small. There were so many different people on the ship and train from so many different countries. We had trouble with communicating, so we used sign language. It was kind of funny, we didn't know what yes and no meant, we didn't know nothing. At first we didn't know the money, and my husband just showed them, and they would just take it. They was honest, and we were never afraid of them."

"There was several persons who got sick on the trip, 'cause the altitude was high, but we never did. Marianne liked to eat ice cream. So she contented herself with that. We didn't have that in Germany, and so she enjoyed ice cream all the time."

Marie has lived in and around Steamboat since May 9th, 1926. "We never study too much about the United States, you know, but when we was there we read a magazine from here. It was about Denver, and that's about all we know. It was all new to us. Mr. Thams sponsored us, and he sent us papers. We had to wait seven years here anyway. That way we could become citizens. Mr. Thams' nephew worked for us in Germany, so we came over to make a living. He paid \$500.00 dollars for us to come to the United States. My husband Bill, Marianne and me. If we got sick, hurt, or in trouble with the law, he had to take care of us and our troubles."



Marie, Bill and Marianne first began their American life working for Mr. Thams. Their first home in Steamboat was the 7N Ranch, (known as the Flying Diamond Ranch now owned by B. Adams). It was farm ground and pasture, where they raised wheat, barley, and oats. "We butchered cows and smoked the meat in a little smoke house. We had a dug-out, a basement in a mountain, where we smoked our pork and beef."

In 1931, they bought their first farm. It consisted of 780 acres, and they farmed it all by themselves. "We canned vegetables, fruit, and meat. I helped my husband with everything, even plowing. We had a big garden, and I loved the outdoors more than anything. In our first house we had five rooms. No bathroom, or

nothing like that, we called the bathroom the pump house."

The Stenders sold their first farm because plowing got too hard, so they moved to Elk River, (eleven miles out of town.) "The house was a two level." When Marie and her husband bought their first farm, it was one of the happiest times in her life. She liked having her own place, and they shared everything they did. "Willie was born in '35, and Shirley in 1940, and Marianne got married in October 1940, to a neighbor boy, William Appel, who lived right up the road. We did everything ourselves, and we very seldom bought anything. We raised our own stuff; we made soap and rugs, and we had our own meat and milked the cows. We had everything that we needed."

It seemed to Marie that the kids were so busy on the ranch they didn't leave home very often, and there didn't seem to be very many opportunities for trouble. Marie fished a lot with her friends in places like Hahn's Peak, Whiskey Park, Diamond Park, and Big Red Park. "I would always fall in, or end up in the creek a lot though. We would have a big fish fry and a large picnic dinner, everyone would always bring something."

We wondered about parental advice to which Marie replied, "To be honest and to be fair to your neighbor, treat your neighbor like you want to be treated."

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Marie considered the most valuable possession in her life, was being with her husband and having had their first place, which was their own. "We just wanted to come over and see what freedom was like, we heard there was no restrictions."

After visiting with Marie several times we got to know her quite well. We found no room for idleness in her life. She has thirteen grandchildren and twelve great grandchildren. She knits, sews, crochets and cooks many family dinners, laughs with her family and friends and is involved in many activities and social clubs.

Marie has traveled a lot in recent years. She has been to places such as Washington, Canada, and Florida. She also took a bus to nine different countries and in each one of the countries she sought Statues of the Unknown Soldiers. She visited unique places such as a Hershey factory and a glass blowing industry. About her travels she said, "I enjoyed it so very much."

Marie concluded by giving us this little bit of advice, "The United States has so much to offer, you don't have to go to other countries to see it." What a pleasure it is to have people like the Stenders come from the old country to the new country.



## Marie Stender's Favorite Recipes --

### KRAUT SALAD

Slice as fine as possible a hard crisp cabbage, should be in shreds. Put in frying pan with butter and soak slightly, turning carefully. Pour over it vinegar and water and cover until cooked. Serve hot with boiled pickled pig's knuckle that has been carefully and slowly cooked, until almost jellied.

### GERMAN COFFEE CAKE

To a quart of lukewarm milk use one Fleishman yeast cake. Flour enough to make stiff sponge. Knead till batter shows large bubbles. Mix in evening, next morning knead again. Put batter about three quarters high in temp. Let rise till twice the size. Glaze with melted butter and sprinkle with cinnamon and sugar. Bake in medium hot oven.

### Marie Stender's Recipes

#### GERMAN RED CABBAGE

1 head red cabbage

1 onion

2 apples

Salt and Pepper

$\frac{1}{4}$  cup vinegar

2 T. sugar

Butter

Shave cabbage very fine. Put slowly in quart of boiling water. Add onion and fine cut apples. Salt and pepper to taste. Vinegar, sugar, butter and let simmer on and off for two or more hours. Serve hot.