

Harley Richardson, second from right, and Gerdi Diederichs, second from left, look over old photographs with Richardson's wife, Bonnie, and Diederichs' daughter Anja, far left. (Submitted Photo)

American soldier, German girl reunite after lengthy separation

By Mike Clark Special Correspondent

On Christmas Eve 1945, a 7year-old German girl invited a lonely young American soldier to her home for dinner. Nearly 59 years later, he's repaid the hos-

Harley Richardson, father of Mustang City Councilwoman Linda Hagan, was the American GI. The now-grownup girl recently came for a visit with him.

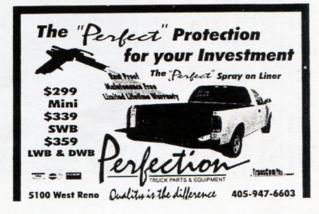
Gerdi Treffler brought her daughter Anja on the trip to America. As part of the trip, Richardson brought the two

\$250+ weekly mailing more information send bed envelope to: AAA, Hollywood, FI 33023 women to Mustang to meet his daughter Linda and her family.

This international friendship began in 1945 in Oberstdorf, a small ski resort in the German Alps in Bavaria. Richardson was a soldier with the 103rd Army Infantry Division.

World War II was over in Germany, but Richardson was

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Soldier

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Eve was a very lonely time more than a year, and Christmas The young soldier had been sepa-rated from his new bride for spending his second Christmas Eve stationed far from home. Richardson enjoyed talking

on Christmas Eve, he and a began talking with her.
"She asked, 'Is it Christmas named Gerdi Diederichs and friend with children and giving them met a little girl then

evening for C Richardson recalled Eve. What are you doing this evening for Christmas?,"

hotel. She invited them to her spending the evening at their some for a holiday dinner with The GIs told Gerdi they'd be

strangers on Christmas Eve. Richardson was hesitant to accept the invitation. He wasn't sure the girl's family would be happy about fedding two foreign When the men returned to

their hotel they found bowls of hard tandy set out for the sol-diers. They filled their pockets with the candy and a few oranges, and decided to take

them to Gerdi.

The German family was living in small quarters and had little to share. But the mother fed the She took them into the home to meet her parents and her 10year-old sister The girl was waiting for them.

come. Richardson especially remembers the apple strudle. soldiers and made them feel wel

friend filled with the candy and oranges from their pocket. Gerdi and her sister had never seen oranges before. The mother had to demonstrate how to peel and He had Gerdi bring him a large bowl, which he and his

eat them.
Gerdi ate some of the candy,
and then told Richardson she
wanted to give some of the treats

impressed. That was remarkable to me," he said. "Instead of giving away a few pieces of candy, she gave half of it to the other children. I was to the children next door.

late into the evening. At mid-Dinner led to a visit lasting

night, the GI guests went to Mass with the family. After that, Richardson went

back to Oberstorf on weekends whenever he could. The last time he saw Gerdi and her family was in January 1946.

wife Bonnie were in France for a veterans reunion. They went to Oberstorf to look for Gerdi's family. A search of town hall records was fruitless In 1994, Richardson and his

mayor of Oberstorf found a man who recognized the boy in that decades old picture. sent Richardson a picture of Gerdi with one of the neighbor boys she had shared her Christmas candy with. The Luckily, Gerdi's father had

"He took us to that man,"
Richardson recalled. "I showed
him the picture and he said, 'oh,
that's me. Where did you get
this? I have one just like it."

had tracked down Gerdi where she was vacationing in she was vacationing in Nurnberg Richardson called and talked with Gerdi for the first By the next morning, the man

time in 48 years.

The two wrote letters back and forth after that Last year, Richardson took his whole family to France for a veterans rounion That was when he invited her to visit him in the United States. and introduced them to Gerdi

Guess Who's 40! Gerdi and her daughter accepted the invitation this sum-mer. They arrived in the U.S. in

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June and stayed for three weeks. What moved a little German girl to invite two foreign strangers to her home so many years ago? Gerdi can only remember feeling that the men were a long way from home and shouldn't be alone on a special

day.

Richardson has never forgotten the young girl who was so
kind when he was 21 years old and far, far away from home on

"I think "I think of Gerdi every Christmas," he said. "I always

always have." who befriended the young girl Harley Christmas...l "I think of Richardson on Gerdi every Germany. Oberstdorf, him in 1945 in



is the father r of Mustang City Councilwoman Linda Hagan

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Prolonged exposure dangerous

that may cause heat stroke or death. activity in high temperatures can result in heat-related illnesses mean they should take the heat for granted. The Canadian County Health Department warns that prolonged exposure and physical Summer heat is no stranger to Mustang citizens, but that doesn't

Health experts say the ability to adapt to the heat varies individually. At particular heat risk are the elderly, who may not be able to adjust to the increases in air temperatures, or who take medicines that decrease their ability to deal with the heat. Heat precautions are also advised for persons with heart, lung or kidney problems; infants and young children; and persons whose occupations require