

Former Klamath Woman Returns From Germany With Tale Of Doomed People

By JOY EVANS ROLPH

After living nine years in Germany—all of them difficult war years—with a fatherless son dependent on your resourcefulness and courage, imagine the wonder of stepping back into this country where getting enough to eat isn't an obsession; where coffee doesn't have to be re-used until the grounds are light; where plenty of heat and light provide comfort and cheer; where there isn't the heartbreak of watching friends die through lack of medicine!

Mrs. Lydia von Berthelsdorf, German, who resided and attended school in Klamath Falls from the first grade upward, and her seven-year-old son, Richard, arrived in the United States early this year after a rugged Atlantic crossing which she describes as an "Ernie Pyle" trip.

Her first interest was in filling up on sweets and pastries, and as she took her son sightseeing about the streets of New York City, she says they were eating so constantly she was almost ashamed.

"You can't realize how perfectly beautiful the fruit displays looked in those New York markets," she exclaimed. "Richard tasted his first banana, but he didn't like it."

Things were tough enough in the Melland household, but it fared better than most for, until her husband's tragic death in October, 1943, he was able to bring home many little luxuries from Switzerland on his frequent business trips to that country.

Boxes From the States

Then, after the Americans took over Heidelberg, some of the soldiers, whom she calls "my boys," extremely pleased to find an English-speaking woman from their own land, saw to it that neither she nor her child suffered too much from lack of food. Right after that, supply boxes began reaching them from her family and friends in the States.

"If it hadn't been for my boys and the food boxes, about two-thirds of which came through, I doubt if I'd be here today. When I had a bad bout with pneumonia last year, and drugs to combat it were practically nil, they brought tomato juice and insisted on my drinking it till it fairly ran out of my ears."

Mrs. Melland generously shared her food gifts with neighbors and friends, and it was to her they came for a pound of coffee if there was a special celebration, for a package of treasured cigarettes or a taste of chocolate. Coffee grounds, even after being twice boiled, were in demand, and the lucky



MRS. LYDIA VON BERTHELSDORF MELLAND

ones used them over and over till they fairly turned white.

Heidelberg Mecca

Sauerkraut, always a popular food with the German people, became the most valued item in their frightfully restricted diet because of its vitamin C. Last winter, when a shipment of peanut butter reached the American zone, the people thought it was shortening, due to the word "butter" and tried to fry with it. Special notices were inserted in the paper informing that it was purely a spread for bread, nothing else. Adults didn't like it much, Mrs. Melland said, but the children lapped it up. All they received, however, was a quarter pound per person.

Peaceful, picturesque Heidelberg, being the only unbombed city in Germany, became the mecca for refugees and was soon so overcrowded that over 3000 had to be evacuated, according to Mrs. Melland. When the battle-weary American soldiers ar-

rived, they were overjoyed at reaching a place that was practically undamaged.

"Most of the time we had only one candle for light; gas for heat or cooking was strictly rationed, turned on only three hours a day, an hour for each mealtime; in washing, we were so saving of soap we'd rub our hands raw."

Mrs. Melland is considerably disturbed about the news of further shortened food rations in Germany and said she can't possibly see how the people will manage to live if this happens. Every penny she can spare above necessities is going into food packages that she's shipping back to close friends who are in want

of them. It was for this reason that she went ahead with delayed plans for a visit home.

Before leaving the States for Germany in 1938, to continue her study of music, Mrs. Melland, an accomplished pianist, was teaching and doing radio accompanying at Stockton, Calif. She left here Monday for that city where she plans to re-enter this work.

Most of her time in Klamath has been spent with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. R. von Berthelsdorf of Swan Lake, and she has also been a guest at the H. E. Roskamp, Fred Goeller and Roy Lien homes.

—an opera singer, a surgeon's family and others.

Asked if the German people really were ignorant of conditions in the concentration camps, she answered that they certainly were; that only those having powerful enough radios and brave enough to defy the Gestapo by tuning in on outside broadcasts knew of these conditions.

Pessimistic

As for Germany's future, Mrs. Melland said that she can see no hopes. For one thing, having the country divided into four zones is not conducive to solving economic or government problems, and for another, the people are too weary and despondent from hunger, cold and disease that they have little energy for anything beyond bare essentials. When she left Heidelberg there were at least 50 suicides a month.

During the reign of the Gestapo, Mrs. Melland's husband was arrested along with more than a hundred others, charged with espionage, and confined to a concentration camp for four months. She herself was questioned every day for 14 days but finally convinced the officers that she knew nothing of his activities, if any.

Mr. Melland proved his innocence of the specific charges against him and was allowed to return home, one of only 12 of the 114 arrested who were ever released. He never recovered from the effects of his confinement, particularly synthetic foods served the prisoners, and died eight months afterward.

Following the death of her husband, Mrs. Melland became owner of the Melland Textile News, an internationally known scientific newspaper printed in four languages. Publication of this paper has now been resumed under the direction of experienced executives, but because of these business interests, she expects to return to Heidelberg some time this year when she hopes to dispose of the publishing plant if market conditions allow. At present, her "marks" are of no value in this country inasmuch as a rate of exchange has not been established.

Her large home in Heidelberg was commandeered late last year but luckily she was able to secure tenants who are friends, and there are now 10 persons living there. It was for this reason

Election Of Directors Near

Election of Klamath County chamber of commerce directors is just around the corner, Charles R. Stark, chamber manager, reminded today.

Ballots being printed now will be mailed to members on Monday, April 14, and must be back in the office by noon Monday, April 21. These will be counted and the 14 top names will be sent out on second ballots April 23. These must be back in the office by Tuesday, April 29, and the seven top names will be the new directors.

The old and new boards will meet together April 30 and elect their officers for the ensuing year which extends from May 1 to April 30.

There are 15 members on the board of directors, serving two-year terms. Each year seven new directors are chosen to replace the seven going out at the end of their two-year term. The 15th members is the president of the Klamath Merchants association who automatically becomes a member of the board.

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Flashes Of Life

TONS OF TROUBLE

KANSAS CITY, April 9 (P)—Dubs today had evidence for their stories of just how much trouble that scant five-inch cover of sand in a golf course trap contains.

Ed Brugger, greenskeeper, finished resurfacing the Swope park municipal course hazards and announced the job took 284 tons. That's a sand pile, Brugger said, as big as the clubhouse if all of it were in one place.

CONTACT MADE
CHICAGO, April 9 (P)—Mrs. James A. Ruzek expressed genuine concern for her husband that he might become involved in trouble if he reported for work yesterday at the Hawthorne plant of the Western Electric company which has been picketed by striking telephone workers because it manufactures telephone equipment.

After crossing the picket line at the plant, Ruzek released the family's pet homing pigeon with a note saying, "entered plant O. K. Don't worry." The bird delivered the note to Mrs. Ruzek four miles from the plant in less than 10 minutes.

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REDAID & NEWS, Klamath Falls, Ore. WEDNESDAY, April 9, 1941, Page 24-26

CARD OF THANKS
We wish to express our sincere appreciation to our many friends, and especially to the Cal-Pine Plywood and all employees, for their many acts of kindness and sympathy during our recent bereavement, the loss of our beloved husband and father.

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Inspect rotor. (9) Inspect lead wires for current leaks. (10) Inspect primary and secondary wires and tighten. (11) Re-set ignition timing. (12) Inspect fuel level, clean carburetor bowl, blow out fuel line. (13) Test vacuum and adjust carburetor. (14) Clean fuel pump sediment bowl. (15) Clean and re-oil cleaner.

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