

PROFILES

SCHÖNHEIT MUSS LEIDEN

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I RECENTLY gave myself the pleasure of a leisurely stay in Hermann, Missouri (pop. 2,658), an old German town on the rolling south bank of the Missouri River, some eighty miles west of St. Louis. Hermann takes its name from a Germanic hero of the first century and was founded in 1837, on a site chosen for its reputed resemblance to the Fatherland, by the Deutsche Ansiedlungs Gesellschaft zu Philadelphia (German Settlement Society of Philadelphia), an organization created in 1836 by a group of Pennsylvania German-Americans for the purpose of establishing a settlement that would perpetuate German culture and the German language on the free American frontier—a settlement that would be “characteristically German in every particular.” By 1839, the settlement had grown from a huddle of log cabins to a town—a flourishing town, laid out on a formal urban plan, with ninety houses, five stores, two hotels, and a post office, and with a population of almost five hundred. Three years later, in 1842, Hermann was designated (“for certain material returns,” according to the chief local historian) the seat of Gasconade County. It became a thriving river port (“During those days,” a contemporary memoirist has noted, “we were never out of sight of steamboat smoke”), a center of viticulture (for several decades it had the second-largest winery in the United States), and, in 1854, a regular stop on the infant railroad that grew into the Missouri Pacific. There was talk that Hermann might come to rival St. Louis as the trans-Mississippi metropolis. It remained a town. It has never even been more of a town than it is today. It has, in fact, scarcely changed at all from the town of its original eminence. Much of Hermann still looks as it did around the time of

the Civil War, and it is still almost as solidly and determinedly German.

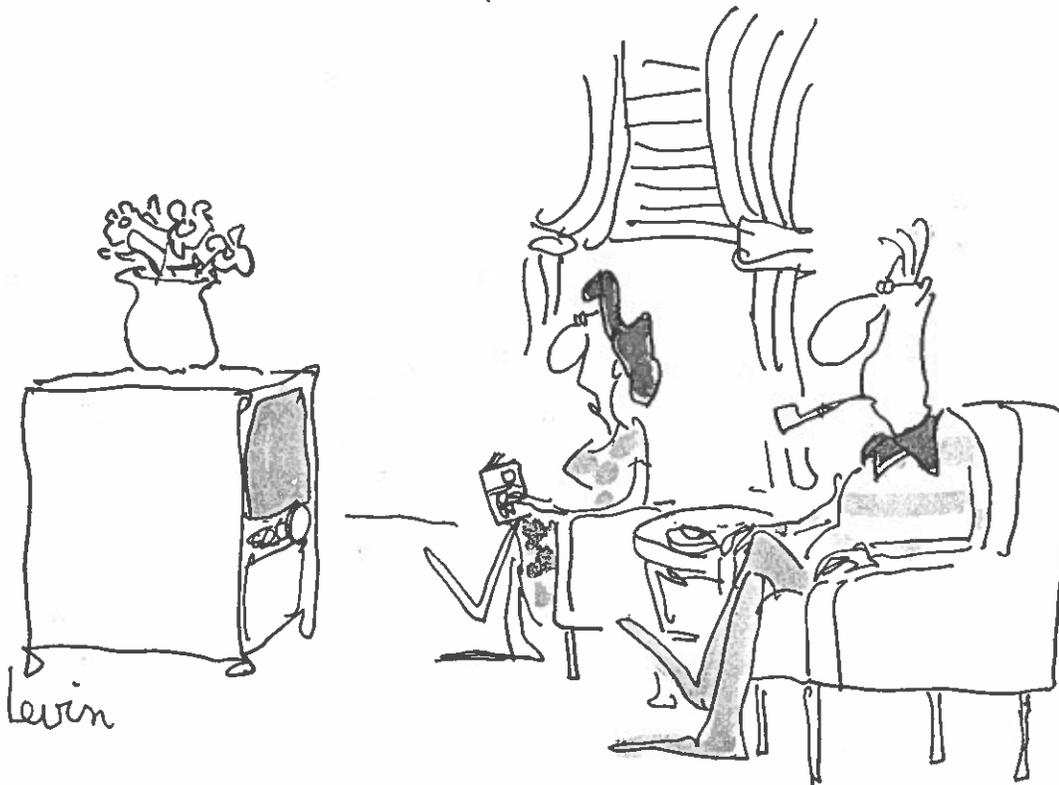
THE municipal street-corner trash cans in Hermann are labelled “SCHUND,” and customers leaving Hillebrand’s, the largest restaurant in town, are confronted by a valediction inscribed on the vestibule wall: “Auf Wiedersehen. Kommen Sie Bald Wieder.” The former mayor of Hermann (until last year) still carries business cards reading “C. M. (Cap) Bassman. Herr Bürgermeister.”

HERMANN sits sheltered in a small, semicircular valley, whose half-encircling slopes were once dense with terraced vineyards. It consists of twenty or thirty crowded, tree-lined blocks of well-scrubbed stoops and old brick sidewalks, and a wide main street called Market Street. Market Street begins at the river, at a narrow iron-truss bridge (built in 1929 to replace an 1880 ferry), and it extends southward perhaps a mile to the first rise of the enclosing hills, where it shrinks to a two-lane road. Market Street has always been the main street of Hermann. It was named, by the founding Philadelphia Gesellschaft, for its Philadelphia counterpart, and it was designed by them on a scale of considerable grandeur. They stipulated that Hermann’s principal street be one hundred and twenty feet wide from curb to curb—or ten feet wider than the Philadelphia original. I never got around to pacing it off, but it looks at least that wide. Parking on Market Street is angle parking, and there is still ample room for four lanes of traffic. Near the southern end of Market Street, there was at one time, around the turn of the century, a big square market building, called the Markt Haus, with two rows of produce stalls and a wagon lane be-

tween, in the middle of the street; there is now a park two blocks long—with a bandstand, lawns and benches, and an imposing two-story building (until recently the only firehouse and now also the town marshal’s office and the municipal jail)—islanded at the northern end of it. The other streets in Hermann are less aggressively proportioned, but they, too, bear the mark of its Philadelphia founders. The distant Gesellschaft required that the streets intersecting Market Street be identified (in the then popular American innovation) by numbers. They elected, however, to give names to the streets running parallel to Market Street. The names they chose suggest some careful thought—Gellert, Franklin, Gutenberg, Schiller, Washington, Mozart, Jefferson, and Goethe. The only street that the original settlers managed to name themselves is Wharf Street.

“THAT isn’t exactly right,” J. J. Graf, editor and publisher of the weekly *Hermann Advertiser-Courier* (an offshoot of the *Hermann Volksblatt*), told me, “although nobody seems to know it. I mean about those street names. Back in the old Prohibition days, the federal agents arrested a fellow here who had a place on First Street. But they had to let him go. The warrant naturally gave his address as First Street. So his lawyer got out the town charter and showed the court there was no such street. The Gesellschaft had named it Front Street.”

HERMANN is a substantial town for a town of twenty-six hundred people. It has amenities not often found in towns two or three times as large. It has a ten-acre City Park, with tennis courts, playing fields, picnic grounds, a swimming pool, and a handsome oc-



"There doesn't seem to be anything on that begins and ends tonight."

tagonal theatre, used for amateur entertainments. It has a modern hospital—the Hermann Area District Hospital—with forty-six beds. It has two medical doctors, two osteopathic doctors (Missouri is the birthplace of osteopathy), two chiropractors, two optometrists, four dentists, and a podiatrist. It has two funeral homes (Toedtman & Grosse and Herman Blumer) and the Frene Valley Nursing Home. It has five lawyers, a tax accountant, and the Kallmeyer-Schroff Auctioneering Service. It has a well-stocked public library (among the bumper stickers that I saw around town was one that read "Follow Me to the Library") and a movie theatre, the Showboat, with screenings four nights a week. It has the Stone Hill Winery, a recent revival of the relished past, with an average annual production of around forty-five thousand gallons. It has Van Kamp's Boutique & Antiques, the Sound Shoppe, and Klott's Blacksmith Shop. It has a Ford agency, a Chevrolet agency, a Chrysler-Plymouth agency, a Buick agency, a Dodge agency, and a John Deere agency. It has Rohlfling's Greenhouse and the Noelke Jewelry Store. It has the Hermann Cleaners and two laundries—the Helpee-Selfee and the Schillerstrasse. It has a Florsheim Shoe Company factory, a toy factory, and

(Snake's) and a bowling alley. It has the Sausage Shoppe ("50 Different Types of Cheeses and Sausages") and Schulte's Bakery: *leckuchen*, *springerli*, *stollen*, *pfeffernüsse*, *schnitzbrot*, *streusel*. It has ten beauty parlors, four barbershops, seven bars and the Levee House Cocktail Lounge, and two liquor stores. It also has a resident celebrity—Ken Boyer, the former St. Louis Cardinals star.

"ONE thing we haven't got," former Mayor (or Burgermeister) Bassman told me, "is an Alcoholics Anonymous. We may be the only town of our size that hasn't. We just don't have that many drunks. Our people are used to Old World gracious living. They grew up drinking beer or wine with their meals. We don't have any kind of extremes. We've got very few people on welfare, and we don't have what I'd call real wealth. I'll admit old Bill Schlender gave us a surprise. Bill was a widower here who died a couple of years ago. He had a shoe store on Schiller Street for as long as I can remember, and he lived upstairs. He wore the same overcoat for forty years, and he used to sit out front of his store in the evening and read the paper by the light of a street lamp to save electricity. Well, he died

sand dollars in a checking account."

HERMANN, small as it is, has two distinct (to local eyes) business districts. One of these is the two blocks on Market Street between Third Street and Fifth, with an extension along East Fourth Street between Market and Schiller. The other is East First (or Front) Street between Schiller and Gutenberg. The First Street block is known to Hermannites as Downtown. Market Street and the East Fourth Street block are Uptown. Uptown has Jay's IGA Food Liner, the Sharp Corner Tavern (where at ten o'clock one morning, I

saw through the open door three gracious livers standing at the bar), the S & S Variety Store, and Schulte's Bakery. Downtown has the Riverfront Bi-Rite Market, the Concert Hall Bar & Barrell, Berlener's Rexall Drugs, and the Sausage Shoppe. The First Missouri Bank of Gasconade County, the only bank in the area, occupies a classically columned limestone building on East First Street, but it also has a branch office in a recently restored brick residence (dating from 1871) on Market Street at Third. "We have a strong feeling about Old Hermann," Robert C. Kirchhofer, the president of the First Missouri, told me. "But we don't believe in shrines and monuments. We believe in preservation for use. This is largely why the bank took over the old Reiff House. That was in 1972, and I think it's turned out well." He laughed. "I dropped in a few weeks after our opening to see how things were going, and on the way out I met an old lady I've known all my life, and she grabbed me by the hand. 'Oh, Robert,' she said, 'I'm just thrilled about your new bank. Now I don't have to go all the way downtown anymore.'"

Some people are inclined to think of Schiller Street between East Fourth and East First as a kind of midtown

Jane's Beauty Salon, Ruthie's Salon of Beauty, Marilyn's Beauty Salon, and Gloria's Beauty Salon. Gloria is Mrs. Gloria Bruckerhoff. Her shop is situated in a low, unrestored brick building (circa 1856) that is also her home. "I guess there *are* a lot of us girls," she told me, "but we get along together real fine. There's plenty of customers to go round. The ladies here in Hermann care about the way they look. They're conservative. They still like to wear it teased. I try to keep up with things at the shows in St. Louis, but we're always about two years behind. Another funny thing is the way all of us girls have started doing boy haircuts. I mean for boys. I've got boy customers from two to ninety. The barbers don't like it, but it's their own fool fault. The boys come to me because I'll style their hair the way they want it styled. They say the barbers won't listen—they just keep cutting it in the regular barber way. If you ask me, the boys around here are even more particular than the ladies. I'm even beginning to do those his-and-hers permanents."

THE architectural antiquity of much of Hermann is formally and officially acknowledged. In 1972, some twenty square blocks of the town, including all its business streets, were accepted for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation, of the National Park Service, Department of the Interior, in Washington. This recognition was largely brought about by the concerted efforts of a number of local groups—the Brush and Palette Club, Historic Hermann, Inc., the Hermann Chamber of Commerce, the First Missouri Bank. "I'm sure it was worth it," Mrs. Anna Hesse, an art teacher and the founder of the Brush and Palette Club, told me. I was sitting with Mrs. Hesse—and with

Mrs. Laura Graf (a cousin of the newspaper publisher), both founding members of Historic Hermann—on the terrace of Mrs. Hesse's home on a slope overlooking the red and green and gray pitched roofs of Hermann. "But, oh, my Lord, the miles and miles of correspondence!" she went on. "I guess you could say that it all began when we organized our first annual Maifest. That was way back in 1952. As you may know, the Maifest is one of the oldest of the German spring festivals. Well, we wanted to try to raise some money to save the Rotunda. That's the octagonal theatre in City Park. Of course, the Maifest goes back to the very beginning of Hermann. But it was originally a children's affair—a close-of-school celebration. I remember—and this was back in the twenties—we'd march from the old German School, on Schiller Street, out to the park, and there would be the town band and sack races and a maypole. And then we'd have the picnic."

"The *treat*," Mrs. Coe said. "We

always called it the treat. But everything was very disciplined. Hermann was totally German in those days, and all of us children spoke German before we learned English. I'm only a Coe by marriage—my maiden name was Dietzel. But about the treat. We would all line up and the bugler would blow a special call and we would march—very correctly—over to the table, and they would give each of us a big slice of knockwurst on a bun. Delicious! Then we'd march away, and in a few minutes the bugle would blow again, and off we'd go to the table once more. This time, they would give us a glass of pink lemonade. And the pink was *wine*! Oh, my! Then one more bugle call, and we'd each get an orange. We really looked forward to the Maifest. But they dropped it twenty years or more ago. It got so the children didn't think it was much of a treat anymore."

"I know," Mrs. Hesse said. "I know. But the Maifest that Hermann

is so famous for now is a total community effort. It lasts only two days—a Saturday and Sunday toward the end of May—but it takes months of preparation, and almost everybody in town participates. We usually put on an original historical musical at the Rotunda—usually written by Mimi Schmidt. We have a walking tour of Old Hermann, and a tour of several of our most historic homes, and various arts-and-crafts exhibitions, and a parade, and a tasting tour of the Stone Hill Winery, and we set up beer gardens, and there are concerts of old German folk songs, and so on. We've been a great success from the start. Our first Maifest was so successful it was almost a disaster. We did just too good a job promoting it around the state. I don't know what we expected in the way of attendance, but forty thousand people showed up. *Forty thousand!* And something like twenty thou-



"Eliza? Oh, please say you two haven't eaten. I've just



"No ideas for you at the moment, but I have mentioned your name to somebody at the National Endowment for the Arts."

no traffic control. Our police force is only three officers and the marshal. People drove into town from all directions and parked just any old where. Nobody could move. There were cars backed up for miles across the bridge. Market Street was a solid mass of pushing and shoving humanity. I know—I got stranded there. And everybody was starving. Every eating place in town ran out of food by early Saturday afternoon. We didn't know whether to call the Red Cross or the Highway Patrol. I called the Highway Patrol, and at first they wouldn't believe me. They just laughed. I understand that all the way to St. Louis people were taking in strangers and giving them something to eat. It was awful, but we made money—enough to restore the Rotunda, and more. And the next year we were prepared. Everybody in town made sandwiches and set up stands. And practically everybody who came that year brought their own food."

"It's different now," Mrs. Coe said. "We know what to expect. We import enough extra policemen. Everything is organized and controlled. Everybody has a wonderful time. It's been a great thing for Hermann."

"I think it's been our salvation," Mrs. Hesse said. "Hermann would be very different now if we hadn't called attention to our historical treasures. They're what bring so many visitors to the Maifest—our beautiful old homes, our unique living past. And we got started in the very nick of time. The war was just over and prosperity was beginning. The bulldozer was looming. But most of our best architecture was still here, and it could still be saved. What had preserved it for so long, of course, was the Depression. Our Depression. We had the longest and the worst of anybody. You might say it began with the First World War. A lot of people don't realize it, but that was the *really* anti-German war. I remember my parents talking. We Hermannites were practically ostracized. We weren't considered German-Americans—we were Germans. We were the enemy. You may have heard of a village near here called Pershing. Well, its original name was Potsdam. Then, after the war, came Prohibition. And the principal economy of Hermann was wine! Almost everybody here grew grapes for either Stone Hill or Sohns. And we also had two

distilleries and a big brewery. Then came the general Depression. I don't know how we survived. Those were terrible years for Hermann. But they did have a kind of silver lining. Hard times kept Hermann a nineteenth-century town. They kept it from going modern, like so many American towns. In a way, they preserved our heritage."

"*Schönheit muss leiden,*" Mrs. Graf said.

Mrs. Hesse laughed. "Yes," she said. "To be beautiful one must suffer."

"ANNA's right about those years," Dr. Joseph F. Schmidt, one of the town's two optometrists, told me. "I came here in the late thirties from Washington, Missouri, which has a big German community itself, but I could see the difference: Nothing had changed in Hermann for at least twenty years. I remember a conversation I overheard on the street one day. I'll never forget it. It was two old women talking. It went like this:

"First woman: 'Call me up. I have now the telephone.'

"Second woman: '*Ja? Was ist deine Nummer?*'"

"First woman: '*Lass mal denken.*'"

Is it 238? Or is it 382? You got to get it just right, you know, or it don't work."

HERMANN has two motels, one at each end of town, and two hotels: the Central Hotel (a second-floor hotel next door to the Sharp Corner Tavern) and the German Haus. I stayed at the German Haus. It occupies a building (put up in 1847) that was first a store and warehouse and then a private residence. It was remodelled into a hostelry in 1962. It is a rectangular building, two good stories in height, and built of the warm, salmony brick that distinguishes most pre-Civil War architecture in Hermann. Its windows are long and gently arched and hung with dark-green shutters, and it has the steeply pitched standing-seam iron roof of the period, painted barn red. A gallery, reached by an outside

staircase, runs along the front and one side of the building. The office of the German Haus, and the living quarters of the owners, Mr. and Mrs. Van Moore, are in an adjacent building, across a gravelled parking lot. This building (1841) was the first *Erholungshalle*, or theatre, in Hermann. The office is a comfortable room, always open to guests, with a big round table, a circle of chairs, an electric coffee urn, and three freshly home-baked cakes (usually a pound cake, a crumb cake, and a chocolate layer cake) to choose from every day. On the wall above the coffee urn is an elaborately framed poem, hand-lettered in gold foil on black glass and headed "*Göttlichen Haussegen*." It reads:

*Wo Glaube da Liebe,
Wo Liebe da Friede,
Wo Friede da Segen,
Wo Segen da Gott—
Wo Gott keine Not.*

Mrs. Moore (née Gellhausen) provided me with a translation:

Where there is belief, there is love,
Where there is love, there is peace,
Where there is peace, there is joy,
Where there is joy, there is God—
Where there is God, there is no want.

The German Haus is conveniently and attractively situated. It stands on a knoll on East Second Street, a block up from the bridge and the river, and it faces down the boulevard sweep of Market Street. I had a big, high-ceilinged corner room that opened on the front gallery, and I liked to sit out there on an old slatted bench in the late afternoon, with much of Hermann spread out around me.

Off to the right, to the south and west, rose the red brick battlements of the two oldest churches—the Gothic spired and dormered St. George Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant St. Paul United Church of Christ, with its seven-story campanile—each on its own imposing hilltop. ("That was no accident," the Reverend Mr. Armin Klemme, pastor of the United Church, told me. "Our two denominations were quite competitive in the early days, and the founding fathers planned with that unfortunate fact in mind. They went to infinite trouble to choose for our churches two sites that had practically the same elevation.") Off to the left, on a bluff above the river, rose the red brick bulk of the Gasconade County Courthouse (the gift, in 1897, of a Hermannite named Charles D. Eitzen), with its colonnaded porch, its four corner domes, and its great central silvery dome ablaze in the setting sun. I could

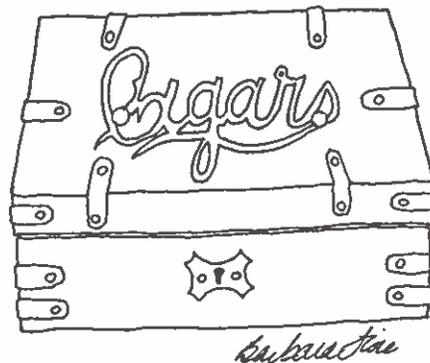
even see, if I stood and craned my neck, the little green bronze cannon (a six-pounder cast in Boston) on its limestone mounting on the courthouse lawn. ("Cannons had names in those old days," Arthur A. Schweighauser, a retired vice-president of the Laclede Steel Company, in St. Louis, and president of Historic Hermann, told me. "Ours is named Ever True. Ever True fired three shots in the Civil War. This is ultra-Republican country, as I suppose you know, and it has been since the beginning. Gasconade County and St. Louis County were the only two counties in Missouri that voted for Lincoln in 1860. So we were on the Union side, and Ever True has the distinction of having stopped the advance of General Sterling Price's Confederate Army for almost half an hour. That was in October of 1864. There was nobody living in Hermann then but women and children and a few old men—the rest of the men were off fighting for the Union. Price's cavalry commander, General Marmaduke, knew that. So he came riding up the river toward what turned out to be the terrible Battle of Westport, near Kansas City, feeling nice and relaxed. Then, all of a sudden, there was a cannon shot from somewhere up in town. Marmaduke thought he was being bushwhacked. He stopped and waited, and a few minutes later there was another shot, this time from a different point in town. Then came another shot, from still another point. But after that, no more. Marmaduke sent out a party of scouts. They brought back the answer: a few old men had been carrying Ever True from hill to hill and pretending to be an army. Well, Marmaduke had his men throw Ever True into the river. But after he left we fished it out. We don't claim a victory, of course. I think Price would probably have been defeated at Westport even without our help.") I could also see, around one end of the gallery, the superstructure of the bridge and a stretch of muddy river and, once in a while, a little white towboat creeping along with

its acreage of barges thrusting out ahead.

But the other view is the view I usually see when I remember my stay in Hermann. That was the view, framed in sweet gums and maples, down the peaceful length of Market Street, across the little bridge that spans a wandering stream called Frene Creek, and beyond—to the cupolaed Stone Hill Winery (built in 1869), massive on its distant hill, and the long green slope and sheltering cedars of the Protestant Cemetery lifting to the opposite far horizon. And I always remember it with the scent of lilacs in the early-evening air and the sound across the rooftops of the bell in the tower of the old German School (now the City Hall) ringing the hours.

I HAD been in Hermann almost a week before I crossed the Frene Creek bridge and climbed the slope of the Protestant Cemetery. I went, that first time, at the suggestion of Arthur Schweighauser. "I'm sure you've come across the name of George F. Bayer," he told me. "You might call him the founder of Hermann. Bayer was general agent for the Gesellschaft. The Gesellschaft selected the site of Hermann, and Bayer bought the land it was built on. But unless you've read pretty deep, you wouldn't know the rest of the story. The first settlers here had a very hard time for a year or two. They didn't like the land or anything about it, and they blamed it all on Bayer. They made him the scapegoat; they hated him. And Bayer took it to heart. He came down with the fever and died, in 1839. You'll find his grave in the far southeastern corner of the cemetery. It's up there all by itself. When they buried him, the people decided that there would never be another grave within fifty feet of his. Go up and see for yourself."

I found Bayer's grave without any trouble. It is in the highest, most commanding corner of the cemetery, but it is conspicuous only in its pariah isolation. It is marked by a limestone slab, darkly weathered and slumped askew, with his name, the dates of his birth and death, and a carving in relief of two clasped hands. It was eerie in its reticence. And, in the circumstances, it was hard to imagine what the hand-clasp signified. I moved away, and was stopped by Bayer's nearest neighbor—a three-foot column surmounted by a sundial. It commemorated a more familiar tragedy: "In memory of the early pioneers who perished in the explosion of the steamboat 'Big Hatchie'



at the wharf at Hermann in 1842, the thirty-five dead that lie buried here in unmarked graves and the many whose bodies were never recovered from the waters of the Missouri River."

I started back down the slope to the street below, where I had left my car. It took me almost an hour to get there; I had forgotten the strange enchantment of an old cemetery. Death was taken seriously in America in the nineteenth century. Its presence was accepted and respected, and, with their stylized conjurations of redemption, the placatory memorials it inspired are works of dignity and art. The Protestant Cemetery in Hermann is more enchanting than most. Hermann in the years before and long after the Civil War was blessed with a succession of gifted stone-carvers. Examples of their work are everywhere on the upper, older slopes of the cemetery—a dove in flight toward a heavenly crown, an angel kneeling in prayer, a woman bowed and weeping, a lamb beneath a weeping-willow tree, a skull and crossed bones, a finger (with the legend "*Im Himmel*") pointing upward, an urn draped with a fringed and tasselled cloth, a ten-foot column rising to a pinnacle cone wreathed in an elaboration, in full relief, of ferns and primroses and lilies. Most of the most richly sculptured stones are also inscribed with richly fervent sentiments. I made a note of one:

Hier
ruhen die irdischen Überreste
von
WILH. DORNER
Geboren
zu Langenwinkel in Baden
Dec. 25, 1807
Gestorben
April 27, 1859
als treuer Jugendlehrer
verband er mit grossem
Lehrtalent, Freiheitsstreben, Redlichkeit
und Biedersein, Friede seiner Asche
I H S

Just below a path that divides the oldest graves from the rest of the cemetery, I came across the plot of a family named Heck. It contained three headstones, two of them placed side by side. The first of these was inscribed

Water
KARL HECK
geb. 25 Dec., 1821
gest. 20 April, 1915

The second read

Mutter
HENRIETTE HECK
geb. GUENTHER
geb. 28 Juni 1828
gest. 1 Aug. 1901

But what interested me was the third stone. It was inscribed

BERTHA HECK
Born Aug. 29, 1851
Died Jan. 31, 1927
Gone but not Forgotten

It seemed to mark the end of an era. I remembered that the *Hermanner Volksblatt*, yielding to the *Advertiser-Courier*, had discontinued publication in 1928.

ST. GEORGE CEMETERY, the Roman Catholic cemetery of Hermann, is on a high and rolling slope on the other outskirt of town, just off Goethe Street. It is a pleasant retreat, with a long *allée* overhung with spreading cedars, and it, too, is rich in sculptured sentiment, but the grave that caught and held my attention there was a new one. It was marked by a small bronze plaque, bright and shining in a glance of sunlight. The inscription read:

FLOYD H. ELSENRAAT
A1C U.S. Air Force
Vietnam
Dec. 24, 1949
Sept. 24, 1971

HERMANN (perhaps because of its European roots) is plentifully provided with places to eat. I counted (and visited) eight of them. All were crowded at lunchtime, and two or three were filled at night. They are the A & W Drive-In, at the far south end of town; Imo's Pizza, across the Frene Creek bridge; the Sausage Shoppe (sandwiches and coffee); Schulte's Bakery (doughnuts and coffee); a bar-and-grill on First Street called Mr. R's; and three Market Street restaurants—Hillebrand's, the Central Hotel Café, and the Rockhouse. The Central Hotel Café keeps farmers' hours. It opens in the morning at six o'clock and closes at six in the evening. Hillebrand's and the Rockhouse keep hours more conveniently urban, and I ate most of my meals at one or the other of them. The food of Hermann includes some contributions from the traditional Missouri kitchen (country-cured ham, batter-fried chicken, catfish, cornbread, grits), but otherwise, except for the standard American fast food available at the A & W and at Imo's Pizza, it is wholly German. (A bumper sticker I often saw around town urged "Eat More Possum," but possum was never on any menu during my stay.) I dined at Hillebrand's on my first night in Hermann, and I ordered the

cuisine—sauerbraten with potato pancakes, apple sauce, and sauerkraut salad. My last meal in Hermann was a home-cooked dinner at the home of the Schweighausers. Mrs. Schweighauser (née Bezold) did the cooking, and the meal she gave us (in a house built in 1846 by her great-grandmother) was an even more satisfying valediction. The entrée was bratwurst with German potato salad. The vegetable was green beans cooked with bacon. There were side dishes of apple sauce and *Schmierkäse*. The bread was home-baked *Schnitzbrot*. The dessert was *Bundkuchen*. With the main course we drank a bottle of dry red wine from the Stone Hill Winery called Virginia Seedling.

I usually had my breakfast at the Rockhouse. It was just down the street from the German Haus—past a dark house in a deep lawn, with a broken bottle and a couple of beer cans under a forsythia bush (the only litter I ever saw anywhere in Hermann), past the Twin Trails liquor store, past Gosen's Gift Shop and Sporting Goods, past Jim's Barber Shop, past a Sears, Roebuck catalogue store, past Van Kamp's Boutique—with the sidewalk roofed or awninged almost all the way. The Rockhouse occupies the ground floors of two small adjoining buildings, the older of which (1842) is built of stone (a rarity in Hermann); hence its name. It is a comfortable place, with a low, beamed ceiling and a portion of the original two-foot-thick stone walls exposed, and the day's special chalked on a slate near the door (ham hock and beans, pot roast and dumplings, Wiener schnitzel), and it was nice to be able to look at the slate at breakfast and decide whether I wanted to come back that night for dinner. And the prices, too, were right. One night I finished dinner (spareribs) and was still hungry. I ordered a chocolate sundae. The waitress brought it, and added the charge to my bill. It was sixteen cents.

DR. SCHMIDT, the optometrist, joined me for coffee at the Rockhouse one morning. "No," he said. "I don't mean that. Of course Hermann is a small town. And I hope it will stay that way. What I mean is, it isn't as small-town as it used to be. It's grown up a little bit. I remember when I first came here from Washington, Missouri, and before Mimi and I were married, I had a birthday, and Mimi baked me a cake. There was a

evening, and when I went over that night, I took her a slice of my cake. She told me later what happened. She was working at the shoe factory then, and she packed her slice of cake in her lunchbox the next day. At lunchtime, she and her girl friend got to wondering who had baked the cake for me. My friend said maybe my mother, over in Washington. But the other woman said no. She said, 'I saw Doc when he got off the Washington bus yesterday, and he didn't have any packages with him.'

THERE are three real-estate firms in Hermann. One of them, whose red-white-and-blue sign I often saw around town on vacant lots and empty buildings, is the Rathert Agency Realtors. It is owned and operated by Merlin T. Rathert and his wife, Judith. Rathert is a vigorous man of fifty-two. "Exactly, my friend," he told me. "We have a great heritage here, and it needs to be preserved. But with it we must be progressive. We can't be stymied by what is already here. I don't say tear down what we've got. I say maintain it, but plan for the future. I don't want big buildings. Anything over three or four stories is a no-no to me. What I'm saying, my friend, is we've got something here that a lot of communities would like to have. We must keep it, but we must also look ahead. People say don't change this quaint little town. I say grow, my friend. I say don't sit on your laurels."

A day or two later, I talked to Robert Kirchhofer, the president of the First Missouri Bank. Kirchhofer is thirty-five years old, and the youngest president in the history of the bank. "I don't know the answers," he told me. "I think I can say we want to stay small. We certainly don't want to see Hermann spread and sprawl. Take the shopping-center people. They turn up here from time to time, and they want to talk business. We always discourage them. The bank isn't interested in that kind of thing. But we have a very real problem here—a job problem. There are jobs to be had. There are offerings every week in the *Advertiser-Courier*. But they don't pay much more than unemployment compensation. It's the familiar small-town problem. How do you keep your young people? I was born and raised here. I love Hermann. I want it to stay Hermann. But I'm one of the lucky ones. I graduated from Hermann High School in 1959, and there were sixty

of us came back to Hermann to stay. The other guy is a farmer. The three others couldn't find any college-graduate jobs here. There aren't even that many high-school-graduate jobs. And I say that ain't good."

Arlie Scharnhorst, the chairman of the board, joined Kirchhofer and me. It was he whom Kirchhofer succeeded as president of the bank. "I think we can survive," Scharnhorst told me. "I think we can keep the kind of Hermann we want. We've always had industry here—the shoe factory and one or two others. I hope we can solve the job problem without becoming really industrialized. And I hope we can avoid becoming a bedroom suburb for St. Louis. I think we can continue to stand on our own two feet. Our economy is sound. I don't know a farm in the area that's in any kind of trouble. Our people are savers. Always have been. There's a tradition here of thrift. That's one of our German

virtues. These are ultra-conservative people. Especially when it comes to money. You may have heard what they say around here: 'Never bet on a sure thing unless you can afford to lose.'"

ONE of the Poeschels built this house in 1869," Mrs. William Harrison told me. The Harrisons came to Hermann from Columbia, Missouri, the seat of the state university, and are one of the few non-German families in town. "He was a brother of the Poeschel who built the Stone Hill Winery, and he had some rather grand ideas. This is the only Greek Revival house in Hermann with columns of that size. We've had to completely restore it, of course. It was in the most dreadful shape when we bought it, in 1954. A moonshiner had it during Prohibition, and the people who lived here after that were too pitifully poor to keep from letting it



"Just because a person has never been mentioned in *'People'* magazine, *'People'* or *'Notes on People'*

run all the way down. We've tried to restore it to exactly what it was when Poeschel built it. The only real change we made, we added the fireplace in what we call the family room. Which brings up an interesting note. The Scharnhorsts, as you probably know, have the old Charles Eitzen house, which was built around 1850, and I'm sure you've noticed those beautiful white marble fireplaces. And Laura Graf, whose house was built in 1892, has that exquisite Victorian fireplace in her parlor. But our house belongs to a period somewhere in between. It was built at a time when the fireplace was considered old-fashioned, and the latest thing was the parlor stove."

THE superintendent of schools in Hermann is a big, bald, sparkling, blue-eyed man named Ross Boeger. "I'm not a Hermannite," he told me. "I've only been here since 1973. But Hermann fits right into my background—I'm a native Missourian, and my ancestry is totally German. I admire these people. They're house-proud and they're self-disciplined and they're responsible. When we first moved here, I saw my neighbor out sweeping the street in front of his house, and I was amazed. But I soon found out that he was only doing what everybody does in Hermann. So now I do the same. Well, our pupils seem to have inherited that Old World respect for property. You won't find a mark of any kind on any wall in any rest room in any of our schools. No graffiti—none. And we don't have any locks on our lockers. We don't need them. Our people don't steal. Another thing is, the parents here believe that the school is authority, and they give the school the right to teach *and* to discipline. And this is on top of some very strict home discipline. We do a real job of teaching here, too. Our grading is rigid. I have two children who were still in school when we came to Hermann. They'd always been better-than-average students,

work harder than ever before in their lives. I'll tell you something that bugs me. We're told that the young people now can't read or do math as well as the youngsters did thirty or forty years ago. Well, I don't believe it. The difference is this: In the old days, a whole lot of young people dropped out of school very early. They were the poor students, mostly. But now they stay in school, and they naturally pull the average down. I'm really enthusiastic about this town. Did I tell you we start teaching German here in the third grade? It's not a real course at that level. It's just offered, like passing around a box of candy. The German teacher comes into the class one day a week or so, and she starts by saying something like 'Guten Tag.' Then she tells the kids what it means, and writes the words on the board. The next week, she starts them on 'cin, zwei, drei.' The kids can pay attention or not. But German is a real course in high school, with an average enrollment in German 1 of around thirty. Now let's move into the shadows. We have our problems here. We have the rumor of drugs. If I were to ask one of our youngsters could he get his hands on some pot this afternoon, the answer would probably be yes. If you ask me is there any in the school, the answer is no. We had a marijuana dog up here a while ago. He was paraded through the halls and past the lockers. Nothing. But by four o'clock this aft-

ernoon there'll be a lot of our young people sitting somewhere and smoking their pot. I think we have a little drinking problem, too. But not in the school—not in this building or on any school grounds. School is for schooling."

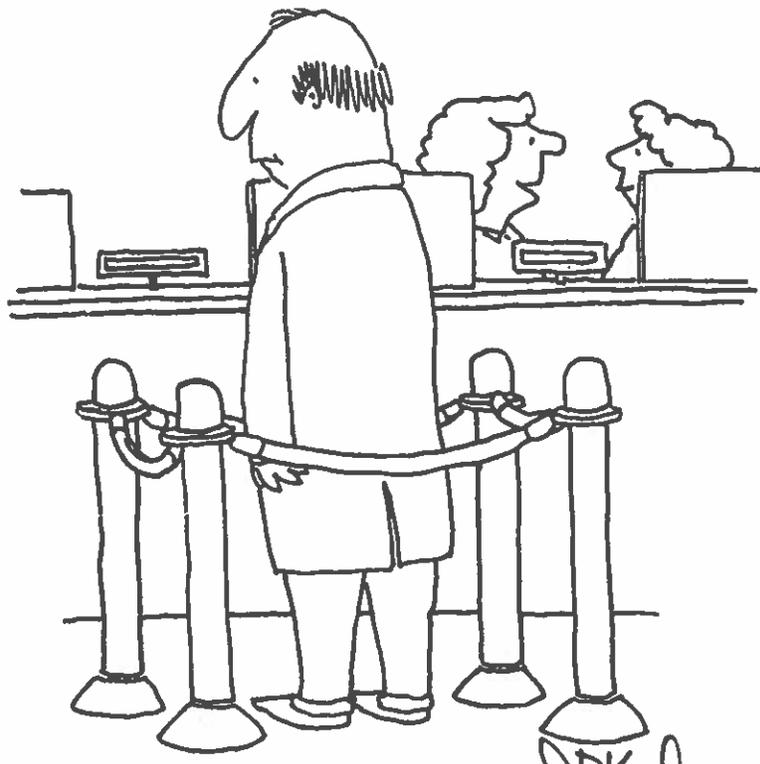
THE *Advertiser-Courier* had had a story, with pictures, headed "TOP RANKING HHS SENIORS." There were thirteen of them—twelve girls and one boy. In the hall outside Boeger's office, I recognized one of the girls. She was Mary Jo Pohlman, a pretty girl with long blond hair and a wide, confident smile. She ranked tenth in the group of thirteen, just ahead of the one boy. "Oh, I'm a feminist," she told me. "I really believe in liberation. I want a career. I'm going to study nursing. But I want to marry, too. The only thing is, I guess I'm also a little old-fashioned. I mean, I like those opened doors."

"Those what?" I said.

"You know," she said. "I like a guy to open the door for me."

I MET the Reverend Mr. Klemme, pastor of the United Church of Christ, by appointment, in his office overlooking the river. He is a tall, gray man, with an air of troubled severity. He sat with his back to the view. "I like small towns," he told me. "I feel they represent the best of America. I particularly like Hermann.

I'm only sorry that the morals of the city are beginning to reach us here. We had eight pregnancies among our high-school girls last year. But I attribute that to more than moral laxity. By that I mean the problem is complex. Our economy here is very important to blame. There seems to be plenty of work, but the wages in all of the ordinary jobs are low. They are often so low that both husband and wife must go out to work. Moral laxity is a direct result of a lack of parental control. There is nobody at home when the children come home from school. And in the evening the parents



ered. Our confirmation classes used to be obligatory. Now the parents consult the children. The *parents* consult the *children!*"

The Scharnhorsts are members of the United Church, and Mrs. Scharnhorst (née Heck) is an active volunteer there. She seemed to share some of the Reverend Mr. Klemme's concerns. "Abortion is unheard-of here," she told me. "It isn't even discussed. So the poor girls just go ahead and have their illegitimate babies. And they're only children themselves—fifteen or sixteen years old. Even fourteen! Half the time, they don't even know who the father is. But the strange thing—the thing that is so hard for my generation to understand—is this: It's no disgrace. They're not ostracized. Nobody even seems to mind. Not even when the baby turns out to be half black. Or half white. Or whatever. What worries me is when the father isn't known. Some of those babies are going to grow up and maybe marry their half brother or half sister. And never even know it."

IT is generally agreed, though often deplored, that Hermann is a growing town. For all its isolation, its limited economy, the drift away of its young people, its population increases every year. Most of the newcomers are city people—fugitives, for the most part, from St. Louis. Most of them also seem to have arrived by chance and to have settled down on impulse. "It's really almost eerie," Mrs. Bessie Moore, my landlady at the German Haus, told me one afternoon over coffee and a slice of crumb cake still warm from the oven. "People come through here, and something seems to happen, and they decide to stay. I can't explain it. Van and I were born and raised in St. Louis, and we had a successful printing business. I suppose we were getting a little restless. I suppose it's those big-city blues. Anyway, we were out driving through the country one weekend, and we turned off the Interstate at New Florence and wandered along and came over the bridge, and there we were in Hermann. I don't think I'd ever even heard of Hermann. But halfway down Market Street I had this feeling. It felt like an electric charge. I said to Van, 'Here it is—I've finally made it home!' I said, 'Nothing but good can happen to us here.'"

"I'D call it an accident," Ken Boyer, the former Cardinals star, told

Porter Tunny, who has that big farm across the river, brought me down to Hermann in the fall of 1961 for some quail shooting, and I liked it here. I thought it was a real fine place. I still do. It has something. I mean besides the shooting. Because there isn't a whole lot of quail shooting left. Too much cow and plow."

THE newest newcomers to Hermann whom I got to know were a couple named Tucker—Frank and Phyllis Tucker. Both are in their forties. Tucker is a teacher by profession. Before coming to Hermann, he taught for fifteen years in a suburban St. Louis high school. He works now as a housepainter and paperhanger. His wife is an artist. "We've been here just over a year," she told me. "We had made up our minds to leave St. Louis, and we had heard about this farm near Gerald, down in Franklin County, and we got on the wrong road and ended up here in Hermann. We'd been here before, for a Maifest, and the only impression we had of Hermann was a lot of people rushing around. But this was a beautiful spring day. We really saw the town. And we decided we'd like to see more, so we checked into the German Haus. Then we went out to look around. We came down Third Street and saw this house with Merlin Rathert's sign out front, and we liked everything about it—the lovely block, the lovely pink brick, and the way it's built close to the street, so there's plenty of room in back for a big garden. Frank said, 'Let's not think about it—let's just do it.' So we bought it. I don't know exactly when it was built, but we have a copy of the original abstract for the land. It was a federal grant to a man named Hensley in 1832, and Mr. Bayer, the Gesellschaft agent, bought it from Hensley in 1837. That kind of continuity pleases me. We bought the house from the estate of an old man named Henry Bohl. Mr. Bohl died a few years ago from a stomach obstruction. The obstruction turned out to be a mass of wood splinters. Mr. Bohl was one of those men who are always chewing on a toothpick. There's a story that he had thirty thousand dollars in cash hidden somewhere in this house. We keep

hoping, but we haven't found it yet."

"We could use it," Tucker said. "But the important thing is just being here in this wonderful, friendly town. Phyllis didn't mention why we wanted to leave St. Louis. The high school where I taught was a joy when I first started there. Then something began to change. The community began to go down. We began to get a whole new kind of student. Nobody seemed to want to learn. I'd look at those sullen, resentful faces. It got so I was spending half of every hour on discipline. We had security guards patrolling the halls. And this was a community that had once been the flower of St. Louis County. I went on teaching the way I'd always taught, and when the first set of grades came out last year, there was an uproar. I had failed fifty-two per cent of my classes. The uproar came from the students. The principal just sat in his office, trying to hang on till retirement. My classes were impossible. There was always some kid jumping up and threatening he was going to get me. I never actually had a knife pulled on me, but the knives were there. I'll tell you something. If you've never had a girl stand up in class and cuss you out in language so vile you've hardly even heard a man use it—well, if you haven't had that experience, you can't imagine what it does to your insides. I'd go home at night and I wouldn't know whether to cry or get drunk. I decided I didn't have to stay there anymore. And nobody asked me to stay. None of the administrators cared. They thought I was crazy. Quality education isn't the point anymore. The point is fill a slot and keep order. I'm not worried about making a living. I might try teaching again, here in Hermann. It's a whole different system. But I've always been handy with my hands. And I'm beginning to get a reputation for good, honest workmanship. I feel I've saved my soul."

"There's something *Frank* didn't mention," Mrs. Tucker said. "He's probably the only paperhanger or housepainter in Gasconade County with a master's degree in education."

—BERTON ROUCHE

"PORGY AND BESS" — Uris; through Dec. 5; fine revival of the Gershwin masterpiece musical based on a James Stewart movie about a Quaker family; available. —*Colorado Springs Sun*.

Remember that Elder named Crown? He was