

German farm life described

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not be surprised to see at least one car in every garage. Even with this relative luxury, Germany has kept clean, comfortable and extremely punctual mass transit systems within reach of everyone's home. Buses run through the country at half-hour intervals — and don't you be late! Because the bus won't be. Train service is equally impressive, creating a complete transportation network which enables any German to go anywhere in comfort whether he owns a car or not.

Old customs often create bothersome situations. In Germany it is nothing extraordinary to find a farm which has its land scattered and none or little of it joining. In most cases the farmer's acreage is spread out in parcels, some of it several miles away from his farm buildings. Consequently he has to drive his cattle to pasture or haul equipment along highways frequently. In some instances his trench silo may be a mile or two from the barn. Some farmers are in favor of exchanging parcels of land so that each operator has his fields nearby, but unless everyone involved is willing to cooperate, it cannot be done. Some farms have been in the family for hundreds of years and members are reluctant to give up these ancient homes

and lands.

With farms being clustered together in villages, fire protection facilities are never far off, and children need not be bussed from all over the country to get to school. Since farms have been in existence for centuries, it is not surprising to find the farm buildings in the central part of villages, and new homes have sprouted up around them. Here again, the most impressive feature is the immaculate state of every home and its surroundings. Simply describing the orderliness and almost fairytale settings of these communities would not do them justice. They should be seen. Farmers who track mud on to the streets are required by law to remove it. Neatness includes even the "Gastwirtschaft" — tavern — which is built and maintained to match the best homes in the area.

Safety regulations are very much a part of German life, especially farm life. Strict codes cover such things as tractor construction and placement of tanks and bins for fuels. Steel fire doors must separate living quarters from those areas of the building which are occupied by livestock, equipment, or machinery.

Such favorite American pastimes as hunting and fishing are not so common in Germany. Instead the German family prefers to enjoy an afternoon with friends, or hike through the public woods and gardens. Listening to soccer games on the radio, or better yet attending the game in person, is definitely one of the most favorite activities of a German. Congregating at the local Gastwirtschaft for a couple of beers and a card game is also enjoyed by many. For the ladies, the younger ones at least, there are such things as gymnastics clubs, something not readily accepted by older German males who believe a woman's place is in the home.

Meals consist primarily of dark bread and cold cuts, meat, vegetables and potatoes. The latter are by far the largest part of a German's diet. Extra large helpings are served daily. Milk, fruitjuices, coffee, or tea are the main beverages. Water is never served and a German host is in near shock to have an American guest request water.

Mechanization is as noticeable on German farms as it is in the States, perhaps more so in some areas. The majority of dairymen have pipeline milkers, bulk tanks, and automatic washers. Sophisticated farm machinery is found everywhere, even on relatively small farms. In the home, too, automatic washing machines and ironing machines have made the housewives' chores easier.

It is a common practice in Germany, and other European countries, to have the elderly members of the family live in with the rest of the household. It is therefore not unusual to have two, three, and even four generations

under one roof. The large farm houses may have been built with that in mind.

Some of the older homes still have thatched roofs, but over the years the art of placing the reeds has become lost, and clay tiles are now the main roofing material. The thatched roof is, however, the one regarded as giving the best and longest service. If it were not for fire codes and the lack of skilled people who know how to lay a thatched roof, more of them would be seen.

While buildings may be several hundred years old, they do not show their age. The brick walls and thick logs are solid. Some remodeling of the exterior takes place, but never seeming to disturb the style of the original plans. What has changed noticeably are the windows. The small glass panes which are so familiar to us in America, are seldomly seen in German homes. Instead, each window is almost like a picture window. Plenty of light and fresh air are an important consideration in the German lifestyle.

Shopping can be done in the same manner as in America, the only difference being that stores, shopping centers, and malls are not quite as big as those in this country, and most merchandise is more expensive than similar items in the United States. With the land being crowded and scarce, planners are much more conscientious about how land is used. Conservation is much more evident than it is here.

With over 60 million people living in an area the size of Oregon, and with natural resources being scarce, conservation is something which Germans cannot overlook. Highways, for example, are as sophisticated as here in the United States, but the wide median strips are not present.

It is evident to the visitor that German agriculture has benefited considerably through "Americanization" — that is the use of mechanization. I believe it is also evident that the American farmer could learn much from his German counterpart about efficiently using his resources. It is something which is bound to happen in years to come, whether we like it or not.



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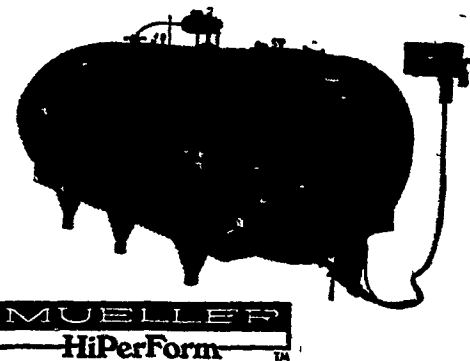
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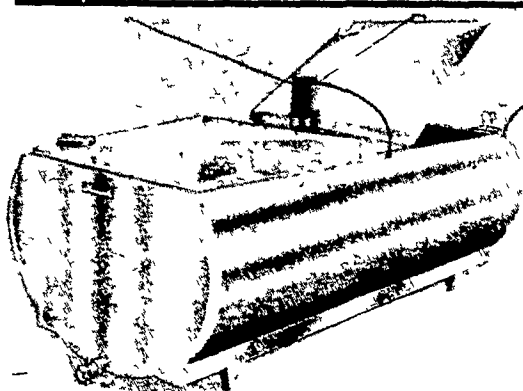
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