

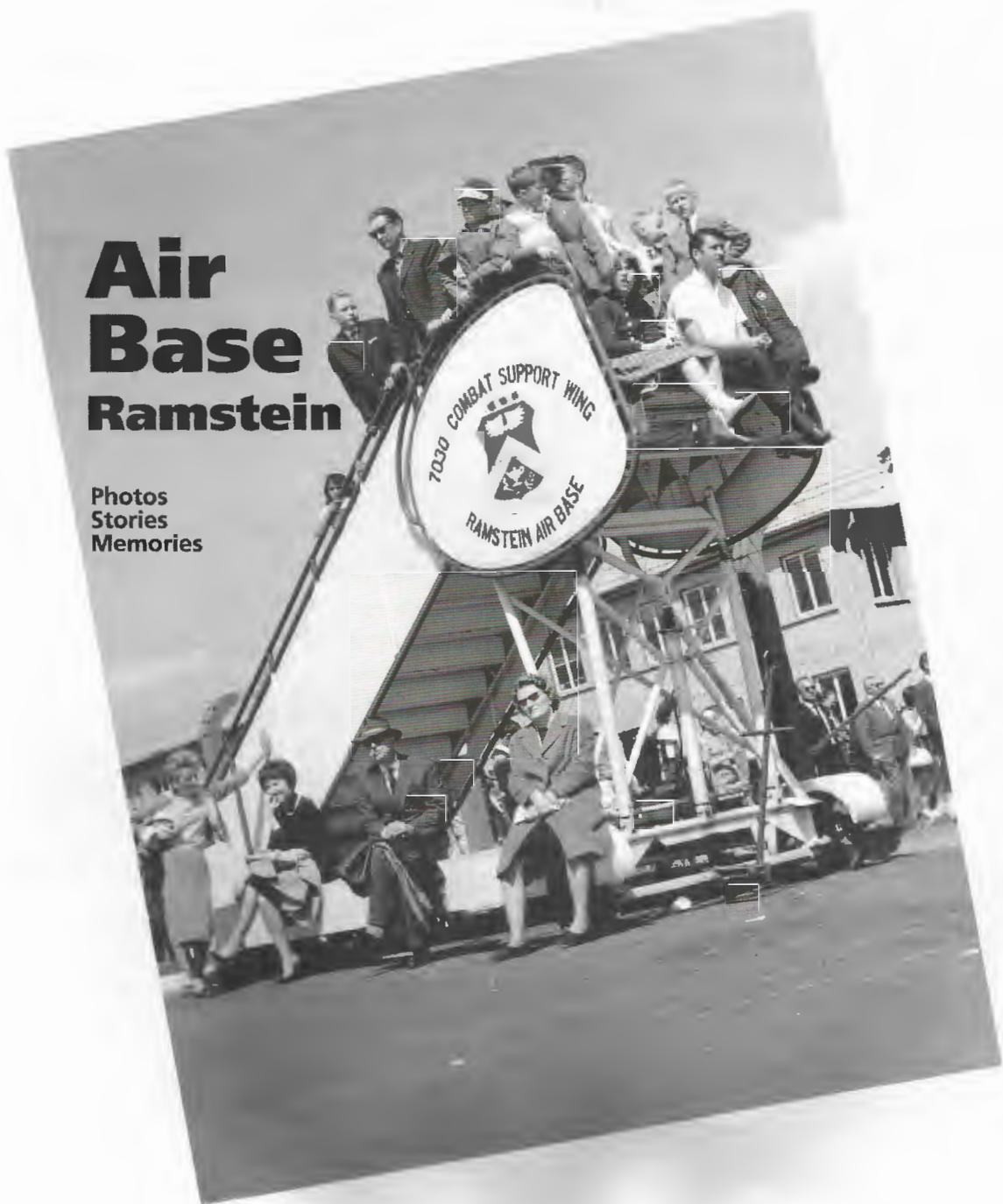
Air Base Ramstein

Photos
Stories
Memories



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Preface

Suddenly they were here! Surprise, curiosity or maybe even fear of what might come next probably moved the population of the small town of Ramstein in the early fifties when the first US jets came thundering down on the old autobahn. Meanwhile, the temporary landing strip developed into the largest US military air base outside the United States and one of their most important hubs. Ramstein is known worldwide and is also home to a NATO headquarter.

Since then several million Americans have experienced Germany and the Germans in Ramstein and in the Kaiserslautern Military Community.

All of this had an impact on the region. This book tries to highlight some important moments and developments in the last decades. The focus is on compressed articles, very personal memories and especially on photos never published before.

The intent is to make clear that it was people who have lived with and on Ramstein Air Base and who will continue to do so in the future.



Postcard with jets
from the 1960's

When the first jets arrived

Karl-Heinz Kirsch

The early years **S**uddenly they were here. The news spread through town like wildfire:

The first squadron of American fighter jets had landed on the old autobahn. An attraction for the boys from Ramstein – and also for many adults. The construction of "Landstuhl Air Base" – Ramstein Air Base's original name – was in the initial stage.

Months before, hundreds of workers had repaired the autobahn. It had been built in the thirties and crossed the road between the towns of Ramstein and Landstuhl before it ended. Especially the medial strip had to be leveled with concrete in order for the aircraft to take off and land safely. Most workers were Eastern Europeans who were stranded here after World War II. In the hot summer months, many of the boys from Ramstein made some good extra money: At the stores in the nearby town they bought apples which were highly desired and paid for by the workers.

At the time when the old autobahn was used as runway, it was an attraction for the old and the young. The jet planes were parked on a flat sandy surface covered with steel sheet near Kindsbacher Strasse. People could come relatively close to the aircraft and were only about a hundred meters away even during take-offs. The engines raised mighty red dust clouds covering clothes and bicycles in an instant. At the end of the runway was a stand from where soldiers communicated with the pilots with red or white signals. Airplanes flying at an altitude of merely two meters above the autobahn caused a lot of amazement.

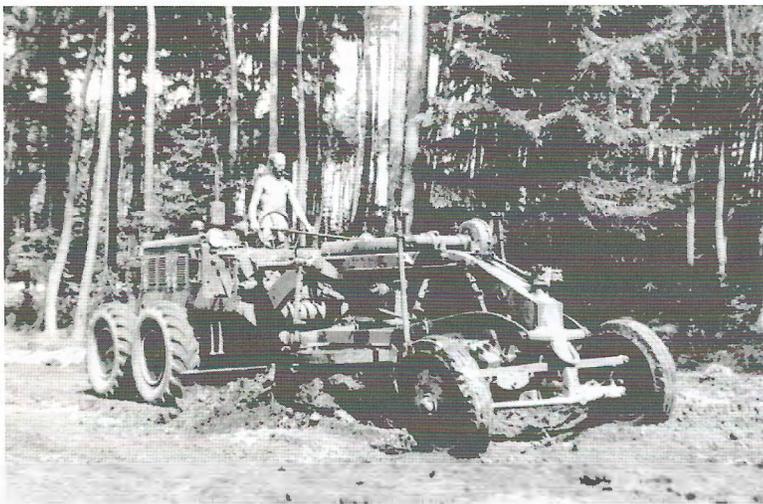


The first planes have arrived (1)

Large construction companies with huge equipment were at work at the actual future air base. Eight to ten thousand workers are supposed to have been employed. Considerable groundwork was required before the concrete for the runway could be laid. The swamp was excavated and filled with red sand transported from

Spesbach by rail. The heavy train had to cross the railway connection between Ramstein and Landstuhl on a wooden construction. For safety purposes, a sentry was posted where the road between the two towns had to be crossed near the present traffic circle. The trains shuttled between the nascent base and Spesbach 24 hours a day.

Of course, disputes could not be avoided where so many people from all over Germany and beyond were gathered. Fights took place at almost every dance night in



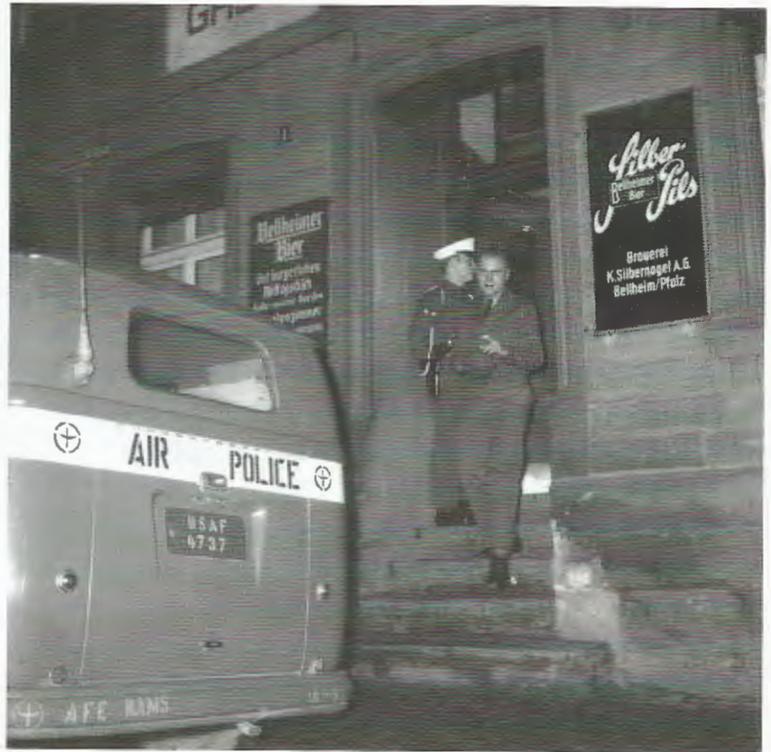
Earthworks 1952/53 (2)

Ramstein. First, foreign construction workers against the locals, then the workers against the Americans and again Germans against the rest of the world. Several times, drunks destroyed the temporary pubs that had taken root in the forest around the base.

At about the same time the construction of the housing area for military members began north of the huge area. After completion, young American families also moved to the housing area. Young German girls – mostly from Saarland – were hired as babysitters and also lived in the housing area. These young ladies were welcome guests at town festivals and dances in Ramstein. They attracted the male youth from the entire region. Friendships developed and some even ended in marriages.

The housing area was a military restricted area. Except for those working on site, Germans were not allowed there. Significant penalties awaited the German suitors bringing back their girls at

night. The military police were often very inventive when they caught them. Once, the young lovers had to take gigantic amounts of coke to a basement; another time they were taken to Mackenbach and had to walk home. At that time hardly anybody owned a car.



Air police at work (3)

9 : 4 for Germany

Michael Geib

About the bonding
effect of soccer

The "Landstuhl News" briefly reported on June 1st, 1956 on a soccer game with a team from Hütschenhausen playing against a group of young US soldiers that ended 9:4. Unfortunately, we are not told more about this high-score encounter between the "German National Team" – as the American newspaper then called the eleven German boys – and the American "Raiders". Most likely the score was not too important to the players involved because they often played each other in their free time.



„Landstuhl News“ 1st of June 1956

"Back then, the young GIs were seeking contact with German contemporaries", Willy Pitsch from Hütschenhausen remembers. They had a preference for soccer, which was actually only little known in the United States. Luckily they encountered like-minded people here and no obstacles were in the way of the first soccer games. Among others, Willi Pitsch, Ludwig Wingert and Karl Badung were on the German team. Beyond playing soccer, friendships developed specifically with the Americans Eddy Lauderback, Jim Precosky, Twain and Tom Lane. They met for private parties, for Fasching or just for a merry round at "Café Toni" in Hütschenhausen. The contacts lasted for many decades.

Despite the initial score of 4:9 for the American team, one of the four GIs benefited from playing soccer. In Hütschenhausen he met his later wife, married and moved with her to the United States. They have three sons.

I wonder if they play soccer?



Private get-together in Hütschenhausen (4)



*Jim Precosky behind the counter
at the „Café Toni“ (5)*

Ramstein and the Americans

Von Maria Höhn

Since the troop reductions after the end of the Cold War, younger people from Ramstein hardly notice the American presence. It has not always been like that. Living together in the village and working together on the American military base initiated contacts between Germans and Americans that were very intensive and often also cordial for decades. Looking back, contemporaries agree that the Fifties and Sixties were the "Golden Years" of German-American partnership. Vietnam and Watergate had not yet disenchanted the "American Myth" and the memory of Hershey chocolate bars, CARE packages, the Marshall Plan and the Berlin Airlift helped many to see the Americans as allies and not as an occupation force. Although there were first protests against the noise from low-level flying aircraft and against the stationing of nuclear missiles after 1955, the Eighties with the peace movement protests during the hot phase of the Cold War were still far away.



Rendezvous at the Night-Club (6)

14

German-American relationships – especially in the Fifties and Sixties – were lived and experienced at many levels but can only be described here in rudimentary fashion ⁽¹⁾. Memories of contemporaries concerning the unexpected generosity of the Americans take up a big part in all recollections. The "Pfälzer Volkszeitung" (German newspaper) expressed the appreciation by publishing a story titled "Friendship in action is no empty phrase/American pioneers help and support many sports clubs, communities and associations" ⁽²⁾. The citizens of Ramstein still remember the lovely Christmas parties organized by the American soldiers for the children in town every year. At times, "St. Nikolaus" (Santa Claus) arrived in a helicopter to the delight of everyone. The bags filled with goodies and the American cartoons shown for the entertainment of the children

were also very much appreciated. Some Ramsteiners still remember that the American chocolate always tasted better than the German chocolate and the Christmas cookies were much sweeter than the ones they knew ⁽³⁾.

The German-American friendship weeks, which always took place in May of every year, are often mentioned by contemporaries as well. For the children of the town it was a wonderland, especially in the Fifties and Sixties. Tanks and helicopters were displayed and the paratroopers entertained

the crowd with daring performances. American women handed out cup cakes and the men cooked the popular hamburgers and hot dogs. The biggest hit, however, was the American ice cream. Children as well as adults waited patiently in line to get their share of that great ice cream. And it seemed as if the American soldiers, who were very fond of children, never noticed if some came up for a second helping ⁽⁴⁾. In 1955, over 20.000 visitors came to the festival ⁽⁵⁾.

Today it is hardly conceivable how much the soldiers were integrated in the various clubs and association of the towns. For example, the military band was always a welcome guest whenever the citizens of Ramstein celebrated. But also individual soldiers became involved in clubs and were well-liked members for the time they were stationed in Germany. The Ramstein Fasching parade also benefited from the participation of the soldiers. The Fasching prince and the Fasching princess had the privilege of being chauffeured in huge US limousines admired by all. Many a military truck was used to pull a float. The children especially loved the American participants who generously distributed candy.

The 1958 Fasching campaign even featured the first American princess. Her name was "Irene the first from across the big pond".



*Santa (Nikolaus)
is coming to town (7)*



US-Forces-Band marching in the "Fastnacht"-parade 1957 (8)

In 1957, the officers' wives saved the fifth season by dressing up as major-ettes and putting on a memorable performance. The American engagement became necessary because the priest of the town – who was very strict even for local standards – prohibited the women of Ramstein from wearing short uniform skirts.

Working together on base and living together in the village resulted in very close German–American ties for many decades. Many German landlords and their American tenants kept in touch

for years after the military members had returned to the US. Cultural barriers were taken down even faster if children were part of the household. The German landlords were often taken on as substitute grandmother and grandfather and many a woman from Ramstein took care of the children while their mothers went about their philanthropic engagements. German families proved to their American tenants that the German cuisine consisted of more than mere Schnitzel and also prepared "such a typical German meal as liver dumplings and pig's stomach." ⁽⁶⁾ The Americans returned the favor and prepared American specialties such as pizza, turkey, corn on the cob, popcorn, hamburger and pies. ⁽⁷⁾ The fact that American women were capable of cooking and talking on the phone at the same time caused great admiration – especially among the German housewives. ⁽⁸⁾

Discussions about the coexistence of Germans and Americans in Ramstein may not ignore the influence of the "American Way of Life". Life together and parallel to one another was so intense that the RHEINPFALZ reported in 1953 "that a piece of America with her people and institutions has come to the Palatinate". Because of coexistence, the "American is no longer gazed at like a strange animal", the paper reported and the image of „America being the land of cowboys, gangsters and rich uncles" was also adjusted. ⁽⁹⁾



American officers' wives in costumes at the "Fastnacht" in Ramstein 1957 (9)



"Fastnacht"-parade in Ramstein 1957 (10)



American "Fastnacht"-princess "Irene, the 1st from across the big pond" 1958 (11)

The invasion of the American way of life was met with skepticism by many adults in the Fifties and Sixties. While people were enthusiastic about the prosperity coming with the Americans and one eagerly saved the money for a refrigerator and a car, the so-called "black music" and the American "un-culture" were less desired. The young people, however, were fully inspired by "the scent of the whole wide world", which came to town with the Americans. Many Ramstein youngsters viewed the Americans less as occupation forces than as ambassadors from a "completely different world". Particularly after the strict years of the 3rd Reich, many young people were convinced "that the Americans had opened up an exciting world (for them)". ⁽¹⁰⁾

The male youth was mainly attracted by the gigantic American cars, the so-called "street cruisers". During a time when most of the heads of German households may have possessed a moped and – at the most – possibly a "Gogomobil" or "Isetta", the chrome-decorated and luxurious Cadillacs, Chryslers and Fords of the American soldiers congested the narrow streets of our village. Forty years later, many contemporaries remembered the first ride in such an "Ami-car". The "big cars ...it was something special for us to be taken along for a ride... We always envied them, look at what they can afford...the gigantic automobiles they possessed...we always felt more important when we came along for a ride". ⁽¹¹⁾ Another one remembers: "The Germans didn't possess cars, the GIs had very fast cars. It was a pure sense of delight for a young person to drive a car. All of these things made it very easy for the Americans to make contact." ⁽¹²⁾

The American soldiers invited their German friends not only for a ride through the countryside but also to the "NCO – and Rod and Gun Clubs". In those clubs, one could admire stars such as Bill Haley and Louis Armstrong but bands such as Max Greger and German singers such as Connie Froboess and Rita Pavlone also performed in those establishments. Even today many remember that the music brought along by the Americans and the American clubs constituted the „greatest attraction, ...(it was) a great thing also for us villagers". ⁽¹³⁾ One also became acquainted with mixed drinks in the American clubs. Mixed drinks carried a special meaning in the

Fifties as they were seen as something questionable: "We already knew Coca Cola before the war, but long drinks were synonymous with sin." ⁽¹⁴⁾ Another contemporary reported that the American mixed drinks represented to him "the scent of the whole wide world". ⁽¹⁵⁾

GI friends were often willing to buy original American Levis and T-shirts, which were not available in German stores. ⁽¹⁶⁾ A contemporary remembers how the young people were trying to dress "like the Americans...it only just started during those days with riveted Jeans... (we) young people all looked like Elvis or other rock idols." ⁽¹⁷⁾ Another one reports: "We only liked American clothes...we felt like princes when we were at least dressed like they were, checkered swimsuits, no woolen rags as like we had." ⁽¹⁸⁾ The American habits of sticking the pack of Lucky Strikes cigarettes in the folded up sleeve of a short sleeve T-shirt or burying their hands in the pockets of their pants were soon copied by the local youth also.



Dream machines of the German youth in the 1950's and 1960's
(12)

The American clubs – but also the local clubs frequented by American customers – brought the new American dances and hit songs to the province and it occurred here earlier than in the major cities. The young people were drawn by the soldiers, reported a time witness, because wherever "they went, their songs were played". ⁽¹⁹⁾ The Ramstein pubs all featured the newest hit songs on the jukebox and if a few tables were moved to the side, one could also learn the newest dance steps imported by the GIs from the US.

There is probably better indicator of German-American relations than the many weddings that took place between American soldiers and German women post 1945. With the abolition of the "Non-Fraternization Rule", approximately 5000 women married American soldiers in Germany per year. ⁽²⁰⁾ This development also affected Ramstein. A Ramstein woman remembers that "the (German) girls all married away like flies." ⁽²¹⁾

The living together of Germans and Americans in Ramstein was well adjusted by the beginning of the Seventies. The US currency was strong and the Americans were well-liked neighbors and guests in the village. This does not imply that there were no problems and concerns. Maneuver damage and the deafening noise of low-level

flying aircraft were a constant source of frustration. It did not always end well when young soldiers – fresh from the States – overestimated their drinking capability. At times and often after indulging too much in beer and wine, GIs pulled out geraniums from the flower pots or disposed of beer bottles in the front yards of the citizens of Ramstein. Conflicts or downright brawls developed off and on during village festivals or other dance events.

However, generally speaking everybody had come together. Living door to door with the Americans was as self-evident for the Ramstein residents as the Cold War, which had split Germany in two.

A major break in German-American relations came with the decision by the Nixon administration to uncouple the dollar from the "Gold standard". Overnight, the dollar lost 10 percent in value and the further decline of the currency could not be stopped, to the great dismay of many Ramstein landlords and shop owners. Starting with the Seventies, the Americans – having been so well off during the Fifties and Sixties – could hardly afford Germany anymore. An increasing number of Americans stayed within the confines of the military base. It was cheaper to live there and, due to the financial support of the US government, it was also cheaper to shop and to dine out on base.



American Square dance group at the 750-year-Celebration in Ramstein (13)

The change to a professional force during the mid Seventies further contributed to the Americans backing away from participation in the village's social life. The soldiers assigned to Germany in the Fifties and Sixties were draftees who used every opportunity to escape the dreary military routine. Military members of a professional force, on the other hand identify themselves more with the military lifestyle and mingle with people of same mind. The arrival of female soldiers in the Seventies also played a role in the widening gap of relations between Germans and Americans. Male GIs now had the opportunity to make contact with the opposite sex on base. By that, a further point of contact between Germans and Americans was lost.

Military bases, in the past accessible and open to free exchange between Germans and Americans, were more and more sealed off from the German environment by the end of the Seventies. The terrorist attacks of the Baader-Meinhof-Group on American military installations, the revival of the German peace movement in the early Eighties with their "Ami go home" slogans and the predominantly negative German reaction to the Gulf War in 1991, resulted in the Americans withdrawing even further behind barb-wire fences and concrete blocks. The troop reduction of the US military after the end of the Cold War also contributed to the fact that the coexistence of many decades in Ramstein and the often-experienced cordiality of the Americans became history.



"Goody"

Michael Geib

An American
in Ramstein

American-born Truman W. Goodwin is a very amicable man who speaks wonderful "chewing gum German". The ex-GI is well known in Ramstein by his nickname "Goody". "I built everything you see here," he proudly said with a whimsical grin when we visited him in his apartment for the interview. But let's start from the beginning.

"Goody" was born in Massachusetts in 1935. He joined the US Marine Corps at 19, but switched to the Air Force as a truck driver six years later. Restless years with constantly changing assignments followed. Goodwin reckons that he has been around the globe about twice. In 1961 he was then assigned to Ramstein.

The countryside and the weather in the Western Palatinate seemed "just like at home in

Massachusetts," Truman Goodwin reminisces. He met his wife Waltraud in Ramstein, married in 1964 and two years later he was again reassigned. This time he went to California, "right into the heart of the desert" with his wife and son. In 1969 the family then relocated to the Netherlands, prior to their last and final move back to Ramstein in 1973.

In 1975 Goodwin retired from the Air Force and then worked as a civilian at the air base gas station for another 20 years.

His three adult sons followed his example and are living a **similar life** between two cultures in their own way. The oldest one is an American citizen and also worked for the Air Force **for 20 years**. The second son has both German and US citizenship, **but is serving** his military duty with the German Armed Forces. **The youngest** son, also with dual citizenship, works for the Air Force **in Washington**.



Truck driver for the US-Navy and
US-Air Force (15)

"Goody" has literally settled down in Ramstein in the course of time and the family lives in his mother-in-law's house. He has been and still is actively involved in various club activities in Ramstein; nine years with the shooting association and fourteen with the voluntary fire department.



Wedding 1964 (16)



*"Goody", member of the "Freiwillige
Feuerwehr" (fire department volunteers)
of Ramstein-Miesenbach (17)*

US Air Force honors a German mother

Anke Herbert

9 May 1954 – Mother's Day – was a big day in the life of Katharina Rudolphi⁽¹⁾ of Ramstein. Representative of the mothers of the airmen stationed in the Kaiserslautern area, the 71-year old was invited to and honored at Ramstein Air Base.



A large delegation came to pick her up at her home. Major General Robert M. Lee, former air base commander, provided his staff car escorted by the security police. As the American newspaper "The Ramstein Ramjet" reported on May 15th 1954, the parade drew a lot of attention. Many spectators gathered at Katharina Rudolphi's home as she stepped into the vehicle smiling.

The 71-year old, mother of several children, was selected because one of her sons lived in the

Air base Commander Gen. Robert M. Lee presents roses to Katharina Rudolphi for Mother's Day on May 9th, 1954 (18)

United States. She was therefore considered to be a link between the two nations. In addition, Mother's Day is celebrated in both countries along with Christmas, Easter and New Year.

The base commander welcomed Katharina Rudolphi with flowers and afterwards they conversed for about 15 minutes with the help of an interpreter. Lee demonstrated his respect for all German and American mothers. "The love, faithfulness and devotion of a mother knows no international boundaries. Our mothers make up the strength of the nation and are an instrument of peace," he was quoted by the base newspaper.

"I feel that this celebration brings together all mothers in the steadfast hope that, no matter where our families may be and whatever challenges they may encounter, they will always find time to remember the principles of humanity and human dignity," Katharina Rudolphi stated. She thanked the US Air Force for halting its operations on Mother's Day "to thank those amongst us who are most affected when world peace is shattered."

Air show at Ramstein

Stefan Layes

"Flugtag" at Ramstein had always been a great attraction for many years. Lines of cars rolled over the Autobahn towards the base even early in the morning. Days before the event, enthusiastic fans would watch the skies to see incoming aerobatic teams and expected aircraft. In the Seventies and Eighties, hundreds of thousands of spectators came to the giant popular festival.

People from everywhere in Germany and the neighboring countries came to Ramstein to watch the pilots' daredevil demonstrations and to visit the aircraft and equipment on display. Solo flights with fighter jets or formations of different squadrons were part of the repertoire. Other highlights of the event were paratroopers jumping out of cargo aircraft at great altitudes and landing right in front of the spectators.

Above and beyond that, there was another attraction for the visitors: American ice cream. Strawberry, vanilla and chocolate, neatly lined up in handy packages and available at cheap prices. Visitors from the vicinity made use of the short distance. They would often buy the treasured goods in dozens and then quickly take it home on bicycle or on foot, where it would last for days or weeks.

It was always a large popular festival, understood to be part of the base for many years - at least until August 28th, 1988. The terrible air show accident with 70 dead and several hundred injured brought a tragic end to the spectacle. Ever since the accident, the air show no longer takes place. It was „replaced“ by „Open House“ events on base (however, without aerial demonstrations) which took place in 1993, 1995 and 1997. The Open House planned for 2002 had to be cancelled for security reasons.



(19)



(20)

The 1950's and 1960's



(21)



The 1970's and 1980's

(22)

(24)

(23)



These pictures will never be forgotten

Hans-Jürgen Vollmer

These pictures will never be forgotten: A fireball in the sky, people fleeing in panic. Then the victims – convulsed and burnt – lying on American trucks. And the acoustic scenario also remains in the consciousness as well: bloodcurdling screams of injured, people shrilling in despair looking for their relatives. And among that, the nerve-wracking noise of police, ambulance and fire truck sirens. August 28th, 1988, 15.35 p.m.: air show disaster at Ramstein Air Base. A black day not only for the district of Kaiserslautern and the Western Palatinate region.

How I experienced the terrible disaster at Ramstein Air Base

As police spokesman, I was watching the aerial demonstrations from the window of the media center in the building across from the tower. The jets of the Italian "Frecce Tricolori" were just flying a curve to swing back over the runway. Prior to the demonstration, I could see the pilots laughing and boarding a van just right below my window, probably on their way to the airfield. Then the ringing of the telephone took me away from the window. A colleague from the news agency AP in Frankfurt wanted to inquire routinely if everything had gone smoothly so far during air show. Just as I was answering, "everything normal", two loud bangs made me turn and look out the window. A deep black cloud of smoke rose over the tower, fire could be seen. "Nothing is normal now," I said to the caller on the other end of the line. And without having any detailed information about what had just happened close to me, I added: "I assume that at least one of the aircraft has crashed, right into the spectators!"

My first thought in these seconds was about my son, knowing that he must be right about where the disaster took place. 20 minutes of despair, fear and uncertainty followed. The most horrible pictures popped up in my head as I observed the scenes in front of the building. Hundreds, thousands rushing to the exits, some knocking each other down. People were bleeding, with visible burns, their



*Picture of devastation as
seen from the office of
press photographer
Hans-Jürgen Vollmer
(25)*

skin hanging in tatters from their bodies. They were seeking safety by fleeing, not waiting for help. The approaching ambulances rushed by them on their way to the crash site. I had experienced a lot in my 30 years as volunteer for the Red Cross and as first responder. But what was happening here was beyond any imagination of an accident, of a catastrophe. My inner tension finally loosened when I saw my son waving in the pool of people, he was unharmed.

Both telephones in the media center rang continuously. After the first short reports on radio and television, there was hardly time to catch one's breath. National and international queries; every newspaper, every agency and TV broadcaster wanted to know more, new details. These were tough hours, even for me, having been in the trade for decades, and we did not always have sympathy for all questions from colleagues.

The next few days in the county's public affairs office were indescribable to an outsider. My office was literally besieged, television crews plunged in, filmed everything in sight. I cannot remember taking a lunch break for a week; "quitting time" became a foreign word.

As current reports about the number of victims, the actual cause, the course of the rescue mission slowly became less interesting, questions about those responsible for the disaster became tougher, more urging. It came to the forefront of the discussion now that there had been warning voices prior to the event, not only on political level, some even wanting to prohibit the event. Ramstein not only dominated headlines in the Federal Republic. And that was not to change in the coming months. Many individual fates that had become public led to at times heated debates about the care of the victims or those left behind. Even today, in the year 2002, this is a highly sensitive topic and courts are still dealing with the consequences of the disaster on that sunny Sunday in August. Mental scars have not healed. "The howling of a fighter jet flying low-level brings back the terrible pictures to my mind. I will not be able to forget Ramstein for the rest of my life," stated a first responder recently, who saw children die and mercifully covered maimed bodies with blankets



Huge mission of the rescue teams (26)



Horror and fear will persist (27)

From Bavaria to the Palatinate

Stefan Layes

The history of Ramstein Air Base is linked to the stories of many people who were involved in the construction of the base and who found a new home in this area. One of them is Josef Fuchs, a skilled wood carver from Bavaria, who came from Landsberg to Ramstein with an advance detachment in the year 1954 (12th US-Air Fleet).

Wood Carver
Josef Fuchs

Josef Fuchs was born in Neu-Ulm and at the age of 15 started his apprenticeship with a well-known company in Ichenhausen near the Danube. Prior to World War II this company worked for royal houses. As a skilled wood carver he produced candlesticks, animal figures, crucifixes and other objects. Being a passionate competitive rifleman he preferable produced highly adorned rifle butts for his customers. After the war, in 1948, the gifted and skilled artisan found a job at the "Rod and Gun Club" in Landsberg am Lech where he worked as a concessionaire. In addition to rifle butts for sporting guns he also carved equipment for hunting rooms and gun cabinets.

When the American unit moved to Ramstein, he and other German employees followed the soldiers. During the first year he lived right next to his workshop in the Rod and Gun clubhouse on Ramstein Air Base until he found a nice rental apartment for him, his wife and their three children. Until 1969 he worked as an independent craftsman on base, then as a salaried employee until 1978. To accomplish his work he had two helpers who had been trained by him.

He soon had many customers from all over the world appreciating his high-quality work. His daughter recalls a work order (handmade adorned rifle butt) from a customer in Addis Ababa. High ranking U.S. officers also ordered valuable unique items from Josef Fuchs.

Some hunting motives that he had carved into rifle butts upon request were published in trade journals.

Because of his exceeding precision and bespoke work, he obtained quite a reputation with the Americans. He became an honorary

member of the Rod and Gun Club in 1958 and, in May 1974, as the first artisan ever, he received the golden pin of the "Rod and Gun Association of Europe" from General Davison (Commander in Chief). This annual award was received by people who rendered outstanding services to American hunting .

After his retirement in 1978, he continued working in his little workshop until his death in 1987. Josef Fuchs' widely traveled masterpieces will always remind people of this exceptionally gifted artisan.



Josef Fuchs (left) in his shop (28)

In 1958 Walter Matheis started to work for television. The Americans established their first television station at Vogelweh/Kaiserslautern where Matheis worked as a cameraman. About 1963, the television station moved into a new studio on base. The next big change occurred in 1978. AFN radio and television were combined in Frankfurt. For Walter Matheis, this meant relocation to the Main metropolis of Frankfurt where he worked as senior cameraman until he retired in 1989.

However, during his time as a cameraman he kept on taking photos at the Club which nowadays serve as valuable evidence of the social and cultural life on base – apart from the military life.

Entertainment used to play and still plays a vital role in all armed forces. Soldiers are supposed to be kept happy. In the past, sutlers and minstrels performed this task. Of course modern times require modern equipment. In the early stages, however, Ramstein only possessed modest facilities. The first clubs were located in ordinary wooden huts. The Airman's and NCO-Club were both located in the same building.

Airmen joined the Airman's Club, non-commissioned officers visited the NCO-Clubs and Officers' Clubs were reserved for officers. Until the end of 1957, the air base was divided into two bases: Landstuhl and Ramstein. Therefore, two clubs existed. As a side note, today only one NCO-club exists, which is called „Ramstein Enlisted Club“.

*The place to party:
NCO-Club (30)*



With their establishment, the NCO Clubs became an important gathering point for members of the military. Furthermore, dollars were not accepted at that point in time. The soldiers could only use so-called scripts (similar to vouchers). Those scripts were not valid off base.

If you wanted to go to the Club you had to pay a fee. There was a monthly 'Happy Hour' featuring a free meal for members. Otherwise, a great variety of entertainment was offered: entertainers, performers, dancing events, dinners for newcomers and farewell parties. Traditional German festivities were also adopted. Thus, Fasching was celebrated with German associations, wine fests or the famous beer and Oktoberfests took place. The Mackenbach brass band – dressed as Bavarians – performed there frequently.

Other German musicians – especially from the Ramstein area – were often engaged in the clubs. After the war, generally speaking all American facilities in Germany were popular among German musicians since pay was above the average. Furthermore, the Germans got to know the American culture and also learned about a style of music that had been proscribed by the Nazis: Jazz Music.

The clubs constituted an important drop-in point not only for German musicians, but also for the local population who were allowed to visit the clubs. Access for German visitors has been handled differently in the past 50 years. Scarcely anybody is still able to tell what the exact regulations were. Due to the sealing off of military bases in the 70's, free access was no longer possible. Thus, all that remains are memories of the 50's and 60's and of 'hot nights' in the



„Happy Hour“ (31)

American clubs. Dancing events with modern music took place and stars that otherwise would have never made their way to the Western Palatinate performed there.

Thus German stars such as the above mentioned Caterina Valente and her brother Silvio Francesco, Bully Buhlan and Conny Froboess or 'Crazy Otto' (Fritz Schulz-Reichelt with his piano) came to the Palatinate province. Not to forget Max Greger and his orchestra that often performed here for weeks. American stars like Little Richard, Count Basie and orchestra, the Golden Gate Quartet or the Jazz legend Lionel Hampton also performed on Ramstein Air Base. The list goes on and on.

The Bingo Nights were particularly well-liked among the Germans and attractive prizes were available. All of a sudden the Germans were no longer allowed to take part in those games. German Customs had supposedly objected.

In addition, floor-shows were offered to an all-male audience, where pretty young ladies swung their legs. In the 60's, frivolous entertainment culminating in strip shows were offered. In the course of time, however, these shows were forbidden on each base independently.

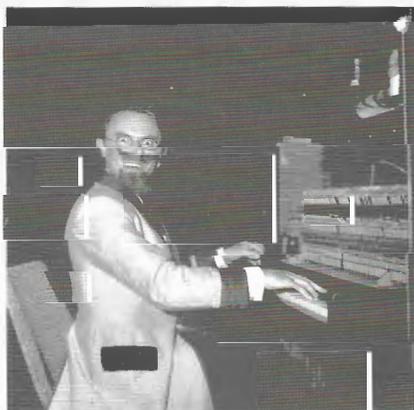
Once women joined the military service, that kind of male "amusement" finally came to an end.

Delicious food was served at the clubs. There was a Hungarian and a Chinese restaurant. The bars offered all kinds of drinks and featured pinball tables and the famous slot machines.

Walter Matheis captured a piece of this life with his photographs.

His pictures characterize the professional work of a press photographer: fast and precise camera shots when taking a photograph of the club foyer with frontal flashlight or when taking

A famous German musician in the 1950's, "Der schräge Otto" (32)





Max Greger and band, a renowned German Big band leader (33)



Golden-Gate-Quartet (34)



Ballet dancers (35)

a snapshot in the ballroom. But also the photographs of the stars are spontaneous and accurate snapshots.

The photographs contain the right amount of information. They depict exactly what is required: the star in a typical pose. At the



40

*Conny Froboess
and Bully Buhlan
at the NCO-Club (36)*

same time the pictures are full of life. They communicate the spirit of the 50's and 60's and of the every day life in those clubs. This becomes apparent on a bawdy picture of a female stripper which is

opposed to a photo of a gaggle of bawling GI's: a glance at the exclusive men's world.

However, we also see a bored bouncer leaned against a music box or we see the happy eyes of soldiers who are about to pitch into their meal during a 'happy hour'. We are almost part of the scene when two young couples go out at night and willingly pose for the photographer or we tend to raise our beer mug while looking at a crowd during the Oktoberfest.

The photographs by Walter Matheis are full of life. They still affect us and tell us about the first „wild“ decades on base besides military life.



Bingo: well liked by the Germans (37)



Leisure time at the pinball table (38)

*Striptease and the
bawling GIs:
a secluded men's
world (39, 40)*





Pianist of a ladies' band in the 1950's (41)



The bored bouncer (42)

Politicians visit the Air Base



*US President Bill Clinton
and German Chancellor Helmut Kohl (43)*



Laura Bush at the Air Base 2005 (44)

44



Arnold Schwarzenegger visiting in 2005 (45)



German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer (46)

From "Hut Camp" to "Super-Base"

Genesis, evolution and expansion plans

Stefan Layes

Planned by French engineers, built by German companies and operated by the American Air Force – that's the usual statement one finds when reading up on the historical development of the air base. It would certainly be of great interest to read the old files about the procedures, negotiations and concerns then, but these files are probably collecting dust in the archives of the United States or in France.

Long-time Ramstein residents are in agreement in their reports that American fighter jets, F-84 "Thunderjet", were already using the "old autobahn (Interstate)" for several days for landings and take-offs between today's West Gate and CTS compound as early as 1950. Apparently the pilots were to explore the area. The fact is that the Allies started building the air base a year later. As occupation forces they requisitioned the land. It seems that the German officials had no influence in the planning of this large project.

3,212 acres of a 9,150-acre district, the twelfth largest of the formerly 708 Palatinate rural communities, were transferred to the Federal

Government to build the air base without informing or even asking the Ramstein community. For example, the municipality of Landstuhl covers an area of 3,820 acres. A contemporary remembers the starting date of May 10th, 1951, when large construction equipment was delivered and a large forested area was first cleared. Into the night,

46



Construction
starts (47)

citizens of the surrounding communities picked up the sought after tree roots to use as firewood.

Leveling work and soil exchange followed in the southern area of the air base. At first a provisional railway was constructed connecting the base and the area where the Pegulan factory was later built between Ramstein and Spesbach. Using the railway, the boggy soil was exchanged for sand. Eventually a runway was paved in the middle of a swamp area.

The first housing area along with the appropriate infrastructure as well as administration and customer service facilities were constructed in the northern area of the air base on hard red sandstone. As early as the end of the Forties, the French occupation forces cleared an enormous gap in the "Reichswald" (State Forest) and transported the lumber as reparation to France. The old Interstate, bordering the western boundary of Ramstein, was constructed before the beginning of World War II and was then integrated into the air base.

Due to the construction measures, a laborer settlement "Ober-schernau" was relocated in April 1955 to "Bamsterhof" near Martinshöhe. In contrast to all the other buildings, the old "Ober-schernau" manor house, built in 1765, remained intact until 1974.

In two essays, Eugenie Lautensach-Löffler described in 1957 and 1965 the enormous efforts of the construction measures and their drastic effects on the surrounding communities³: "Since the beginning in 1951, dozens of large and hundreds of smaller companies accomplished the leveling and construction of new roads and rails, air base infrastructure etc. very speedily, drawing to the region a workforce of, at times, 8,000 to 10,000. As a result, tremendous problems in regard to accommodation, provisions and transport reached their peak in 1953." Temporary accommodation was constructed for the workers, 34 dining halls provided food for the people and meetings about the construction projects took place in huts.

The effects on the surrounding communities ranged from an increase in population (from 1950 until 1963, the population increased by



(48)

61 % in Ramstein from 3,790 to 6,284), traffic congestion on the small village roads by American street cruisers to a rather drastic decline in farming. Active construction led to newly-built homes in Ramstein, nearly doubling the number of houses between 1939 and 1963 and renting out to Americans became a profitable source of revenue⁴.

The increase of businesses, especially restaurants, bars, gas stations, car repair shops, taxi companies and laundry services was also significant.

But to return to the new air base. A two-part installation was finished with the interim completion of the construction work in 1953: in the North, Ramstein Air Base with housing, schools, quarters (also the headquarters) as well as support facilities and in the South Landstuhl Air Base with runway, tower, hangars and ramp. Each air base had its own Officers' and NCO club.

The community council successfully protested against the name "Landstuhl" Air Base, especially since its area falls in its entirety within Ramstein's boundary. On December 1st, 1957 the two bases were united as "Ramstein-Landstuhl." Gradually, according to the Americans, the other name was dropped and Ramstein was adopted.

The first unit that set foot on Ramstein Air Base was the 86th Fighter Bomber Wing under the command of Colonel George R. Bickel with their F-84F "Thunderjets", which were soon replaced by the new all-weather F-86D "Sabre" jets. As early as 1954, the unit was renamed 86th Fighter Interceptor Wing⁵.

With the commencement of flight operations on the new runway in 1953 and the completion of the housing area toward the end of the Fifties, life became more of a routine on and around the base. Due to a strong US currency and their curiosity about the other culture, the Americans were mostly well-liked guests, tenants and consumers. Music, lifestyle and customs of the Americans were especially attractive to parts of the younger generation of the German population. Thousands of interested people visited the installation during "Open House" events, which the Americans started in the Fifties.

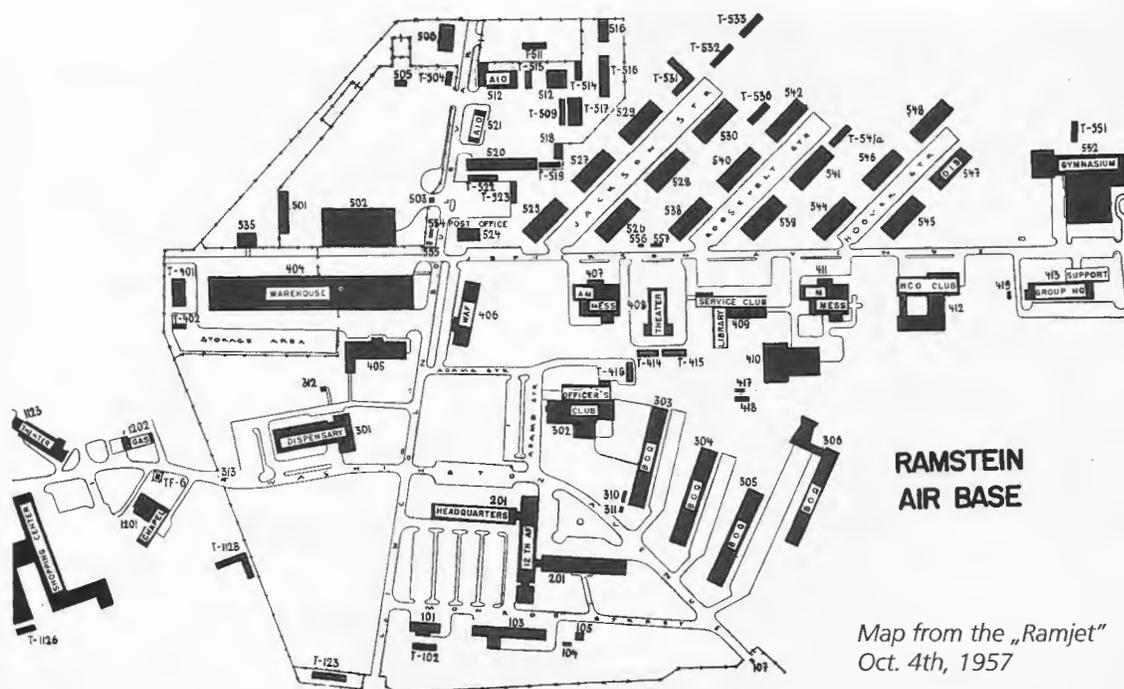


LANDSTUHL AB Apr 1953



*Air bases in 1953
(49, 50, 51)*





On base, the Americans were self-sufficient.⁶⁾ American stores, banks, post office, church, clinic, schools, childcare centers, clubs, fitness centers and much more resulted in the soldiers, civilians and family members living in their little town in a similar fashion as they would in the United States. Even an 18-hole golf course was constructed in the north east area of the base. All the streets received American names like Lincoln Boulevard, Jefferson Avenue or Kising Memorial Drive.

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It really wasn't necessary for people who lived on base to leave it. Everything one needed for life was available. And the air base provided everything for those who were living in the surrounding villages. At first, the withdrawal to one's own "little America" was not so distinct. However, this changed in the Seventies and late Eighties with increasing security needs, changes in the military structure and a declining dollar. The cost of rent for German houses and other German goods increased considerably and the sales figures on the US installations rose steeply. For the German economy, this

meant less income caused by a definite restraint in buying by the Americans.

In October 1966 the host unit of the air base changed. The interceptor wing moved to Zweibrücken and the 26th Tactical Reconnaissance Wing with their RF-42 aircraft came from France to Ramstein, as the French left the military structure of NATO. In 1973, the tactical reconnaissance wing transferred to Zweibrücken and the 86th Wing returned to Ramstein as a tactical fighter wing. In 1971 a special ramp was constructed in the west and the base took on increased responsibility for military airlift. For the first time, a C-5 "Galaxy", in those days the largest military aircraft in the world, landed in Ramstein in addition to C-141 "Starlifters."



US soldier's wall locker on the air base in the 1960's (52)

The Seventies brought significant changes for the US soldiers. Criticism of the military became more vocal, even in their own country, during the course the Vietnam War. Compulsory service changed to a professional volunteer force in 1973 and women were able to join the military now. At the same time funds became scarce and the Dollar exchange rate started its decline when the US government uncoupled the Dollar from the "Gold standard" in 1971. Although there were many reasons for it, it must nevertheless be stated that the eagerness of the soldiers to establish social contacts declined in comparison to the first ten to fifteen years. They rarely left their "little America". The military and the USO tried to counteract with special newcomer and orientation programs as well as special leisure activities.

In October 1972 the 17th Air Force headquarters moved to Sembach, making room for Headquarters US Air Forces in Europe (USAFE). This led to another round of construction, ultimately transforming the installation into the largest American community outside the

continental United States. Air Force units were moved to Ramstein and to former Army compounds in and around Kaiserslautern, while US Army units were transferred to Wiesbaden and Mainz. This action was called "Creek Swap". As part of the expansion, the commander of the 86th Tactical Fighter Wing also became the commander of the Kaiserslautern Military Community, an area reaching from Miesau in the west to Pirmasens, Zweibrücken, Ramstein and Kaiserslautern and as far as Sembach in the east. Its population increased to more than 60,000 American soldiers, civilians and family members by the end of the Eighties.

In June 1985, the 316th Air Division was activated with the intent of centralizing the command. As subordinate units, the 86th Tactical Fighter Wing was responsible for aircraft operations, while the newly activated 377th Combat Support Wing took care of the logistical and administrative support on the installation.

Ramstein Air Base was the scene of two terrible incidents in the Eighties. In the morning of August 31st, 1981, terrorists of the "Red Army Faction" (RAF) set off a bomb at the NATO and USAFE headquarter building. A total of 20 people were injured, some of them severely. The Americans reacted by increasing their security measures and increasingly sealing off the installation.

During the Ramstein air show on August 28th, 1988, three jets of the Italian "Frecce Tricolori"



squadron collided while performing aerial acrobatics. One of the jets crashed into a group of spectators standing near the runway. The other two jets crashed into a wooded area on the other side of the runway. Including the three pilots, 70 people died immediately or as result of the severe burns and injuries. About 400 people were also injured, some severely.

Another tragic accident happened almost exactly two years after the air show catastrophe. On August 29th, 1990 a C-5A "Galaxy" crashed immediately after take-off into the wooded area "Hofwiesen" south of Ramstein. 13 crew members and passengers were killed.



C-5 „Galaxy“ (53)

Extensive troop reductions and disarmament measures started off the Nineties in a re-united Germany. Besides American troop reductions, the French, British, Belgian, Dutch and Canadians also withdrew their forces completely or partially from West Germany. In Rhineland-Palatinate the US Air Force closed bases in Hahn, Bitburg, Zweibrücken and Sembach; Spangdahlem and Ramstein remained. The Air Force installation in the western Palatinate region, with its sub-installations in Einsiedlerhof and Vogelweh, not only remained but gained increased importance and was further expanded.

The 316th Air Division was deactivated on May 1st, 1991. The two subordinate wings were combined to form the 86th Fighter Wing. On June 1st, 1992 the name changed to 86th Wing

as a result of the assignment of the 58th Airlift Squadron. By this, the transformation of the wing from a fighter wing to a central hub for strategic and tactical airlift in Europe began. The C-130 "Hercules" aircraft from the 37th Airlift Squadron at Rhein-Main were transferred to Ramstein in June 1994. In return, the two F-16 "Fighting Falcon" squadrons left the western Palatinate region for Aviano in Italy. The renaming to 86th Airlift Wing followed in October 1994.

A new era started for Ramstein Air Base on December 23rd, 1999 with the signing of the "Agreement to return Rhein-Main Air Base in Frankfurt and the housing area Gateway Gardens as well as the implementation and financing of construction measures at Spangdahlem and Ramstein Air Base" by the transfer partners.

The agreement specified that the Americans were to return Rhein-Main Air Base in Frankfurt to the Federal Republic of Germany by the end of 2005. In return, the responsibilities and capabilities of Rhein-Main will be transferred to Spangdahlem in the Eifel and in Ramstein. Extensive construction projects would be financed with a volume of 373 million Euros, of which 175 million Euros were designated for Ramstein. Agreement partners for the transition program were the Rhineland-Palatinate State Government, FRAPORT, the State of Hessen, the City of Frankfurt, HQ USAFE and the Federal Government, represented by the Federal Minister of Finance.

In the transition agreement, the most important construction measures for Ramstein were the upgrade of the existing northern runway, the upgrade of the existing taxiway "India" to the future



Wreckage of a galaxy (54)

main runway (southern runway), accommodating 90% of all future aircraft movements; and south of it a 12.5 acre „Hot Cargo“ pad and another expansion of „Ramp 5“ by 178,202 square yards. This huge 243,982 square yard strategic airlift ramp located southeast of the West Gate was just finished in the beginning of 2001 at a cost of 120 million Marks.

Due to the significant changes resulting from the planned construction measures, an approval process IAW Air Traffic Act was initiated. Air and ground noise studies, expert opinions on pollution and possible effects on the health were prepared to evaluate the consequences of the expansion. On May 3rd, 2002, the Upper Finance Directorate in Koblenz, representing the US forces, formally requested the approval for the expansion of Ramstein Air Base with the Defense Area Administration West. The public hearing phase took place between May and June 2002. More than 12,000 comments and objections were submitted during the formal process against the expansion. The Air Traffic Act permit was granted on June 11th, 2003 and court proceedings are still ongoing.

In a separate formal land acquisition procedure, the US forces furthermore requested an additional 544 acres for the expansion of the air base. Included in this request were 366 acres for compensation measures. The base area itself was extended by 175 acres. In the western part of the base, it includes property formerly belonging to the municipality of Ramstein.

Meanwhile, construction started on the base as part of the immediate execution authorization - creating facts independent of the objections and court proceedings. Large wooded areas were cleared by extensive tree cutting to establish an obstacle-free zone for aircraft movements. Most of the Rhein-Main Transition Program construction projects have been completed. „Ramp 5“ was expanded, the „Hot Cargo“ apron was built and the new southern runway was put into operation at the beginning of September 2005, resulting in serious protests from the communities of Hütschenhausen and Spesbach in the following days and weeks. These villages are especially affected by over-flights during approaches from the west (during easterly wind conditions). The new state-of-the-art

freight terminal and the passenger terminal addition have also been completed. After the closure of Rhein-Main, 35,000 passengers per month can be handled in this extended facility. The upgrade of the northern runway will be finished in 2006.

Ramstein Air Base, originally built for fighter jets, will receive "a new face" and transform to a "super-base" of the US Air Forces in Europe according to Brigadier-General Mark Volcheff, Community Commander from 2000 – 2002, in a Kaiserslautern American interview on April 12th, 2002⁽⁸⁾.

At the turn of the year 2005 to 2006, this prognosis is facing its implementation. Effective with the official closure of Rhein-Main Air Base in Frankfurt on October 10th, 2005, Ramstein is now the new "Gateway to Europe" for all US soldiers and their families. Up to 35,000 passengers may be processed monthly through the passenger terminal on the installation. In addition to the mostly finished RMTP construction projects, the Americans announced further US-funded projects in a volume of 255 million Euros, which have been partially realized by now.

The new "KMCC" (Kaiserslautern Military Community center), located north of the passenger terminal and constructed on a 62 acres area, is one of those projects. This shopping, meeting and leisure center will cost about 150 million Dollars. More than 3,000 parking spaces will be available for American customers, who are expected to arrive from throughout Europe. A 350-bed visiting quarters, a large shopping center, four movie theaters, banks, a travel agency, several restaurants and much more will be located within the building complex, which is expected to open at the beginning of 2007.

An extensive housing modernization project is also included, in which the old multi-family dwellings dating back to the Fifties will either be completely renovated or torn down and replaced by town houses. Step by step, the entire infrastructure of the base is being upgraded or repaired. Schools or child care centers, fitness centers or club houses for the golf course, hangars or single airmen's quarters, new command centers for military groups and squadrons – upgrade and new construction is going on everywhere. The US Air Force is even

building a swimming pool on Ramstein, which is not appreciated by the surrounding communities since many of their customers to date are American; they may possibly be missing as customers in the future.

These extensive, enormous and complex construction measures will result in an excellent military and civilian infrastructure on Ramstein Air Base, which emphasizes the importance of Ramstein Air Base in the strategic

planning of the US military and NATO. Ramstein will probably be the last base to close if the Americans ever decide to withdraw from their military engagement in Western Europe. However, the present great investments are rather an indication that the Americans plan to stay in Ramstein for a long time.

Just as in the past, Ramstein citizens and the citizens from the surrounding municipalities will observe the further development of the airbase with mixed feelings. On the one hand, the region profits tremendously from the extensive investments and employment created by the allied stationing forces as well as from the money spent by soldiers, civilians and family members downtown⁹. However, the impact of and restrictions caused by the operation of a base are also indisputable.

Since June 16th, 2005, the 86th Airlift Wing has once again been host unit at Ramstein Air Base and it is the only US airlift wing in Europe. With its four groups and about 40 aircraft, it is responsible for tactical, medical and humanitarian airlift within the European and African theater. The wing is presently commanded by Brigadier General Richard C. Johnston, who is also the Commander of the Kaiserslautern Military Community with about 47,000 Americans.

On January 15th, 2004, the 435th Air Base Wing was newly activated. Responsibilities were split between the 86 AW and the 435 ABW:



The new ramp 5 in August 2001 with parked airplanes (55)

Operational responsibilities remained at the airlift wing; base support and logistical functions were moved to the air base wing with its four subordinate groups. The wing's first commander was Brigadier General Rosanne Bailey, who also held the position of the community commander until June 2005, at which time Colonel Kurtis D. Lohide took command of the 435th Air Base Wing.



The new passenger terminal (56)

The Kaiserslautern Military Community is also home to yet another wing. The 38th Combat Support Wing (CSW) includes 28 geographically separated units in 9 countries USAFE-wide. More than 3,500 soldiers and civilians with diverse tasks ranging from maintenance and storage of weapons, security services or weather forecasting to civil engineering are assigned to the 38 CSW. Colonel Earl D. Matthews is the commander; he and Colonel

Lohide are also presently KMC deputy community commanders.

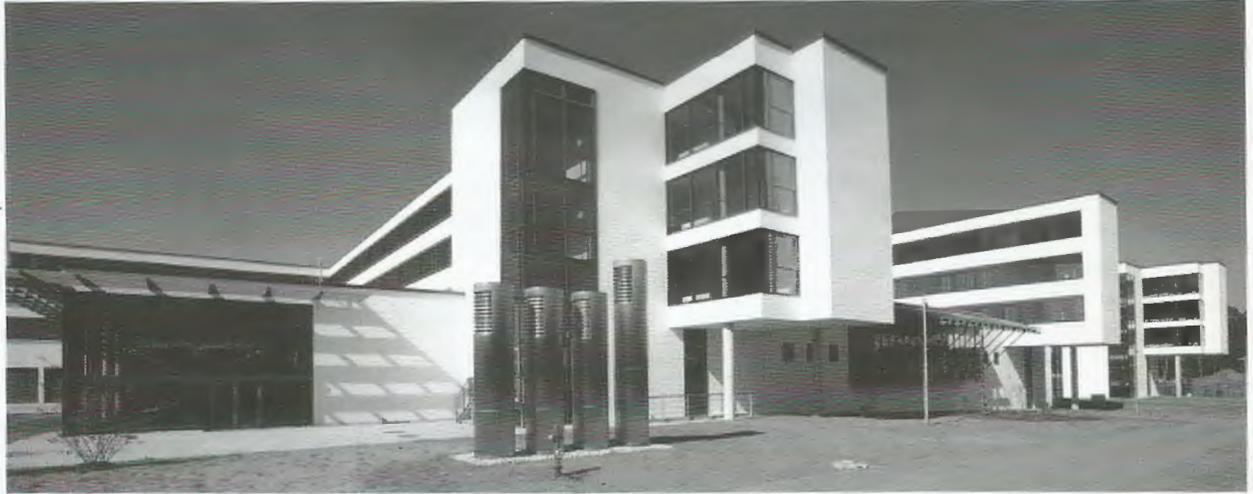
Ramstein Air Base is also home to the 721st Air Mobility Operations Group (AMOG) belonging to the Air Mobility Command (AMC) of the US forces with its headquarters at Scott



Loading a Globemaster (57)

Air Force Base in Illinois. The unit is responsible for cargo movements and aircraft maintenance for AMC in Europe. The associated squadron at Ramstein receives and distributes freight on large cargo aircraft

like C-5 "Galaxy" or C-17 "Globemaster" as well as leased civilian cargo aircraft. Since October 2005, the very noisy and meanwhile outdated C-141 "Starlifter" airframe was taken out of the US Air Force inventory in Europe .



NATO-Headquarters (58)

NATO turns Ramstein into a multinational installation

Stefan Layes

In addition to the Headquarters of the United States Air Forces in Europe, Ramstein is also host to command structures of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, NATO. ⁽¹⁾ The 4th Allied Tactical Air Force came to Ramstein in 1958 as the first NATO unit. On June 28th, 1974, Ramstein became home to the NATO Headquarters Allied Air Forces Central Europe (AAFCE).

Plans to completely restructure NATO command and control functions start after 1990 in the wake of detente policy and troop reductions. The new NATO command "Allied Air Forces Central Europe" (AIRCENT) is activated on July 1st, 1993. Its area of responsibility is expanded to include Denmark and parts of Northern Germany effective July 1st, 1994. In addition to Germans, Americans, Britons, Dutch, Belgians, French and Canadians, Danish soldiers are now also part of the headquarters staff.

In March of 2000, further changes in the NATO command structure led to a reduction in headquarters and the abolition of an entire management level. Ramstein profits by this reorganization and becomes seat of the Headquarters Allied Air Forces Northern Europe (AIRNORTH). It assumes tasks of the disbanded NATO installation High Wycombe in England and others in Denmark and Norway. Its area of responsibility almost doubles. Aside from monitoring the airspace over Germany, the Benelux countries, Denmark, Poland and the Czech Republic, the skies above England, Norway as well as North Sea and Baltic Sea are added.

In March of 2004, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania as well as Bulgaria, Romania and Slovenia were accepted as NATO members. The Baltic States and Slovenia are added to the area of responsibility of the Ramstein headquarters. On July 1st, 2004, AIRNORTH is renamed

"Component **Command Air, Headquarters Ramstein**", abbreviated **CC-Air HQ Ramstein**. The main objective of the headquarters is the **airspace monitoring of all of Northern Europe**. Ramstein takes over the **operational control** of the air component of the newly founded "NATO Response Force" (NRF) in mid-2006. It is also **responsible** for the air component of the **International Security Assistance Force (ISAF)** in Afghanistan under the mandate of the **United Nations Security Council**.

Due to the **growing area of responsibility and NATO expansion** to the East, military personnel from **Norway, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovenia, Italy and Spain** are now also assigned to the staff. Ramstein's higher headquarters is the "**Joint Force Command**" at **Brunssum, Netherlands**, which is subordinate to the central NATO headquarters "**Shape**" in **Casteau, Belgium**.

Since December 5th, 2005, CC-Air is commanded by the American Four Star General **William T. Hobbins**, who also commands Headquarters **United States Air Forces in Europe** from Ramstein.

The new NATO HQ facility was opened on October 7th, 2005 at Ramstein Air Base. ⁽²⁾ The construction of the four-story building complex cost approximately 40 million Euros and concentrates the staff in one facility after having been split up in twelve locations across the base. Amongst others, conference rooms, offices and representation facilities with state of the art information and communication technology are available to the military and civilian staff. Also included in the new central facility are an auditorium for 300 persons, a cafeteria, a spacious foyer and a parking garage for 600 vehicles.

The facility encompasses approximately 40,000 square meters in the Eastern part of the base. The built-up space totals 100,000 cubic meters and has a total utilizable floor space of approximately 14,000 square meters. The 550 military and civilian staff members come from 20 different NATO states, of which some have only single representatives on site. The facility was originally laid out for 800 people; however, due to internal NATO changes, the number decreased. The security measures in the facility are also the most modern, which is set off by a separate entry gate and electronic barrier from the rest of Ramstein Air Base.

Annotations

Maria Höhn

Ramstein and the Americans

⁽¹⁾ The book "GIs and Fräuleins – The German-American Encounter in 1950s West Germany" (2002) (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press) by Maria Höhn describes in more detail the coexistence during the Fifties in the area of Birkenfeld and Kaiserslautern. Winfried Herget, Werner Kremp and Walter Rödel, (ed.) (1995): Neighbor America – 50 years of Americans in Rheinland-Pfalz (Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag) Winfried Herget, publisher (1996): Americans in Rheinland-Pfalz – an article about half a century of German American neighborhood (Trier:Wissenschaftlicher Verein) for the history of the American military presence in Rheinland-Pfalz.

⁽²⁾ Pfälzische Volkszeitung, 16 February 1955

⁽³⁾ Rheinzeitung, 21 December 1954 "Zehntausende Sternlein leuchten"
Rheinzeitung, 22 December 1953 "Kinderbescherung im General – Hospital"
Rheinzeitung, 7 December 1953 "Der Nikolaus kam mit dem Hubschrauber"
(Santa Claus came by helicopter)

For the memories of the time witnesses see:
IANAS Videos 20, 40, 41, 48, 53, 56

⁽⁴⁾ IANAS Video 56 – the Oral History collection of the Interdisciplinary Research Group for North American Studies at the Johannes Gutenberg University in Mainz was used for this article. The filmed interviews in the year 1993 were part of the research project: "Neighbor America". Some of the interviews were filmed in the Kaiserslautern district and Ramstein. The statements of the contemporaries are identified with video numbers.

⁽⁵⁾ Pfälzische Volkszeitung (23 May 1955) - "Wochen(end)schau – Tag der Streitkräfte, (Armed Forces Day) : Kaiserslautern, Vogelweh, Landstuhl, Ramstein, Sembach"

⁽⁶⁾ IANAS Video 33

⁽⁷⁾ IANAS Video 30

⁽⁸⁾ IANAS Video 27

⁽⁹⁾ Die Rheinpfalz (14 March 1953) "Wie lebt der Amerikaner in der Pfalz." (How does the American live in the Palatinate)

⁽¹⁰⁾ IANAS Video 34

⁽¹¹⁾ IANAS Video 13

⁽¹²⁾ IANAS Video 14

⁽¹³⁾ IANAS Video 6

⁽¹⁴⁾ IANAS Video 1

⁽¹⁵⁾ IANAS Video 34

(16) IANAS Video 1

(17) IANAS Video 51

(18) IANAS Video 6

(19) IANAS Video 51

(20) Patricia Hough (1979): "The Socio-Cultural Integration of German Women Married to American Personnel" (Dissertation, Freie Universität Berlin), p. 144 – 145

(21) IANAS Video 34

Anke Herbert

US Air Force honors German mother

(1) Slightly changed article of Die Rheinpfalz, Kaiserslautern edition, 10 May 1997

Stefan Layes

From barracks to a "Super Base"

(1) Feth H. (1966): Ramstein, die größte Landgemeinde der Westpfalz – Heimatkalender Kaiserslautern, p.20f (Ramstein, the largest rural community in the Westpfalz – Homeland calendar Kaiserslautern, p.20f)

(2) "Ramstein AB: A journey through time"
Article by S. Westrich and K. Brehmer in the Kaiserslautern-American, 25 October 1991

(3) Lautensach-Löffler, E. (1957): Die westpfälzische Großgemeinde Ramstein im Spiegel der sozialen Umschichtung – Hermann Lautensach-Festschrift (The Western Palatinate community Ramstein in the mirror of social change) (= Stuttgarter Geografische Studien, 69, 181 – 198) Stuttgart

Lautensach-Löffler, E. (1964): "Ramstein und Sembach" Zum Wandel der Lebensverhältnisse in zwei pfälzischen Flugplatzgemeinden – Mitteilungen der Pollichia, III. Reihe, 12. Bd., 27-46 (Ramstein and Sembach: on the change in living conditions for two Palatinate air base communities)

(4) (1965), p. 32

(5) A survey of the units stationed on base in the last fifty years:
Information book (1995): Ramstein Air Base Festival
86th Airlift Wing Public Affairs Office- 86th Airlift Wing Fact Sheet,
July 1999
50 Years of Friendship and Freedom 1952 – 2002.
Supplement to the Kaiserslautern-American, 8 March 2002

(6) The life of American soldiers in Germany was well described by Signe Seiler in his book: "Die GI's – Amerikanische Soldaten in Deutschland" Reinbek, 1985

(7) compare to the article in Die Rheinpfalz (4 January 1988): „Mit dem US-Dollar fällt der Traum Bundesrepublik“ (The dream of the Federal Republic falls with the US-Dollar) and the article in Frankfurter Rundschau (4 January 1988): "Es reicht nur für die Ansichtskarte" (It is just enough for a picture postcard)

⁽⁸⁾ Ramstein Air Base's metamorphosis continues – Kaiserslautern American (KA), 12 April 2002

⁽⁹⁾ Based on the numbers of the 435th Air Base Wing for the fiscal year (October 1st, 2003 – September 30th, 2004) of 2004 for the entire Kaiserslautern Military Community: total amount of salaries paid to German civilian employees: \$ 227.945.877

Estimated amount of the US citizen expenditures in the region: \$ 412.313.652

Expenditures for construction projects, services, material, equipment and procurement: \$ 467.005.839

The US military estimates approximately 13,405 indirectly created jobs. With an average yearly income of \$ 39,118 is the monetary value \$ 524.376.790

The US total annual economic impact is 1,631,642,158 billion Dollars in the fiscal year 2004, from which the regional economy benefits.

A new NATO Headquarters

⁽¹⁾ The history of the NATO in Ramstein "History of the NATO Air HQs at Ramstein Air Base"

Internet: www.nato.int/structur/airnorth/text/history_nato_hqs.htm

⁽²⁾ According to the article in the newspaper „Die Rheinpfalz“ (16 November 2005): "Ein riesiges Uhrwerk in Glas und Beton"

(A huge clockwork made of glass and concrete)

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Suddenly they were here! Surprise, curiosity or maybe even fear of what might come next probably moved the population of the small town of Ramstein in the early fifties when the first US jets came thundering down on the old autobahn. Meanwhile, the temporary landing strip developed into the largest US military air base outside the United States and one of their most important hubs. Ramstein is known worldwide and is also home to a NATO Headquarter.

Since then several million Americans have experienced Germany and the Germans in Ramstein and in the Kaiserslautern Military Community.

All of this had an impact on the region. This book tries to highlight some important moments and developments in the last decades. The focus is on compressed articles, very personal memories and especially on photos never published before.

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