Dream-Come-True House

By HELEN McLAUGHLIN
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BACK IN THE TURBULENT early years after the end of World War II, a German mother of three grown girls viewed with increasing sorrow and alarm the oft-repeated tragedy of the homeless girl. In her own city of Stuttgart, as elsewhere in Germany, she saw countless girls, many barely in their teens, roaming dark streets at night, sleeping in parks or bombed-out buildings, stealing or turning to illicit ways for even momentary warmth and shelter.

Why not build a home for girls in Stuttgart? It seemed an impossible, fantastic dream. There was so much else to be done first. But the more she thought about it, the more she became convinced that such a home could and must be built. She took her idea to a handful of American friends. They listened, and a dream began the long process of coming true.

IT WAS A HOT weekday in Stuttgart in July 1951 and a casual visitor to the Wuerttemberg-Baden capital must have wondered where all the people were going dressed in their Sunday best. But Stuttgarters knew — everyone who possibly could was bound for the borough of Bad Cannstatt for the dedication of the dream-come-true of Mrs. Anna Haag, onetime member of the Wuerttemberg-Baden state legislature, writer and lecturer.

The crowd toiled in a steady stream up a steep incline to a clearing of freshly-turned earth where a sprawling structure stood, its pinkish walls glistening in the sun. Inside, the visitors overflowed a huge auditorium and waited for the program to begin.

At last, a slight, graying woman of 63, torn between laughter and tears, stood amid the cool greenness of the decorated stage to open the dedication program of the new Anna Haag Home for German girls and its adjoining community youth center. The tears which stood in the dancing blue eyes of Mrs. Haag and which repeatedly crept into her voice were tears of joy.
In spacious reception room are group of the first girls admitted. Center, seated, is house mother, Mrs. Lilo Adam.

Dedication of the new building, constructed by joint German-American contributions and named for the woman whose energy and courage had helped carry it to completion, was a momentous occasion. Mrs. John J. McCloy, wife of the US High Commissioner, was among those present to pay tribute to Mrs. Haag and her co-workers. Other dignitaries on the speaking program were Maj. Gen. Charles P. Gross, US state commissioner for Wurttemberg-Baden; Dr. Arnulf Klett, mayor of Stuttgart; Dr. Elisabeth Schmaltz, representing the Wurttemberg-Baden ministry of culture; Karl Stroele, state ministerial adviser; Josef Hrn, deputy mayor of Stuttgart, and Hermann Bannhart, mayor of Bad Cannstatt.

Details of the early struggle to raise money were recounted by Mrs. Stuart L. Hannon, wife of the chief of the Public Affairs Division, OLC Wurttemberg-Baden, who was one of the American women who helped to pioneer the project; sessions with the women regarding plans for the building were described by Architect Hans Herkommer, and contributions by the youth of Stuttgart were outlined by two representatives of the City Youth Committee, Susi Arnold and Toni Furtner.

Later there were an inspection of the new project and refreshments in the gleaming white and yellow milk bar. Some 500 men, women and even a few children wound up and down its stairs, into the youth center's lovely reception room, the hobby room and the third-floor library, the Girls' Home's bedrooms, kitchens and baths.

Roommates enjoying a pleasant evening snack in their room are Ursula Wrack (left), 19, and Maria Rudolf, 21.

Residents in another corner of the living room enjoy chess, checkers, card games. Ever-present kibitzers are there, too.

and finally out onto the sunwashed roof. All their faces reflected pride and pleasure in a community achievement which is one of the most outstanding in postwar Germany.

The beautiful, modern structure, built on a Bad Cannstatt knoll overlooking the towering greenery of Stuttgart's seven hills and its spires and smokestacks beneath, cost DM 560,000 ($133,200). It will house 85 girls from 14 to 24 years in age — refugees from several countries, girls from the rural districts who are serving as apprentices in Stuttgart industries, shops and trades, trainees for teaching in kindergarten schools and young workers who have no other home.

In the youth center wing, young people of the area can spend their leisure hours in the basement hobby room and snack bar, in the auditorium, where movies, plays and concerts will be held; in the great reception room, with its polished wood floor for dancing or games, and in the secluded quiet of the well-equipped library. The roof-top sun deck can also be used for summer dancing parties or for lounging and reading on summer afternoons.

Bedrooms in the Girls' Home are equipped for one, two or three occupants, the girls paying 40 Deutsche marks ($9.52) a month for a single room; 30 marks ($7.14) each for a double, and 25 marks ($5.95) each for a three-bed room. All of the rooms are brightly papered in various designs, and the colorful bedspreads and matching curtains, tables and tiny stools and broad expanse of window provide an attractive place to live.

Listening to radio are, left to right, Lola Sigle, 19, Ingrid Steinbach, 19, Elise Maenz, 24, and Brigitte Hahn, 21.
Furnishings for several rooms have already been provided by Stuttgart and Bad Cannstatt business firms. In each corridor of the three-floor Girls’ Home wing is a small reception alcove where the residents may receive guests. One of them has a beautiful combination radio and record-player, the gift of the German-American Women’s Club of Stuttgart.

Because of the great number of applications, girls selected for residence in the home are chosen by a special committee, which is required to allot a certain amount of space for refugees and apprentices. Although the problem of homeless girls is not so serious now as it was when Mrs. Haag first broached her idea, it still exists and the influx of refugees keeps it at a serious level despite the rapidity with which the Württemberg-Baden capital city has rebuilt its war-damaged homes and institutions.

AFTER THE CROWD HAD GONE, Mrs. Haag sat on the broad stone steps of the youth center entrance, her bouquet beginning to wilt in the sun, and talked animatedly of the manner in which the project was started and told of the vast amount of work which went into it. She spoke with glowing praise of the splendid cooperation which American residents of the community, especially the women, had given throughout the long months of planning and fund-raising, and of the value of their persistent moral courage in the face of seemingly insurmountable obstacles.

Brigitte Knirsch, 23, refugee from Silesia, and Doris Meller, 19, who fled East Prussia, do their weekly pressing.

Renate Knipping of Osnabruck, 19, and Hertha Knepfel, 23, once of Tientsin, China, enjoy cooking supper.

At one of the initial meetings of German and American women to discuss launching of the project, Mrs. Haag said, Miss Margaret Blewett, HICOG Women’s Affairs officer for Württemberg-Baden, suggested that perhaps US funds might be contributed to the venture. When city authorities were approached for a grant, they openly discounted the possibility of a HICOG contribution. “We will match whatever you get from the Americans,” they said.

Smilingly, Mrs. Haag recalled the moment when city officials were shown the HICOG check for DM 170,000 ($40,460). “They were slightly taken aback, to say the least,” she laughed, “but they kept their promise and matched the American check, that gave us a wonderful total of 340,000 marks ($80,920).” The City of Stuttgart also donated the site for the project, but cost of upkeep is borne by Bad Cannstatt.

Dozens of campaigns of various kinds were carried on to raise additional money, chiefly through the enterprise of the Arbeitsgemeinschaft Stuttgart Frauen (Working Association of Stuttgart Women) with the assistance of American women of the community. There were benefits and sales and door-to-door soliciting, and soon the fund began snowballing into a more and more impressive figure. “We begged and begged and begged,” said Mrs. Haag, “and finally, last March, we had enough so that ground for the building could be broken.”

During the dedication ceremonies, Mrs. Haag was presented a check for an additional DM 1,000 ($238)

Bothild Bredau, 18, of Riga, and Marianne Schroeder, 19, of East Prussia, are among refugees in Anna Haag Home.
I know that all of us feel, as I do, that our reward has come not only from the sight of this beautiful building but in the warmth we have in our hearts from helping others.

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Marshall Plan
And the Germans

Condensed Text of Address

By ANNA HAAG

ANYWHERE ON EARTH you can find people with a negative attitude toward life. Here in Germany you find them, too. In the art of politics especially, the pessimists maintain that the development of humanity becomes obscure. According to their opinion it is absurd to say that human beings are gifted with "common sense." They think that people can only be called "intelligent." They admit that intelligence is something quite precious, but only once in a while, and never can it reach in the ranks of human values that which is called common sense.

Surely these pessimists are right in this placing of values. They also are right when they say that intelligence without common sense might have a negative, even destructive, effect. But are they right in affirming that nowhere on earth can developments be observed which are proofs of human intelligence combined with common sense? Are there nowhere men who watch political relations with such a superior view or who are courageous enough to take unusual and sometimes uncomfortable paths that might lead to a worthy goal?

Let's look at what we call the Marshall Plan. Is that not a new path never before trod until these years of the 20th century? I speak of "The Marshall Plan and the

Mrs. Haag beams as Karl Stroele, a Wurtemberg-Baden state official, presents DM 1,000 check for new home.