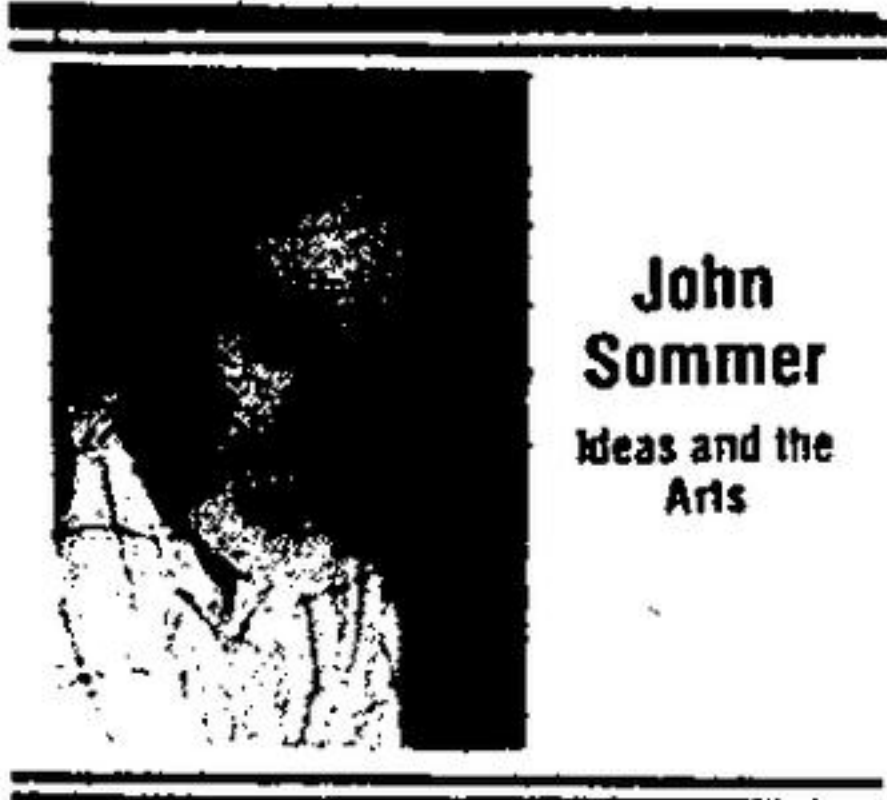


Memories of Berlin; the wall divides



John Sommer
Ideas and the Arts

To see and to hear and to read about what is happening in Berlin right now is such a deeply emotional experience that I can't resist to write down some of my personal memories of this great and tragic city.

In the summer of 1936, when I was almost 10 years old, my parents went with us children to the Berlin Olympic Games for a week. The Games were then thought the proudest achievement of the new Germany, and not to be missed. The wide boulevards of the city had been decorated by the designer of the State Opera House productions Benno von Arendt with banners, swastikas and statues of nude athletes. The connection to Greece, and the ideals this ancient civilization represented, had been stressed by a spectacular relay of torch bearers that brought the Olympic flame from Athens to Berlin. Every propagandistic means had been employed to glorify the regime and accordingly visitors from abroad marvelled at the vitality and affluence of Germany in the middle of a depression that strangled all the other European and North American economies. For me the week was a delirious mix of sports events watched in the gigantic new stadium, meeting in person some of the famous sports personages known to me so far only from photographs, visiting the grandest of the sights the capital had to offer, and waiting with thousands of others in front of the chancellery for a glimpse of Hitler, who from time to time on one particular day, came out onto a balcony to wave and to soak up the adulation of the near hysterical crowd.

Seven years went by before I travelled to Berlin again. This time I went alone. My parents had given me the trip as a graduation gift. The bombings had started but little damage was visible yet. Because of war-time-austerity the streets in the centre of the city were almost empty of traffic. The theatres, however, were filled with soldiers on leave and their girls. Potsdam and the park and palaces of Frederick the Great were as manicured as in peace time and open for inspection.

Only two years later Berlin was in ruins. The war had come to a deservedly terrible end for us Germans and the military occupiers did with us whatever they wanted, in particular in the eastern part of the country. I found myself in a freight train full of prisoners. We passed through Berlin on our way to an internment camp on an island in the Baltic Sea. Later, after I had escaped from the island, I again came to Berlin, walking, one early, cold morning through miles and

miles of total and utter devastation to get from one train station to another. I was on the run and came to rest only many weeks later when I crossed the border, illegally, into West Germany. Eventually I came to Canada.

In 1966 I flew to Germany on a holiday and I went to West Berlin to see an old aunt. To my surprise the western part of the city had been resurrected and her war scars had grown over. The huge Tiergarten to the west of the Brandenburg Gate, a field of bomb craters in 1945, had been replanted. The young trees were already high enough to give shade and comfort on a hot summer day. The wall, only five years old at that point, looked and felt hideous, of course, dividing the city into two opposing political systems from which no escape seemed ever possible.

In 1975 my wife and I travelled to Berlin to see our daughter. In nine years West Berlin had become a glittering metropolis in the middle of drab, backward East Germany. If anything, the wall, which one suddenly encountered behind the tall trees of a park or meandering across a street, was even uglier than before, reinforced with barbed wire and fortified by the watchtowers of the East German police.

And now this: On Nov. 9, 1989 the sudden and unrehearsed opening of a 28-year-old prison wall by the prisoners themselves, who, encouraged by the actions of a remarkable Soviet leader, decided that they had had enough, that they would not be servile to their managers any longer, who had never given them anything but shortages, evasions and lies. The result is that Berlin has ceased to be a divided city. It is now up to our leaders too, if the division of Europe will continue or become a thing of the past, one day.

Obituary

Hugh Allan Leslie

Hugh Allan Leslie passed away, suddenly, Oct. 20, 1989. He had undergone two heart operations within the year. The son of George H. Leslie and the former Mabel Dolson, RR4 Georgetown.

He gave up high school at 15 years of age to manage his father's farms, when his father became ill. Later he operated his own dairy farm on Heritage Road in Peel County.

He had a continuing interest in the local Plowmen's Association and in 1950 represented Canada as Esso Champion in several countries in Europe. As a diligent farmer and expert mechanic, he enjoyed perfecting a job and did so to the best of his ability. Life was a challenge and he met it straight on; as well, his enthusiasm for life spilled over in his good sense of humor.

The family moved to Acton, RR4, 11 years ago. He leaves his wife, the former Eloise Hyatt, three daughters, and a son. Lynda and her husband, Doug Swackhamer, Shari-Lou Cation, Susan, and David, as well as six grandsons, his brother Bob, of Georgetown, and sisters Margaret Chapman, Bayfield, Ontario, Helen Daoust, Montreal, Ethel Samuels, Toronto. He is predeceased by a brother Eric.

He was a member of Union Presbyterian Church. Rev. Cribbar of Acton Presbyterian and Pastor Williamson conducted the family service on Monday, Oct. 23, at J.S. Jones Funeral Home, Georgetown. Burial was at Greenwood Cemetery, Georgetown.

Pallbearers were David Leslie, Drew Swackhamer, Michael Cation, Terry Leslie, J.D. Cameron, and Allan Cook. The grandsons helped to carry floral tributes. Donations were gratefully received for the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario, in Hugh's memory.

98 years young



Clara Chapman, a long-time resident of Halton Hills, celebrated her 98th birthday at the Bennett Health Care Centre Nov. 9. Ms. Chapman has lived in Halton for 63 years. She is seen here holding a cake with her great niece Marilyn Oldham. (Herald photo)

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<p>Heat 'n' Serve Cooked Frankfurter on a Stick in a Batter POGO STICKS 4⁹⁹ Tray of 10</p>	<p>Boneless & Skinless CHICKEN BREAST Marinated With Lemon & Herbs 19⁹⁷ 3 lbs.</p>	<p>BEEF STEAKETTES 8⁹⁵ 16 x 4 oz.</p>	<p>Breaded, Oven Ready TURKEY SCHNITZEL 12⁹⁸ 10 Pack</p>

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