

## Wichitan recalls time in divided Berlin

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More than three decades have passed since Glenna Harrison had her own experiences with the Berlin Wall.

A teacher at the Berlin American High School from 1969 to 1972, the Wichitan remembers the East German guards in their towers with binoculars and guns, the barbed wire and the expanse along the wall's East Berlin side where would-be escapees were shot as they tried to run for freedom.

Mostly, she remembers the feelings of oppression the East Berliners had.

"I just never thought the East Berliners or East Germans had any possibility of ever living outside the Iron Curtain," she said.

But then the Iron Curtain fell on Nov. 9, 1989.

Three years ago, Ron and Glenna Harrison returned to Berlin, where they lived while he was stationed in the Air Force and she worked at the school.

"There were still signs of differences between East and West Germany," she said. "The area around Hitler's bunker has been rebuilt, and it's quite a shock to see brand new buildings."

The barbed wire and guard houses are long gone, but her memories remain of television coverage of the wall's demise.

"It was unbelievable when it came down," Harrison said. "The East German guards were not shooting back."

The Harrisons moved to Wichita in 1985.

She has long been a member of the Overseas Brats, an organization for military dependents and those associated with American Overseas Schools. She is also a member of the American Overseas Schools Historical Society.

Harrison said it's hard for her to realize two decades have passed since the wall was torn down.

"We knew what it was to live inside the wall," she said. "We could travel to East Berlin with papers. West Berlin was bright and colorful and the people had food. In East Berlin, the food was sparse and everything was very old. They didn't have any pollution controls. There were East German soldiers stationed at every block along the wall."

In 2005, the group Berlin Brats bought a 12-foot tall, four-foot wide, 4 1/2-ton section of the wall for the historical society.

That piece of the wall is on loan and on display at the Museum of World Treasures in downtown Wichita.

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