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BERLIN WALL EXHIBIT OPENS IN WICHITA

By Diana Green Kempton

There are two events in the past sixteen years I regret that I've missed. The first was seeing the Berlin Wall come down in person. Having lived in West Berlin from 1965-1972, I stared in joyous disbelief at national television coverage in November 1989. Berliners smashed it with sledge hammers. framing hammers, tire irons...anything they could to destroy that worn-out relic of injustice to humanity. They swarmed the Wall and tore pieces from it with their bare hands, like molten metal from a cauldron obliterating the very crucible that had held it captive. And the Wall came down, amidst cheers from onlookers and participants alike, who jumped up and down and hugged strangers in the streets, reminiscent of the end of World War II. Watching this event provided a sense of closure, in that the sacrifices our families made during the Cold War, as the free world worked toward that wall coming down, had all been worthwhile.

The second event I wish I could have attended was the unveiling of the Berlin Wall Exhibit at the Museum of World Treasures in Wichita on August 12, 2005. Donated to AOSHS by the Berlin Brats, Berlin American High School's alumni group, the 12 ft. high, 41/2 ton section of the Wall (heavier than initially estimated) made its way from Maryland to Wichita on a flatbed truck in July, arriving on August 1st. It is on loan to the Museum by AOSHS. pending construction of our own AOSHS museum.

Former AOSHS President Ann Bamberger sent me her thoughts after the opening ceremonies, which were attended by city dignitaries and a group of about 50 visitors. "I just Opening Day: AOSHS founder returned from Wichita and the formal opening of the exhibit...it was a nice crowd. Dr. Kardatske, director of the



Drysdale, Ann Bamberger, Norma Margaret Palmer. Glenna Drysdale. Harrison, and Dr. Jon Kardatske, founder and director of the Museum of World Museum of World Treasures, spoke on Treasures, in front of the section of the Wall on loan to the museum.

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Berlin Wall Exhibit



like a holo was blasted in the wall, such SVmbol that you are looking "through" to see a reunification-a reminder that ARE LEAVING string in the lower left corner; the string communication leads up to a red kite, with crosshatches on its tail.

the Museum's behalf; Glenna Harrison, former Berlin educator, spoke on behalf of the Berlin Brats; and I spoke on behalf of AOSHS. The wall is much more impressive in person than in any photo I could send. I am including one photo...so you can clearly see what is being viewed as you look through the "hole" painted on the wall. It is a kite. The string starts in the lower left corner and leads up to a red kite, partly obliterated by some of the paint, and then a tail hangs down from the kite with some crosshatching on it. It is my understanding that (the Berliners) would send messages over the wall using kites."

A contributing factor during the authentication process of this section of the Wall was that graffiti only existed on one side of it-the West-facing side. Anyone attempting to get close enough to the wall from the East would have been shot by their own countrymen who were border

guards...had they made it through the barbed wire, tank traps and mine fields first. What luck to obtain this section with the blasted hole Historic Graffiti: It is painted to look and "view" of the kite, a small of hone between people is a precious freedom.



Next to the Wall section on Checkpoint Charlie display gives viewers a to jump through to simply pass from West to East.

exhibit, a video about the Wall runs continuously. There is also glimpse of the military and political hoops one had a display on Checkpoint Charlie, the American checkpoint between East and West Berlin. Each ally had its own

checkpoint along the city's border. Standing nearby, almost as unmoving as the real life versions I remember, is a life-size East German border guard in uniform, holding his Russian-made rifle,



School students listen intently while Dr. Jon from East to West: Kardatske, director of the Museum of World Treasures. points out the significance of the Berlin Wall section and the graffiti painted on it by West Berliners.

Groups of school children have already visited the exhibit and stood solemnly as they were asked to imagine a roll of barbed wire being strung through the middle of their own city within a matter of hours: to imagine seeing guards along the barbed wire with rifles drawn and military vehicles patrolling the streets. Then, as quickly as the barbed wire rolls are strung, a wall begins to go up, one brick at a time, and the city is isolated from the rest of the world for the next 28 years. Imagine.

As a German school child visiting Checkpoint Charlie wrote beneath his drawing of the Wall that was seen taped to the stairwell in the Berlin museum dedicated to those who lost their lives trying to escape

"The worst thing about the Wall is that people can get used to anything."



Above: An East German Border auard uniform.