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Newsletter of the Southwest Center for German Studies • Texas Tech University • Lubbock, Texas

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The Karl May Connection

Between Texas, Arizona, New Mexico and the Indian Territory. . . lies a wide, terrible stretch of land which could be called the "Sahara of the United States".... Barren areas of dry, glowing sand mingle with naked, burning canyons, which are not able to offer even the poorest vegetation the barest prerequisites of the shortest existence; the cold night harshly and abruptly follows the heat of the day....

*And what is this desert called? The residents of the surrounding territories give their various English, French or Spanish names; generally it is named after the stakes driven to mark the paths: the **Llano Estacado**.*

—Karl May: *Winnetou III*, Chapter 2

This is one of Karl May's descriptions of Northwest Texas where today 24,000 students attend Texas Tech University in Lubbock, a modern, young city of 200,000 residents. The sense of danger so cultivated by May can still be experienced in some back canyons, but fortunately for the modern visitor, it is generally preserved only in the museums and historic exhibits of the area. The general impression that German guests tend to emphasize when they get back home is the unusual friendliness and generosity of the people and of the land.

AND our visitors make return trips! For example: Dr. Rolf Dencker, director of the Goethe Institute in Houston, and his wife, Grace Dencker first visited the Llano Estacado during the National Cowboy Symposium in May of 1992. Again in November of 1992 the Denckers came to Lubbock to join a delegation from Bad Segeberg, Germany, for a major Llano Estacado celebration hosted by Lubbock Mayor, David Langston.

Thanks to the Goethe Institute, an exhibit on the Karl May Festival in Bad Segeberg was on display at the Lubbock International airport and then in the University Center at Tech. As a result of this Lubbock visit, the lucky holder of ticket number 200,000 at the summer festi-



val in Bad Segeberg won a trip to Lubbock to experience the Llano Estacado in person. Mayor Langston repaid the call during the summer of 1993, an



Enjoying the November sun at the Ranching Heritage Museum with the Denckers (left) are Bad Segeberg dignitaries Mr. Wolfgang Spahr; Mr. Ernest Reher, business manager of the Karl May Festival; Mayor Jörg Nehter; and Mr. Tom Woodruff of Lubbock, who drove the entire group from the airport in a stretch limo and all over the Llano Estacado in a plush van.

event which was spread all over Germany by the press: "*Texaner wollen Wilden Westen importieren*," "*Karl-May-Spiele bald auch in Texas*," or "*Texaner hoffen auf Winnetou*."

Dr. and Mrs. Dencker paid a fourth visit to Lubbock for the annual TTU German Club awards banquet in the spring of 1994. Besides his delivering the banquet address, the Denckers arrived laden with gifts of German

(See *Karl May Connection*, p. 8)



Lubbock's 4th Cavalry presented a very entertaining program of great historical interest. Here they pose with the 44 members of the first *Winnetour* group from the Karl-May-Society.

Photo by Mark Lee

generosity of individuals along the trail and the gigantic expanse of the land itself.

At the initial roundup in Ft. Worth, it came as even a surprise to me that the Director and CEO of the Ft. Worth Convention and Visitors Bureau, Mr. Doug Harman, would put in a personal appearance at our hotel and proceed to greet the German guests clutching a copy of a May novel! Doug was with us every inch of the way, smoothing over the bumps, pointing out delightful details, cracking his bull whip and generally winning our hearts.

With all due respect to other highlights of the tour: Palo Duro Canyon, the sights of Amarillo and Canyon, Inn of the Mountain Gods in Ruidoso, Santa Fe, Taos and the Navajo Nation Powwow in Albuquerque on the last night, I am filled with pride to read the participants' unanimous report that the four days spent in Lubbock were unbeatably memorable.

They were very impressed with the welcoming crowd which was still waiting at the National Windmill Collection despite our plane arriving in Lubbock two hours late because of tornados in the Dallas area. The honor of being

greeted in the Texas Tech library by Dr. Haragan, Dr. Cluff and Dr. Murrah, reverberated among the guests after hearing an explanation of a special exhibit of German-Texan letters delivered in German by Bruce Commach.



Mrs. Smith-Ericson (center) arranged a private reception in the McKanna parlor, a luncheon the next day on the grounds of the Ranching Heritage Museum, opened her Casa del Sol home in Blanco Canyon and even followed the greyhound bus to Amarillo to be in on that part of the tour. She now has 44 fans in Germany who will never forget her model of civic leader, rancher and passionate student of the history of the settlement of the Llano Estacado.

Other friends who opened their homes to the bus load of visitors were: Mr. and Mrs. Hoeve as well as Mr. Bob Bruno of Ransom Canyon, and Ron and Rita Peek of Yellowhouse Canyon.

How surprised and delighted the tour group was when Mr. Angulo stepped forward at the Lubbock Lake Landmark and delivered his welcome and detailed tour in fluent German. The Museum of TTU has also developed a brochure in German on the historic site, a great plus for the German fans of the Llano Estacado. Years ago the Southwest Center encouraged a German translation of the "TEXAS" pageant brochure (completed by then graduate student in German, Kay Mittnik) for visitors to Palo Duro. There are several other similar projects on the drawing board at this time.

Various local groups added festive flare to the Lubbock stay: the Mejia family and the mariachis band at Taco Village, the impressive 4th Cavalry of Lubbock and in Palo Duro, the Blue Prairie Band at the campfire in Blanco Canyon, the German-speaking students of Texas Tech, Mr. Tumbleweed and the buffalo herd on the Palo Duro rim, the hosts at Residence Inn and Big Texan. And conveying us safely with humor and thoughtfulness through every canyon was our greyhound bus driver, Lyn Thornley.

Thank you one and all!