

Hills woman welcomes changes in her native land

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

AFTER 45 years of seeing her homeland divided, Helga Miller welcomes German reunification. But she understands the fear many have of the monumental, historic moment.

"I, like many, think it's wonderful," said the German-born Farmington Hills resident. I also remember World War II vividly. I can understand the fears."

Miller captures the fear in a nutshell: "It's that once again this sleeping giant monster will awaken again and do whatever terrible things to the world."

As a child in Germany, Weissenhof was exact, during World War II, Miller has no trouble understanding why fear accompanies the historic German reunification.

But as a child of the war, Miller also knows full well the hardships, the pain and the tragedy of the war — on both sides.

"A dictatorship is a dictatorship. We were as suppressed as much as the people in the East (Germany) have been," Miller said, recalling life during the war.

"We lived in a capitalistic society, yes. But we still could not speak our minds," she said. "I remember the war vividly. This is the last thing a German would want. But I understand others' fears."

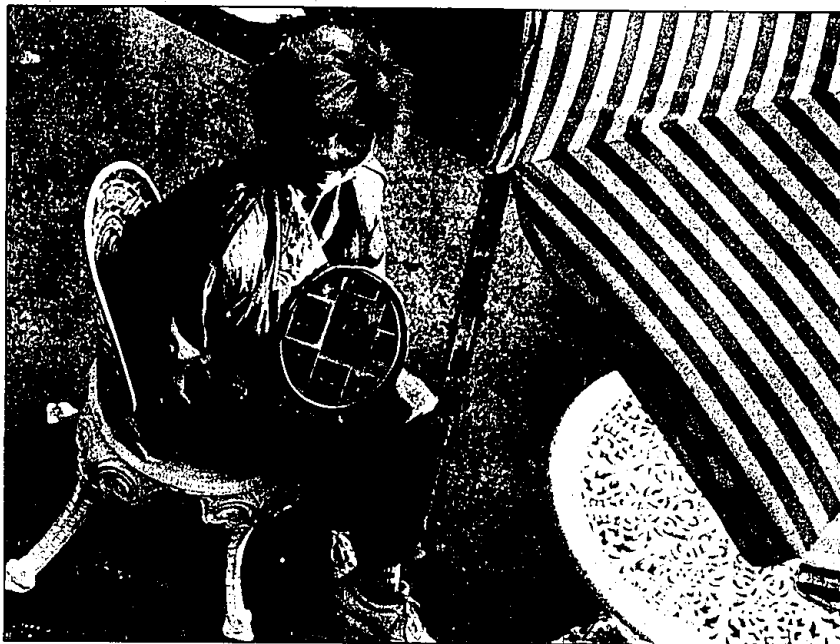
MILLER believes the reunification is good and expects dramatic — and sometimes difficult — changes will result.

"In Germany, people have been separated. Mothers, sons, brothers, sisters. People have not seen their grandchildren. Emotionally, the wall, the division has been a real tragedy."

Changes will be emotional and economic.

The eastern bloc has been economically deprived. Reunification will open eastern markets. Reunification, Miller believes, may be tough for young people, especially those in the east who know freedom only as an idea.

"Two generations of people have



German-born Helga Miller of Farmington Hills welcomes her homeland's re-unification. But she's certain change will be

have to change. But Miller expects that to be tough too. "Transition will be tough. Everybody wants everything yesterday."

And she wonders what's in store for Germany globally. Will the unified nation be permitted in the European Common Market? Will a new Germany be accepted?

The psychological barrier that's been in place for decades will be the toughest thing to overcome. "These people have been sup-

pressed for such a long time."

Unity Day, Oct. 3, is something Miller suspected would happen one day. The dawn of Glasnost gave her a clue.

"I had bet that the wall would be next. It was. How could you not think things would open up. I felt they would. But I'm not saying it wasn't a surprise."

Miller, who first moved to Hallifax, Canada, when she left Germany about six years after the war's

tough going and understands why some fear a unified Germany.

end, is out-spoken and detailed about her memories of the war and of Adolph Hitler, both the early years of optimism and the days that brought the nation to its knees.

SHE RECALLS the fear, the hunger and the propaganda. She recalls traveling to Poland — East Prussia then — to see her soldier father. Being told for so long that Germany was winning

the war, Miller and her family would dart the shooting and the bombings as German soldiers retreated.

As though it were yesterday, Miller describes her confusion when her parents methodically ushered the children out of the kitchen.

She didn't understand what was so secret.

Then one day Miller sneaked a peak and saw her parents listening secretly to the BBC for the Allied version of the war's progress.

"My parents would have gotten into so much trouble if anyone knew they were listening," she said.

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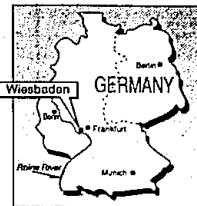
But she also hopes the world will give the unified nation a chance to stand up and take its first step.

"Many people lump the Germans and the Nazis together. They do not know there is a difference," Miller said.

After growing up during the war and watching the destruction, Miller fears when she sees or hears of some of the world's youth donning the swastika.

Actually, she's alarmed.

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Farmington police unions to seek outside mediator

One Farmington police union has requested intervention by a state mediator in ongoing contract negotiations, and another said mediation is "just around the corner."

Wage, pension benefits and work schedules appear to be the biggest issues on the table this fall between Farmington public safety officers and commanders and the city.

Two affiliate unions of the Police Officers Association of Michigan, which represents some 20 members of the Farmington Department of Public Safety, are negotiating separately for contracts that expired June 30. Both groups began meeting with city negotiators last spring, as contracts were close to expiring.

Officers requested mediation after "we decided we had come to an impasse," said Joe Schornack, president of the Farmington Police Officers Association. He said the FPOA brought number of suggestions to the table, including a 16-percent wage increase over three years, changes in pension benefits which would allow a "25 years and out" provision without age restriction, and increased uniform allowances.

Officers currently earn between \$22,486 and \$35,667 per year, depending on their rank and years of service.

Officers also seek a minimum staffing provision, so that at least three officers are available to handle emergencies and fight fires at all times.

FARMINGTON CITY manager Robert Deadman said he is confident contracts with both unions can be reached successfully. "I think we've had some pretty good give and take at the table," he said. "We're still working on it — it hasn't broken down."

The city is seeking to maintain management rights provisions in the contract, and cost containment on health insurance expenses, Deadman said.

Commander Thomas Cox, who sits on the Farmington Command Officers Association bargaining team, said his union has not yet applied for mediation, but "it's just around the corner. I foresee us being forced to mediation as well."

A big issue for commanders, he said, is whether members will be able to apply for their own days off one month in advance, or have the city schedule their time.

The unions apply for mediation to the Michigan Employment Relations Commission, which will appoint a mediator to aid both sides in reaching a settlement. If a settlement cannot be reached, either side can then apply for binding arbitration, in which an appointed arbitrator will decide on the various issues and both sides are bound by the decision.

The commander's last three-year contract contract was decided in binding arbitration, Cox said.

Negotiations are expected to continue after a mediator is appointed later this month.

Drug awareness focus of event

Rap music, workshops and other entertainment will all be part of "Family Day '90" on Sunday, Oct. 14.

The program is hosted by Farmington Families in Action in continuing observance of Substance Abuse Awareness Month.

The event will be held at North Farmington High School, with registration at 12:30 p.m. for the program which runs from 1 p.m. to 4:20 p.m. Tickets for the event will be \$1 for students and seniors, \$2 for adults or \$5 per family.

Featured speaker for the program will be Bill Proctor of Channel 7 News, who will lead off with a keynote address. A former police officer, Proctor has hosted dozens of charity and school events and is currently a news reporter and anchorman.

Following the address, finalists from the middle school and high school Rap Contest will then perform and receive prizes. Door prizes will also be awarded at that time, including autographed Pistons and Tigers "Say Yes to Life — No to Drugs" T-shirts.



Bill Proctor

The afternoon will be divided into two 45-minute workshops, where students and parents can age-appropriate programs. Highlights of

some of the workshop topics include: Physical Strength Without Drug Abuse, Peer Pressure and Reversal Techniques, Keeping Friends and Effects of Alcohol on Self, Family and Friends Among Others.

Rounding out the afternoon will be Jerry Jacoby, who does a "Good Stuff for Kids" musical program with a message for children from preschool through third grade.

Farmington Families in Action, a group devoted to educating children about the dangers of drugs, is focusing on Substance Abuse Awareness Month with a variety of activities in addition to Family Day '90.

On Sunday, Oct. 7, at 3 p.m., proceeds from an ecumenical Kirk's Of the Tartan cultural program at Nardin Park United Methodist Church will be donated to FFIA. A Family Walk/Run sponsored by the Farmington YMCA will also be held on Saturday, Oct. 27, beginning at 9 a.m.

The annual Red Ribbon Campaign continues throughout October with students, teachers, community members and businesses sporting red ribbons as a symbol of substance abuse awareness.

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