

**Thought for the Month:** Das Glueck das heisst Zufriedenheit mit dem was dir beschieden.

**Meaning:** Happiness is, being content with whatever life presents to you and make the best of it

**The following letter is a human interest story of a friend who read this at his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday party.**

**San Jose, Ca ,June 12 . 2007**

**1.**

**Dear Family and Friends,**

First I like to thank everyone here to take time out to toast my 90 th Birthday with me and Christa, my wife of 57 years, who unfortunately is not able to do the last dance with me but is keeping me on my toes nevertheless. My thoughts also go to those who could not be here to celebrate this rare event. I believe this is an excellent day to look back and recap the 90 years. I'll try to do it on 2 pages and many details had to be omitted.

Born in [1917](#) in a little town in [Westfalia](#) a Western German province bordered by the Rhein river, I still remember when I was about 3 or four years old visiting my Grandparents' house next door and collecting the eggs from the chicken coop, stealing strawberries and drinking goat milk We moved to a bigger city where my father transferred to be the mayor in 1922. My brother was born the same year. A sister was born in 1920. Soon afterwards my parents were able to build a house into which we moved 1926. It took almost 2 years to finish, because of constant labor strikes. The years growing up in the new house close to a city park and the following school years until 1936 were the happiest years of my youth. I was looking forward to a medical career but according to law I had to join the voluntary labor force for 1 year and do 2 years [military service](#).

It was during this service that Hitler decided to reclaim the [lost territories](#) from [WW I](#), starting the EUROPEAN CONQUEST, and with it started [WW II](#) .The war years took me to France, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Poland and finally Russia in 1941. Luckily my unit left Russia in Kiev, before the severe winter of 41 / 42 and relocated to Paris to protect as anti-aircraft the Renault factory from Allied Air raids. In spring 1942, I was absolving an officer's seminar in Munich when my father suddenly and accidentally died

in our hometown's hospital. After completing officers school in Berlin, I was deployed with a newly created unit to North Africa in support of the retreating [Africa Corps](#).

The Allied had landed in early 43 in [Casablanca](#) in support of General [Montgomery](#) who had reorganized and was marching towards Tunisia. The tide of war was beginning to turn against us with the loss of [Stalingrad](#) plus the landing of the Allies in France. We in Africa were unable to stem Montgomery's advance mostly because of lack of gasoline, heavy equipment and airpower. The Africa Corps collapsed and we surrendered in May 1943 to the British forces in Tunisia, who then transferred us to the US forces.

A flotilla of [Liberty ships](#) brought about 100.000 [German prisoners](#) to the US. I spent 3 years as POW in Tennessee and S. Carolina, working in Agriculture and the Pulp and Paper industry before serving another year in England. I was finally released to Germany in spring 1947.

2.

These P.O.W. years in the US and England probably saved my life. In the course of [occupation](#) by the Allies we had lost our parental home and my mother was moved into a partially [bombed out house](#) in the neighborhood.

But she was better off than a lot of people. The loss of my father and other circumstances made me give up the University plans. I decided to join the automotive business. I became a journeyman visited engineering evening classes and was employed by the growing [Volkswagen](#) Organization.

In 1950 I married Christa a prewar friend in [Berlin](#), who was a wartime widow with a young daughter. Son Peter was born in 1956. A mistake to lease a Shell service station made me think about my future. Being married with two children and the still rotten German economy fueled my decision to go back to the US which way of life I had learned to love. I applied for a Visa and the VW agency negotiated a job with VW in San Francisco. I was accepted and we sailed with the SS Berlin, 26 pieces of luggage and two children over the Atlantic, landing in March 1958 in [Ellis island](#).

A life for the better had begun. It was hard work for Christa and myself but we made it and we are both very proud today to have a wonderful supporting family with 2 children 2 Grandchildren and already one Great Grand daughter. However not all is gold what shines, The last 35 years were overshadowed by Christa's diabetes. It seemed, that after her car was rear ended and she was hospitalized with a whiplash and several slipped discs, this disease and its symptoms multiplied. She had several bypass surgeries, a colon surgery, eye surgery, back surgery and a hip replacement from slipping on spilled Yogurt in our Safeway store.

It was followed by Angioplasty and a stint, several attacks of congestive heart failure and finally the amputation of her left leg below the knee in 2000. This changed our lives completely. Christa could not drive anymore and had to be taken everywhere. It was followed by a few ulcers of which needed more than two years to heal. She also needed numerous blood transfusions and Iron infusions. All this put a tremendous strain on us and we were sometimes close to desperation. Only Christa's strong will to live combined with Sabine's frequent visits, as moral booster, helped her to pull through all this. Here she is today beaten but not knocked out to help celebrate my birthday, congratulation to her as well.

All these events made the water of the Golden Pond very murky and it was often difficult to find a little sunshine everyday. But all in all we are very lucky to have found, for the most part very fine and dedicated Doctors and Nurses at Kaiser. Without them the picture would have been quite different.

Today I am thankful for what we have accomplished. We don't have Millions and no Stock options, but we have a reasonable satisfying life. I thank the Gods for giving me a healthy body and mind to be able to enjoy these rare fruits of life.

I wish and hope that I am going to live a bit,  
because, once they close the lid,  
that will be it.....!  
Thank you all again and cheers to you all.

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