

the Radschligger

AIWCD

an american woman's life in düsseldorf autumn 2019

SIXTIETH ANNIVERSARY ISSUE



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BE RAD!

are you interested in writing, editing, or graphic design?

If so, please come to our Radschläger Writer's Circle meetings. We would love to hear your ideas and input on our magazine. If you have a story to tell, please come and see us – we would love to meet you!

QUESTIONS? Contact us at radschlaeger@aiewcduesseldorf.org.

Don't forget – all content for the next issue must be submitted by **NOVEMBER 5**.

Any content received after this date may not be included in the magazine, at the discretion of the editing team. It takes time to organize and edit the articles, and to design the magazine. We appreciate your understanding!



SIXTY YEARS STRONG

what the aiwcd means to me

THE AIWCD TURNED 60 THIS YEAR. PEOPLE JOIN OUR CLUB FOR A NUMBER OF REASONS – TO MAKE NEW FRIENDS, TO FIND HELP ACCLIMATING TO LIFE IN A NEW COUNTRY, OR JUST TO PRACTICE ENGLISH. IN THE NEXT PAGES, YOU WILL FIND A COLLECTION OF STORIES FROM MANY OF OUR LONG-STANDING MEMBERS ABOUT WHY THEY JOINED THE AIWCD AND HOW THE CLUB HAS IMPACTED THEIR LIVES OVER THE LAST SIX DECADES.

barbara bühling

MEMBER 193
SINCE

I have been a member of the AIWCD since 1993, the year that I got married. When I look back, it is amazing to realize the changes that have taken place both in my personal life and in the world since that time!

I first served as club President in 1996/97 when I was pregnant with my second daughter – that was before the days of the Internet. My memories of that year include attending regular monthly meetings, participating in many club activities and talking on the phone A LOT.

I joined the Literature Study Group in 1995, which was the year that we studied German Children's Literature in translation. This special group, which is entering into its 35th year (in a slightly altered form), remains special to me today. Although the group is no longer a club activity, I will always be grateful to the AIWCD for introducing me to this wonderful group of women.

Veronica Hughes-Friederichs and I taught the Newcomers Seminar which was needed for many reasons. We were able to introduce people to German foods – Quark, for example, give them practical details, such as how to fill out a bank Überweisung as well as giving them other useful information about expat life in Germany. Today, that is all different – if you don't know what Quark is, just google it! When I became the club's President again in 2011, it was a completely different club. There were no more zones or monthly meetings and the needs of the members had changed. Although the membership had declined and there were no longer all the regular events to attend as there had been before, I still felt my own personal need to stay connected to this group.

Many of you have heard me say this at various Club events over the years, but it always stands true – if I had not joined the AIWCD, I would not have met anyone in the room. Being a member of this club for so long has enriched me and I have benefitted from the connection with American and international women. When I moved to Germany, I chose to step onto the international stage and I recognize that for me to feel at home, I needed to have friends and acquaintances who are German, American and international. It is who I am today.

In addition, I will always be grateful to the AIWCD for connecting me with FAWCO. My first FAWCO conference was in 1996, but I began attending regular conference in Dublin in 2012 and have now been to Bern, Brussels, Rome, Frankfurt, Mumbai, The Hague and Edinburgh. In 2020, we are off to Luxembourg. I served as the first chair of the FAWCO Youth program, but found my niche in the philanthropic arm of FAWCO. As the current President of The FAWCO Foundation, I have the opportunity to work with women from all over the world. It is incredibly rewarding to work together and see what our joint efforts can achieve to help improve the lives of women and girls worldwide.

It would be interesting (and close to impossible) to know how many different Club members I have met over the years. To be honest, some have become very good friends, some I never see, but when I do, it is as if it were yesterday... and there are others whose names I don't remember. I haven't seen the majority of them since they left, but I know that if I ever see them again, we have a connection. I guess I can safely say that, thanks to the AIWCD, I truly have friends around the globe!

vanieta canonico-jahn

MEMBER
SINCE '99

I joined the "American Women's Club" back in 1999 when I moved from Hamburg to Düsseldorf with my German husband and my three bicultural children. I had lived in Germany for 17 years already, so I was not exactly a newcomer to the country, but this was the first time that I became part of an active group of this kind.

For me the Club means that I am not alone here in Germany as an American woman. I am living here with many other fellow expats – either temporary ones or "lifers" – who understand the dissonance of living in two cultures at one time. One culture is deeply ingrained within the fiber of our American selves, while the second culture – the German one – surrounds us with every step we take. I am very grateful for the impressive women who have shaped the Club for the past 20 years of my membership and who have helped us all find harmony in our lives abroad.

rita duran

MEMBER
SINCE '02

I joined the club about 17 years ago with the aim of getting my family and I closer to my American husband's heritage. Over the years, the Club has given our children a wonderful American experience despite being so far from the USA. I have wonderful memories of my children playing baseball and their hair flying behind them as they round the bases, carving pumpkins at Apfel Paradies, Trunk or Treating at ISD, moving excitedly from one Halloween game booth to another, sitting on Santa's lap and reciting their wish lists, hunting for Easter eggs, eating popsicles while waving their American paper flags at the 4th of July and of course celebrating Thanksgiving at Chen's. As for my husband and I, the Club provides us with a wonderful group of inspiringly warm people who are fun to mingle with – be it at Wine Tastings or at Cooking Classes or at various Parties or Dances.

Thanks AIWCD for bringing my family home.
Happy 60th!

yvonne koch

MEMBER
SINCE '92

After living in Washington D.C. where both Yvonne and her husband Herbert were working for the National Health Institute, they returned to Düsseldorf-Benrath where Herbert had a position at Henkel. Through his contacts, Yvonne met a few women that were also living in Benrath, and they were members of the Club. They told Yvonne that she must become a member.

What Yvonne cherished and continues to cherish about the Club is the international contacts. As a "foreigner" herself in Düsseldorf, despite having lived here for decades, she is drawn to those that have both lived outside of Germany, as well as having an international outlook on life. Her fondest memories are being part of the Travel Team which at the time was very active. They took trips to places like London, Paris, etc. Yvonne remains in regular contact with some of her old friends, even though they moved away.

ute klein

MEMBER
SINCE '04

About 15 years ago I joined the AWC and right away felt at home and welcome. I had and still have wonderful friendships with some of the ladies and their families.

And this is what I liked most: meeting people from different cultures, engaging in activities like golf, bridge or literature helping newcomers to find their way around in a new city or even country.

mary westhoff

MEMBER
SINCE '84

When I came to Germany 50 years ago, I was not interested in joining the AWC. My aim was to adapt as completely as possible, to become as "German" as possible, in order to fit in with my husband's family and culture. I was afraid that being in the Club would conflict that aim.

In the many years since then, I've learned that I'll never be German. My motherboard is English; my roots are Texan. And it might have been very helpful to have had an AWC big sister who had been through it all before me.

In 1984 I learned about an AWC activity called "die fruchtbringende Gesellschaft", a literature study group founded two years before. The group's aim was to study German literature in English translation, and one of the founders had a degree in German. I joined the AWC in 1985, and that group became a home away from home, a home I hadn't realised I needed.

Almost all of us were Americans married to Germans and here long-term. From this group I gained a great deal of knowledge and appreciation of German (and other) literature, as well as some long lasting, precious friends. I'll always be grateful to the AWC for helping me become my best American-German self.

ellen nuber

MEMBER
SINCE '91

I have been a member since January 1991. During all those years, I have tried to contribute some assistance to the Club, at the beginning especially to Newcomers and later to both newcomers (as Big Sister) and to the older crew (Longstanding Members).

I would like to take the opportunity to say how grateful I have always been to be a part of this Club. Most members are open-minded, friendly, with interesting backgrounds and helpful. I always admire the ladies who serve on the Board, who are extremely involved in all kinds of ways – they offer an enormous amount of their free time to the Club, its members and to charity.

The Club has also broadened my mind regarding all the various charity organizations that the Club is supporting, like Knackpunkt, the Autism Center in Viersen, Friedensdorf Oberhausen, etc..

For me, networking, making friends and social contacts throughout the many years of membership are among the great benefits of being a member of the AIWCD.

Here are the reasons why I was so happy and honored to join the AWC in 1991-92.

We had just come back to Europe after living in Racine, Wisconsin, for five years. It had been a phenomenal experience to explore and discover the U.S. with a young family and I was eager to continue this discovery through meeting people here in Europe, particularly in Düsseldorf and in the International School of Düsseldorf. It was an honor and a joy to be welcomed with open arms, to be involved in a very professionally organized Club which had an impact at multiple levels in and around Düsseldorf. Many (A)ISD parents (American International School parents) were part of the AWC (as it was called at that time) and we made sure to synchronize our calendars of activities, to work together on many activities and to support each other as needed. Volunteering was the name of the game and a very unifying element in all joyous and professional interactions. I learned a lot from my U.S. co-parents and colleagues in the AWC and have great admiration for their very generous care for each other and for the highly deserving charitable causes they have embraced over the years.

brigitte (birgit) katsuta

MEMBER
SINCE '78

The reason I like being a member of the AIWCD is because the club is very international.

I was born and raised in Japan in an English-speaking, international environment. The English-French school I went to was a little United Nations, with students from all over the world.

When I arrived in Germany for the first time in 1960, almost nobody spoke English and I quickly realized that I had grown up in an entirely different world. After three years, I gave up and returned to Japan. But fate brought me back to Germany and to Düsseldorf in 1970. As I was working at that time, I couldn't join the AWCD until I stopped working. Although Germany had moved on by this time and my work was very international, I still yearned for the little United Nations that I had left behind.

In 1978 I applied for membership in the AWCD. In those days, one still had to wait three to five years before becoming a full-fledged Associate Member. But this didn't really matter, because the club warmly welcomed me from the very first day. I was delighted because I had once again found my little United Nations.

There were ladies from many, many nations and from all walks of life; each with an exciting and interesting background. In addition, the club offered, and still does, so many interesting activities. I was not only able to enjoy new friends from around the world, but was also able to learn many new things.

Today, the AIWCD is still an international entity and a treasure in today's world. I feel honored and proud that I am a member of this cosmopolitan club.

Both my husband and I are German. We moved to Beijing in 1997 with our very young children (my husband was sent by his company) where we were asked to move into a compound for foreigners in Beijing. My new neighbours were mainly English-speaking. Most of them came from the USA and Australia, some from other parts of Asia. English was our common language. These women helped me a lot and supported me when I was new. After 3 years, we moved on to Bangkok, which was an easy transition as the children were older. They attended International School Bangkok and again I met many inspiring women and am very grateful for these experiences.

When we finally moved to Düsseldorf in 2003 (I was new to the Rhineland as well), a friend suggested to reach out to the AWCD in order to stay in touch with the international community and of course in order to help women who are new to Germany and to share experiences. I soon found other ladies in the Ratingen area who loved books and that's the beginning of the Ratingen Book Club.

Before I went back to work, I hardly missed out on any Art Appreciation outing with Wally and joined most Luncheons. I miss these reunions a lot. At the moment, Book Club is the only AIWCD event I try to attend regularly because I'm working.

elaine terlinden

MEMBER
SINCE '95

Now over 60 years old, the AIWCD has over 20 members who have remained friends for over 25 years!

Goodie Zandlo (Member 1984 to 1990 and winner of our 1989 Outstanding Member Award) has been friends with Long-Standing Member Gerda Bohlken (Associate and Honorary Member since 1971). Goodie now lives in Florida. While in Düsseldorf in the 80's she organized lots of wonderful Club trips! With their husbands, who were top executives with UPS and Bayer, respectively, Goodie and Gerda also did an amazing amount of entertaining and fund-raising for the Club.

For many years Gerda, Goodie, and Connie Premuroso (1987/88 President and founder of Working Women's Network/Evening Section) – who sadly lost her battle with cancer in 2014 – had regular reunions in Florida, and often met with Jean Geesey (1989/90 President), who had moved to Baltimore, as well as the belated Linda Crowley (Member 1985 to 1989), who had moved to Connecticut. All of these ladies still remained very active in FAWCO and FAUSA.

THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE HAVE BEEN TOUCHED BY THE AIWCD OVER THE YEARS. EACH AND EVERY ONE OF OUR MEMBERS HAS HELPED TO MAKE THAT POSSIBLE. YOUR CONTINUING SUPPORT KEEPS THIS DÜSSELDORF INSTITUTION ALIVE AND THRIVING. THANK YOU!