

"Kalb Housing Fürth" - A Facebook site delights Americans

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FÜRTH – Here was the laundry! And since the playground! And do you remember the old Lady Emily? A Facebook group for “Kalb housing area” in the southern part of Fürth, which once housed about 4,800 Americans, found in no time more than 600 members. Most come from the United States.

Suddenly, something was no longer consistent with the cotton candy. The blue and pink ones were gone, only in bland white there was the sticky candy on the festival. “I asked my mother why and she said that the Americans are gone,” says Stephanie Spindler (31). She must have been nine, she estimates, about Americans she never had thought.

Today things are different. Spindler, who grew up in Nuremberg, moved with their two children four years ago to Fürth, into the Kalb area, by working here as an educator. She has read into the history of this district. And had some day the idea with the Facebook page. “I wondered who are the people here once called this their home,” she writes on the website.

On December 26 the site went online, five days later she had 500 members. “That was amazing,” says Marco Frömter (39), a friend of Stephanie Spindler. New Year’s Eve the two spent their time activating the questions, “next to the raclette the laptop operated”.

Frömter grew up in the 80ties in the southern part of the city, when two worlds met here. His parents had many American friends and he was playing with the neighborhood kids from the Kalb housing area and loved to shop in the “PX”. America was only a few steps away.

The most striking memory of that time? “The feeling, you’re going through a barrier from A to B and are in a different world. As a child this was the very intense,” he says. To date, Frömter, himself a former soldier, is fascinated by this chapter of German-American history. It is no coincidence that he is now president of the German-American Men’s Club of Middle Franconia who is maintaining contacts between Germans and Americans, formerly stationed in the region.

Frömter knew that there are Facebook pages about Johnson Barracks and Monteith Barracks in Fürth, the Merrell Barracks in Nuremberg or the Ferris Barracks in Erlangen. He encouraged Mrs. Spindler: A community for Kalb is missing. But he would not have expected such a rush.

The site has become a virtual class meeting. 90 percent of users are Americans. Communication is almost exclusively in the English language and each photo which is uploaded, will be celebrated. “Is this Frommüller street?” A woman is asking to one of the pictures. They had lived in the third building of the school in the direction from the PX. “Yes, it is,” says the photographer, a man from Fürth. “Home sweet home” notes a further user. Is that the old “Launderette”, the old laundry ?, someone asks under another photo and learns: This has become an oecumenical center.

Quickly the users started to scroll in their photo albums. You can see old class photos, young cheerleaders, the High School (now the Hans Böckler school) as has got a new painting in the 60s, an old cinema program for the “Community Theater”. At that time the music movie “Hair” was shown – the admission: \$ 1.50.

Memories were brought back: to the nice “Mr. Pincher” who gave ice cream for free; to this “old lady Emily” who liked dyeing her hair in blue color; to first jobs; to ski trips (“The girl with the crutch - that's me – my leg was broken”, writes a user); to the prom in the school cafeteria.

There are sweet memories. The Americans are raving about happy days in Fürth – and are absorbing grateful the news: “Wow, what the Germans have made out of our homes,” writes a woman. In the group there are also people from the southern part of Fürth, told Mrs. Spindler. One of them, Andreas Kreuzer, enabled her and Mr. Frömter to a photo tour in the Böckler-School. The photos are already online. And of course, were liked.

Stephanie Spindler hopes for further members contributing their photos to the group “US Army Family Housing Kalb Furth”.

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(translated by Marco Frömter)