

## HOME IS WHERE YOU FIND IT

*by Fred Hobbs*

“Oh, there’s no place like home for the holidays,  
‘Cause no matter how far away you roam,  
When you pine for the sunshine of a friendly gaze,  
For the holidays, you can’t beat home, sweet home.”

Those warm lines from the lyrics of a song made popular by famous singer Perry Como conjure up nicely a scene unfolding a visit “over the river and through the woods to grandma’s house.”

Going home for the holidays, however, need not necessarily involve a trip to a specific dwelling. “The sunshine of a friendly gaze” is accessible in a variety of settings. A person can feel “at home” anywhere the proverbial welcome mat is laid out.

My most extended stay away from my family occurred while on duty in the Army, stationed in Germany. Not yet married, having no children and not ready or prepared to establish my own home, understandably I still missed the presence of my mother, siblings and good friends as holidays approached.

Surprisingly, though, the Thanksgiving and Christmas events shared with my Army buddies and newly acquired German friends from the Berlin community were among the most memorable and enjoyable of my life.

We were billeted in a house once owned by a prominent Nazi official. Because of the small size of our unit (ten), we had no mess hall at our disposal. We received a “separate rations” allowance and bought our food at the U.S. Army commissary. Pooling our resources, we had sufficient funds to hire a cook, Louisa. For the holiday meals, she prepared a traditional American feast with tasty German culinary “accents” complemented by some fine Rhineland wine, all served up with lively and convivial conversation.

Perry’s song declared,  
“If you want to be happy in a million ways,  
For the holidays,  
You can’t beat home, sweet home.”

No doubt true. But, as a young soldier in a foreign land, for a few special days I found merit in the notion that home is where you find it.