



**McHENRY
MUSEUM**
& Historical Society



Newsletter

January 2022

Please call us at:
(209) 618-5387

History Lesson

"Ah, when to the heart of man, was it ever less than a treason, to go with the drift of things, to yield with a grace to reason, and bow and accept the end of a love or a season?" This last stanza from Robert Frost's poem "Reluctance" has a special meaning for the end of 2021. A new year can mean a rebirth, a fresh start. I can also mean a goodbye to the past and the end of an era.

On December 6, 2021, a ninety-five-year-old woman from Austria who called Modesto home for seventy-one years named Margaret Shields passed away. Mrs. Shields was the grandmother of MM&HS President David Seymour. Mrs. Shields had a long history of working in Modesto area restaurants and a strong bond with the German American Community which formed Der Orden der Hermanns-Soehne German Lodge in Modesto. Most members consisted of German immigrants who came to the United States at the end of World War II. Mrs. Shields was the last of the original group of the 1950s. The woman who bonded this group was the first to come to this country, a woman named Ellen Miner who on the second of January would have been 100 years old. Ellen was the owner and chef of the only two restaurants in Modesto who served German cuisine, The Office Lounge and The King's Bench. This is her story.



Dale & Ellen Miner



Ellen was born Elly Kluge in the German province of Silesia on January 2, 1922. She was the middle of three children born to Ernst and Selma (Ludewig) Kluge. The family included older brother Walter, and younger sister, Gerda. Ernst Kluge worked in a coal mine; Ellen considered herself the original "Coal Miner's Daughter." Ernst died suddenly in a cave-in, in 1931.

Ellen came of age during World War II and re-located to Berlin for career opportunities. There, she studied cooking and childcare and eventually found employment as a nanny. In 1942, she moved to Vienna, Austria where she worked as a secretary in an investment firm. Due to ill health, she moved home near the war's end in 1945. That same year, prior to the Russian invasion, the family fled Silesia. The Kluge family up in a displaced-persons camp in Bamberg, Germany where Selma Kluge passed in January 1946. Ellen married an American Soldier whose name she would not like told, she simply referred to him the rest of her life as "The handsome bastard" and immigrated to the United States. She arrived in the country on November 8, 1948, aboard *The General Harry Taylor*. She was able to send for her sister Gerda in 1953. Ellen became very active in the local German community in Modesto. She introduced most immigrant women to each other, and they became a second family. Following her divorce in the early 1950s she married Dale Miner (1925-1994) in 1956.

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Dale had previously worked as a bartender and purser on the luxury liner the *S.S. Lurline*. He had become acquainted with many celebrities including silent-film star Harold Lloyd who gifted Dale a 1936 Pierce-Arrow automobile which became well-known in Modesto as Dale frequently drove it around the city.

In late 1956, the Miner's leased the café on the second floor of the Hotel Hughson and opened The Office Lounge. It was there where 'Modestans' first were able to feast on Ellen's German delicacies like Sauerbraten, German pot-roast, and Wiener Schnitzel, pounded and breaded veal, (not a hot dog).

The Office became a thriving Modesto business and the Miner's decided to expand. With the help of Dale's sister and brother-in-law Juanita (1918-2007) and Clarence (1914-1996) Luckey, they purchased the building at Eleventh and "I" Street and opened The King's Bench. Dale and Ellen found two business to be too much work and sold interest in The Office Lounge in 1960.

Right next to the Stanislaus County Courthouse, The King's Bench normal clientele consisted of many local, judges, lawyers, and politicians. Ellen continued cooking her German dishes for the next fifteen years. She was frequently seen behind the bar mixing numerous drinks and one time. If she was not working, she enjoyed time at her chalet-style home on Edgebrook Drive. She was proud have one of the first swimming pools in the area, where she was frequently found sunning herself. Ellen had a passion for animals and doted on her cocker spaniels Gitte and Sparkle, and one unlikely pet. Ellen adopted a small monkey she named Stinky who became quite infamous in Modesto. Whenever Stinky went missing, Ellen went on KTRB Radio to ask the City of Modesto to please help her find her beloved monkey.

Ellen and Dale Miner moved to Sacramento in the late 1970s after selling interest in The King's Bench. The restaurant operated for several more years before closing.

The Miner's returned to their Edgebrook home in the early 1990s when Dale's health declined. He passed away in 1994. Ellen remained at home enjoying a good cigarette and her signature cocktail a Manhattan, with lemon. In her later years she moved to McHenry Avenue with her sister, Gerda Beckstein.

When the Luckey-Miner Building, home of The King's Bench was demolished in 2003, she commented how everything which told Modesto she was here had vanished. Ellen Miner passed away on December 28, 2016, with her best friend of sixty-six years Margaret Shields near her side. She was a mere five days from her ninety-fifth birthday. Her beloved sister Gerda joined her six and a half months later. Ellen possessed a zeal for life and fun. She lived a long life, she loved to drink, smoke and party. This article is meant to let all its readers know that Modesto had a remarkable woman named Ellen Miner who made her mark on the city. She never worried and had a catch phrase which may encourage others to worry less to achieve a long and full life, "Other people get mad, I just say to hell with it."



The Office, 1958. Left: Charlie the Bartender, Dale Miner (1925-1994) and Ellen Miner (1922-2016), Gretel Dzierla (1927-2012), and Margaret Stallone Shields (1926-2021).

Top: Dale (1925-1994) and Ellen Miner (1922-2016), Margaret Stallone Shields (1926-2021), Gretel Dzierla (1927-2012). Second: Same three women and an unidentified man. Bottom two photos: Margaret and Gretel, and Margaret and Gretel with Charlie the Bartender on the left and an unidentified woman on the right.

*Information for this article came from various *Modesto Bee* Articles and a March 12, 2008, Interview with Ellen Miner, more information is published in *Hummingbirds are Free: The Exodus of Silesian Women in Post-war Germany* by David Seymour (2011).





The Kings Bench Restaurant

and

Bavarian Room

11th and Eye Streets ☆ Modesto, California



Speisekarte

(MENU)

German Entrees

(Served with Soup and Salad, German Bread, Ice Cream or Sherbet, Coffee or Tea)

1.	Sauerbraten mit Kartoffel Pfannkuchen <small>Most Famous of all German Dishes, Marinated Beef Roast served with fresh grated German Potato Pancakes</small>	2.95
2.	Schweizer Bratwurst Rotkohl, Apfelmus <small>Swiss all Veal Sausage, served with Applesauce, Red Cabbage or our special prepared Sauerkraut</small>	2.75
3.	Wiener Schnitzel Garniert <small>Sliced Veal, Breaded with Eggs, Cracker Meal and Sautéed to a golden Brown</small>	2.90
4.	Ungarisches Paprika Schnitzel mit Spatzen <small>Fresh Veal Cutlet, Hungarian Style, Paprika Sauce and home made Noodles</small>	2.90
5.	Wiener Schnitzel Cordon Bleu <small>A large breaded Veal Steak sautéed with Ham and Melted Cheese</small>	3.50
6.	Rinds Rouladen mit Pilz <small>Stuffed Rolled Beefsteak with Mushroom Sauce, Steamed Rice and Vegetables</small>	3.00
7.	Gefüllte Kohl-Roulade <small>Tender leaves of Cabbage stuffed with seasoned Choice Ground Sirlon. Simmered in Wine Sauce</small>	2.75
8.	Bayerisches Goulash mit Spatzen <small>Tenderloin Tips with Home Made Noodles</small>	2.75
9.	Lenden Schnitte mit Pilz <small>Choice sliced Tenderloin of Beef with Mushrooms. Simmered in Wine Sauce</small>	3.50
10.	Hasen Pfeffer Bayerische Art <small>Tender Young Rabbit, marinated in Red Wine. (This entree served Friday and Saturday only)</small>	3.25
11.	Heidelberger <small>Open faced Sauerbraten Sandwich with Potato Salad (Ala Carte)</small>	2.50

SIDE ORDERS: Apple Strudel, Cheese Cake or Potato Pancakes with Applesauce .65

American Entrees

(Served with Soup, Salad, Baked Idaho Potato or French Fries, Dessert and Coffee)

FROM OUR CHAR BROILER

Choice New York Cut Steak		4.90
Chopped Sirlon Steak - Mushroom Sauce		3.25
Choice Rib Eye Steak		4.25
One-half Pan Fried or Broiled Chicken		2.95
Open Faced Rib Eye Steak Sandwich (Ala Carte)		2.75

Sea Foods

Combination Sea Food Plate - Prawns, Scallops & Filet of Sole		3.25
Broiled Lobster Tail with Drawn Butter		4.85
Jumbo Prawns or Scallops with Tartar and Hot Sauce		2.90
Broiled Halibut Steak with Lemon Butter Sauce		3.00
Shrimp Louie or Crab Louie		2.75

California Sales Tax on all Alcoholic Beverages

NOW OPEN

The King's Bench

1026 "EYE" STREET
TIL 9 P.M.

SERVING
THOSE DELICIOUS
AUTHENTIC GERMAN MEALS
ALSO
SUPERB STEAKS AND SEAFOOD

PHONE 524-2318 FOR RESERVATIONS

SOMETHING NEW FOR
THE KING'S BENCH
NOW OPEN
SUNDAYS 10 AM TO 6 PM

SERVING
BREAKFAST, GERMAN
& AMERICAN DINNERS

LOUNGE OPENS AT 8 AM ON
SUNDAYS FOR THOSE WHO NEED
TO GET WELL WITH A KING-SIZE
BLOODY MARY.



Two pictures under the King's Bench Ad, taken in the Kings Bench Top Picture: Margaret Shields (1926-2021), Margunde Robinson (1923-2015), Gerda Beckstein (1924-2017), Ellen Miner (1922-2016), and Maria Duester (1929-2015). Same woman in picture below.

Ellen Miner
Jan 2, 1922-Dec 28, 2016

SPECIAL TRIBUTE



*A Portrait by
DeBrower*
McHENRY VILLAGE



Margaretha Kleber Shields
Nov 16, 1926-Dec 6, 2021

Every historian has a person who inspired them, and a muse. As your President, I had one person whose brain I liked to pick about Modesto History, my grandmother. Margaretha Kleber Shields, known to everyone as Margaret or “Oma” inspired several of the articles you have read over the last year. An immigrant from Austria, her first home in Modesto was at 2243 Carol Street, she inspired the February article on Lance and Carol Ellis. She was also friends with Gemma Sciabica and helped me with the August article. She worked many years at both the Office Lounge, The King’s Bench, The Sundial Lounge, and Sabella’s. A glamorous beauty, ‘Modestans’ may remember her image as the model photo in the window of DeBrower Studio in McHenry Village. On November 16, 2021, she was honored by Modesto Mayor Sue Zwahlen for reaching her ninety-fifth birthday. Sadly, she passed away twenty days later, on December 6, 2021. This month’s article was the story of her dear friend of sixty-six years Ellen Miner, her first friend in the United States. She is the beautiful brunette in many of the photographs on the previous pages. She supported me and listened and advised me on all issues I had while serving on the board of the MM&HS. She loved history and loved Modesto; she was the best friend anyone could ask for. The family asked for all donations in her memory be made to the MM&HS. Love you, Oma! - David Seymour

UPDATE

For the past two and a half years, I have been proud to serve as the President of the MM&HS. As of January 1, 2021, Don Scott will be taking over as President. Ben Sivils will serve as Vice-President, and Talitha Agan and Margie Neder will be serving as co-secretaries. I will be serving all of you as the new Executive Director. I want to continue to serve our historical society to the best of my abilities. We have accomplished a lot during this pandemic and have had the Museum and the Museum Store open since August, and hope to continue to have our organization thrive, I would like to thank my Executive Board of Don Scott, Michelle Gallagher, and Ben Sivils for all their hard work. It has been a pleasure and I hope all of us look forward to a wonderful and productive 2022.

Thank you,

David Seymour

2022
Happy New Year!

*Best Wishes
to You
on MLK Day*