



Separations
From
Immigration

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

A Brief Background

What happens when your parents are suddenly forced to leave the country? This is what I found myself asking as I sat in the kitchen, staring at my breakfast in shock after hearing the news. About a year ago, my parents sat my brother and me down, fed us pancakes and told us that they would have to leave the country in the coming months.

My parents were born and raised in Germany and decided to move to the States in 1992 after getting married. During the first couple of years they traveled on the B1 Visa and had to leave the States every six months to be able to stay another six months.

After two years of this, they were told by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services they needed a different type of visa or green card if they wanted to officially stay in the States. They hired an immigration attorney in Pittsburgh and she gave them information on how to apply for the E1 Treaty Trader Visa.

This type of visa is for self-employed immigrants who do half of their business with their home country, which was Germany in this case.

The E1 Treaty Trader Visa had to be renewed every five years. It was denied to them in 2015, however, because the trades with Germany were no longer over 50 percent of their total business. Production had begun to circulate through my dad's brother, who also lives in the States, and had him trade to Germany instead.

After receiving the news in Jan. 2016, my parents immediately hired an attorney to help us find another way to stay in the States. The attorney was able to get them permission to stay for six months with the B1 Visitor Visa, and another six months after that expired.

During this time, my parents talked to countless immigration attorneys, went to the immigration office in Buffalo to seek help, wrote letters to the governor, senator and state representative of the county and state of New York and even wrote one to President Trump.

Everyone had the same answer: my parents didn't qualify for the green card or citizenship, even though at the time they had lived most of their adult lives in the States, had invested in countless cars, two houses and most importantly had two children who were born in the country and lived

here all of their lives.

So far, my parents came back to visit for the summer in 2017 to be there for my brother's graduation and left with him in August. I saw the three of them again over this past winter break, which was wonderful, but things are so different now.

Nothing has been the same since the day they broke the news about leaving. The house was emptied of most furniture and belongings that my parents had to sell.

One of our dogs and cat, Drew and Kitty, had to be put down because they were too old for my parents to take with them or have them put up for adoption. Our other dog Billy had to be left behind and now stays with a family friend.

The fact that international families like mine are being separated for doing nothing wrong while illegal immigrants are "accidentally" granted U.S. citizenship means something needs to change about the immigration policies in this country.

My parents are good people. A couple of speeding tickets was their only wrongdoing in all 26 years of living here. They never took work away from anyone as my dad owned his own company. They spent and invested all their money into the States. They always applied for their visas legally and spent a lot of money on attorney fees and visa fees. They have two children who are U.S. citizens.

So why are they on the other side of the world right now?



Doehre vs. Dohre: Brother vs. Brother



Ralf Doehre takes a selfie shortly after voting in the November 2018 Midterm Elections. *Courtesy of Ralf Doehre's Facebook page*

It is known that siblings can have a rivalry, but try having rivalry that spans across an ocean. Literally.

Brothers Ralf Doehre, 52, and Dirk Dohre, 51, grew up in Germany together until 1992. They are extremely close and worked as co-owners of their self-employed company, R.D. Logs and then later R.D. Veneer. R.D. stands for Ralf and Dirk.

"My relationship with my brother is pretty freaking awesome," Ralf said. "He's my best friend, so we've always had a good relationship."

After their father, Werner, closed down his logging company, the two started R.D. Logs in 1992, the same year Dirk and his wife Katharina Doehre moved to the United States.

Now 26 years later, Dirk and Katharina have been denied new Visas and forced to leave the country, and Ralf just received his U.S. citizenship. Ralf is now the sole owner of R.D. Veneer while Dirk recently started a new company in Germany that he's working on part-time.

Ralf moved to the United States in 2006.

"My dream since I was 14 years old was to actually move to the States," he said. "I took the opportunity, and since my brother

was here already with the logging company, it was pretty clear for me that this is what I wanted to do."

He first had the chance to become a U.S. citizen in 2010 when he married his American wife, Jerry. After applying for a green card, he received one in February of 2011. Three years later, he was then eligible to apply for citizenship. His wife Jerry had since then passed away.

Ralf officially applied for citizenship in May of this year. "The process was pretty much the same as it was for the green card," he said. "You had to fill out a lot of paperwork, and you had to prove a lot of things."

Later, he was invited for an interview in September, where he was told on the spot that he would become a citizen.

"Was I nervous? Yeah of course, but at the end of the day, I mean, you had to learn some questions that they asked you, but I didn't think it was too complicated," he said.

The final part of the process was attending the induction ceremony.

"It was actually pretty cool," Ralf said. "They showed a video of our president, talked about all kinds of obligations we had to the country now, we got sworn in, and that was pretty much it."

Dirk and Kathrin definitely crossed his mind while he went through the process. According to Ralf, Dirk was very happy for him when he got the news on being granted citizenship.

"He [Dirk] said 'Hey dude, awesome' and 'Congratulations.'"

According to Dirk, he had said something along similar lines. "I couldn't believe they let him in," he joked. "Seriously though, I loved it. It's a big thing obviously for him to get it, and I think

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Dirk Dohre takes a smoke break on a tour of the Neuschwanstein castle in southwest Bavaria, Germany.

Taken by Angelina Dohre

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it's great."

However, Dirk and Katharina had been living in the States 12 years longer than Ralf. Just because he married a U.S. citizen, he was presented this opportunity and they were not.

Dirk and Katharina are happy for him, but they don't understand how a situation like this can happen to them.

"We totally want him to have it, and his story has nothing to do with our story," Katharina said. "We just don't understand how the policies can be so open to somebody and then so drawn back to somebody else."

Dirk believes that some of the U.S. immigration policies should be looked at a little differently. "Some of these laws don't make any sense," he said. "Just because you marry an American doesn't make you an American."

The two had spent their entire adult lives in the United States. "We kind of became Americans," Dirk said. "I was probably, to a certain point, just as American as I was German."

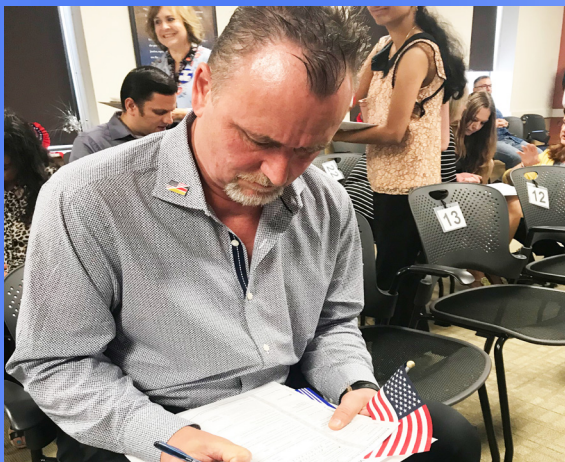
** Note that there are multiple spellings of the German name "Dohre"*



*Front and back cover photos taken
by Angelina Dohre*



Ralf Doehre and girlfriend Tina Lumley attend his U.S. citizenship ceremony. *Photos courtesy of Ralf Doehre's Facebook page*



Gaining U.S. Citizenship

Love, anger, happiness, heartbreak: the life of Katharina



Kathrin Doehre. *Courtesy of Kathrin Doehre's Facebook page*

Having lived on two different parts of the world for an equally long time, Katharina Doehre has experienced several changes, some even life-changing.

She was born in the “Charlottenhaus” (a private clinic) in Stuttgart on Oct. 26, 1967. Growing up in Filderstadt-Bonlanden and later Filderstadt-Plattenhardt, Doehre attended preschool at the catholic church in Bonlanden.

Her childhood included weekend hikes and weeklong mountain tours with her parents and two siblings, Franziska and Felix.

Doehre recalls her mother, who passed away in 2013, and how she always made her feel loved throughout her life.

“Once she was no longer with me I realized that she was the only person on this earth that I was able to go to with everything that was on my mind,” she said. “No one would ever fill this gap since then.”

After starting elementary school in Bonlanden at the “Schillerschule,” she began walking there herself every morning and afternoon. She began learning new concepts there, one of them being bullying.

“The boys in our class had a

sort of ‘leader,’ and he sometimes was mean to us girls,” she said. “I was always invited to his birthday parties, but he sometimes threatened to beat me up on my walk home or one time spit in my face on a bus traveling to the Opera in Stuttgart.”

When she was 11, Doehre started high school, called “Gymnasium” in German, in Bernhausen at the Eduard Spranger Gymnasium. They moved to a town called Plattenhardt. She was new to the area and had to get along with the group of kids that lived there.

Although she was shy at first, the kids ended up being very nice to her. This helped her make a lot of friends fast. “In seventh grade I joined the French class and was put together with kids from the other villages of Filderstadt, which included Dirk.”

Dirk Doehre would become her future husband and father to her two children, Angelina and Nicolas. Back then, however, he was simply a nuisance.

“He was liked by everyone, and I was annoyed by that fact,” she said. “I thought he was arrogant.”

Over the next few weeks, however, she learned that he was in fact not arrogant and

began to have an interest in him.

“He was interested in pretty much every girl that was good-looking but didn’t really date anyone,” Doehre said. “One of my friends told him that I had a crush on him which made me so mad, and I never trusted that friend again. But since he now knew he started to pay attention to me and at the beginning of eighth grade he asked me out.”

This was the start to their long, and at first rocky, romance. “We dated for six months and for the next three years broke up a total of eight times,” she said. “One time I broke up with him, and the other seven he broke up with me. I always pretended that it didn’t bother me, and I think that bothered him each time.”

Their lives went in different directions when they turned 18. Doehre began dating another boy named Hansi. Dirk also started dating someone else, Andrea, to whom he later was engaged to marry. Within the next three years the two only saw each other once or twice.

In 1988, Dirk went to the UFO, a nightclub in their town, and him and Doehre were able to catch up for the first time in a long while. That evening, Dirk stopped by her house, but she wasn’t there.

She was supposed to teach a dance class that evening, but her friend Tine was the only person who showed up due to a severe snowstorm. They decided to go to Dirk’s house and, according to Doehre, the rest is history.

“Tine was so emotional about us being back together that she started to cry,” she

said. “Over the years, Dirk and I got married on Sept. 15, 1990, moved to the United States in ‘92 and were lucky enough to have Angelina and Nicolas.”

According to Doehre, her and Dirk are a team and will go through anything and everything together. “Without each other, we are only half a person,” she said. “We experienced more together than most people in their lifetime, both good and bad, and I am grateful for every moment.”

After grade 10, Doehre left the Gymnasium to go to Neurtingen on the Saer, a hill in the city that houses several different schools grades 11 and up. “I went to a science Gymnasium but was not very good in chemistry and decided to quit school after grade 11,” she said.

Later, she chose to go to business school instead and went down the path of a medical assistant. She deemed it to be diverse and interesting work, and she still believes it is.

Though she attended business school, she never finished all 13 years of high school. This made her father disappointed as he had always expected more from her since she was doing so well in school.

As she became an adult, however, he was impressed with her being brave enough to move to a foreign country and this soon removed any tensions between them.

“Today he hugs me so tight each time I see him and sometimes cries,” she said. “He shows me how much he loves me, and I show him back because time is precious.”

The glory of being a Dohre



Dirk Dohre with his wife. *Courtesy of Kathrin Dohre's Facebook page*

Dirk Dohre was born a New Year's baby on Jan. 1, 1967 in a town called Steinheim which is located in Nordrhein Westfalen, Germany.

Thinking back to his childhood, what comes to his mind are all the traveling and vacations he took with his parents, Christel and Werner, and older brother, Ralf Dohre. He especially remembers the ones they spent during their winter and summer breaks.

"We stayed in a small town called Fischen for winter break," he said.

"In the summer, we stayed in Italy at a hotel where the owner became good friends with my parents," he said. "Ralf and I called him Uncle Lucio."

When they were a little older, they drove to Spain over the summers. Christel and Werner rented a house from a doctor that they stayed in for the entirety of the vacation.

He also recalls memories from their winter vacations. "I obviously remember all the skiing we did, and a lot of times it was pretty crazy," he said. "We were five boys and one of us always had a dumb idea."

Although they moved

a lot because of Werner's occupation back then, Dohre spent most of his childhood in the town of Filderstadt. He attended the Eduard Spranger Gymnasium, which is the equivalent of what high school is.

He admits school was a bit tricky for him at times as he found himself getting in trouble quite a lot. He didn't pay attention all the time and thought that some of the rules were unnecessary and therefore didn't apply to him.

"I spent a lot of extra hours there [high school] for detention," he said. "I believe I planted the entire rock garden of Mr. Klein, the janitor of the school and man in charge of the detainees." According to Dohre, Klein actually liked him a lot.

Christel and Werner eventually had enough of it. He believes it was being expelled for two weeks that did it for them. So Dohre went to a so-called Internat. This was a private school where students had to reside at for the entire week while attending classes.

"Students were only allowed to go home on weekends if they behaved during the week," he said. "Needless

to say, I spent a few weekends there."

Although he may have stayed there for getting in trouble, Dohre said that looking back that was by far the best thing that could have happened to him.

"I actually became the person that was in charge for grade levels eight through 10 and was the one representing them at the school board," he said. "I still did my fair share of things but did understand that it would have consequences and I believe that the private school had a huge impact on me becoming a grown-up."

Dohre recalls when he met and fell for Katharina Dohre in seventh grade, his future wife and mother of his two kids, Angelina and Nicolas.

"I fell in love with her during a swimming lesson while she was sitting at the edge of the pool with a red Adidas swimsuit and a white shower cap on," he said. "I don't know why that was the moment I realized it but it was."

They officially began dating when they were 13 years old and over the course of time broke up numerous times. Dohre remembers one particu-

lar moment from back then.

"I walked Katharina home one evening and for some reason stopped, turned her towards me and told her that we will have other relationships but that I will marry her," he said. "I think she was upset about the other relationships."

According to him, the two not only became a couple, but to this day they are also best friends. "Of course, she is more annoying today than back in the old days," he joked.

After school, Dohre attended business school and soon was in the logging business after his father. "Me getting into the business was a combination of my wanting to live in America and my father having a company that was already dealing in the United States," he said. "Furthermore, I was never a person to sit behind a desk."

When it comes to the most dramatic changes in his life, he can name them in order.

"[They are] meeting Katharina, getting married to her, moving away from Germany, opening our own company, having the two rascals [Angelina and Nicolas] and getting denied staying in the United States."



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