

Bridge Builders

Winfried Engelbrecht-Breges heads the Hong Kong Jockey Club. He was the key to success when this summer's Olympic Games put his organization to the test.



Winfried Engelbrecht-Breges never needs much sleep. Five hours a night is enough for the German chief executive officer of the Hong Kong Jockey Club. He draws all the power he needs for his demanding job by jogging every morning. But the Olympic equestrian events in August were "the ultimate stress test," even for the resilient Engelbrecht-Breges. No less than 100 club employees had a second full-time job in the two years of preparations that went into the events, and more than 1,300 members worked as volunteers during the Olympics. "That was a huge effort," he said, paying respect to the people working under him.

Beijing decided to move the equestrian events to Hong Kong less than three years ago. Otherwise, given Chinese quarantine restrictions, none of the world-class riders could have brought their mounts back home again. The Hong Kong Jockey Club had less than a week to prepare a feasibility study.

The 52-year-old says the Olympic Games "more than fulfilled expectations." He is pleased at the praise received from German medal-winners like Isabelle Werth. He puts it down to Hong Kong's unique can-do spirit – which he says is found in very few places.

Engelbrecht-Breges married into the world of equestrian sports. His former wife owns the Zoppenbroich stud farm near the German city of Mönchengladbach. He himself rose to the position of CEO of the governing body of German horse racing and breeding, based in Cologne. In 1997, an offer of a position as racing director lured him to Hong Kong.

Last year, EB – as many call him – became CEO of the Jockey Club. Under his leadership, the club has bolstered its position as an engine of Hong Kong's economy. The territory's only legal gambling organization paid 13 billion Hong Kong dollars (€1.16 billion) in taxes last year alone. The club is a non-profit organization – its earnings all go to charity and welfare institutions. Most recently, it made more than two billion Hong Kong dollars available for hospitals, schools, universities, and charities, as well as for victims of the Sichuan earthquake.

"We are much more than just a racing club and a betting place," he said. He points out that competition is growing. Nearby Macao has long replaced Las Vegas as the world's gambling capital. There are plans for the first casinos in the People's Republic of China. So Engelbrecht-Breges is calling on the city government to allow him more freedom "to benefit both sides."

Hong Kong has become Engelbrecht-Breges' home. He says his future is in Asia – "because of the tremendous quality of life." His three children are all grown up. He only flies occasionally to Germany for the weekend. After his separation from his first wife, EB got married again – this time to a Chinese woman. These days, he can even speak some Cantonese himself. "I find real fulfillment in the task of contributing to the development of Hong Kong," he said. "That gives me energy that will hopefully last a long time."

Frank Hollman

An ambassador with heart and soul

Delia Domingo-Albert keeps close ties to Germany – in public and in private | By Martina Merten



This woman doesn't do anything half-heartedly. The Philippines' first female foreign minister has been her country's ambassador in Berlin for the past three years.

When Delia Domingo-Albert introduces herself to her audience or begins to speak, she particularly likes one opener: "It doesn't really make a difference whether I stay seated or get up." That is the Filipino woman's way of hinting at her modest height, with characteristic self-irony. Domingo-Albert measures about 1.50 meters. And yet it's not possible to overlook the ambassador of the Philippines to Germany. No matter where she appears, Domingo-Albert always stands out. Perfectly dressed, she is a lady who leaves a lasting impression.

Domingo-Albert has been representing her country in Berlin since 2005. Coming here was a matter of the heart for her in many ways. Her husband, Hans Albert, is German.

The diplomat calls Berlin the "center of Europe." Standing on the rooftop terrace of her residence in the downtown Hackescher Markt quarter, she raves for minutes about the fantastic view of Berlin Museum Island. She points to the orchids growing high above the roofs of Berlin and loses herself for a moment in a different world, far away from any kind of obligations.

Moments like that are rare in the ambassador's life. Those who



PHOTO: G. G. L. / G. G. L.

know her say she is a workaholic, hardly sleeps, absorbs new information at any opportunity and surrounds herself with people non-stop. She always uses breakfast appointments in her favorite Berlin café – Café Einstein – for official business. Domingo-Albert takes informal dinners and turns them into lively discussions on world politics. She is an eloquent

master of networking. Nobody finishes a conversation with her before she has passed on at least three addresses. "Diplomacy is about being related to people," is her mantra.

The 66-year-old owes her professional success to two things: tenacity and her enormous diligence (which especially her staff acknowledge ungrudgingly). On

the other hand, she met "the right people at the right time," she says. And smiles.

Domingo-Albert was only 25 when she met Narciso Ramos, the father of Fidel Ramos, then foreign minister of the Philippines. He was taken by the self-confidence of the young woman who, despite her youth, had already traveled half the world as part of her diplomatic training. He was also impressed by the fact that she had been teaching in Japan during the previous four years. Ramos hired her as an assistant on the spot. "That was a unique opportunity," says the ambassador in retrospect.

From that moment on, her career surged. Domingo-Albert always saw setbacks as challenges, never as defeats. She also mastered difficult phases in her personal life. When the Department of Foreign Affairs of the Philippines wanted to forbid the marriage with Hans Albert – after all, a female diplomat from the Philippines wasn't supposed to marry a foreigner – she got her way. "If a male Philippine diplomat was allowed to marry a foreigner, then why wouldn't a female Philippine diplomat be allowed?" It took three years for the Department of Foreign Affairs to give its blessing in 1980. Domingo-Albert endured those three years "because I knew that I would win."

Five years as general director of the ASEAN Secretariat in the Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs, seven years as ambassador to Australia and one year as deputy minister in the Department of Foreign Affairs were followed by Domingo-Albert's biggest

career move so far. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, the president of the Philippines, appointed her foreign minister in 2003 after her predecessor suddenly died. "I was completely stunned when I was actually appointed," said Domingo-Albert. He was the first woman to hold that post. She had prevailed. In every way. Now the key was to remain "cool." In the end, she held the post for eight months as interim minister. She didn't sleep much during that time.

Her current position as ambassador in Berlin would offer her more freedom but she wouldn't be true to herself if she actually took advantage of that. Instead, she prefers to work periodically to Manila to work for women's rights, try to mediate in the conflict between Muslims and Christians on Mindanao and constantly build new bridges between Germany and her home country. Only recently, she invited three German honorary consuls for the Philippines to Manila to persuade them to invest more in the island nation. She succeeded. Germany honored Domingo-Albert's dedication years ago with the Federal Cross of Merit.

Considering her full plate, it is difficult to believe that Domingo-Albert is also a mother. She has a 25-year-old daughter who shuttles back and forth between Europe, Australia and the Philippines. She wouldn't want to have missed her daughter in her life for a second. Still, asked if she ever misses the traditional role of mother, she answers characteristically: "There is more in life than being a mother." ■

King of Rock 'n' Roll at the garden fence

50 years ago, Elvis Presley began his military service in Germany | By Klaus Grimberg

Never was there a more popular G.I. in Germany than Elvis. German teenagers worshipped the uniform-clad rebel. Deep in provincial Germany, the hip-gyrating enfant terrible became an ambassador for American values.

Bad Nauheim, Goethestrasse 14: It may sound like an everyday German address but at the end of the 1950s, thousands of young West Germans turned it into a pilgrimage site. For one year, an American soldier called the simple villa in the spa town near Frankfurt his home. It wasn't just any U.S. soldier but His Majesty Elvis Aaron Presley – the King of Rock 'n' Roll himself.

Looking back

Hard-core fans waited, day in, day out, just beyond the wooden fence. The young people knew exactly when G.I. Elvis would head off to the Ray Barracks in nearby Friedberg, and when he would return home. And each time, their idol took time to sign autographs or pose for pictures. Bits of broken English are all that was required for a little chat with the big star.

The U.S. Army made it clear it viewed Elvis as little more than an average soldier serving his military duty. But the truth was different. When Elvis arrived in Bremerhaven on the troop transporter U.S. General Randall on Oct. 1, 1958, a throng of fans and scores of reporters awaited him. The uniform-clad musical misfit striding down the ship's gangway,

shouldering his duffel bag – it was one of the iconic images of music history. On his first two days in the barracks not far from Frankfurt, the media kept following his every move.

On Oct. 2, dozens of journalists squeezed into the base's canteen, where that "average soldier" held a news conference. One reporter remarked afterward that the run on the event was "only a bit less than what would have been expected for President Eisenhower."

The horde even followed the star to his bedside; No. 13 in Barrack 3707, where the first sack of fan mail already awaited him. Much more would follow. In some weeks, the postmen dragged up to 20,000 letters for Elvis to the gates of the base.

A few days after Elvis' arrival, his father Vernon, his grandmother Minnie Mae and his two friends and "bodyguards" Red West and Lamar Fike landed at Frankfurt Airport. They all moved into the Hotel Grunewald just up the street from the hotel spa in Bad Nauheim.

Even the unmarried soldier Elvis was allowed to move into the hotel, since his father and grandmother were categorized in his army file as requiring care – and Elvis brought them to Europe at his own expense. While his father dealt with Elvis' financial matters, his grandmother pampered him with his favorite dishes – the King largely escaped army food.

Early in February 1959, Elvis settled into the villa on Goethestrasse, which he rented for 2,000 German marks a month. Aside from such distractions, the singer clearly felt at home in the prosperous neighborhood. He even set up a small studio in his new home and recorded a few songs.

The German media had a field day, covering and snapping every one of Elvis' moves in exacting

detail. Whether he was buying a classy BMW convertible, giving blood, heading off on maneuvers or to Munich or Paris on a vacation; whether he was attending a Bill Haley concert or a Holiday on Ice show, photographers were always at his side.

Bravo, Germany's most successful magazine for teenagers put

town. A star devoid of any airs, even in Germany, Elvis was the nice neighborhood boy, always friendly and pleasant.

In September 1959, Elvis met the 14-year-old stepdaughter of an Air Force captain stationed in Germany. Eight years later, Priscilla Beaulieu would become his wife and the mother of his only child.



From Tupelo to the Friedberg barracks: Elvis Presley arrives in 1958. From the start, fans and the media followed his every move.

Elvis on its cover several times, and reported on the adventures of the U.S. Army's most famous soldier nearly every week. In 1959-1960, Bravo dedicated one of its legendary "cut-out" series to the singer. A poster in 23 parts, appearing one by one in consecutive Bravo issues, produced a life-size likeness of Elvis. Today it's a precious collector's item.

Beyond the media madness, Elvis lived an astonishingly normal life (by today's standards) in provincial Germany. He got to know a few of the "friends" from across the fence and even took one for a spin in his car to the next

That was not the only way Elvis' one and a half years in Germany became a turning point. During his military service, his image changed profoundly. The dirt-dancing brat became a respectable young man who wasn't above serving his country.

The role model for young rebels everywhere became tame – and was listened to by more and more mothers and fathers on both sides of the Atlantic. From then on the erstwhile enfant terrible's records were played in family parlors, and Bob Dylan, the Beatles and the Rolling Stones became the new scourges for ears over 30. ■

Thanks to the clever strategy devised by Elvis' manager Colonel Tom Parker, who kept releasing records while Elvis was serving abroad, no one back home forgot the star for even a month. Meanwhile, Elvis' entourage in Germany was hard at work planning the artist's "comeback."

Film producer Hal B. Wallis paid a visit to Goethestrasse and discussed the concept for "G.I. Blues," which would be based on the singer's stint in the Army. A comedy spiced with melodrama, it became the Hollywood version of Elvis' adventures in Germany, not to mention a big box office hit. The soundtrack topped the charts for 10 weeks.

But before returning home, it was déjà vu in Germany – with the scenes of his departure mirroring those of his arrival. On March 1, 1960, Elvis gave a final news conference and answered questions for a stunning two hours. A day and countless autographs and farewell pictures later, the star – who had by then been promoted to the rank of sergeant – left Frankfurt for the United States.

Soon the ordinary soldier again became the extraordinary singer, the voice unmistakable to this day. For those who met him in Germany, he left indelible memories. But even people who never met Elvis began seeing him as more than just a famous singer. He became a symbol for the changing relationship between Americans and Germans.

No one viewed the King as an "occupier." Many Germans proudly saw in him a friend and buddy, not least in the confrontation with the Communist Bloc. Soldier Elvis Aaron Presley was just a player in the puzzle known as the Cold War but he accomplished his mission with distinction. ■