

Wichita German restaurant Prost leaving shipping container mall for larger downtown spot

BY DENISE NEIL
dneil@wichitaeagle.com

When Wichita shipping container mall Revolutsia was new back in 2018, its flagship tenant was Prost — a two-story German restaurant owned by German transplant Manu English and her husband, Austin.

The business met Wichita's long-voiced desire for a German restaurant, and each fall, people would slide into their ledershosen and head to Revolutsia's courtyard for a big, old-fashioned Oktoberfest party.

Now, the Englishes are preparing for the next phase of their restaurant, which is moving to a new home in downtown Wichita. Prost will be taking over the building at 134 N. St. Francis that's directly north of Bite Me BBQ and previously served as a warehouse space for Grant Rine's Architectural Salvage, which closed in 2023.

The building is owned by Hutton Development, but the Englishes are buying it. The restaurant will use both stories of the building, which has original wood floors, exposed brick walls and a space for an outdoor beer garden directly to the north.

Austin English said he hopes to have the move completed sometime in



COURTESY PHOTO

Prost is famous for its authentic Oktoberfest parties, which its owners put on every September.

June.

Although Revolutsia was a good home for Prost — and a great place to incubate a new business, English said — he and his wife are ready for Prost's next chapter.

"We're excited to be downtown," he said. "We're definitely excited to see more customers experience more of what it's like at a German guesthouse."

Prost won't close in Revolutsia until about two weeks before it reopens in

the new space, English said. At the moment, the focus is on the massive renovation of the historic brick building, which went up in the early 1900s and has been home to several different businesses over the years.

Austin English said that Prost will be able to spread out in the new space. The main floor, which shares a wall with Bite Me BBQ, will have two entrances: one facing St. Francis and a second north-facing door that

customers will be able to access through the beer garden.

People who enter from St. Francis will find themselves inside Ze German Markt, which is a German retail market that the Englishes opened on the upper level of Revolutsia in 2019. They're also bringing that business with them and incorporating it into the lower level of the new space.

Beyond the market will be restaurant seating as well as a bar that will be

set up in a salvaged antique bar that the Englishes purchased from Rine. In the back of the main level, customers will see a 10-foot-tall by 8-foot-wide stained glass piece that originated in Germany and that the owners also purchased from Rine. It features an angel, which Austin English has dubbed "the beer angel," and it will be a design centerpiece for the lower level, which will also contain the stein wall that's been a popular feature at the Revolutsia restaurant.

The upstairs section of the building will be transformed into Prost's beer hall, or "bier halle" in German. It will be filled with the authentic German benches that are now upstairs at Prost and will be decorated with the flags that hang on the current location's walls. It also will be fitted with a salvaged antique bar purchased from Rine.

The big beer garden will have eight-foot-wide tables made from wire spools and will be the place where Prost's owners put on the Oktoberfest parties that have become popular at Revolutsia. Oktoberfest also will be able to spill into the building, which will have at least twice the square footage of the Revolutsia space.

Austin English said that demolition has started in the building and that the owners have uncovered many unusual treasures left by previous tenants, which included the McCoy Candy Company in the 1910s; the Will K. Jones Merchandise Co. in the late 1920s; the Roland-Speh Leather Co. starting in the 1950s; and a fence-

ing club in the 1980s. In the basement, for example, they found an old corncob pipe adhered to a support beam with a handwritten "don't touch" sign next to it. Austin English said that he and his wife are trying to incorporate lots of the building's old touches into the design. (But not the pipe. They're not touching it.)

"We're going to keep a lot of the old architecture," he said. "The exposed brick, we're keeping. We're keeping a lot of the old and mixing it with a lot of the new."

Austin English said that he hopes Prost will keep operating in its new space — which is just across the street from Nortons Brewing Company — for years to come. His and Manu's son, A.J., who now works as Prost's kitchen manager, and A.J.'s wife, Lauren, who is the restaurant's general manager, have expressed interest in taking it over one day.

Austin English and his wife Manu, who grew up in Germany, got their culinary start in Wichita with a food truck called Let'm Eat Brats, which first opened in 2013. The couple gained a following and decided to open their stationary restaurant in the new shipping container mall five years later.

In addition to authentic German beers, Prost also serves German specialties like bratwurst, schnitzel and bierocks.

Stay tuned for more updates as Prost's moving date gets closer.

Denise Neil: 316-268-6327, @deniseneil

Vietnam veterans worry war's lessons are being forgotten

BY DAVE PHILIPPS
NYT News Service

A scratchy prerecorded message crackled over American Armed Forces radio in Saigon 50 years ago, repeating that the temperature was "105 degrees and rising," and then playing a 30-second excerpt from the song "White Christmas."

It was a secret signal to begin emergency evacuation. After about 15 years of fighting, \$140 billion in military spending and 58,220 American lives lost, the last American foothold in Saigon was falling. The Vietnam War was ending. Or was it?

As the United States marks a half-century since that chaotic day in April 1975, veterans say the war continues to reverberate through American culture and politics, as well as their own lives. And the experience still holds pressing lessons, they add -- lessons the nation seems not to have learned.

American newspapers printed images of the fall of Saigon that are still burned in the nation's memory: crowds clambering to the rooftop of the U.S. Embassy to try to get on the last helicopters out.

"We witnessed the city dying there right in front of us," recalled Douglas Potratz, a Marine veteran who was there. "So many people had died in Vietnam, and it was all gone."

He was a 21-year-old

sergeant in the embassy guard unit. After helping hundreds of people flee, he left with other Marines on the second-to-last flight out. "A lot of us cried," he said this week about watching the city recede from the helicopter. "But a lot were too tired to do anything at all."

Potratz, 71, said the Marine guards hold a reunion every five years, and he has seen how the war stayed with them long after they got home. Some have been dogged by anger, depression, drinking and regret. Six have died by suicide, he said.

"There was so much trauma," he said. "A lot of us didn't realize we needed to deal with it until 20 or 30 years later." If they had, he said, "we could have saved a lot of marriages and a lot of lives."

In the same way, the Vietnam War became a stubborn wound in American life.

The U.S. military, the most advanced in the world, had gotten heavily involved in the civil war in Vietnam in the early 1960s, believing that victory over Communist insurgents would come swiftly. "Our machine was devastating. And versatile," war correspondent Michael Herr wrote in "Dispatches," his 1977 memoir. "It could do everything but stop."

By the time Potratz arrived in Saigon, the war had devolved into a deadly grind. The United States

had signed a peace deal and withdrawn nearly all its troops, but was still spending heavily to equip the South Vietnamese army, which few of the young Marine guards imagined would suddenly collapse.

"We thought it was impossible, but before long, there were North Vietnamese jets strafing Saigon and tanks attacking the airfield," Potratz said.

Panicking Americans and their Vietnamese allies flooded the embassy compound. The Marines let as many as they could through the gates, frisking them for weapons and throwing what they found into the embassy pool, and then loaded people onto helicopters that took off about every 10 minutes, bound for U.S. Navy ships offshore.

The airlift lasted nearly 24 hours, but barely dented the throngs hoping for escape. Eventually, the exhausted Marines fell back to the main embassy building, barricaded the doors, jammed the elevators, burned the last armloads of the embassy's classified documents in barrels on the roof, and waited to escape.

By dawn on April 30, leaders from the U.S. military and State Department -- who had run the war for years -- had all gotten out. It was just a few young Marines left, watching smoke rise over the city as Vietnamese civilians frantically tried to ram their way



NEIL SHEEHAN NYT

During the Battle of the Ia Drang Valley in South Vietnam, a wounded soldier attached to the U.S. Army's Seventh Cavalry is helped by a comrade as he arrives at Landing Zone X-Ray on Nov. 15, 1965.

through the embassy wall with a fire truck.

"We waited hours, and we honestly thought we had been forgotten," Potratz said.

Finally, two helicopters appeared. The Marines peeled off helmets and flak jackets to lighten the load, piled in the choppers and flew away.

"It all came down on us," Potratz said. "I had never seen anything like it." He paused, then added: "But now, I feel like I've seen it in Iraq, in Afghanistan, in Ukraine. It's almost spooky."

The fall of Saigon began a cycle of national soul-searching that changed how the United States thinks about itself.

Trust was frayed to breaking. Suspicion oozed into pop culture. In the first "Rambo" movie, released in 1982, the enemy that Vietnam veteran John Rambo is forced to fight is his own government.

For the next 30 years, candidates for president tried to both condemn the

Vietnam War and honor those who fought in it, while accusing opponents of being skaters, fakers and draft dodgers.

When the United States invaded Iraq and Afghanistan, political leaders argued over whether those conflicts were exactly like Vietnam or nothing like it. Then came the fall of Kabul, Afghanistan, in 2021, with its eerily similar scenes of desperate crowds pressing against a few frantic Marines.

"The harmonics of Vietnam have reverberated in some really tragic ways," said James R. Moriarty, a trial lawyer who was a Marine helicopter door gunner during the height of the fighting in Vietnam in the late 1960s.

"I was on the ground about a week before I figured out that there was no way we were winning that war," Moriarty said. "But I had a young, naive lower-middle-class idea that surely our politicians and military leaders knew what they were doing. I didn't

learn until later that we had been lied to the whole time."

Moriarty said the experience shaped his decision to become a trial lawyer and take on powerful institutions and large corporations in court. "It taught me that the folks in charge cannot be trusted, that they lie to people, they harm people," he said. "And the political leaders often don't have the guts to do anything about it."

He said he did not fully understand the tragedy of the war until 2016, when his son, an Army Green Beret, was killed by a terrorist attack in Jordan. His son was there as part of a Middle East military strategy shaped by the American experience in Vietnam.

"I was devastated," Moriarty said. "And for the first time, I understood how devastated all the families in Vietnam, on all sides, must have felt."

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EAGLE EXECUTIVES

Michael Roehrman, Executive Editor
316-269-6753, mroehrman@wichitaeagle.com

Marcia Werts, Managing Editor
316-268-6216, mwerts@wichitaeagle.com

Dion Lefler, Opinion Editor
316-268-6527, dlefler@wichitaeagle.com

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