

## THE BERLIN WALL

In August 1961 East Berlin began constructing a barrier to keep people from fleeing to freedom. The Berlin wall stood as a symbol of communist tyranny for 28 years finally coming down on Nov. 9, 1989. Guards were authorized to use lethal force and at least 138 were killed trying to escape. An estimated 5,000, however, succeeded.

On the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the wall coming down Charlotte Alfred listed 10 of the most daring and brazen escapes. The following is condensed from her article in the Huffington Post.

1. Four months after the wall was constructed Harry Deterling discovered an unused track to W. Berlin and on Dec. 5, 1961 put his family and friends on a train, opened the throttle, sent border guards flying, and blasted his way to freedom. The next day the communists blocked the track.
2. On April 16, 1963 E. German soldier Wolfgang Engels stole a tank and tried to crash through the concrete barrier. He failed and was shot twice trying to scale a barbed wire fence. Fortunately some W. Germans left their drinks in a bar and came to his rescue.
3. On May 5, 1963 Heinz Meixner took the windshield off a convertible, let some air out of the tires to make it lower, put his future wife and mother in law in the back and successfully sped under the barricade at Checkpoint Charlie.
4. In 1966 18 year old braved attack dogs and hypothermia and swam 4 hours across the Teltow canal to freedom. He later returned to E. Berlin helping friends to escape. He was caught and sentenced to 15 years in prison. W. Germany secured his release after only 4 years.
5. In 1975 Ingo Bethke, an E. German border guard, floated safely across the River Elbe on an air mattress navigating through a metal fence, over a trip wire, and through a mine field.
6. In May 1983, Ingo Bethke's brother Holger escaped by climbing to an attic and shooting an arrow with a wire cable attached across to W. Berlin. His brother Ingo was waiting, fixed the cable to his car, and Holger came safely to freedom on a zip line.
7. In May 1989 two brothers put on military uniforms, painted Soviet style red stars on an ultra light airplane, and flew over the wall to rescue the third brother from whom they had been separated by over 10 years.
8. On Sept. 16, 1979 Hans Peter Strelczyk and Genter Wetzel and their families escaped to W. Berlin in a home made hot air balloon stitched together from bed sheets. Waiting for just the right weather and winds they made the trip to freedom in only 30 minutes.
9. In Dec. 1962 tight rope walker, Horst Klein, scaled an electric pole and inched his way to freedom across an unused electrical wire. He fell and broke both arms, but fortunately was on the right side of the border.
10. The largest mass escape took place in 1964. A group of senior citizens dug a tunnel under the wall and 57 people made their way under the wall to freedom. The tunnel was called the "Senior Citizen's Tunnel".

Every rational person wants to escape from tyranny. No rational person, however, wants to escape from God. He is not a tyrant, He is a Loving Father. Those who try to do so, like the Prodigal Son, will live to regret it. Fortunately, if we confess our sins, He is faithful to forgive us and to of our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 Jn. 1:9).

Moses recognized two kinds of slavery. One based on law, and the other on love. The law slave only served six years and was then set free. The love slave went through a public ceremony, which included piercing his ear with an awl, then vowed to serve his master as long as he lived (Ex. 21:1-6). Love is more binding than law! It "constrains" us far effectively than any barrier like the Berlin wall. Praise the Lord! We love Him because He first loved us!