

Learn the signs at autismspeaks.org
 Click here

28
UPDATES
TODAY

52°
FEW CLOUDS



Advanced Search

GO

News Opinion Sports Business Life Get Out QuickHits Nerdvana Photos Jobs Elections Marketplace Obits

FREE & LOCAL East Valley Mesa Gilbert Chandler Tempe ABC 15 Weather Discover Mesa Best of Mesa 2015 Discover Gilbert Best of Gilbert 2014 Discover Chandler

Home East Valley Local News Queen Creek & San Tan Valley

GET OUT CALENDAR

Dec 2	Dec 3	Dec 4	Dec 5	Dec 6	Dec 7	Dec 8
-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------

Submit an Event

Visa causes odyssey for Queen Creek couple

Story Comments Image (2)

Share Print Font Size:

Tweet Like 0

Previous Next



Toru Kawana

Visa causes odyssey for Queen Creek couple

Gerlinde Foltin holds her Austrian passport with a visa waiver. It shows the last day of her allowed stay in the United States. Her husband, Anton, is a permanent resident of 20 years.



Posted: Wednesday, January 10, 2007 5:15 am

Art Martori

Gerlinde Foltin had a pained look in her eyes last week as she opened a passport from her native Austria. Scrawled across the last page was a note from a U.S. Customs and Border Patrol agent that reads "Subject required B2 visa for further entries."

It means the 52-year-old Austrian woman will have to leave her immaculate Queen Creek home and her husband by Sunday, or become one of millions of immigrants living illegally in the United States.

When Gerlinde goes back to Austria, she won't have a job waiting and she'll have to stay with family members who have seen her only sporadically during the past three years. But she's planning to go back to Vienna, nonetheless, and wait for the U.S. to review her visa application, a process that could take another two years.

"I don't know if our marriage will survive," Foltin said in broken English.

Since 2003, Gerlinde has used a visa waiver to fly back and forth between the East Valley and her native country. She's taken 14 round-trip plane rides across the Atlantic in order to stay with her husband for three months at a time. But the visa waivers were only good for 90 days, so she had to return home at the end of each period.

On Foltin's last visit, her ocean-hopping lifestyle came to an abrupt end. A customs official stopped her as she exited a plane in Phoenix and told her that she must leave the country and



4-COURSE MEAL FOR 2
 ONLY \$25!
 CHANDLER FASHION CENTER

create a profile upload a resume
 YOURAZJOBS.COM
 Get Started Now



not return until she gains formal approval to

stay here.

Margarita Silva, an attorney with Phoenix-based immigration law firm Navidad, Leal and Silva, said Foltin's visa will arrive no sooner than June 2008. Silva added there was no legal way to remain with her husband.

"She doesn't have any prospects," Silva said. "This illustrates one of the huge flaws in our immigration policy."

A SECOND CHANCE AT LOVE

Foltin's saga began in 2002, when she met her future husband, Anton, on the Internet. Both had recently gone through divorces.

When they met, Anton Foltin had just returned to Austria after living for 20 years in New Jersey.

Gerlinde held a \$70,000-per-year job as a sales representative with Avery Dennison, an international manufacturer of paper products.

They married a year later — first in Vienna and then in Las Vegas. But the marriage had little effect on Gerlinde's immigration status, since Anton is an Austrian citizen who holds a green card to work in the U.S.

Now they are worried about their future together as they face the prospect of long-term separation.

Anton, a 50-year-old press operator, said nobody seemed concerned about the difficult process of legal immigration, even though there has been vigorous debate at the state and federal levels about the problem of illegal immigration. "They want to make these people legal," Anton said. "What do they do about us? I'm not the only one. There are lots of people like us."

The couple's situation illustrates the difficulty for many foreigners to navigate successfully through U.S. immigration process.

The Pew Hispanic Center has reported that about 500,000 people each year enter the U.S. illegally. They join a population of nearly 12 million unauthorized immigrants who already live in the U.S, according to Pew.

The number of illegal immigrants entering the country each year is nearly equal to the number of people who gain legal citizenship.

According to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, the U.S. naturalized more than 600,000 immigrants last year.

Critics of U.S. immigration policies say reform is necessary to stop the influx of illegal immigrants to the country.

As long as it remains difficult for people to move here legally, many will continue to skirt the system and the border, critics say.

Eliás Bermúdez, executive director of immigration-reform lobby Emigrantes sin Fronteras, said the cumbersome and oftentimes lengthy process to obtain legal citizenship is the real problem behind illegal immigration.

"That's what we've been clamoring about," Bermúdez said. "Our country is attracting immigrants without a legal mechanism to deal with them. We invite them to work in our factories without making it official."

A GRAY AREA



PHOTOS & VIDEO



Photos: AZ Down Under Exotic Petting



Photos: Winter Wonderland at



Photos: Gilbert Days Parade 2013



Photos: Veterans Day Celebration



Photos: Harlem Globetrotter Anthony



Photos: Volunteers help Save the Family

VALLEY, STATE AND NATION



UMOM New Day Centers receives \$5K for child development center

posted: December 01¹



Positive Paths seeks nominations for Man, Woman of the Year

posted: December 01¹



Chandler continues Tumbleweed Christmas tree tradition

Featured Popular Top Story

posted: December 01¹

Gilbert halfway through special census

posted: December 01¹

While Gerlinde has made every effort to move to the U.S. legally, her flights back and forth fall in a sort of gray area in the law.

Gerlinde said she received a letter two years ago from U.S. Customs and Border Patrol, warning her not to use a visa waiver again.

Yet she continued to fly from Vienna to visit her husband. She said she spent more than \$20,000 on the flights.

"At one time, I thought, 'Should I stay illegally?' " Gerlinde said. "We were too scared. We aren't those kind of people."

Gerlinde already purchased a ticket back to Austria. She'll leave the country Saturday.

Once she boards the plane, she won't be allowed back until her visa request is processed, probably sometime in 2008, said Bill Johnson, U.S. Customs and Border Patrol program manager.

"It could be sooner, it could be later," he said. "It's very difficult to predict."

Gerlinde's application will be approved or denied after the U.S. State Department sorts through all the outstanding visa requests filed prior to the Austrian woman.

Applicants file over 26,000 visa requests each year, Johnson said.

A two-year wait in Austria is Gerlinde's best bet for a visa. And her marriage is the sole rout to Gerlinde's eventual U.S. citizenship, said Lauren Mack, spokeswoman for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

Anton has already applied for U.S. citizenship. That status would streamline the process of his wife's immigration.

However in 2004, an out-ofcourt divorce settlement tied to a previous marriage pushed the earliest date for Anton's citizenship to 2009.

"He's the only way for her to immigrate right now," Mack said. "She just has to wait for her visa."

Anton said he can't imagine returning permanently to Austria, after experiencing the U.S.

"It's the way of life. It's totally different," he said.



Williams Field students assist United Food Bank

Spotlight Popular Top Story

Updated: Yesterday



Pocket park offers respite in downtown Mesa

Top Story

posted: November 29



Dinosaur party offered at history museum

Spotlight Topical

posted: November 29

Expansion planned at Dana Park

Popular

posted: November 29



Maricopa County's CASA celebrates National Adoption Day, 30 years of service

Popular Top Story

posted: November 29



Comments sought on Gateway land plan

Topical Top Story

posted: November 28

Tweet Like 0

Discuss Share Print

Posted in Queen creek on Wednesday, January 10, 2007 5:15 am.

More From This Site

- Police investigating possible murder-suicide at Banner Desert Children's Hospital
- Lights on at LDS temple this weekend
- PD: 3 arrested for Mesa armed robberies
- Gilbert mom arrested after children test positive for drugs
- Letter to the Editor: It's Thanksgiving: Thank You, God

From Around The Web

- The Fastest Way To Pay Off \$10,000 In Credit Card Debt (LendingTree)
- Crowdfunding is Changing Real Estate Investing (TechCrunch)
- Golfers: Why Your Hips Are Responsible for Your Inconsistent Swing (Watch) (Square to Square Method)
- 10 Ways Coconut Oil Will Change Your Life! (ReallyFacts)
- This Next Big Crash Will Cause U.S. to Ban Cash (MoneyWise 411)

Recommended by

0 Comments

Sort by Top



Add a comment...

Facebook Comments Plugin

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT...



East Valley boasts 5 playful cities



Independence Day celebrations across



Corona's Barcello becomes leader for



Hear ye! Hear ye! Enter to become a



Williams Field senior wins honors writing



Local Internet companies split on

Learn the signs at autismspeaks.org

[Click here](#)



Sections

- News
- Opinion
- Sports
- Business
- Life
- Get Out
- Nerdvana
- Specials
- Marketplace
- Jobs
- Obits

Services

- About
- Advertise
- Career Opportunities
- Contact
- Find a Rack
- Local Businesses
- Public Notices
- Privacy Policy
- Site Map
- User Agreement

Affiliates

- Ahwatukee Foothills News
- Arizona Interactive
- Daily News Sun (Sun City)
- Explorer (Tucson)
- Glendale Today
- Nerdvana
- Peoria Today
- Surprise Today

Contact us

East Valley Tribune
Phone number: 480-TRIBUNE
Address: 1620 W. Fountainhead Parkway, Ste. 219
 Tempe, AZ 85282

[More Contact Information...](#)