

The Atlanta Constitution

FRIDAY, MARCH 3, 2000

TODAY'S PAPER / ONLINE AT AJC.COM

NHL
Blues 5
Thrashers 2

Every Friday:
WEEKEND PREVIEW
SPORTS WEEKEND
WHEELS



Wrestlers toss racial lawsuit into the ring

← Harrison 'Hardbody' Norris LIVING, GI



50 CENTS

WEATHER

Showers and storms late, 64° / 46°, D20

Funding unlikely for Bible study

Proponents of teaching the Bible in Georgia public schools probably won't get the state's blessing — and funding — this legislative session. **DI**

Airlines wrangle over e-fares

Delta and Northwest airlines battle over the availability of fares through Priceline.com. **F1**

Firm offers Citadel \$300,000

A New York law firm that helped Shannon Faulkner enter The Citadel's cadet corps is offering to give the school as much as \$300,000 it won in

No need to pull up roots: Georgian won't be deported

By Mark Bixler
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A Covington woman found out Thursday she will not be deported after all for pulling another woman's hair 10 years ago.

Mary Anne Gehris, who came here from Germany as a baby, got a pardon that will halt the federal government's plans to deport her in accordance with a 1996 immigration law roundly criticized as unduly harsh. Her lawyer called her at work to break the news.

"I was like, 'What? Oh my

God! You're kidding!'" Gehris said. "He said, 'No. You really got it. Calm down. Calm down.'"

In 1988, when Gehris was 22, a judge put her on probation for a year for pulling a woman's hair in a spat over a man. She had put the episode behind her until she applied for citizenship last year and authorities asked whether she had ever been convicted of a crime.

She learned that the '96 law requires deportation of people who have ever received a one-year sentence — even a suspended sentence

for a misdemeanor such as shoplifting. The government has deported hundreds of such immigrants, but even the Immigration and Naturalization Service says Congress should act on three pending bills to change the law.

On Jan. 10, hours after a newspaper story about Gehris appeared, the Georgia Board of Pardons and Paroles called Gehris' lawyer, Socheat Chea, to tell him about the possibility of a pardon. It has pardoned "a handful" of immigrants facing deportation after convictions on nonviolent mis-

demeanors, and it has heard from more since Gehris' story made national news, said Kathy Browning, a board spokeswoman.

The board voted 5-0 last week to pardon Gehris, 34, a wife and mother who grew up as an American and knows no German. Browning said an investigation revealed Gehris has not been in trouble with the law since 1988.

Meanwhile, Gehris plans to reapply for citizenship. The pardon should clear the way for that, and Gehris is encouraged about her prospects, partly because she



KENT D. JOHNSON / Staff

Excited: Mary Anne Gehris, German-born but Georgian-bred, will not be deported for an offense a decade ago.

aced a civics test required of new citizens when she applied last year.

"Who takes over if the president and vice president die?" she asked herself Thursday. "The speaker of the

House. What are the three branches of government? Executive, judicial and legislative."

She paused. "You have no idea how excited I am," she said.

First steps: Rocker back with Braves



Déjà vu for GOP debaters

By Ken Herman