

Baltic Sea Letter in a Bottle Found 24 Years Later

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Korotkikh holding a bottle with a letter he found on a Kaliningrad beach. **Viktor Guseinov**

Nearly a quarter-century after a German boy tossed a message in a bottle off a ship in the Baltic Sea, he's received an answer.

A 13-year-old Russian, Daniil Korotkikh, was walking with his parents on a beach when he saw something glittering lying in the sand.

"I saw that bottle and it looked interesting," Korotkikh said Tuesday. "It looked like a German beer bottle with a ceramic plug, and there was a message inside."

His father, who knows schoolboy German, translated the letter, carefully wrapped in cellophane and sealed by a medical bandage.

It said: "My name is Frank, and I'm 5 years old. My dad and I are traveling on a ship to Denmark. If you find this letter, please write back to me, and I will write back to you."

The letter, dated 1987, included an address in the town of Coesfeld.

The boy in the letter, Frank Uesbeck, is now 29. His parents still live at the letter's address.

"At first I didn't believe it," Uesbeck said about getting the response from Korotkikh. In fact, he barely remembered the trip at all; his father actually wrote the letter.

The Russian boy and the German man met each other earlier this month via an Internet video link.

Korotkikh showed Uesbeck the bottle where he found the message and the letter that he put in a frame.

The Russian boy said he does not believe that the bottle actually spent 24 years in the sea. "It would not have survived in the water all that time," he said.

He believes it had been hidden under the sand where he found it — on the Curonian Spit, a 100-kilometer stretch of sand in Lithuania and Russia.

In the web chat earlier this month, Uesbeck gave Korotkikh his new address to write to and promised to write back when he receives his letter.

"He'll definitely get another letter from me," the 29-year-old said.

Uesbeck was especially thrilled that he was able to have a positive impact on a life of a young person far away from Germany.

"It's really a wonderful story," he said. "And who knows? Perhaps one day we will actually be able to arrange a meeting in person."

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