

VACATIONS – CHAPTER TEN

2000 – GERMANY – Isabel and Bill

November 22 – 27, 2000

Philadelphia 5:35 pm to Frankfurt – 7:20

Frankfurt 2:30 pm to Philadelphia – 5:40 pm

Wednesday, November 22, 2000

Boarded USAir 894 at 7:10 pm bound for Frankfurt – 3603 miles away. Cruising now at 38,000 feet with 13 flight attendants, Captain John Nagy at the controls. Isabel and I are in the center four-seat section with no one else – hopefully we can stretch out later.

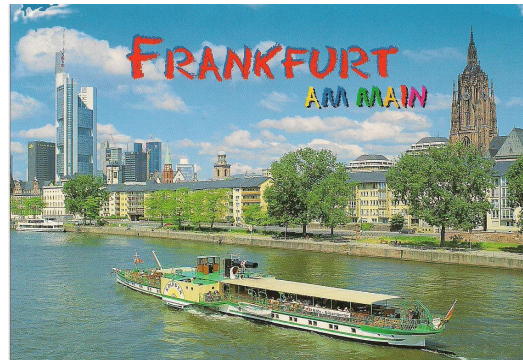
This plane has an individual TV screen affixed to the back of the seat in front,, and ear phones – a choice of music, TV or a movie later in the flight. Supper was Chicken breast, salad, roll, apple pie and beverage. Breakfast very light, juice, croissant, cheese, jelly, fruit slices, beverages.

Thursday, November.23, 2000 (Thanksgiving Day in the USA)

Arrived at Frankfurt Airport at about 8:20 am following a favorable night flight.. After a McDonald's snack we picked up our car at Avis – a four-door Mercedes – no extra charge – and drove directly to Frankfurt in time to hear the noon bells at the Dom Cathedral. Driving on to the IG Farben building (Eisenhower's Headquarters at the end of WWII), we found that it had been taken over by the Goethe University and was undergoing renovation. We could not enter the building as I had hoped, remembering my visits there in 1946 with Chaplain Colonel Paul Maddox, Chief of chaplains. He later became a personal aide to Billy Graham. Stopping at a restaurant on Eckenheim Strasse, I realized that we were just across the street from a very large cemetery that I remembered so well from my Army tour of duty in Frankfurt in 1946-47. It was also the street that I marched down in a military parade back then. We then checked in at the Dom Hotel, just across the street from the Cathedral. We had stayed there once before.



Hotel Dom nest to Cathedral



While Isabel took a nap, I walked to the Romerberg square where the Heiligeshift Christmas Festival was taking place. Numerous tented stands filled the square selling food, drinks, crafts, toys, etc. Children were taking rides on the merry-go-round as I pressed close to the raised platform where a children's choir presented Christmas songs.



Frankfurt Romerberg Square before WW II

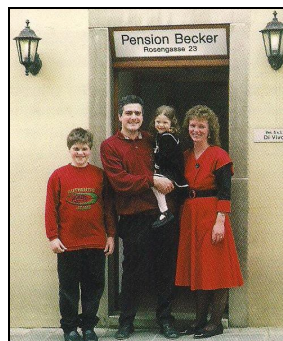
The Burgomeister (Mayor) appeared and spoke, introducing Rene Kollo, a well known singer. Suddenly I realized that I was hemmed in and wondered what Isabel thought when I didn't return on schedule. But when a woman standing in front of me with a small child in her arms turned to get out, the crowd parted for her and I followed. Getting back to the hotel, I found that the desk clerk had gone out to our car and put money in the meter, twice.

Isabel and I returned to the Festival, ate a bratwurst sandwich for supper and watched the lighting of the Christmas tree by the Mayor as everyone sang "O Tannenbaum" led by Rene Kollo. What a thrill to be a part of the celebration hearing the familiar song in the original language.

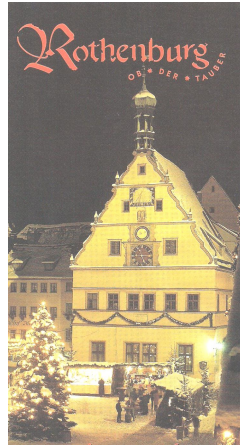
Finally, after ice cream, we returned to the hotel and bed at the end of a 20-hour long day.

Friday, November 24, 2000

After a wonderful fruhstuck we drove on to Rothenburg and the Pension Becker owned by Lydia DeVivo and her husband. Our room is extremely small with a double bed and a sink, the shower and toilet in an adjoining room.



The only advantage here is the price and the nearness to the town square. Spent the day walking around the Christmas (Weinacht) Festival. We ate supper at an Italian Restaurant where we ate with Jimmy and Lisa in 1997.



Saturday, November 25, 2000

Fruhstuck in the downstairs room was quite meager but Lydia very pleasant and cordial to us. We then met with Ulrich Knorr, organist at the St. Jakob's Cathedral and talked about the seven ministers, music in the church and his family. He has a 16-month old daughter and has been at the church since 1994.



Bill and Ulrich Knorr

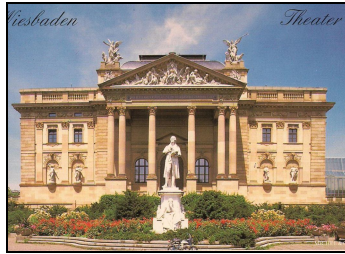
We drove out of town and found a used book store where I bought several books by Schiller and Goethe. In the evening we attended an organ concert at the Cathedral with Ulrich at the organ.

Sunday, November 26, 2000

Still here at Pension Becker before going to the Cathedral for the Sunday morning worship service. Ulrich was at the organ and played for a prelude for several minutes ending with an improvisation of the first hymn which we then stood to sing. I've never heard anything like that before.

Leaving after the service we drove to Wiesbaden and checked in at the Bierstadt Hof operated by Peter Schreiner whom we met in 1997 when Jimmy was with us. This is actually our sixth visit to this beautiful city having made our first visit with Barbara in 1990. Tonight we go to the Staatstheater for the opera "La Boheme." After purchasing our tickets, we ate supper in the Kleine Hall, a part of the theater which is also used for

small musical productions. The Staatstheater amazes me with its beautiful art and architecture.



Going to our seats for the opera I was seated next to a very well-dressed lady, distinguished in appearance and speaking only German. She did not want to talk, very reserved. We sat there for several minutes after the starting time wondering why the delay, when a man appeared on stage to announce a delay for about twenty minutes and that we should all go to the reception hall – the two-level place where we had had supper. When we got there, we were to get our coats and hats and leave the building because of an emergency. We all went outside, stood there waiting as police arrived and told us to leave the area because of a bomb scare – there would be no performance.

Disappointed, we walked through the shopping area, but shops are all closed on Sundays in Germany, so back to the car we went, and back to the hotel.



Bierstadter Hotel – Wiesbaden
Peter Schreiner and family

Monday, November 27, 2000

Here at Bierstadter Hof for another wonderful German fruhstuck with cold meats, hard roll, cereal, juice, coffee and tea.

Driving on the back roads to Frankfurt, we arrived at the airport for our 2:30 departure on US Air. Arrived in Philadelphia at 5:00 pm where Bev met us and we went home, tired after a long day.

This was a delightful but short vacation trip at Christmas time when we were able to enjoy the festivals even though we were extremely disappointed that the opera was canceled.

THE END