

## VACATIONS – CHAPTER FOURTEEN

as of 8/19/2011

**2003 – GERMANY, SWITZERLAND AND AUSTRIA** – Isabel, Bill, Jessie and Chris

September 3-17, 2003

Depart - Philadelphia, Wednesday 9/3/2003 - 6:00 pm Lufthansa # LH427 to Frankfurt, Thursday, 9/4/2003 - arrive 7:55 am

Return - Frankfurt, Wednesday 9/17/2003 - 1:35 pm Lufthansa # LH426 to Philadelphia, Wednesday 9/17/2003 - arrive 4:10 pm



Chris - Pop Pop - Isabel - Jessie

### **Wednesday, September 3, 2003**

This is the 14th foreign trip that Isabel and I have made - our 11th to Germany - and two more of our grandchildren have joined us - Jessica and Christopher. They are the fifth and sixth to do so. Jimmy in '97 & '98, Lisa in '98, Kate and Sarah in 2002.

Beth, Jim and Debbie took us to the airport at Philadelphia where we boarded a Lufthansa (Alliance) plane at 6:00 pm to Frankfurt. Our plane had seven seats across - 2-aisle-3-aisle-2. We flew at 38,000 feet, outside temperature at -74 degrees, 527 miles per hour. The midnight supper was great. Each seat has its own TV screen - about 8"x5" - on the back of the seat before it. In addition to a choice of several movies and music, the TV screen also shows various aerial maps depicting the departure and arrival cities and the current location of the plane by way of a little moving icon. Fascinating! It also indicates the distance already traveled, and the distance remaining.

### **Thursday, September 4, 2003**

Right now at about 5 am we are crossing the English Channel with the sun beginning to rise. Hot, damp napkins were handed to us to help freshen up for a new day. Arriving at Frankfurt Airport at about 7:15 am, we went through customs and picked up our luggage. Getting our Opel Astra Station Wagon we headed toward Reichenstein Castle on the Rhine River but got lost around the city of Mainz. Ask Jessie about that.



Opel Astra

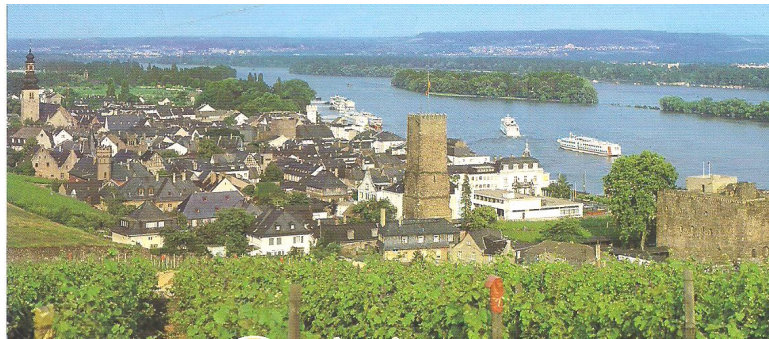


Reichenstein Guest House - our room 2nd floor right

Checking in at the guest house at Reichenstein Castle, and catching a brief nap, we then crossed the Rhine at Bingen on the small uncovered ferry to Rudesheim. Jessie and Chris enjoyed their Snitzel and French fries for supper and then we rode the ski-lift up to the Niederwald Denkmal, a very large war-memorial monument on the hill-side overlooking vineyards and the ships passing up and down the Rhine. What a sight!



Niederwald Denkmal



Looking from Niederwald Denkmal across vineyards of Rudesheim on Rhine River

The three of us walked down through the vineyards - a 35 minute walk - to meet Isabel at the Kathe Wolfahrt shops - one of her favorites. Before we left for our car, we watched and listened to an Ompa band march through the streets playing their music. Always something going on in Rudesheim, a festive place.

We then drove up through the countryside to Rettershain and stopped at the home of Jendrick (Jens) Kloos, a ten-year old boy whom we had met on the tour-boat last year with his school group. We were greeted by his mother and father at their door, and they called him to come greet us outside.

Before taking the ferry back across the river and turning in for the night at Reinstein Castle, we stopped at a small cafe for ice cream, cokes and coffee. Fortunately, we had a key to the castle and our rooms, because when we got back late no one was around. I am surprised at how trusting everyone is here, particularly with those of us who are foreign. There seems to be none of the typical suspicion of foreigners usually found at home in the USA.



Jessie and Chris at Rhine



Reichenstein Castle - note ladder to right tower

### **Friday, September 5, 2003**

We have a large "family size" room here at the Rheinstein Castle Guest House, the same one we shared with Jimmy and Lisa in 1998. It is on the second floor overlooking the Rhine and has a large private bath. We enjoyed the large and delicious breakfast offered here, and then we toured the ruins of the castle itself, separated from the guest-house by a long walkway. The castle is not occupied but contains a lot of furnishings and artifacts from its past. And a very noisy, vicious-looking dog prowls the outside enclosed path surrounding the castle.

Driving on to Bingen we boarded a cruise-boat up the Rhine to St. Goar. The street of shops is typical of towns along the Rhine. Here, however, the tourist-tram that goes through the town also goes up the hill to the ruins of Castle Rheinfels.



We hopped aboard. This is a very large complex accessible across a large and deep moat. The castle is just the shell of what it once was, with large and small rooms, walkways and towers. A museum deep inside has an unbelievable amount of artifacts and displays depicting its history. There is also a gift shop and small restaurant on site. It is one of the best places to understand the feudal age.

The fast moving current of the Rhine as it travels north from the Swiss mountains means that a two-hour journey north takes about three hours returning south. On the way back to Bingen, we ate supper on board the cruise-boat. Arriving late, we ended up at the NH hotel, a chain of modern hotels much like the Holiday, Quality or Marriott Hotels here in the States. This is a five-story building, but the only room we could get was very small with three single beds. Though a cot or a fourth bed would not fit, they gave us extra bedding, and Chris slept on that on the floor.

Though Isabel was tired after the long and busy day, I took Chris and Jessie to see the town festival which was just a block away. What a great time we had walking around, looking at the various booths, the Ferris wheel and other rides, and getting something to eat. My prize purchase from one of the craft stands is a 9" alligator made of twisted wire. We watched the man make it while we were there.

### **Saturday, September 6, 2003**

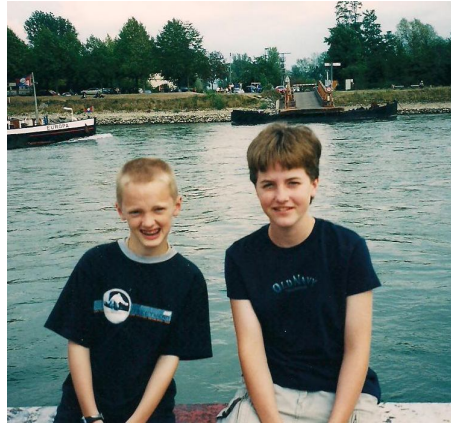
Leaving the NH Hotel in Bingen we drove to Worms to see the Cathedral made famous by the heresy trial of protestant reformer Martin Luther. Once again, in a catacomb under the chancel, we saw the burial vaults of several former pastors of the church and of some other political dignitaries. In a side room there is also a display model of the Cathedral and its accompanying buildings of long ago before WWII. Going through the gardens, and passing over a small memorial marker in the walkway referring

to the testimony of the Protestant reformer Martin Luther, we then went to the nearby monument honoring several other reformers from other countries.

We stayed for the night at Gasthaus Herbstwasen in Bad Peterstal-Griesback in the Black Forest. The name, Black Forest, indicates the "blackness" or "darkness" of the forest because of so many trees growing so closely together. It is difficult to see very far ahead when walking in the woods.



Gasthaus Herbstwasen - Bad Peterstal



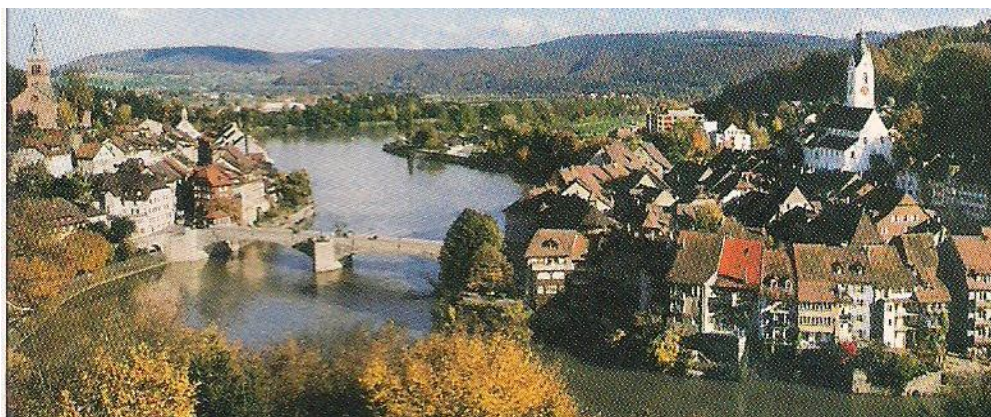
Chris and Jessie crossing Rhine on ferry at Rastatt

### **Sunday, September 7, 2003**

Leaving Bad Peterstal early, we drove to Strasbourg, France to see the Cathedral and Astronomical Clock. We got there in time for the morning worship and afterwards found out that the clock would not be open to the public today. A real disappointment in not being able to show this to Chris and Jessie. But, Chris, Jessie and I did get to climb the 330 steps to the top of the Cathedral, the same as we have done with Jimmy, Lisa, Kate and Sarah, and Isabel on our first trip several years ago.

Meeting Isabel upon our return, and watching some of the pantomime actors on the square in front of the Cathedral, we also watched a portrait painter and decided to let Chris and Jessie have their portraits painted.

Moving on, we crossed over the Rhine once again back into Germany and stopped for the night at Lauffenburg, a town that is divided by the Rhine River, with Lauffenburg, Germany on one side and Lauffenburg, Switzerland on the other. We stayed at the Rebstock Hotel on the main street, the same place where Isabel and I stayed in 2000.



Lauffenburg, Germany on left of Rhine River - Lauffenburg Switzerland on right

### **Monday, September 8, 2003**

On a rainy and overcast morning, we drove on to Lauterbrunnen, Switzerland, parked the car and ran quickly to board the train to Jungfrau, the glacier mountain in the Alps. A part way up the mountain, we were instructed to get off that train and board another one - a cog-rail train - that then tunneled to the very top. During the transition, everyone stopped at the outdoor snack shop to get hot chocolate or such. As we stood alongside the cog-train waiting for the doors to open, it started to leave. Turning to an attendant, and telling her we had wanted to get on, she explained that we should have pushed the button on the side of the train and the door would have opened. Fortunately, she had a walkie-talkie and called the train which stopped for us as we ran up the tracks to catch it and hop on. It was the last train up for the day. How lucky we were.

It takes over an hour to reach the top. Two stops are made in the tunnel as everyone gets off and onto a platform that leads to large glass windows cut into the sides of the mountain. You then can see the glacier. Getting back onto the train and reaching the summit, we went immediately to the Ice Palace cut into the Glacier itself. The ice tunnel is several hundred feet long and has several ice rooms with ice carvings of animals, Mickey Mouse, etc. At the end of the tunnel was an opening onto the ice-covered top of the mountain, guarded by a single strand of wire to keep you from falling or sliding away - to eternity.

We caught the last train down to Lauterbrunnen and decided to stay at one of the few hotels there - The Crystal Hotel. We ate supper at another hotel across the street, on their outdoor terrace. (In later year visits, we stayed twice in this second hotel.)

### **Tuesday, September 9, 2003**

Up at the Crystal Hotel here in Lauterbrunnen, we had fruhstuck and then started our long drive over the mountains, steep and twisty toward Walenstadt and the Curfirsten Hotel where Isabel and I had stayed in 2001. The previous owner, George, who had been so cordial to us, had sold the place. We had supper in the very nice restaurant - first class - and then called it a day after such an arduous journey. Not a very productive nor enjoyable day.

### **Wednesday, September 10, 2003**

On this rainy and cool day, we were ready to move on from Walenstadt, Switzerland, but before leaving, I noticed an unusual looking boxcar on the train tracks across the street. It was almost exactly like the 40 and 8 troop train that we took across France and Germany when I was in the Army in 1946. It looks like some things don't change.

We drove to Heidiland in Maienfeld, Switzerland, walked across the open field-path to the house where Heidi's supposedly lived. Jessie, Chris, and I went farther up the mountain but never reached another cabin - supposedly the grandfather's - referred to in the story. We did buy some souvenirs in the gift shop. (In a later year when Beth and Jim were along too, Chris and Debbie went to see the grandfather's cabin up the hill but were disappointed in what they saw. They said that it wasn't worth the long walk).

On the way, high on the path, we saw these large wood carvings of Heidi, her grandfather, and a cat sneaking by out of the woods.



Driving on, we went over the mountains through the Fernpass to Hotel Tirolerhof in Lermoos, Austria, where we had stayed in previous years. Still rainy and cool.

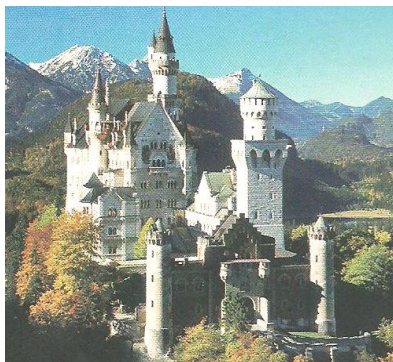
### **Thursday, September 11, 2003**

Here at Tirolerhof it is so foggy that we cannot see the top of the Zugspitz mountain. After Isabel had gone to the hairdressers and we had lunch at a nearby bakery, we drove to the cable car for a trip up the Zugspitz only to find that it was closed because of the weather. We decided to wait in the area until the next day.

We killed some time by going to a new restaurant where they have their own trout pond, ate supper there and waited for the weather to clear. It didn't. And I was not feeling well.

### **Friday, September 12, 2003**

Still here at Tirolerhof waiting for clear weather and a trip to the top of the Zugspitz, We decided to stay here for another night, and hope for clearing the next day. In the meantime we went to visit Neuschwanstein Castle, not too far away.



We rode the horse-drawn carriage to the top, went on the castle tour, and to the Marienbrücke, the suspension bridge over a very deep gorge. While Isabel and Jessie rode the carriage down to the parking lot, Chris and I walked.

While driving away, we saw para-gliders floating down from their jumping off places high in the surrounding mountains. We pulled off the road to a parking lot and watched them land just a few feet away from us in a designated area.

Then back to the Tirolerhof.

### Saturday, September 13, 2003

Still rainy and cloudy here at Lermoos today with hope that we can get up to the Zugspitz before leaving the area. Going into town for lunch we heard about the annual return of the cows to town from the summer fields. We then watched as cattlemen, shepherds, boys and girls all led the animals down the main street of town toward their respective barns and local grazing areas. The cows were adorned with garlands and bells that they wear when out on the mountain side during the summer months. It was a very interesting and attractive event.



We then caught the tram to the top of the Zugspitz even though it was still foggy with temperatures about 26 degrees. While at the top, it started to snow, so we stood around drinking hot chocolate before descending and traveling on.



We then stopped in Ramsau but couldn't find a reasonably priced guest-house. Because it was getting late, we ended up at a classy, costly "Wellness" Hotel, recognized as a spa. PLUSH! Chris and Jessie thought it was the best. We had a small two-part room separated by the bath, apparently a family room.

When we went to the dining room for supper we realized that this was a high quality hotel. After another dinner of Snitzel and chicken, the waiter brought us ice cream and coffee without us even asking.

Chris and I went to the indoor heated pool where he took a swim. We got Jessie to go with us and the two of them enjoyed a most unique pool with a fountain cascading upon them. The marble-top benches at the side of the pool were heated as well. What a life some people live.



### **Sunday, September 14, 2003**

After a great breakfast at the Wellness Hotel, we drove on to Hallein, Austria to the Salt Mines. We took the tour as we did last year with Kate and Sarah, riding the miner's train deep into the mountain and then riding a flat boat across the underground salt lake.



The kids really enjoyed the wooden slide down into the mine as they were dressed in the oversize miner's pants, shirt, and attached leather seat on which to slide.

Thinking that we would not have sufficient time on this trip to tour Salzberg, Austria, we drove to Oberndorf, Austria to show Jessie and Chris the place where "Silent Night, Holy Night" was written. And then we rushed on toward Dachau Prison Camp. We had only a brief time there before it closed, but it was long enough for them to get an idea of the horrible conditions resulting from the Nazi's and Hitler's reign of terror.



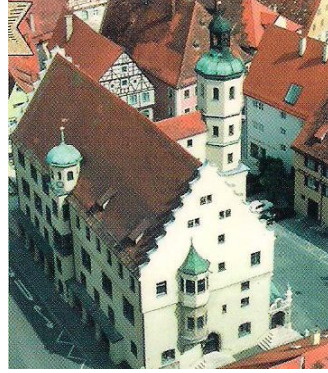
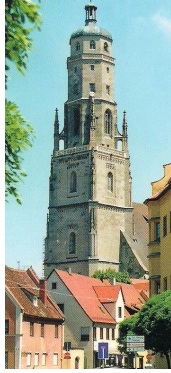
Dachau Prison Camp

Moving on to the walled city of Nordlingen, Germany, on the Romantic Highway, which was one of the first Protestant cities, we stayed at a guest house in the center of town across from the Protestant Cathedral. The double-attached rooms were strange, but adequate. Jessie, Chris and I walked around the town before bedtime, and had our usual ice cream snack.

### **Monday, September 15, 2003**

Our fruhstuck this morning here in Nordlingen was plain and simple. Chris, Jessie and I then went to St. George's Kirche Cathedral, climbed the steps to the tower, and were greeted by a very friendly older man - Luther Schwan - who lives in the tower most of the time as a watchman and guide. He talked with us about the church's history and gave us an autographed postcard. The church was built between 1427 and 1505 and has a steeple named "Daniel" that is almost 300 feet high. We took pictures together with Lothar Schwan the "Turmwachter," and I sent one to him after returning home, and thanked him for his cordiality.





Still on the Romantic Highway going north, our next stop was another walled city, Dinkelsbühl, Germany. We stopped in the middle of town and visited a couple of stores, and bought souvenirs. A few years ago, Isabel and I came here to visit the 3-D Museum, and to meet the Director Gerhard Steeff, a well-known German photographer. At that time we also purchased a unique 3-D painting called an Anamorphosen and met the artist Adrian P. Goddijn who was visiting from Holland.

Around noon we arrived in Rothenburg ob der Tauber, the third of the three famous walled cities on the Romantic Highway. We found a wonderful hotel in the center of town, the Gotisches Haus (Gothic Hotel), and had two rooms on the second floor. Jessie and Chris thought that it too was the best, second only to the Wellness Hotel in Ramsau. We were told that originally it was an old German barn, rebuilt with style, including an elevator. In the hallway as well as in our large suite with bedroom, living room and large bath, a section of the floor boards, about 30"x 24" and 5" inches deep, has been cut out, and a thick piece of glass placed across the top to form a display of Middle Ages antiques with border lights surrounding them. Most fascinating and well designed. I never cease to be amazed at such things that keep cropping up here in Germany.

Isabel stayed in the room as Jessie, Chris and I toured the Kiminal Museum nearby which houses four floors of Middle Ages implements of punishment and torture. There are metal masks for women accused of talking too much, stretch tables, executioner's swords, and a large metal dunking cage suspended by a rope that was used to punish prisoners by dunking them in a pond of water.



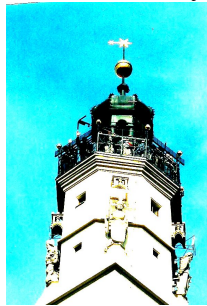
Jessie and Chris at the Kriminal Museum - Rothenburg

After Jessie went back to the hotel to keep company with Isabel, Chris and I took a long walk around the town which had been terribly bombed during WWII but shows no present signs of that destruction.

## **Tuesday, September 16, 2003**

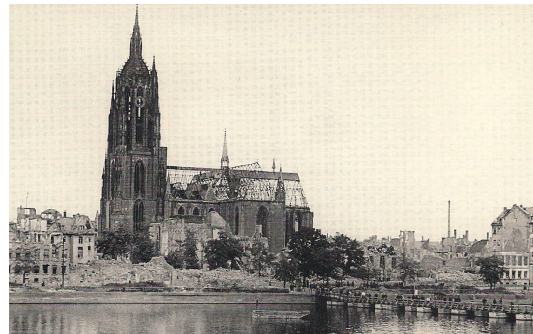
Going to fruhstuck in the hotel, the table was set for the four of us, a usual procedure in the Fruhstuck Raum everywhere we've gone. Also, it is noticeable in most restaurants here in Germany, that there is a small container in the center of each table to place trash such as used tea bags, straw wrappings, sugar package envelopes, etc. Very neat!

Packing the car and ready to leave Rothenburg, Jessie, Chris and I first decided to climb to the top of City Hall Tower on the old wooden steps and view the city from a great vantage point. What a sight, looking down on the magnificent Cathedral and all the red-tile roofed buildings, and the Tauber river valley.



We then went to say goodbye to our friend Ulrich Knorr, the organist at St. Jakob's Cathedral, and before leaving we took one more walk on the surrounding city wall that encircles this old, old city.

Traveling the autobahn, we arrived in Frankfurt, visited the Dom Cathedral that had been almost destroyed during WWII, but fully rebuilt. I remember seeing it in 1946-47 when I was stationed there in the US Army, and could not believe how beautifully it has now been rebuilt. Whenever we have had the opportunity to visit it and even worship there on our tours, it has been a very emotional experience for me.



The bomb damaged "Dom" Cathedral, Frankfurt as I remember seeing it 1946

We then drove to Hochst to show my grandchildren where I was stationed while serving as the Chaplain's Assistant at McNair Barracks there. The former military base there with its three-story high building that wrapped around the drill field has now been relinquished by the US Army to the city and has been transformed into a low-cost housing development. The drill field has been covered with Belgian Block and includes a play ground and garden center.



Our last night in Germany was in Kelsterbach at the the Grunnen Baum Hotel and restaurant. We have come to know the owner, Herr Angelis whose son Zacchaeus came to Philadelphia for medical treatment a few years ago. Chris and I enjoyed a late night walk along the Main River adjoining the guesthaus.

### **Wednesday, September 17, 2003**

Leaving Kelsterbach early this morning, we drove the short distance to the Frankfurt Airport taking a back road we had learned before, returned the rented car to Alamo, and waited for our departure home to Philly. Flying over Dublin, Ireland on this Lufthansa plane, we have 3319 miles to go, traveling at 512 MPH 32,000 feet altitude with outside air temperature at -49 degrees.

We were served a delicious shrimp salad, roast beef, rice, brussel sprouts, tea, coffee, and a small piece of pastry. Oh, yes, a small mint.

We arrived in Philly at 4:00 pm and were met by Beth, Jim and Debbie. After and "American" supper at Wendy's we arrived home in Wayne at 8:30 p.m, which was like 2:30 am German time - a long, long day - thanking the Lord for another great vacation in a country we enjoy so much.



Places visited on this trip

- Trechtingshausen - Bingen - Bad Petershtal-Griesbach
- Laufenberg - Lauterbrunnen, Switzerland - Jungfrau
- Walenstadt, Switzerland - Lermoos, Austria - Ramsau
- Nordlingen - Dinklesbuhl - Rothenburg - Kelsterbach
- Strasbourg, France - Oberndorf, Austria

**THE END - CHAPTER FOURTEEN**

AS OF 8/19/2011