

VACATIONS – CHAPTER FIFTEEN

As of 9/29/2011

2004 – GERMANY, FRANCE, SWITZERLAND AND AUSTRIA –

Isabel, Bill, Jim, Beth, Chris, Debbie

October 20 - November 3, 2004

Wednesday, October 20 - depart Philly 5:50 pm Lufthansa #427 to Frankfurt.

Thursday, October 21 - arrive Frankfurt 7:35 am

Wednesday, November 3 - depart Frankfurt # 426 1:30 pm to Philly, arrive 4:25 pm.



Debbie, Isabel, Bill, Chris, Beth, Jim

Wednesday, October 20, 2004

Our daughter Beth, her husband Jim, and two of their children, Chris and Debbie, came from Richland to meet us at our home at 134 Poplar Avenue, Wayne for another European trip. Bev drove us to the Philly Airport and then took Beth's van to her home in Wallingford.

This is Chris's second trip to Europe with us, having joined Jessie last year. Now with Debbie, it means that five of our grandchildren have shared this experience with us - Jimmy, Lisa, Jessie, Chris and Debbie - all Mellon's. Beth is the second of our children in that Barb was with us in 1990 - or that we were with Barb - for she initiated it.

We left Philly from the new International Terminal at 6:00 pm, were served beverages at 7:00 pm, supper at 8:00 pm, and breakfast at 6:00 am as were flying over Paris, France. The plane is an Airbus with 8 seats across with 4 in the middle and two aisles, with 2 seats window-side.

Thursday, October 21, 2004

Arriving at Frankfurt, Germany Airport about 7:35 am, we met the Thrifty Auto pick-up van which took us to Morfelden/Felden where we rented a full-size van. Chris was excited to note that it had a GPS (Global Positioning System) with a "talking lady" who gave us verbal directions in addition to the street maps - and more.

Driving directly to the Rhine River area, we arrived at Assmanhausen at a location where I knew we could get a tour boat on the Koln (Cologne) - Dusseldorf line. Soon it arrived and we were on board to St. Goar, one of our favorite river-side towns

with one of the village streets open only to pedestrians, and filled with shops. We had lunch at one of the sidewalk cafes.

On our return trip (two-hours duration) we had coffee and sat topside to view the beautiful scenery of sloping hills covered with vineyards, and the several old castle ruins. The weather was grand - sunny, mid-fifties, and a bit windy. Because of our long overnight flight, several in our party were seen napping while enroute.

Getting back to Assmanhausen and our van, we drove up the hillside to Dorscheid to Gasthaus Bluecher - family Fetz - and got two rooms on the first floor of the new building. Very nice. This is country, with farms and vineyards surrounding us - seemingly in the nowhere.



Jim and I walked around the property and through the fields to a spot overlooking the Rhine River and the distant town of Oberwesel on the other side of the River. All six of us then drove into St. Goarhausen (this side of the river opposite St. Goar) and had supper in a restaurant.

Friday, October 22, 2004

Up for a big and delicious fruhstuck at Gasthaus Bluecher, we then walked the area where there are very few homes but a beautiful small church - evangelical - that was locked but had a nearby cemetery with its usual flat marble or granite slab over the grave, and decorated beautifully throughout.

Because the gasthaus was booked, we could not get accommodations for the second night and were referred to Hotel Stahl in Oberwesel/Dellhofen on the other side of the Rhine. Though there are just a few bridges across the Rhine, small ferry-boats seem to be most everywhere. They are fun to ride, and make the crossing frequently and quickly.



Meeting the proprietor here at Hotel Stahl where the family has been owners for six generations, we settled in and then drove to the nearby Burg Rheinfels Castle ruins, the older and largest in Germany. What a place. It is like a village within walls. The museum, deep within, in a closed room, has wonderful old items of by-gone-days. The gift shop is filled with goodies, and the small restaurant served us on the terrace overlooking the Rhine. Wow! Burg Rheinfels Castle pictured below.



Crossing back over the Rhine again, we went to Rudesheim, one of the towns Isabel and I always visit, and a place I first came to in 1946 when I was in the US Army. We wanted to ride the Seilbahn - cable car - over the vineyards to the Niederwald Denkmal (war memorial -132 feet high and 120 feet wide with statue of Lady Germania at top), but it was closed from October to March. Instead, we drove up to the memorial and then Beth and Jim walked down. (Jim, Chris, Jessie had done that in previous trips.)



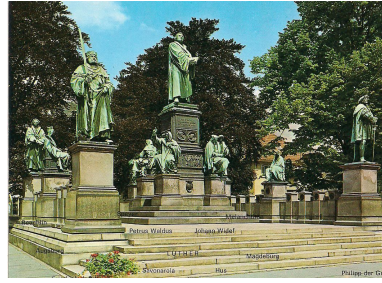
Not us!



As before, we went for supper in one of the restaurants in Rudesheim where I knew there would be live music, a female vocalist and male accompanist. As we ate, we listened to them singing a great variety of German and American tunes. I slipped away from the table, cornered a waiter, gave him some money, and asked him to request "Happy Birthday, Dear Christopher" who had just celebrated his 13th birthday. They did it! When Chris heard it, he just about went under the table as we got him to stand and the people stopped eating to applaud. It was quite late when we crossed back over the River to our rooms.

Saturday, October 23, 2004

On a beautiful, sunny cool 60-65 degree day we left Hotel Stahl in Oberwesel/Delhaven and are on our way to the cathedral in Worms, where Martin Luther was tried by the Roman Catholic church for heresy when he rejected the authority and practices of the church. This was an early event in the Protestant Reformation of the Christian Church. We spent a lot of time in the cathedral, the under-the-chancel catacombs where several church and political leaders are buried in stone sarcophaguses or sarcophagi. Walking through the memorial gardens we went to the Reformer's Memorial Statue just a block away where larger than life statues of Luther, Zwingli, Hus, Wycliffe and Savonarola dominate the block.



Across the street, we had lunch and headed South to Rastatt, Germany. Here there is a very small ferry boat that crosses the Rhine River to Seltz, France. The ferry boat has no power of its own, but is powered by the swift current of the Rhine, and is moored by an overhead cable that keeps it from floating downstream. It can carry about six or eight cars in addition to pedestrians and bicycles. Most interesting.

We went to Hatten, France to visit the World War II Maginot Line Embattlement - Musee de L'Abri de Hatten. It is like a concrete pill-box or a casemate with a below-ground entrance. On the top is a gun-turret plus gun-slots. A wire fence surrounds it as well. A guide showed us around in the small structure that covers an area about as large as the foundation of our home.



Looking around, we found Hotel des Bois, Family Werlen in Seltz where we spent the night. We had supper at a nearby Italian restaurant and called it a day.

Sunday, October 24, 2004

This Hotel is like so many small chain motels in the USA, with a small breakfast room just at the reception area. Because of the extra cost for breakfast, we decided to eat later when we arrived in Strasbourg, France. We parked as close as we could near the Cathedral and got there in time to attend the Mass/Church Service. Following it we had to go outside, buy tickets and enter the side-rear entrance to see the Astronomical Clock with its numerous figures of Jesus, the disciples, and others at the striking of the noonday hour. There was the moving figure of an old man moving on as a young man appeared to begin the new day.



Last year, when Chris and Jessie were with us, the two of them had chalk-portraits painted of themselves by one of the several artists located on the plaza in front of the cathedral. This year, it was Debbie's time.



Debbie sitting for portrait, Strasbourg, France - Pop Pop waiting in background

After snacks and the purchase of souvenirs at one of several shops on the square, we drove on to Lauterbrunnen, Switzerland, a long drive. We found a very nice hotel - the Schutzen - across the street from the Crystal Hotel where we had stayed last year. This was so much nicer, larger too. What a view we had from the street to snow-covered Jungfrau as well as the nearby water falls.

Monday, October 25, 2001

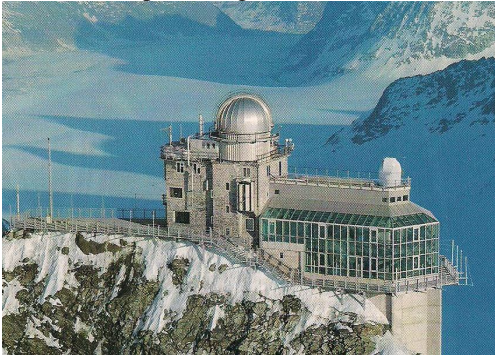


Immediately after fruhstuck in the hotel, we got the train just down the street to Jungfrau Hoch at 11,323 feet. The first train took us quite a distance where we then changed and boarded the cog-rail line up through the mountain for over an hour. Just as in the past, when we reached the visitor's center at the top, we then entered the Ice Palace constructed inside the Glacier itself. We marveled at the ice sculptures along the walkway cut into the ice in little rooms or dioramas. At the end of the ice tunnel we walked outside onto the top of the glacier. What an unbelievable and amazing experience. The sight across the ice-covered mountains is hard to describe.



Bill, Chris, Debbie, Beth, Isabel on top of Jungfrau

Top of Jungfrau -11,323 feet



Inside Ice Glacier - Beth, Isabel, Debbie, Pop Pop



Having already checked out of the hotel, when we arrived back at Lauterbrunnen around 5 pm, we drove on to Brienz on the Brienzsee and found the Hotel Seerest right at the edge of the Sea (large lake to us). We ate supper there and turned in for the night.

Tuesday, October 26, 2004

Here at Brienz, we ate breakfast at a tea-house next door to the hotel, bought rolls and meat in a Deli for traveling, and went shopping in this nice little tourist town. We watched wood-carvers at work in one of the shops, and then traveled north toward Altdorf, William Tell's town. Not much to see here, so on we drove to Hotel Freihof in Bilten, Switzerland. Not a very profitable day except for traveling.

Wednesday, October 27, 2004

We left the hotel by 9 am and headed toward Heidiland at Maienfeld, Switzerland, and toured the sight, with Beth, Jim and the children walking all the way up the mountain to see the grandfather's house.



Then it was off to Vaduz in Lichtenstein, probably one of the smallest nations on earth. We stopped there long enough to get souvenirs and a light Kabob snack at a stand. For the night we stayed at Hotel Gasthof Rosste in Nensing, Austria, a very nice little town set way back from the highway.



Across the street was a little church which I decided to check out and found that the 7 pm midweek service had begun. I stayed and worshipped, finding out that the visiting priest was from Poland. Then back to the hotel for a late supper with Isabel and Beth. All the others had ice cream before turning in for the night.

Thursday, October 28, 2004

This is another beautiful sunny day with temperature between 40 and 45 degrees. We kept moving toward Fussen to see Neuschwanstein Castle and got tickets stamped for 2:20 pm entrance. Taking the two-horse carriage up the mountain, we still had time to walk across the MarienBrucke (Mary's Bridge), a wire-suspension walkway over a very deep gorge. It gave us another view of the castle. This is the castle after which Walt Disney modeled his castle at Disney World. Built by King Ludwig II, it is beautifully maintained and looks as it would have in the early 1900's.

We are staying in Schwangau at the Pension Hellmar, a large motel right in the center of this little town.



Walking down the street we ate in a Pizza Restaurant after which Jim, Chris and I walked a bit farther to the Kurhaus Auditorium and heard a concert with a German Band of thirty plus an all male choir of fifteen. We sat at long tables in the Sasl (hall) behind many others in folding chairs in facing the stage. While listening to the music, including "Amazing Grace" sung in German, we ordered ice cream served by waiters. Very nice and quaint.



Community Saal for public events

Walking back to the motel on the local streets we passed by a large cow-barn - situated there just like any other business or store. Fascinating!

In the lobby of the Kurhaus was a small model-train exhibit on a glass enclosed platform. Placing a coin in the attached machine the trains began to move and other actions on the platform took place.

Friday, October 28, 2004

Before breakfast - everything imaginable to eat was available - I walked down the street to see the church - Roman Catholic and beautiful inside as usual - St. George's.

We then drove to Linderhof Castle, another built by King Ludwig II, and really beautiful with its surrounding gardens, waterfalls, and large man-made grotto in which there is a small lake - with its swan-shaped boat for the king - and electronic waterfalls cascading into the lake. One can only imagine what it meant to build this in the late 1800's or early 1900's. Really Disney-like.

Moving on toward Bertschegaden and Hitler's retreat, we got lost, took a road that led us up a high mountain. It got dark, there were no other cars on the road, and the road was very narrow. When it seemed as though we should be reaching the top, we saw a man crossing the road between a barn and a house. When we stopped for further directions he told us to turn around and go back down to the town because the mountain road was closed - apparently because of snow.

We found a hotel - Gastehaus Wiimmer in Unken, Austria and had supper in the restaurant there.

Saturday, October 29, 2004

Leaving Unken, we drove to the bus entrance for Eagle's Nest - Hitler's Retreat - and rode the bus up the amazing and beautiful mountain-side to this small retreat building on the peak of the mountain. As the bus neared the top, it came to a turn-around area that could accommodate about three buses at the entranceway-tunnel to an elevator ascending another 400 feet to the inside of the guest house. The tunnel was about 100-150 feet long. The elevator accommodating 30-35 people was marble and polished brass with circular mirrors on the sides that made it appear even larger.

Inside there was a very large lodge-like room with a marble fireplace and many chairs and tables. Off to one side was a small room for private meetings or meals, named "Eva Braun Room", apparently for Hitler's lover. Adjoining was a good size dining hall and kitchen. On the lower level were several bedrooms with an adjoining walkway or sitting area to view the mountains. On the outside was a large sun-terrace, presently used for dining, and rising upward was a path to more overlooks, and surprisingly, a large Christian cross. We neglected to ask if it had been there during Hitler's reign of terror.



From there we headed to Hallein, Austria to see the Salt Mines. We took the miner's train deep into the mountain, then slid down the wooden-sloped-rails to the base, on pads provided along with over-size clothing worn over our own. We rode a flat-bottom barge across the underground salt lake and then rode to the top via a tram-type elevator.

We spent the night at Gasthof Zur Post in Irschenburg, way off the highway. After supper, Chris and I walked the town and found that a church service was in session, but we did not enter.

Sunday, October 31, 2004

Surprise! We forgot to turn our clocks back for Daylight Saving Time and got up for breakfast in the dining room at 8:30 and found that it was only 7:30. We waited, ate breakfast and started out for Dachau, the Prison Camp nearby. Once again, we were shocked and saddened to realize all that happened here. We felt that it was important for Chris and Debbie to learn more about it, even though Chris had been here last year. The stories shown and told in vivid photographs will always remain in our minds.

Having lunch in a nearby McDonalds (they are everywhere- and totally un-German) we drove on to Rothenburg ob der Tauber, our favorite place in Germany, and got a room for Beth, Jim, Chris and Debbie at the Gottisches Haus, the same place Isabel and I, along with Chris and Jessie, stayed last year. Unfortunately, they had only one room available, but it was the best - second floor front with large bedroom, sitting room, and large bath. It was the same room that Isabel and I had last year, but the other room that Jessie and Chris had was not available. We insisted that the Mellons stay there.



So, Isabel and I went across the street to Hotel Meistertrunk, another 13th Century building that had been nicely transformed into a hotel. We had a front room which we enjoyed so much that we stayed there again in 2005 when Jimmy and Ellie were with us.

Walking up the street, we had supper in a small restaurant and then went to St. Jakob's Cathedral for a Reformation Day service with organ and brass choir. Once again, we met with the organist Ulrich Knorr, our friend. It was a great way to close the Sabbath, again in the fellowship of Christians, even though we did not speak the same language. Nevertheless, there was a bond.



St. Jakob's Cathedral



City Hall Tower

Monday, November 1, 2004

As Isabel and I ate fruhstuck here at the Meistertrunk, and waited for the others to join us, we met the elderly lady who was the owner. What a lovely, friendly, classy woman of style. We did not find out whether her husband was living, but her daughter was the present proprietor and was away on vacation. Though the hotel restaurant was closed, room guests were accommodated, and only Fruhstuck served. The mother stepped in to oversee activities as she lives in a very nice old house at the back of the property, facing the next street. Quaint, old country.



Meistertrunk Hotel Rothenburg

Beth, Isabel and I drove to Dinklesbuhl where Isabel had purchased some linens last year, but found the store closed in celebration of All Saints Day. This is the second year that we have been in Germany at this time of the year and wonder why so little is made of this important day in the USA, especially among Protestant Christians. So much is closed in Germany to observe this holy day..

Back in Rothenburg on a cool, cloudy day, we climbed City Hall Tower, though Isabel waited at ground level for us at the Plaza.



We then watched and listened to a four-member American/Italian Band play some very strange looking musical instruments. They were dressed in Indian clothing and all had very long hair.

There always seems to be something special going on in the Square in front of City Hall. This is also the spot where there is a clock near the top of one of the buildings (four stories high) with two large windows that open at the striking of the hour. Then the heads of two men appear and slowly lift their beer-steins as though they were drinking. Then their arms lower and the windows close. It typifies an event of long ago in 1631 when the military General leading Catholic troops in an attack against this Protestant city challenged the Mayor to a drinking contest. The Mayor succeeded in the challenge, and ever-since the city has celebrated the victory and its independence won by the MeisterTrunk - The Master Drinker.



On one of the old cobblestone side streets, there are two small eateries, one on either side. It was there that we split up and had our supper, everyone choosing according to menu offered.

Tuesday, November 2, 2004

After frunstuck in our separate hotels, we met and drove to the NH Hotel at Morfelden/Waldorf near Frankfurt, checked in with two rooms, and drove to Kelsterbach. I wanted to see our friend of several year's visits, Mrs. Areti Lucas, whom we last saw at the home for the infirm. But when I inquired at the reception desk I was informed that she had passed away. How upsetting it was for me was obvious as I returned to the van to tell the others. She had been so kind to Isabel and me when we first met her on the river-walk, and she directed us to the Grunen Baum guest house. One year, when she was still living in her own apartment, Isabel, Jimmy and I visited with her. She had made pastries especially for us, which we ate along with coffee and tea. She spoke good English, having worked for the US Army for many years. And now she was gone.

While in Kelsterbach, we also stopped to see Mr. Angelis at the Grunnen Baum Hotel. He kindly offered us a drink which we declined.

Driving on to Hochst, I wanted to show Beth and family where I was stationed in the US Army in 1946-47 serving part of that time here as a Chaplain's Assistant and Driver at Mc Nair Barracks. It is now community housing. Driving on to Frankfurt we went to the Dom Cathedral and walked the shopping area around the Romerberg before returning to NH Hotel for our last night

This was the time of the US Presidential Election when President George Bush, the son, was running against John Kerry, Senator from Massachusetts. We watched for the election results of a very close vote.

Wednesday, October 3, 2004

Here at the NH Hotel in Morfelden/Waldorf we ate breakfast in the Fruhstuck Raum and returned the van to Thrifty Rental where a driver got in to take us to the Frankfurt Airport. Our flight took off at about 1:35 pm for expected arrival in Philly about 4:00pm. We were traveling at 35,000 feet, minus 65 degrees outside, 490 mph. At 1:30, the TV screen on the seat-back in front of us indicated that we had 2172 miles yet to go. The seating was two on each side, two aisles, and a center section seating four. At 12:30 pm an attendant came through the aisles saying that George Bush has won his second term and that John Kerry had conceded defeat even though there were many questions regarding the count from the state of Ohio.

Arriving home safely, we look back on another enjoyable trip having shared it with so many family members. But there are five more trips still to come before we say ENOUGH!



Debbie and Chris on Plane

Places visited on this trip

- Frankfurt - Assmenhausen - Dorscheid - St. Goar - Oberwesel - Worms
- Rastatt - Seltz, France - Strasbourg, France - Lauterbrunnen, Switzerland
- Jungfrau, Switzerland - Brienz, Switzerland - Altdorf, Switzerland
- Bilten, Switzerland - Heidiland, Switzerland - Vaduz, Lichtenstein
- Schwangau - Wimmer, Unken, Austria - Ramsau, Irschenberg - Dachau
- Munich - Rothenburg - Dinklesbuhl - Hochst - Murfelden/Waldorf

THE END - CHAPTER FIFTEEN