

VACATIONS
CHAPTER FIVE

as of 9/27/2011

1994 – GERMANY, LUXEMBOURG, AND BELGIUM – Isabel and Bill –

May 26, 1994 – June 9, 1994

Newark 5:55 pm Lufthansa to Frankfurt, 7:30 am (actual 9:15am)

Frankfurt, 1:30 pm Lufthansa to Newark, 4:00 pm

Thursday, May 26, 1994

Ginny drove us to the Adams Mark Hotel on City Avenue, Philadelphia where we boarded a limo (9-passenger van) to Newark, NJ Airport for Lufthansa. The airline subsidized the Limo to and from Newark Airport – \$15.00 person each way. Though we were to depart at 5:15 pm, lightning storms delayed us for three hours until 8:15, sitting in the plane. We arrived two hours late at 9:15 am.

Friday, May 27, 1994

After renting a car - Europcar, Opel Corsa - we went to the Hauptbahnhof for lunch, and found a tobacco shop where they repaired my old German pipe that I had purchased from a German man in 1946. We then found the Dom Hotel right across the street from the Dom Cathedral.



While Isabel napped, I went to the Dom and the Romerberg (Plaza) where there was a very large street fair. I had told her that I would be back in an hour, but it was so crowded and I was pushed forward to the stage area, I could not find a way to back through the crowd. Finally, a woman with a small child in front of me turned to leave and everyone let her squeeze through. I immediately followed her while everyone must have thought we were together and I got out. Returning to the motel, Isabel and I then went on to the Zeil (closed to motor traffic, street with shops on both sides).



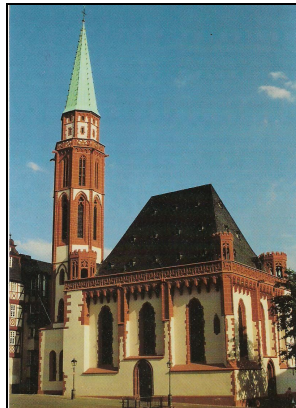
Street Fair at Romerburg, Frankfurt

Saturday, May 28, 1994

Returned to the Street Fair at the Romerberg with its many booths extending down to the River Main. At the Romerburg Plaza is the St. Nicolaus Lutheran Church, Frankfurt's oldest church. Like the Dom, it too was terribly damaged during WW II, but restored. We went in to look around and when the tour guide found out that we were from the USA, she said that the minister, Rev. Jeff Myers was from Philadelphia. I knew him from when he was the minister of the Calvary Presbyterian Church in Upper Darby where I had preached many times as a guest. She called him and he came across the street from his apartment to greet us.

While studying in Germany, Jeff had met a German woman who was also a minister and they got married. He decided to remain there, and the two of them became pastors of the Lutheran church.

They live in an apartment connected to the church-school right on the Romerburg. Of course, he was as surprised as I was to connect in Germany, and we were sorry that we didn't have more time to be together. (In 1995, we were there again. Just the Sunday before our 1995 trip, I was the guest minister at his former church in Philadelphia. I announced to the congregation that we would be seeing him and his wife next Sunday and that I had prepared a greeting card for them to sign. It was very large. The people were delighted and gathered around after the service to sign it and add personal notes. A couple of women even gave up photos of their children and added them to the card. We then presented it when we arrived at his home a week later. It provided a lot of cheerful moments).



St. Nicolai Lutheran Church

We decided to stay in Frankfurt that night and to attend the Oper Schauspiel, the more modern opera house in Frankfurt, and saw "Blauberts Burg", a very weird story. We ate supper at the Napoleon Bonaparte Restaurant.

Sunday, May 29, 1994

This morning we went to the Dom Cathedral for worship and "first communion" for many children. Beautiful service. Then we went back to the continuing festival, found the location of "Four Corners" and "Luther's Corner", on the plaza, which had been destroyed by the bombing and had not been rebuilt. Leaving Frankfurt and driving on to Singlingen and the Hotel Post, we then found the little town of Eschborn where there was another street fair. The street fairs in Germany are a lot of fun.

We are still looking for Gunther Vahlberg to no avail. He was the young German teenager serving us as a translator in 1946.

Monday, May 30, 1994

We went to the local cemetery, (Friedhof – Place of Peace) and the local Lutheran Church in Hochst where we met Pastor Muller, but still have no information other than Gunther’s baptismal record indicating that he was born on November 25, 1930, making him sixty-four at this time. Our last stop was to the Police Station where we were given the name of Karin Vahlberg living somewhere in Frankfurt. We decided to check it out later. (We did, after we returned home and found out that she is his daughter. In 1995 we located him and his wife living in Saarbrucken. See Chapter 6).



A typical German Cemetery – graves with flowers

Driving on to Wiesbaden, we got a room at the Hotel Olympia, out of town on the edge of the forest. It was a training center for rifle and pistol competition for the Olympics. I went into their shooting gallery and watched them and their instructor for a while.

Driving back to the city we had supper at the Salat Restaurant and attended a concert in the Stadttheater – Schubert’s “Winter Reise.” The music was weird with a 19 piece ensemble, strange instruments, no intermission. We were disappointed that it was not held in their main hall, so beautiful, but in a reception room adjoining it.

Tuesday, May 31, 1994

Heading out in the morning, we stayed off the main road and drove through vineyards, winding roads and small villages to arrive at Rudesheim on the Rhein River. We stayed in Erb-Abf Weingut-Weinhaus Gebr Endlich, a motel-like building connected to the owner’s restaurant. – Markstrasse 26 A. Very different. Only 95 DM (\$65.00). It was right in the center of town which made it easy to see all the various shops and stores. He had free parking for us right off the street behind a gated wall.

Across the street was a restaurant and in front of it was the town square. Though we never stayed at this guest-haus again, we returned to the town many times in the following years. It was one of our favorites.

We then took a 5 ½ hr round-trip excursion on the Rhine River, a most delightful experience. There were many castles on the hillsides, vineyards, many barges and ships of all types. The railroad runs near the waters-edge on both sides of the river.

Very picturesque. Because of the current of the Rhine which runs north, our northbound trip was almost an hour quicker than the return up-river trip. Of course, the river is fed by the waters of the Alps.

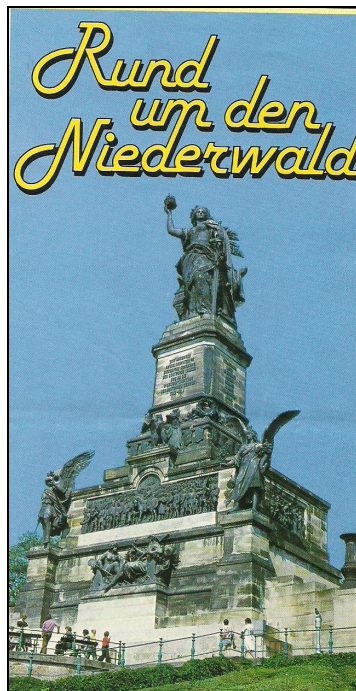


Rhine river Cruise ship

We ended the day back in Rudesheim at a very nice restaurant with a 3-piece instrumental ensemble and female singer. (We met her twice more in later years. One year when Chris was with us on his birthday, I tipped her to announce it and then lead everyone in the restaurant in singing “Happy Birthday” to him)

Wednesday. June 1, 1994

After fruhstuck, we rode cable cars up the hillside, over the vineyards, to the Rundum Dem Niederwald Military Monument overlooking the Rhine and Rudesheim. In a later year we drove our car up to the top but it is much more enjoyable to ride the swinging cable cars, similar to a ski lift. On two occasions, I walked down through the vineyards, once filled with ripened grapes, and one time had my picture taken with one of the huge baskets used to gather the grapes. The workers all laughed at me, but I was having an unforgettable ball.



Traveling on, we arrived in Luxembourg city and stayed at the Alpha Hotel, where brother Chuck and I stayed during a three-day military pass in 1946 when we were in the Army stationed in Frankfurt. I had saved a photo of the hotel, viewed from the street showing the room we stayed in at that time, and asked to have the same room. The clerk was amused, and said that particular room was occupied but we could have the room next door on the same floor. When we entered, and Isabel looked around, she said that the carpet was probably the same one. Nevertheless, I was happy as I stepped out onto the tiny balcony that overlooked the Hauptbahnhof across the street.

Going to the hotel restaurant on the first floor, and being greeted by a waiter dressed formally with bow tie and towel over his arm, I showed him the menu I had saved from 1946. I asked him if the prices were the same; he laughed and asked to show it to the chef. He came out from the kitchen and we had more laughs.

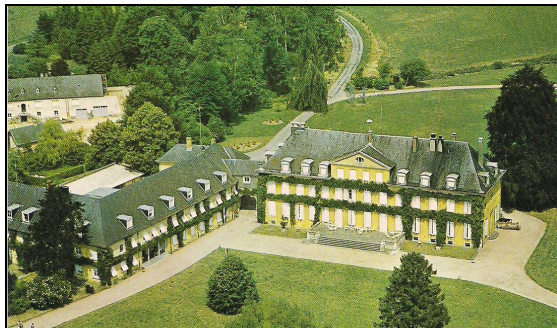
We did have the choice of staying at a modern Best Western hotel next door, but this one brought back some wonderful memories of almost fifty years ago.

Thursday, June 2, 1994

This morning after fruhstuck at the Alpha Hotel, we took a tram tour around the city to see the building where General Patton had his headquarters after WW II came to and end, the Cathedral, and then went to the Bibliotheque – the Luxembourg Library. Inquiring about John Wanamaker’s visit with the artist Michael Munkacsy at his home in Colpach in 1887, we were introduced to a genealogist working in the government offices next door.

Dr. Jean-Claude Muller, First Govenour Counselor, Ministry of State, knew the history, and took us to a government reception room to view one of Munkacsy’s original paintings – a model for his “Christ on Calvary” the one purchased by JW and brought to his home at Lindenhurst in Jenkintown. Wow, what a find for us!

We also met another government official who wrote about Munkacsy and gave us a copy, which I have in my files. He gave us directions to Colpach and Munkacsy’s former estate, where we visited and found that it was now a part of the Luxembourg Red Cross. We met the director who spoke very little English but showed us a wall-plaque indicating that visit of the composer Franz Liszt with Munkacsy. We were told that Baroness Munkacsy was buried in the cemetery across the street, which we visited, but found no such marker.



Former Munkacsy Estate now Red Cross



Church & Cemetery across the street

Luxembourg money is in the form of francs. At that time, our exchange of \$300.00 US dollars gave us 10,000 francs. Our hotel, cheap at that, cost 2,200 fr, about \$65.00.



General George Patton

After leaving Luxembourg we took photos of the larger than life statue of Patton which is by the side of the highway out of town in a desolate area. I think that it was at the entrance to the American cemetery at Hamm, a seemingly desolate area. We were surprised that it wasn't in a more prominent location.

Friday, June 3, 1994

Stayed last night in Hotel Arens in Radange, then a hairdresser's appointment this morning for Isabel in Ell, a crossroad with one little café and the Frissur. Driving on to Ettlebruch we found the Museum DieKirch, a most amazing display of military hardware set up in individual settings or dioramas. Unbelievable WWII exhibit in the area of the Bastogne. Since then it has been expanded and has become the National Museum of Military History of Luxembourg.

We drove to Beverce, just north of Mamedy, Belgium and stayed at a luxurious country-like Chateau Chapelle, very elegant.



Chateau Chapelle



Saturday, June 4, 1994

Going back to Germany and passing Aachen we suddenly passed a portion of the Ziegfried Line built by Hitler to halt invasion by the Allies into Germany. The anti-tank defense line of concrete barriers, called Dragon's Teeth, in the form of a pyramid 4' to 6' high, still remained.



Ziegfried Line - Dragon's Teeth Barrier

Driving on, we arrived at Randerath-Rheinsburg, Germany looking for information about the Zulker family who supposedly lived there in the 17th century. After speaking with the German pastor of the local church and attending the evening service, we met a German-speaking man from India who said he could help us. It is a long story, but he couldn't. No tourist house there so we drove to Heinsberg and stayed at the Hotel Corsten owned and operated by Luke, a black American who was a former Army officer who returned to Germany after WWII.

Sunday, June 5, 1994

Luke told us of a special religious Processional that would go from one church to the big Cathedral of St Christopher in Roermond to celebrate Ascension Sunday. It is interesting to note that the churches in Germany, a place we have so frequently defined by the word War, celebrate the ascension of Christ to His Father in Heaven. But here in America where so many of us call ourselves Biblical and evangelical, this is a day we let pass. Tradition seems to have both its good and bad aspects.

There were two bands, walking between the two churches, a lot of people following down the street, and it was an impressive sight with a lot of meaning..

We drove on to Maastricht, the Netherlands, where the celebration continued as the Parade of the Giants. Very large – 15'-20' puppet-like figures - are carried by one or more individuals hidden under the figure. No one seems to know for sure where the idea originated but the event attracts entries from other cities and even countries.

Fascinating to stand there just a few feet from these large figures moving down the street. What a unique privilege for us to come across this event without prior knowledge. That is one of the advantage in traveling, you always find surprises. How informing and enlightening it is.

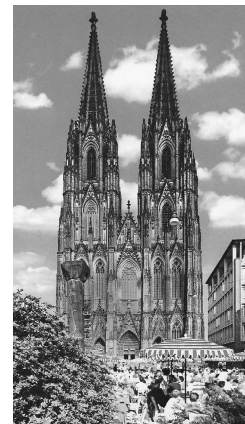
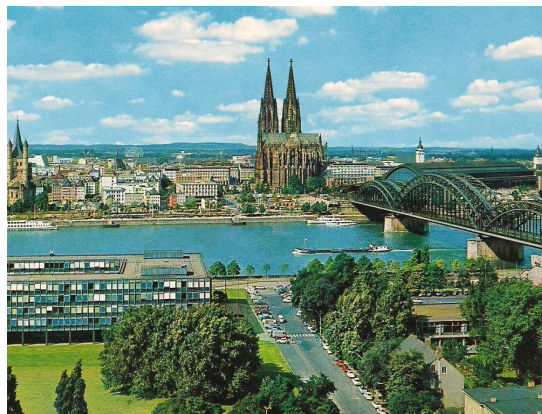


Parade of the Giants – Maastricht, Netherlands

Monday, June 6, 1994

Driving back to Germany we stayed at Hotel Post in Duren The next morning we drove back across the Rhine.

Arriving in Cologne (Koln), we attended a noon-day service in the magnificent Cathedral and listened to the organ as well, then toured the rest of the Cathedral including the Treasury Room where gold and silver altar cups, trays, and crosses were kept – many 500 years old.



Cologne (Koln) on Rhine River - Cathedral

Driving South along the Rhine River to Boppard and other beautiful little towns we arrived back at the Berg Hotel in Budenheim for the night. Before turning in, we walked down the hill to a little restaurant in the Village. Our room on the 3rd floor has French doors opening to a small private balcony overlooking the Rhine River and Valley.- a beautiful sight. River cruise boats and barges going up and down, and large mountains to our right and left.

Tuesday, June 7, 1994

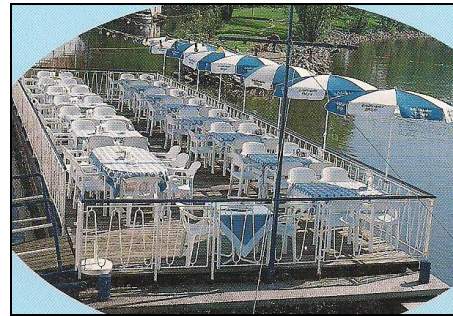
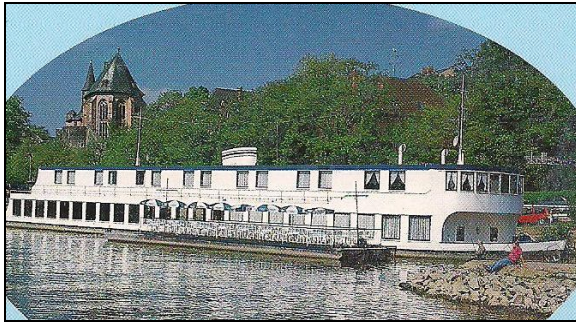
After fruhstuck in a beautiful dining room, we drove to Kelsterbach, our first of several visits in this little town on the Main River near the Frankfurt Airport. Our room in the Taunus Blick Hotel was right on a busy main street with too much noise. The

back of this small hotel faces the river, along which is a beautiful path, but we won't have time to walk it until later.

Following an afternoon ferry boat ride – (passengers and bicycles only, Kurt Ezlte, operator) - across the Main to Hochst and back, we drove to Frankfurt for another concert at the Alte Oper to hear a program of Broadway Music with Deborah Sasson, Garry Sass, and Gunther Emmerlich, led by the German conductor Peter Falk, not the American actor. Elman Gunsch was the Master of Ceremonies, and is apparently well known to concert goers there.

Wednesday, June 8, 1994

On our next to the last day in Germany, we drove again to the ferry to Hochst, had lunch on the floating restaurant sitting on the open deck.



We then went to the Hochst Tur (Tower) museum, back to Kelsterbach, to a different hotel – Schutzenhof - and then walked the pathway along the river. As we were taking photos of each other, a German lady spoke to us in English and offered to take our picture together. Mrs. Areti Lucas, had worked for the US Army following WWII and was now retired leaving nearby. She said that the next time we came we should stay at the Zum Grunen Baum just down the street. We did just that in May 1995.

(There is so much more to tell of this gracious lady in my reports of later visits. She entertained us in her apartment for coffee, helped to make reservations for us in a nearby guest-house, until she was taken ill. We visited her in the rehab home one year, and then were saddened on another visit to find that she had passed away. She like so many other German people who treated us so kindly will remain in our memories and hearts.)

Thursday, June 9, 1994

Leaving early, we drove to the nearby Frankfurt Airport, boarded at 1:30 pm and arrived in Newark Airport where we took a limo to the Adams Mark Hotel on City Line Avenue, Philadelphia.

Places visited on this trip –

- Frankfurt - Wiesbaden - Luxembourg, Lux - Randange Lux
- Berverce, Belgium - Cologne - Heinsberg - Durens - Bad Salsig
- Kelstersbach

End of Chapter Five