

**OUR VACATIONS**  
**CHAPTER SIX**  
as of (1/27/2011)

**1995 – GERMANY** – Isabel, and Bill –

May 18-June 1, 1995

Philadelphia – US Air – 1:00 pm to Pittsburgh 2:05 pm – 5:10 pm to Frankfurt  
7:15 am

Frankfurt - 11:30 am to Pittsburgh 2:45 pm – 4:04 pm to Philly 5:10 pm

Avis rental car – VW Polo green two-door hatchback

**Friday, May 19, 1995**

Driving from the Frankfurt Airport, we went directly to Kelsterbach to the Zum Grunen Baum Guest House (the Green Tree) on the edge of the Main River. This was our first of several stays here with the owner Herr Angelis. We called Mrs. Areti whom we had met last year on the walk path, and with whom we kept a contact for several years until her death. She helped us make reservations for our final day here on May 31.

We next went to Frankfurt and before going into the Dom Cathedral (\*2), we stopped to have a snack at the Dom Hotel Restaurant (\*5). Last year we had a room here

Going to the Romerburg and Nicolai Lutheran Church, we made our second contact with the minister, Rev. Jeffrey Myers, and sat in his living room chatting about the church – Calvary Highland Presbyterian in Upper Darby, PA – where he had been the pastor. On the preceding Sunday, I had been the guest minister there. At the end of that service, I told the congregation that Isabel and I would be going to Frankfurt and invited them to sign a card to Jeff “24”x 18” I had prepared. They did, and even added photographs of their children, that they had in their possession at the time. When we presented Jeff and his German wife Andrea with the card they were so surprised and thrilled. What an experience.

Before we left Jeff, he took us back to the Nicolai Church (\*5) where we climbed the stone steps up to the roof where there was a walkway overlooking the Romerberg.



Frankfurt Romerburg - Jeff Myers –Bill Zulker – Roof of Nicolai Church  
The walkway had been used by dignitaries observing the crowning of the rulers of Frankfurt when it was an independent state or country several hundred years ago.



Romerburg – 1995



Frankfurt Romer – 1945 after bombing of WWII

Across the Romerberg Court (or square) there was the Romer (City Hall) and the large banquet hall in which we saw the large paintings of each of the rulers dating back to the Middle Ages.

We returned to the Dom for a Friday night 6:00 pm mass after which I met the organist, Ulrich Knorr who became one of our German friends with several visits.

**Saturday May 20, 1995**

Driving on to Wiesbaden we found an inexpensive Fremdenzimmer Pension Behm on Limestrasser Strasser. This was very different. Between two buildings was a wooden-gated driveway. Following the sign, we turned into it and found the back entrance to a private home. Ringing the doorbell, the owner showed us the two-room and bath guest apartment at the back. Though Isabel didn't appear too happy, we took it. There was also one other apartment there as well. Only 80 DM per night, about \$55.00! To me, this is Real Germany! I love it



Pension Behm

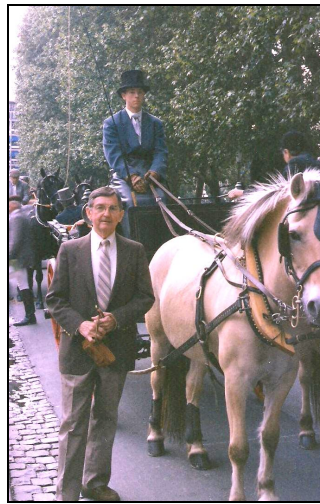


Isabel

Driving three or four minutes into the center of Wiesbaden we tried to get tickets at the Staatstheater for the evening ballet - Tchaikovsky's "Swan Lake", but they were not available. Walking to the Kurhaus (City Hall) next door, we found that there was a SAAB auto display and that the ballroom was set up for a special event. As normal, I went (by myself, of course) into the hall to inquire, and met a gentleman who must have



been in charge. He spoke English and was very friendly. When I told him that we couldn't get tickets, he apologized, said that SAAB was having a special performance of the ballet for their clients preceding the evening ball. He then gave me two complimentary tickets and told us to get there early. He said that he regretted not having tickets for the Ball. Dashing back to the Pension to change to appropriate clothes, we went back to the Staatstheater early. In front of the building were several horse-drawn carriages ready to accommodate the SAAB clients. Dressed as we were, one of the drivers must have thought we were clients and invited us to get on. WOW. There we were, just the two of us in our own carriage as we drove around and behind the Kurhaus through the park. Just one more exciting and surprising experience in the Vaterland!



Bill ready for carriage ride

We then went to the ballet performance in the beautiful and magnificent Staatstheater. Following the performance everyone – except us – entered the Ballroom for the dinner and musical performance. BUT, after we had gone to a nearby restaurant, I convinced Isabel to go with me back to the Kurhaus and see what was happening. Showing our ticket stubs from the ballet, we gained entrance and then went to the balcony overlooking the dinner guests and watched them as they danced the evening away to the sounds of a forty-five piece orchestra.



**Sunday, May 21, 1995**

We went to the nearby Catholic Church for morning worship which included a confirmation service for about twenty-five children all robed in white. After walking through the Bahnhof in Wiesbaden we took the tram up the mountain to St. Elizabeth's Russian Orthodox Church built by Duke Adolf in memory of Princess Elizabeth, his nineteen year-old wife who died in childbirth, and named in honor of her patron saint.



St. Elizabeth Russian Orthodox

We purchased tickets (11 DM +\$6..00) for “Tristen and Isolde” opera in the Staatstheater. Not the most enjoyable – five hours long with two intermissions.

**Monday, May 22, 1995**

Drove on to Ruudesheim and Frenndenzimmer Winzerschanke (95DM = \$65), and took a Rhine River excursion to St. Goar. Here's Isabel on Rhine River-boat.



**Tuesday, May 23, 1995**

Leaving Rudesheim, we crossed the Rhine on a small auto ferryboat and headed for Heusweiler/Holz in Saarbrucken. We finally connected with Gunther Vahlberg after forty-eight years. During my Army service at Hochst as the Chaplain's Assistant, Gunther was but fifteen years old, and served as our translator. While there we met his mother who entertained us in their two-room apartment and served cookies to us, a real treat. Upon returning to the States, and realizing the plight of the Germans after the War,

we sent them CARE packages. After marrying, Isabel and I kept up the practice for a while longer and then stopped. We stopped corresponding and lost contact. But then we heard that Gunther had come to the States and studied for two years at Northwestern College in Minnesota where Billy Graham had once been the President. Whether Gunther’s involvement with us in Frankfurt Youth For Christ helped bring this about, I never heard, but it is likely because of Billy Graham’s early ministry as a YFC evangelist and his campaigns in Germany.

Once we began to vacation in Germany we tried to find Gunther. At the end of last years vacation the police department in Hochst, where Gunther had lived, gave us a contact in Frankfurt, who turned out to be his daughter. She in turn gave us his address. And now we had finally arrived at his home. He and his wife received us warmly, and my what a pleasant time we had showing photographs, laughing and talking about our days so long ago. Here I was sixty-eight years old, and Gunther at sixty-five was a retired banker.

They had made reservations, at their expense, for us at a nearby guest house in Hausweiler and then entertained us for dinner at their home with Elke, one of their daughters. Before we parted, we presented them with a bronze Liberty Bell on a stand about 6” high, a copy of my book on John Wanamaker, and a cross-stitch bread tray cloth with Isabel’s handwork –“Give us this day our daily bread” in German. What a thrill it was to reconnect, not knowing at the time that we would never see them again, for both Gunther and his wife died within four years.



Gunther, Irmgard and Bill



Irmgard, Gunther and Isabel

**Wednesday, May 24, 1995**

Leaving Heusweiler Hof, we drove on the Pirmasens, then through a corner of France – Wissembourg, Riedselz, and Seltz, where we took a tiny uncovered ferry of sorts that could hold about eight cars, and arrived back in Germany at Ratstat.



From France to Germany





Then on to Baden-Baden and a room at the Rote Lache in the Black Forest where we had stayed in November 1992. Going back down the mountain to Baden Baden, we enjoyed walking around this old city famous around the world for its hot mineral baths. Oh, yes, John Wanamaker loved coming here, too. In the dining room we met an 84 year-old man who had been a prisoner of war confined somewhere in New Jersey, but he did not remember where.

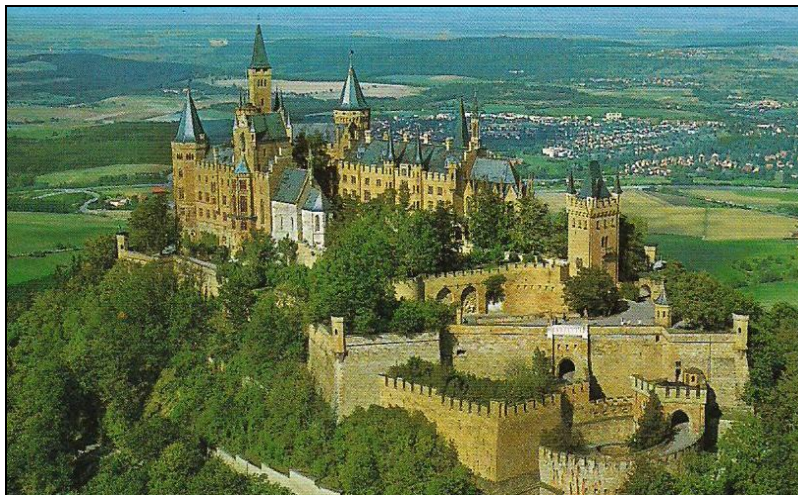
#### **Thursday, May 25, 1995**

Driving Rte 462, we went through Gernsbach, Forbach, Schonegrune and Freudenstadt to another fair-festival in the town square. Again, this is a National religious holiday observing the Ascension of Christ and most all regular stores and businesses are closed.

Moving on to Bad Petershal, another delightful town, we stayed at the Gasthof Schutzen for 96DM (\$65-70). This is the Black Forest at its best. We attended an evening concert at the local St. Peter and Paul Roman Catholic Church that was packed. The choir – about 85 with organ, violin and cello – sang some familiar music including four variations of “Ave Maria”, “Largo” by Handel, “Bells of Joy” by Elgar, the “Hallelujah Chorus”, and even “Pomp and Circumstance.” The German food in the restaurants is wonderful.

#### **Friday, May 26, 1995**

After fruhstuck, we traveled on through rain –first time – on through the Black Forest to Hohenzollern Castle (Schloss) high on a mountain top that can be seen from miles and miles away.



What a magnificent castle. Interestingly enough, we met a couple from Blue Bell, Jack Kaspar and his wife, while we were there. That evening we stayed at the Gasthaus Pension zur Morchel in Thanheim, then to a restaurant at Gasthof Adler in the next town of Bisingen-Zimmer.

#### **Saturday, May 27, 1995**

In the next town of Heckinger, Isabel went to a hairdressers and I walked the small town, and then on through Tubingen and Stuttgart. Stopping for an hour, we walked through the center-square where there was an antique show. Traveling the

autobahn, we arrived at Rothenburg, once again and found that there was another street fair which we just missed. We stayed at Gasthof Kingentor, which was not the best, but very close to the walled entrance to the old city.

**Sunday, May 28, 1995**

Walking to town, we found that we had missed the hour of worship in St. Jakobs Cathedral, but enjoyed the time walking around this beautiful ancient city with its stone wall and buildings all restored following the destruction in WWII. One wonders why the Allies found any reason to bomb this city. Fortunately, the Cathedral, City Hall and the town square were spared.

**Monday, May 29, 1995**

On our way toward Heidelberg via back country roads, and after stopping to take photos of a shepherd and his large flock of sheep, we came across another old castle in Weikersheim – 12<sup>th</sup> century. We are continually impressed with the architecture, statuary, paintings and gardens in these places. Very difficult to describe how the side, head and trunk of an elephant protrudes from high up on the side of a wall in bas-relief. The cost of maintaining the gardens as well must be enormous.



Weikersheim Castle and Garden view from Castle



Weikersheim Interior with Bas-relief animals

We then stopped at Schontal Monastery, Cisterian Abbey and magnificent cathedral dating from 1157.





Schontal Monastery Interior

**Tuesday, May 30, 1995**

We stayed last night at the Pension Panorama in Bad Wimpfen. Just two days left. Monetary exchange dropping at bit to 1.37 (\$300 – 413,40 DM, not bad!) This was before Germany joined the European Union and the EURO which went way down.

Now in Heidelberg, ate lunch in a “Pizza Hut”, for a change, couldn’t find the right price for a room, so drove on to The Grunen Baum in Keltersbach where we stayed our first night here

**Wednesday, May 31, 1995**

We decided to drive to Frankfurt and walked through the famous Palmgartens which I first saw in 1946 in the Army. At that time we had also held a Youth For Christ “Singspiration” rally which I conducted. The Palmgarten is like Longwood Gardens in Delaware or the grounds of the Philadelphia Zoo.



Driving back to Kelsterbach we went across the street to visit Mrs. Lucas whom we had met last year on the river-walk path. She was surprised to see us but entertained us with coffee and cookies, and was disappointed when we left after only an hour or so.

Driving to the ferry-crossing over the Main River, we were once again amazed at the simplicity of this ferry-boat, uncovered, no vehicles, operated by cable and winch, and spanning about 300 – 500 yards across the river. We were the only ones aboard –



cost just 1 DM. When we finished our walk in Hochst and went back to the ferry-slip, the ferry was on the other side. When the operator (George) saw us, he came over, let the two of us on-board and took us back to the auto-park



When we returned to Hochst in the following year, we again crossed on the same ferry, but were saddened to hear that George had passed away. So young!

### **Thursday, June 1, 1995**

Getting up early, we drove to the airport, dropped off car and were hoping to catch our flight at 11:30 am, but we were delayed due to technical problems. Finally in the air at 1:15 pm toward Pittsburgh then Philly. GREAT TRIP!

Places visited on this trip –

- Kelsterbach
- Weisbaden
- Rudesheim
- Saarbrücken
- Baden Baden
- Bad Peterstal
- Thanheim
- Rothenburg
- Bad Wimpfen

**End of Chapter Six**