

VACATIONS - CHAPTER EIGHT

as of 9/28/2011

1997 – GERMANY AND SWITZERLAND – Isabel, Bill and Jimmy Mellon

June 10-24, 1977

June 10 - Newark 6:45 pm to Frankfurt 7:30 am – Lufthansa 747

June 24 – Frankfurt Lufthansa 747 – 1:30 pm – Newark – 3:55 pm

Rented Opel Vectra auto 4-door sedan, no air-conditioning

Tuesday, June 10, 1997

John drove us to Newark Airport for our flight to Frankfurt for another vacation. This time, on our sixth trip here, Isabel and I are joined with our 15-year-old grandson, Jimmy Mellon. In the following years, seven of our nine grandchildren will have this experience with us.



Isabel, Jim, Pop Pop

Upon arriving at Frankfurt, we drove to nearby Kelstersbach, the Grunen Baum and Herr Angelis, where we have stayed before. Then on to Frankfurt, the Romerberg, the Alte Opera, the Dom and the Hauptbahnhof. We couldn't get tickets at the Oper Haus, but hoped to get to a concert at Wiesbaden.

Driving on to Hochst, we showed Jim where I was stationed in 1946 at the Mc Nair Barracks Compound which the U.S Army had recently closed and was now guarded by a snarling dog inside a barbed-wire fence. So we looked only from the outside. More of this story in a later chapter. (see Frankfurt Youth For Christ and later trips)

We also stopped at the Jahrhundert Halle outside Hochst (where Isabel, Barb and I had attended a concert on our first trip to Germany in 1990) hoping that there would be a concert there, but none scheduled. So on then to Wiesbaden where we found a room at Hotel Bierstadter and met Peter Schreiner a son of the owner-family.

Checking at the Staatstheater, we got tickets for a chamber orchestra concert and heard the strangest music ever. Rather than being in the beautiful concert hall, it was held in a downstairs rehearsal room, hot, un-air-conditioned, and we were sitting on folding wooden chairs. When the musicians appeared on a raised platform, they were in

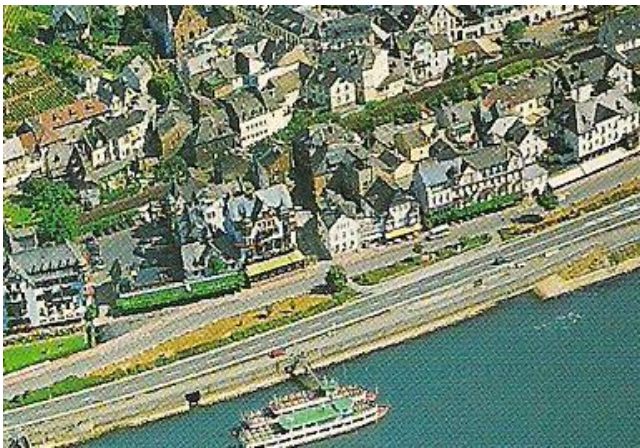
their shirt sleeves. Jimmy looked at me in surprise because the two of us were the only ones dressed in suits and ties thinking that it would be quite formal or semi-formal as when we previously attended. The Master of Ceremonies introduced someone who was the composer of some of the music. And then when the concert started, it was weird. The horn players used only the mouthpiece of the horn as though it were a kazoo. The drummers had the tops of trash cans which they beat. It was disgusting. Jim was almost falling to sleep with boredom, and I was right with him. At intermission, the three of us slowly, but deliberately walked down the hallway until we found an exit door and beat it out of there. What a disappointment. I missed the opportunity to show Jim what a beautiful building this is, and we didn't get to see or hear a great performance as hoped.

Though we still hadn't slept since leaving home the day before, Jim and I were not ready to turn in. As Isabel went to bed, Jim and I decided to drive around the countryside while it was still light enough to see. At that time of the year, it stays quite light until well after 10 pm. Returning to the hotel, we opted for pizza in the restaurant, a fitting close for grandpa and grandson in Europe for our first day together.

Thursday, June 12, 1997

Driving to Assmannhausen, the three of us took a two-hour tour on the Rhine River with Jim taking numerous photos of the castles, vineyards, and passing ships until we reached Boppard, a quaint town filled with shops along the river. We disembarked and spent an hour there.

Returning to Assmannhausen we found a very nice guest house – the Pension Renate Schmelzeis - right at rivers edge where we had two rooms separated by the bath. Jim had the front room overlooking the river where he could take many pictures. wanted.



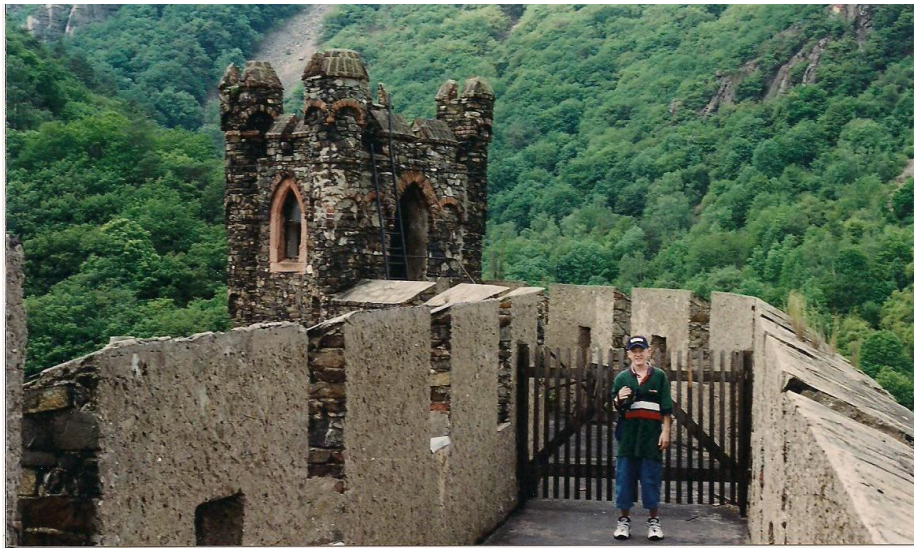
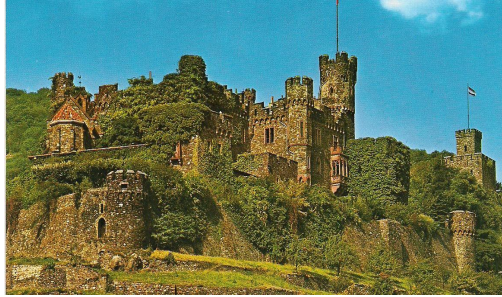
Pension Renate Schmelzeis is the white building in the center on the roadway

Before turning in for the night, we walked around the little town and had a spaghetti supper, Jim not being too interested in German food. Still light at 10:30 pm.

Friday, June 13, 1997

Waking to the sound of church bells ringing at 7:30 am, it's a beautiful day. Our room is typically German with the ceiling all wood boards as on the floor. The beds all have duvet coverings on one sheet. Each room has its own water heater for the shower. Everything is spic and span.

After fruhstuck we got on a small auto-ferry, uncovered, accommodating 10-12 cars, and crossed the Rhine to Castle Reichenstein. Wow, here is a step back in history. The castle has been well preserved and includes numerous artifacts of the old fief and fiefdom days. Adjoining it is a smaller, yet old building, a part of the castle compound with guest rooms and a restaurant. Though we did not stay there this time, we had the delight in doing so twice in following years – once with Jim and Lisa and again with Jessie and Chris.



Jimmy at top of Reichenstein Castle – Ladder behind him

Jim and I went to the top of the castle and up a metal ladder to the tower overlooking the Rhine River. The tower and the ladder can be seen in many photos of the castle. In later years we found that a sign prohibited access to the ladder, which made it seem even more important that we had done it. Jim and I will never forget that.

Driving on we arrived at the Worms Cathedral including its catacombs beneath with several sarcophagi of former clergy and political dignitaries. We also saw the “Luther and Reformers Monument.” As a Protestant believer, it was a moving experience to stand at the spot in the Heylshof Gardens and see the memorial stone on the walkway commemorating the statement of Martin Luther that began the Reformation and Protestant Church.. “Here I stand, I can do no other. So help me God” May 25, 1521



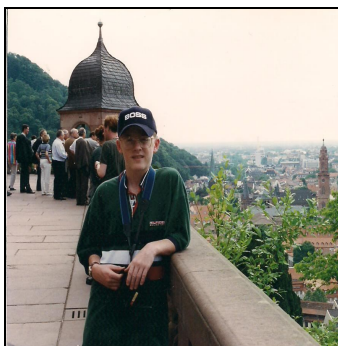
Jim standing at Luther/Reformers Statues at Worms

We traveled on to Mannheim and got the chance to take Jim on board the “Mainz” river boat, now a ship-museum, and tell him “again” the story of my experiences with Frankfurt Youth For Christ in 1946 on board this ship. (See web-page story “Frankfurt Youth for Christ.”)



Replica of “The Mainz” Rhine River Tour ship at Mannheim

We drove to Heidelberg Castle, walked through, then stayed at Bad Schonborn, about twenty minutes South.



Jim on wall Heidelberg Castle

Saturday, June 14, 1997

Driving on, we crossed the Rhine on a little auto ferry at Rattstat to Seltz France then on to Strasbourg, France and toured the Cathedral. We saw the Astronomical Clock

at midday with all of its moving characters of the Bible, and then Jim and I climbed the 333 steps to the top observation roof. What a view across Strasbourg.

In a later year (I think 2005) when Jim and Ellie joined us, we came here again. . On that trip we took a tour boat trip on the canal that goes through the old city with ancient buildings on both sides. The boat was long with a removable glass top with seating for 60 or 70 people. Sitting in the boat, it almost seems like you are at the waters edge. We also floated past the European Parliament Building, a most impressive glass structure.



Jim on Rhine ferry at Seltz, France/Ratstat, Germany

Crossing back into Germany by autobridge, we stopped at Freiberg, went to the Cathedral and heard a musical program before supper at an outdoor café. Finally, we ended the day at Berggrasthof – Schausland zur Sibermine.in Hofgrund, Oberried in the Black Forest in Germany.

Sunday, June 15, 1997 (Father's Day)

Nearby is the second highest mountain in Germany with its ski-lift. Jim and I rode to the top while Isabel shopped in the little stores at the base.

It was then on to Basel, Switzerland, and Zurich, until we found Hotel Loen in the town of Watwill, Switzerland, a very small town where Jim and I walked before supper at the Hotel. This was the only place where there were three beds in one room with bath adjoining.

Monday, June 16, 1997



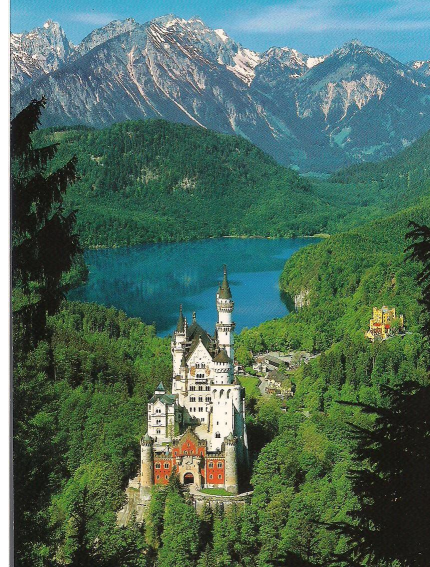
Bill, Isabel, Jim at Linderhof Castle

This was another day of auto-travel, up the Swiss mountains through the famous Arlberg Tunnel of Austria, (almost 8 miles long) and on to King Ludwig's Linderhof Castle in Germany. Being late in the day we spent the night in Schwangau at a private home – Pension Gasthaus Gonneneck. It is interesting to see these German homes that

have one or two beautiful guest rooms and a small dinette called the Frühstück Raum – or breakfast room. This area is like a residential suburb in the States, with each house separate from the other. Each one is distinctive and beautifully maintained.



Linderhof Castle



Neuschwanstein Castle

Tuesday, June 17, 1997

Up this morning here in Schwangau. Across the field from us we see children arriving for school in a low-slung two-story building of red-tile. It appears to be an elementary or middle school. No athletic fields at German schools. We were told that school is for class-study, not play. Each community has an activity-center building which may include a gymnasium and possibly a swimming pool. Athletic teams are community teams, not school teams.

As I watch, children arrive on their bicycles with some parents in cars transporting their children. No buses.

Off in the distance, high on the mountain, is the Neuschwanstein Castle, one of several castles of King Ludwig II. Arriving at the base of the mountain, we first toured Hohenschwangau Konigschloss – the King’s Castle – where Ludwig grew up when his father was king. It was filled with a variety of frescoe paintings. Then we rode up the mountain side in a horse-drawn carriage to Neuschwanstein and waited in line for a tour guide. The beauty and magnificence of the castle is hard to describe. Then too, there is the view across the valley toward the little town of Schwangau where we had stayed. We chose to ride the bus down to the parking lot and shops at the base.



Isabel, Jim, Bill at Neuschwanstein Castle

Moving on, we got to Dachau, one of the notorious prison camps where Hitler sent thousands to their deaths. Very sad and somber.



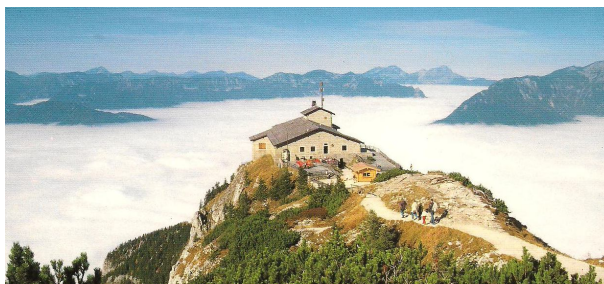
Bill at Dachau Prison camp

Driving through Munich, we stopped at the Olympic Stadium and were actually permitted to step a few feet into the entranceway where the Olympic Games were held in 1972, and where the Munich Massacre occurred with the killing of several athletes.

At the end of a long day we stayed at Gasthof Post in Irschenberg.

Wednesday, June 18

After fruhstuck, we drove to Berchtesgaden and took a bus up the mountain to Eagles Nest, the retreat of Adolph Hitler. This is quite a remarkable place built on a very small mountain peak with a fantastic view. Just one building, hardly large enough for one family, but certainly a comfortable place to escape the pressures surrounding a political leader. While there we saw a beautiful rainbow far below us, a most unusual sight. Also interesting is a very large Christian Cross erected on the mountain site. It seemed almost paradoxical when thinking about the dictatorship of Hitler.



Eagle's Nest – Hitler's retreat near Berchtesgaden

Moving on to Ramsau, a tiny village so often pictured in scenes of Germany. The Danbury Mint in Connecticut has produced a ceramic replica of the little church which we visited. We stayed at Gasthof Oberwirt built at the edge of a very fast-moving stream

running out of the mountains. Jim had a room above us with a balcony overlooking the stream. It was here that we purchased a small hand-carved wood angel at a little shop operated by the carver Maria Bauman, and had her autograph it as well.



Jimmy stands on balcony at Gasthof Oberwirt – Ramsau Church

Thursday, June 19, 1997

Reluctant to leave this beautiful little village, we nevertheless drove the short distance to Salzburg, Austria to visit the massive remains of the old castle on the hill. Kept in very good condition, it contains a museum of military weapons of the old feudal days. The view from the old fortress down upon the city of Salzburg and the Danube River Valley was magnificent. Riding a tram down to the city of Salzburg we toured the Cathedral, and saw the statue of Mozart. Right in the center of the Plaza is a very large chess-board painted on the walkway. The chessmen were about two to three feet tall. Anyone can step up to play.



Salzburg view from Castle



Chess Board on sidewalk in Salzburg – Jim at extreme right with camera

We didn't stay as long as we should have but wanted to get on to Obendorf, Austria. It was here that the Christmas carol "Silent Night" was written by Franz Gruber and Joseph Mohr. We visited the tiny chapel that commemorates the song as well as the two men pictured in stain-glassed windows



Jim at "Silent Night" Chapel Oberndorf --



Windows in Chapel – Mohr and Gruber



From there we drove on to Thanngreit and the Alma Stuben guest house.

Friday, June 20, 1997

Our next stop was the Herrenchiemsee Castle on an island in Chiemsee, the largest lake in Germany. It is unbelievably beautiful, and the garden grounds, ponds and fountains magnificent. Taking a boat – ours named "Barbara" – we docked at the island and walked the stone paths (some rode in horse-drawn carriages) to the castle, a mansion.



Jim and Pop Pop in paddleboat

When we got back on shore, Jimmy and I rented a bicycle-paddle boat while Isabel went to the hairdressers. Jimmy did most all of the paddling on the Chiemsee Lake, which was a very memorable experience with just the two of us enjoying ourselves on a lake in the middle of Germany.

Saturday, June 21, 1997

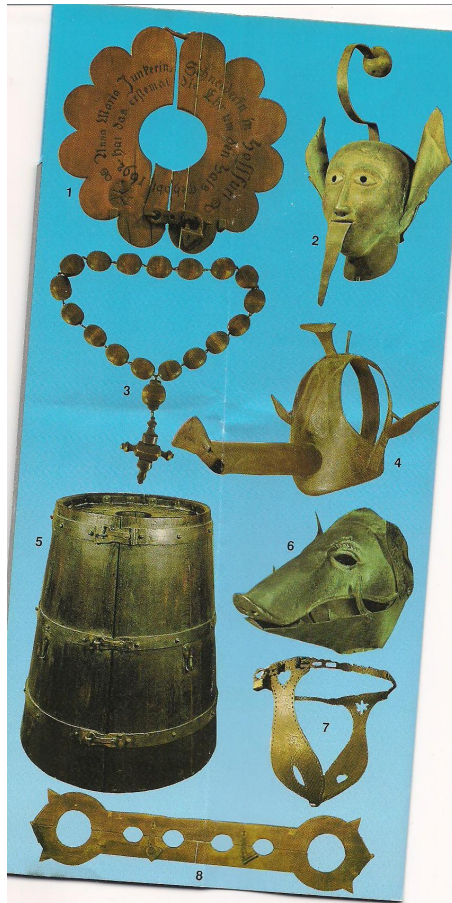
We stayed last night at Pension Wagner in Ellgau owned by a very nice and friendly woman. While there we met a family from Denmark at fruhstuck and learned that they were on their way to Venice and the Mediterranean seacoast.

Traveling on to Nordlingen, one of the three walled cities on the Romantic Road, we visited the cathedral and listened to the organist in rehearsal. This is the place where we stopped again in a later-year tour with Chris and Jessie and met the keeper of the tower after climbing many steps to the top.

Moving on, we stopped in Dinkelsbuhl, another walled city and had a snack at a small backerei.

Finally, we arrived in Rothenburg and found the fremdemzimmer owned by Mrs Schneider, an elderly lady who took a liking to Jimmy. She could not speak a word of English, so it was very challenging for Jimmy and me to try our German speaking skills.

A very interesting visit was made to the Criminal Justice Museum, four floors of Medieval methods of punishment and torture showing shame masks, stretching racks, thumb screws, tongue screws and much more.



In the evening Jimmy and I attended an organ and trumpet concert at St. Jakob's Kirche before the three of us went for supper at a nearby restaurant.

Sunday, June 22, 1997

We attended morning worship at St. Jakob's Cathedral, Lutheran, where an orchestra, organ and choir presented a Bach cantata. After the service, we climbed the stairs at the back of the church to the organ and choir loft and met the organist Ulrich Knorr. (Writing this in 2011, I must say that Ulrich has become a good friend through the years and we generally meet each year for coffee or such during our visits to Rothenburg.)

Jimmy and I climbed the tower to the top of City Hall and then walked around the covered city wall that had been rebuilt after the bombing of World War II. It is remarkable that the buildings were rebuilt looking exactly as they were originally. But the destruction was complete in some areas, near the famous wall. It is not clear as to why this city was selected for destruction. I have heard nothing about any military facility or manufacturing that was vital to the German war strategies..

Monday, June 23, 1997

Walking around Rothenburg this morning, we purchased an incense-burning toy man as well as a book on the Criminal Justice system of the Medieval Ages.

Then driving on, we stopped at the castle in Weikersheim. It is in a very small town with the main street leading up to the castle entrance. The inside rooms, the center court and the magnificent gardens far exceed the impressions first given. Unlike the

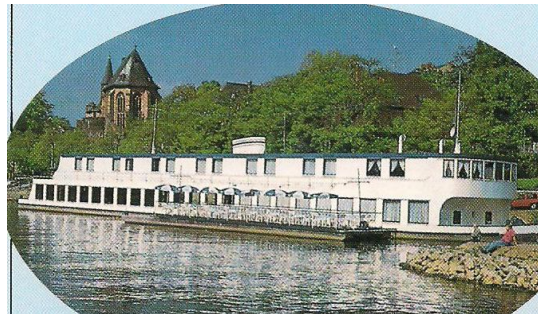
other castles we have seen, you have to get through the entrance and across the moat to appreciate it.



Weikersheim Gardens viewed from Castle porch

Leaving, we then had a snack at one of the booths at the town festival and drove on to Kelsterbach, the Grunnen Baum restaurant and Guest Haus owned by Mr. Angelis. He asked us to take a bottle of wine to his friend Dr. Ioanis Labrus in Bryn Mawr, Pa. who had apparently treated his daughter when ill some years earlier, and gave a second bottle to Isabel who carried it home..

After checking in, we parked the car and took the small passenger ferry over the Main River to Hochst and ate supper at a Ship-restaurant docked there at waters edge



Tuesday, June 24, 1997

We began the day with fruhstuck here at Grunen Baum in Kelsterbach and then called Mrs. Areti Lucas who lives across the street. She invited us to her home, had thought we would be coming later and had baked pastry for us. She served the three us as though we were dignitaries. She is the nice lady Isabel and I met on a previous visit, who had worked for the US Army, and the one who suggested the Grunen Baum.

At 10:30 we proceeded to the Frankfurt Airport just a short distance away, turned in our auto and boarded the plane for Newark at 1:45 pm. Lufthansa.

Places visited on this trip –

- Wiesbaden - Asmannhausen am Rhein - Bad Schonborn - Rothenberg
- Silbermine-Hofsgrund-Oberrajed - Watwill, Switzerland - Schwangau Irschenberg - Ramsaw - Thanreit - Wllgau

THE END - CHAPTER EIGHT

as of 9/28/2011