

## Visiting Western Europe with Andrew

We discussed Andrew's senior trip with him and he said he would like to visit Spain during the spring vacation. As you might recall, we had promised our four grandsons a special vacation with us during their senior year, with the only stipulation being that they select some place we could afford and that we hadn't yet visited. Dan, our oldest grandson had selected Italy and I recorded that trip in a story entitled, "Visiting Italy with Dan", which can be found in the Stories by Glenn section of this website. After thinking more about the trip Andrew noticed that for the same amount of money we could go to six countries in Western Europe during the same period. He decided that he preferred to take this trip and we booked the trip for a ten day period commencing in late April 2003.

We boarded a Continental Airlines flight on the evening on April 17th and seven and a half hours later (plus a six hour time change), arrived in London around 8:00 in the morning, after the 3700 mile non-stop flight from Cleveland.

We decided when we checked into our Victoria Place Hotel to not take a nap, but to hit the tourist circuit in an effort to defeat the large time change. We had the day free and could do anything we wanted to do, and in retrospect we made a very wise decision. Our fellow travelers who took long naps that first morning seemed to take longer to adjust to the time change...and suffered jet lag more than we did. During the first day, we walked to Buckingham Palace to watch the changing of the guard, visited Trafalgar Square which

honors Lord Nelson, walked along the Tames River, shopped and had lunch at Harrods (man, you have to be rich to eat there), and walked by Big Ben, Parliament, Westminster Abbey and Number 10 Downing Street. At this point, Ruth and Andrew had not spent money and were getting restless to shop. We bought all-day passes on the Underground (subway) and traveled to every recommended shopping area for the next four or five hours. When they finally had had enough, we returned to the Victoria area, had a dinner of "fish and chips and mushed peas" at the Shakespeare Restaurant (doesn't this sound like a place you should eat on your first night in England?)....and turned in for the night. We slept well!



Andrew, Big Ben, & Ruth



Glenn, Palace Guard & Andrew



Glenn & Ruth at  
Buckingham Gardens



Andrew & Ruth at Harrods

The next morning we took a bus tour of London and learned much more about the history and customs of London and England. I learned that when Yankee Doodle stuck a feather in his hat and called it "macaroni", it was English slang for being a "hot dog." It doesn't sound as good however to sing, "he stuck a feather in his hat and was acting like a hot dog." I'll just stick with the regular verse! After a nice lunch, we took a bus ride to the "White Cliffs of Dover" for our ferry ride to Calia, France.

On the bus ride we met our guide, Esma (English), and when we arrived in Calia, met our driver, Massimo (My Italian-speaking friend, Melanie says his name is probably spelled Masuccio, but I'm going with Massimo since it works better with the cheer we made up for him later in the trip!). We then drove through the French and Belgium countryside on our way to the Netherlands. Belgium has about 10 million residents and this Commonwealth Country is the

home of NATO Headquarters. The early part of the trip reminded us of parts of western Ohio with its spacious farmland. The Netherlands also reminded us of Ohio (with the exception of their water problems). The country side was beautiful and the many ditches and canals added to the beauty of this quaint country. The windmills are always in view, with some new high tech ones helping with the never-ending work of moving water to the canals, a job which continually faces these residents.

Andrew and Robert (VA) spent considerable time on this trip resolving the exchange rate we received for Euros and Swiss Francs. The Euro is about 1.11 to our dollar and the Swiss Franc is about 1.5 to 1 with regard to our dollar. I just handed my credit card to the waitress and hope that VISA will do the conversion for me. Since I don't shop (I just stand and watch people) I have little need to know the conversion rates...ask Andrew and Ruth and they will know. They can even bargain with Swiss Francs! Now, you know they are shoppers! On the way through Belgium, Massimo told us that our Mercedes bus was going to be two years old on April 23. How many of you know the birthday of your mate (let alone that of your car)?

After arriving in Amsterdam, we took a canal ride around this "Venice of the North." It was a lovely trip and we learned a lot about the city which started in 1275 along the Amstel River. The city known for prostitution and the open selling of drugs seemed dirty...probably a testament to the type of clientele the city attracts. On the brighter side, Queen Beatrice now reigns and the people seem to love her.

After the canal ride, we selected a small restaurant, which served Dutch food, to have our evening meal. Barbara (CA) from our group asked if she could eat with us, as she was traveling alone. When she ordered her meal, she asked lots of questions about the ingredients and how the food was prepared. After her first bite of the entrée, she told the owner that the meal contained sugar, which she could not eat, and returned the meal to him. He angrily tossed the meal into the trash can and no one returned to our table until it was time to pay the bill.

We paid for our meal, but Barbara said she would not pay for her meal and started to leave. The owner grabbed her and shoved her back into her seat and told us to leave. The owner shouted to his waitress, "Call the Police." By this time I was standing and I said, "I won't leave because you shoved her," pointing at Barbara. He shoved me towards the door and when I resisted, shoved harder. This angered Andrew and he shouted, "Don't shove my Grandpa or I'll smash you in the face," I calmed Andrew and was at the same time proud of him for defending me and worried that things might get out of control. When the owner went behind the bar to do something Barbara made a dash for the door and disappeared.

We sat there for several minutes and then the owner through up his hands, shrugged and said, "You go" to Ruth, Andrew, and I. He acted relieved that the whole thing was over. When we got outside we searched for Barbara but could not find her. It was time to return to the bus and when we got there



Barbara was arriving. She told us she had gone to the police station and reported the incident and that she was filing a report. She wanted us to file a report, but we declined. What an exciting way to spend our first night in Amsterdam! We liked Barbara, but didn't go out to eat with her again. Remember, I went to the Academy at Arcadia, where we enjoyed refined dining "At Table." Heaven forbid that anyone would raise their voice, let alone argue!

The next morning, we visited a diamond-cutting and polishing factory. It was very interesting and while Karen (VA), Claudia and Tim (NY) bought diamonds (keep an eye on those folks...they must be rich), the remainder of the group remembered we still had many \$5 coffees, \$5 cokes, and \$9 wines yet to purchase!



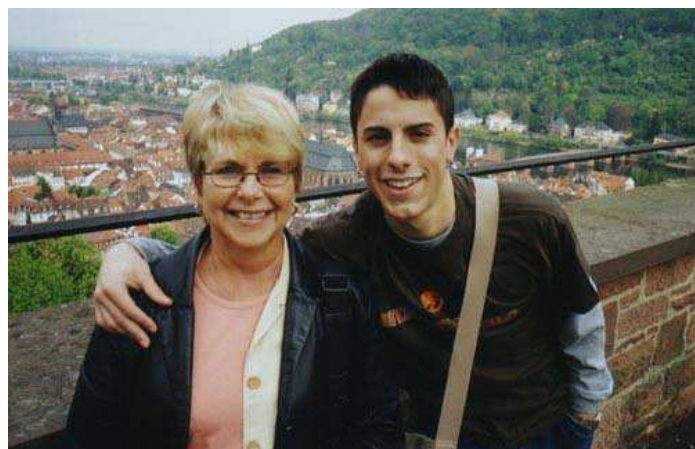
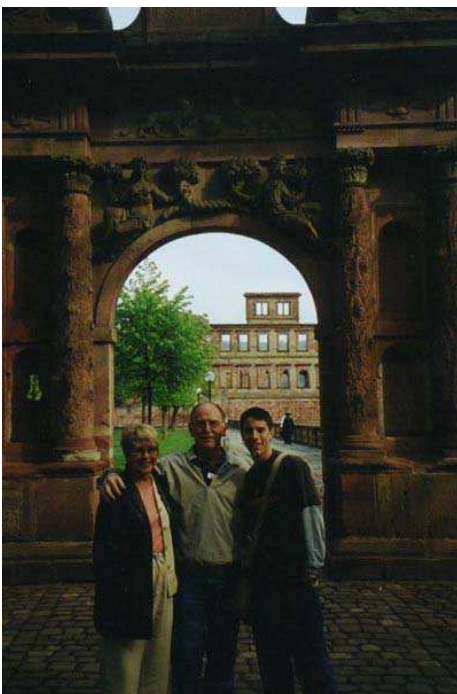
Where Ruth lost her bike in Amsterdam

The next day after visiting Amsterdam, we passed Arnhem, sight of one of the greatest battles of World War II (memorialized in the book *A bridge Too Far*), and on to Cologne and Bonn to view several gothic cathedrals. We next headed to our Rhine River Cruise for the remainder of the day. The cruise was very special and the scenery was beautiful. The Rhine (850 miles long) is not the longest river in Europe (the Volga is the longest), but it is the busiest and we saw evidence of this with many barges and cruise boats. The Rhine also has one of the fastest currents I have ever seen (and remember that as a 32 year Navy man, I have seen a lot of fast currents in my time). When our boat would be heading upstream and the Captain would want to turn around, he would merely change course slightly, and the boat would swing around 180 degrees in a few seconds. It was almost scary how fast the boat would turn. This evening we spent in a hotel (Koblenz, Germany) overlooking the Rhine...and watched the many barges and cruise boats during dinner. We ate with Rita and Charles and their daughter Alison. Rita and Charles are from Calgary, Canada and came to England to take this trip with their attorney-daughter who has been working in London for several years and is now returning to Calgary to continue practicing law. Charles is retired after several careers as an engineer. After dinner Ruth, Andrew, and I walked along the beautiful and busy Rhine.



Andrew on The Rhine

The next day we headed for the city of Heidelberg (1275) to view the university (1396) and the famous red sandstone castle. The city burned to the ground there in 1693, but the castle on the hillside was unscathed. The castle was a little wedding gift for a royal bride (Ruth shared her "loose change" coins to help pay for the honeymoon) and we had a great time touring this magnificent edifice. We then departed for the several hour trip to the Black Forest.





The gang at the castle

Ruth & Andrew overlooking  
Heidelberg

On this trip, we had people of all ages (we weren't the oldest in case you were wondering). One wonderful family, Tita and Amor (NY), had three beautiful daughters (Elaine, Kim, and Michelle). They also had grandma along. Tim and Claudia had Ashley with them, and Eleanor (NJ) brought Portia. These five beautiful girls, aged 8 to 12, were full of fun and mischief. They spotted our Andrew (17) and kept track of him the whole trip! They sent him letters, mentioning which one would like to marry him, and by this point in the trip were tickling him if he dozed off, following him on walking tours and constantly asking him questions. I felt for him a little bit in that this has been a problem for me during my whole life...being chased by women. I just turn my head and pretend not to notice their advances, but Andrew is too young to understand this technique! He was both annoyed and seemed to enjoy the attention. I think he handled the whole thing very well....some 17 year olds might have been less polite than Andrew was during the trip.

When our driver would make a particularly difficult turn with our large bus, people would clap. I told Michele, the 8 year old, that we should make up a cheer for him. She agreed and I suggested..."Massimo, Massimo, Mo, Mo, Mo." During this period, I had taught her to say WOW! By holding up three fingers on each side of her mouth (each set of fingers forming the letter W, opening your mouth wide, and this

hands and mouth combination forming the word WOW as it was shouted)!

She and the other girls also added this line to the original cheer... "And when he turns, we go WOW!" (Holding their hands to their cheeks and shouting Wow very loudly.) Thank goodness this cheer was not over used as we only shouted it about 25 times during the remainder of the trip. Not everyone appreciated the cheer I am sure, but the cheerers loved it each time we shouted it...and Massimo laughed and raised his fist each time we chanted it. You have to remember that Massimo, our wonderful driver was from Italy and knew little English.

The Black Forest was beautiful and made the perfect prelude to Switzerland and Lucerne, that lovely lakeside city, high in the mountains. We took a brief bus tour of the city to orient ourselves for a night on our own, and then to our lovely hotel. After dinner, we walked through the city...the wooden bridge which connects the two parts of the city downtown, the spectacular shops, the cathedral, and Lake Lucerne.

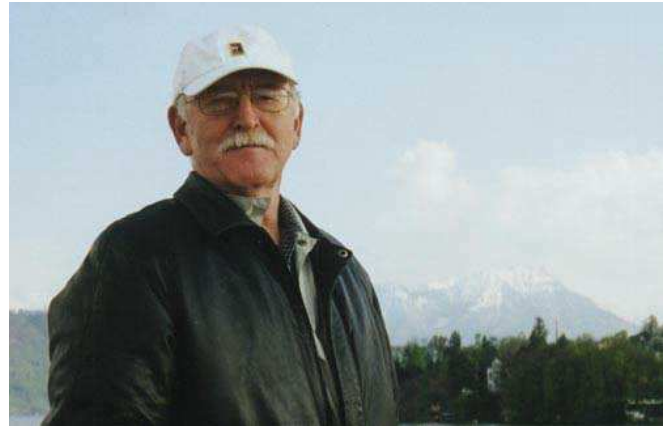
What a special evening with Andrew. He thanked us about a million times for bringing him on this trip. He has grown to be such a fine young man...and this trip has made us even proud of him than ever. He has been respectful and helpful to others, showed a sense of humor when things did not go exactly as planned, was flexible when others weren't (I want that seat!) and was up to late nights and early wakeup calls. He is becoming a fine man!

Switzerland (Helvetsia, 1291) is a small country (16,000 sq. mi.) and is home to 8 million people. Sixty eight percent speak German, 18 percent French, 12 percent Italian, and 2 percent a Romance language. The city of Lucerne (1332) is very beautiful and is nestled by Lake Lucerne with mountains on all sides. The first morning in Lucerne, we took the cog train and the cable car to the top of Mount Pilatus for some spectacular Alpine sights. After viewing the Lion Monument, carved into the side of a very tall cliff, and honoring the Swiss Guards who had given their lives protecting a king, we departed for lunch at a folk restaurant.

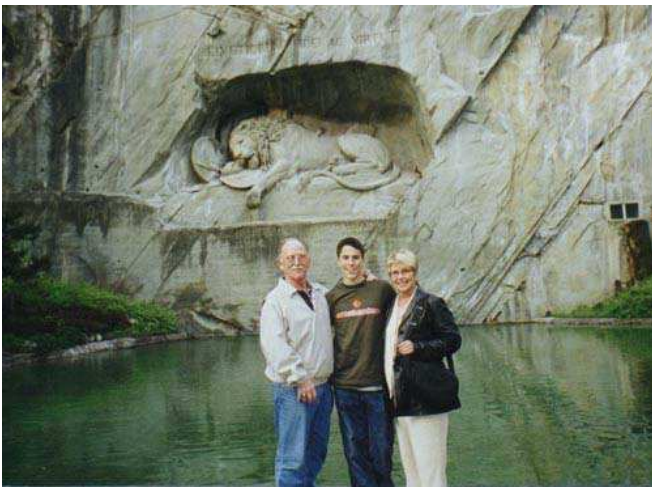
As the bus was leaving, I noticed that Ruth and Andrew were missing. I yelled at Massimo to stop but he didn't hear me. I then did what any good husband and grandfather would do...I threw myself in front of the bus...Massimo stopping only several inches from my trembling body! (This is the way I remember it.) It seems that they had been standing beside a Trafalgar bus (you see one, you've seen' em all) talking (can you believe that) and had not seen us depart. If you want to see something funny, you should see Ruth running very fast, waving her arms and shouting! I really think Massimo saw them and was having a little fun! Massimo, Massimo, Mo, Mo, Mo!



Andrew at the Alps



Glenn at the Alps



The Lion Monument

The folk restaurant was special...wine, cheese fondue, main course, and dessert. During our lunch, the staff performed...yodeling, flag dances, broom music, Mountain Horns, dances, and contests. Andrew participated in the yodeling and Mountain Horn contests, and did quite well. Several days after we ate lunch there, our 12 year old grandson, Connor, touring with a show choir after a concert with the Vienna Boys Choir, ate and performed at the same

restaurant (they sang Edel Weiss and the funny "Chicken Song" for the audience). Interestingly, both Andrew and Connor thought that Lucerne was their favorite place on their tours. After lunch, I sat in the square for several hours, reading a book about Antarctica and people watching, as Ruth and Andrew shopped. After a wonderful dinner on the seventh floor of the hotel (overlooking Lucerne) we adjourned to the outdoor rooftop bar for group pictures.

The next morning we departed for Paris. I looked forward to this part of the trip, as we were going to pass through the Alsace area of France, where my grandfather Saltzman had been born and raised. This area has been the focus of many years of disputes between Germany and France, and was in the hands of Germany when my grandfather immigrated to the USA in the 1880's. He met my grandmother near Findlay, OH, where he owned a small saw mill, a trade he had learned in Alsace. My father said his father considered himself a French speaking German, even after Germany returned Alsace to France before World War I. The area consisted of undulating farmland and reminded me of the rolling lands of northeastern OH. I never met my grandfather, and only saw my grandmother several times, so it was good to visit the area where this part of my family originated.

We now started the last leg of our trip...a several hour ride to Paris, through the Burgundy (wine) area, and later through a cattle growing area. We stopped for lunch in Beaune, France. There were French troops (carrying their weapons on their shoulders) at the restaurant where we ate. I observed a French soldier motioning to a waitress that his



soup was cold, eliminating any thoughts I had had about the fierce nature of the French fighting man. Some on the bus joked about the French military, since their government had elected not to support the USA effort in Iraq, but I must say that we never encountered any open resentment towards us, or our government, during the entire trip. The CNN reports from regional correspondents were the only negative comments we heard about the USA while we were on our tour.

The first night in Paris, we took the Seine Illumination Cruise. The boat used flood lights to illuminate the buildings we passed on the Seine. The highlight was seeing the Eiffel Tower and Notre Dame (I have been to Paris three times in the past fifty years and each time there was scaffolding on the building, with repairs underway). This cathedral is impressive, never-the-less. Following the cruise, we toured the major attractions to see them after dark. We visited the Place de la Concorde, Champs Elysees, Arc de Triomphe, and some of the upscale sections of the city. In one location (I can't recall the name of the square); we observed a party in progress on the second floor of an elegant building.

The guide said the apartment was owned by the Sultan of Brunei, and the cost of his Parisian pad was over 12,000 per square meter! (Not counting improvements he had made after purchasing this 6,000 square meter space). That is over \$72 million for this fixer-upper! Ruth and I are saving for a new sofa! We will have to wait a little longer to buy our sofa, as we got Andrew a coke (\$5) and chocolate mousse (\$10) at a sidewalk café near our hotel before we called it a

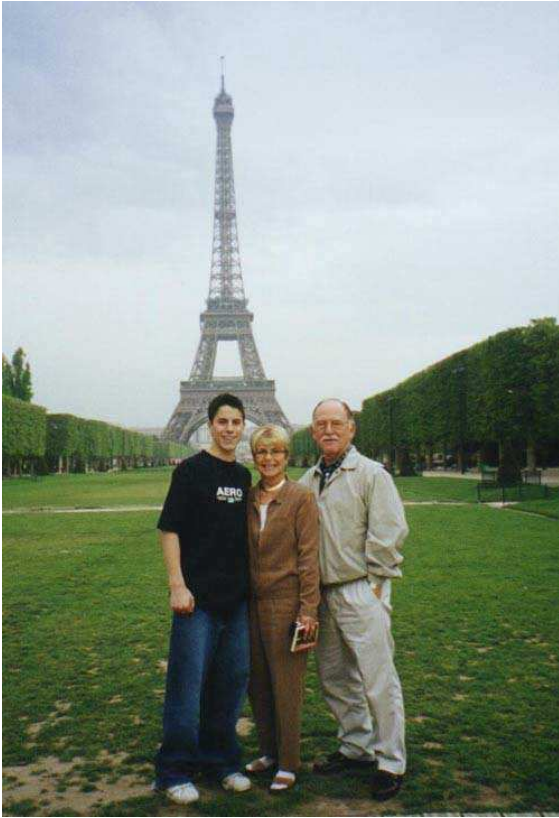
night...Ruth and I were being frugal as we only had \$4.50 coffees!



Andrew & Ruth at them Arc De Triomphe

The next morning we toured Paris by bus. Paris originated on the island which now is home to Notre Dame, in 300 BC. The first evidence of construction in Paris was the Roman baths (circa, 55 BC) and the ruins are still quite well preserved. We passed the Sorbonne (1200's), Notre Dame (1163), the Latin Quarter, the Louvre and then ascended the Eiffel Tower. Andrew went all the way to the top while Ruth and I stayed on the second level. I won't review all of the other places we saw, but suffice it to say, we hit all of the tourist spots. In the afternoon, we visited Versailles and the Versailles' Gardens...an incredible site. The last evening, we went to La Nouvelle Eve, a show complete with the obligatory French mine (how did he do those things?), acrobats, and singers. Oh yes, there were lots of scantily

clad men and women too, but I hardly noticed (and I'm sure Andrew didn't either)!



Andrew, Ruth & Glenn  
at the Eiffel Tower



Ruth & Andrew at Versailles

Besides the people already mentioned, there were many other super people on this tour. V.S., Radhamani, and V.R. from Kerala, India were our tour-mates too. Their daughter, V.R., could speak some English, but the parents did not speak or understand English. The Massimo "thing" was probably lost on them; Anne and Ben from Australia was a wonderful young couple, he is in charge of a hair salon and she is a teacher. They looked at pictures of their two young children all the time...you just knew they were great parents;

Anna and Lynn, a mother and daughter team from Australia were on board too.

The daughter had just completed a teaching assignment in London and was returning to Australia; Eileen and Joe (PA), with their friend, Barbara (PA) and Eileen's mother, Katie (AZ), were lots of fun. They were the "back of the bus people"! Glenda and Rachford, a pair of school principals from NY made the trip better because they were along; Katie and Maria (NY), a niece and aunt were celebrating Katie's high school graduation and acceptance at St. Johns; the person, other than Andrew, who Ruth and I spent the most time with, was Karen, a friend of Robert's from VA. Karen had the same sense of humor as me, so we had a comment on everything. Karen and Robert and Claudia and Tim made this trip more enjoyable for Ruth and me. We were lucky to have so many wonderful travel-mates for this trip!

The next morning, our tenth day, we boarded a plane and returned home. None of us were ready to come home, and none of us minded seeing our home, as we drove into driveway. It was a wonderful trip.



Our Tour Group

Andrew had a high school graduation trip he will never forget...and neither will we. The quality of the trip exceeded our fondest dreams and although fast moving, was perfect for a young man and his semi-old grandparents. The thing I will remember best about this adventure is not the sights, the hotels, the meals or the six countries we visited...but rather, observing our grandson come of age before our eyes. It was a beautiful sight to see him help others with their luggage, compromise with others over a special seat they wanted (although it was his turn), defend his grandfather when it really mattered and spend his own money to get gifts for his Mom, Dad, grandparents, and brothers. He has started to move beyond that teenage period of egocentric me-ism to the higher road of altruism...a trip that some folks never take or even understand. We gave this trip to Andrew for his graduation, but he gave us so much more by demonstrating that he is now ready to start the next phase of his life as a caring, productive, creative, and responsible citizen. We are so lucky to have him as our grandson.

May, 2003

Postscript. One day after our return home, Jill called and asked us to pick up Connor from the airport, as he returned from his trip abroad. After telling us about the trip and inquiring about ours, he said, "I know where I want to go on my senior trip." Ruth said, "Where do you want to go?" Connor said, "I want to go to Venezuela!" Maybe we are never going to get that couch!