

European Travels August 1963 - October 1963

August 1963 -- From Bayreuth to England – My week in Bayreuth drew to a regrettable close, with the next item on my agenda being to cycle back to Frankfurt, deposit my bicycle into John's hands for safekeeping in his BOQ basement storage area for a month or so, then head for the Autobahn-West to hitchhike first to Paris, then North to Calais, across the English Channel to Dover, then further on up to London, my eventual goal being to meet Tedi at Heathrow Airport to accompany her on several weeks of train travel around Europe. The necessity for doing this had caught me a bit off guard since, after my disastrous bicycle accident back in Berlin, I had more or less assumed that my parents' trip to Europe would be put off until another, more propitious time -- in particular so that my father would be able to come along as well (my relationship with my mother had always been considerably milder by the presence of my father!). She was determined to make the trip however – the assumption presumably being that it was now or never(!), and she was eager to explore European influences as a possible means for expanding the breadth and depth of her artwork. I was somewhat skeptical of this change in plans, as I had very much looked forward to having my father accompany us on the trip, but his schedule at Lockheed was such that it would simply be impossible to reschedule the trip for another time ...

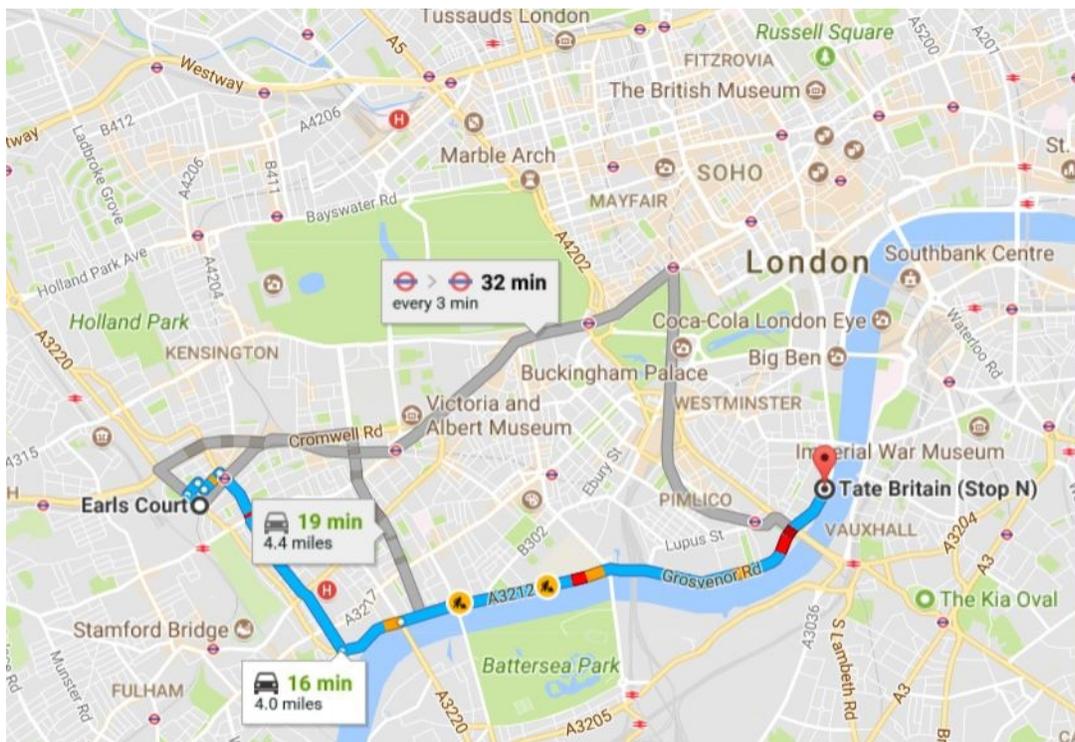
And so I set off from Frankfurt on a warm summer morning in early August, taking the local bus and trolley lines as far as I could to the edge of the city, then sticking my thumb out in the hopeful manner characteristic of all hitchhikers! As it turned out, luck was on my side and I made it to Saarbrücken by the first evening – actually not that far distance-wise, but reasonable considering the difficulties of negotiating the congested stretch from Frankfurt to Mainz. I remember the youth hostel there very well, as a large group of German schoolgirls were breakfasting at the same time I was, and, at the appearance of a large basket of breakfast rolls, one of them sighted, "Ach, endlich wieder mal Deutsches Brötchen!" (Finally, German rolls again!) – an odd thing to say after having returned from the fabled land of French baguettes and batards! Another day with my thumb out got me to Paris by early evening, although having arrived fairly late in the day I found the rather funky Paris Chambre-d'Hôtes (youth hostel) up by the Marché aux Puces flea market in northern Paris to be full up! Oh, well, an evening on a park bench in Paris isn't all that bad, provided that one has an American passport to show any French police ("les flics") who show up in an inquiring mode. I spent the next morning doing a quick bit of sightseeing around the city, then set off in the early afternoon headed for Calais. The French road from Paris to Calais was at that time a small two-lane affair, and I found progress to be very slow – so slow in fact that by evening I had covered only about a hundred miles – about half the distance to Calais (a total of 300 km, or about 180 miles). I looked for the nearest Chambre-d'Hôtes, checked in, and mulled the situation over – the absolute necessity to be at Heathrow to meet Tedi when she arrived suddenly became an overriding concern, so the next day I grabbed the first train through town headed for Calais and was on the ferry to Dover by early afternoon.

While on the ferry it was necessary to have a brief interview by an English customs agent, this one being a very mature (and somewhat hardened) civil service type who ran through a series of routine questions, of which one was to ask me if I had any plans to seek work while in the UK. I demonstrated my naiveness of Continental affairs by saying it sounded like an interesting possibility. Wrong answer – I was hustled into an adjacent room to fill out forms and be interviewed by an agent who specialized in dealing with immigration issues. I eventually talked my way out of being placed on the next ferry back to Calais by saying it was essential that I meet my mother at Heathrow in a couple of days' time, but ended up with my passport being stamped for the minimum period of a single month (something that was always viewed with a jaundiced eye whenever I re-entered the UK at later times). Oh, well, lesson learned the hard way – only one of many to come!

After spending a pleasant evening at the youth hostel in Dover, I set out the next morning, positioning myself on the London road, thumb (and smile!) at the ready! I quickly picked up a series of short rides – friendly folk, but none of them going more than a few miles between adjacent villages. It was my first time in England, however, and it was hard not to find everything fascinating – everyone on the wrong side of the road, having to hold out your left thumb instead of your right, pubs, sweet shops, and English cuisine (including the fabled 'meat pie' – one of nature's truly curious concoctions – especially the 'pork pie' from which Frank Lloyd Wright's haberdasher apparently took inspiration for his 'porkpie hat'). One young gent who picked me up surprised me by saying he had never "been abroad" as though it were some distant place, instead of about 30 miles away across the Channel. My impression of

the English was overwhelmingly favorable, however – I was an English-speaking Yank, which helped of course, although with a deplorable accent – but at least not a bloody foreigner! Once in London, I made for the youth hostel (very nice, large, and modern, with several floors and right in the downtown tourist area). Tedi was due to land at Heathrow a day or two later, so I began scouting for B&B type accommodations and was delighted to find them available in nearby Earl’s Court for about 20 shillings (i.e., an English pound – about \$2.40 at the time), and that was for two people, including a substantial English breakfast! Earl’s Court is just outside the downtown area, but right on an underground stop just off the Kensington High Street and actually within quite reasonable walking distance to most spots of interest in central London (Tedi was always a good walker!).

August 1963 -- Tedi in England – One of the nice things about London is that access to Heathrow Airport is readily available by a combination of Underground (subway) and bus – a real convenience for tourists with limited resources. I met Tedi at Heathrow Airport on a pleasant, slightly overcast afternoon, and we quickly made our way back to Earl’s Court and settled in. We spent several days walking all over downtown London – doing the usual tourist things and especially visiting the many museums, which of course was one of the main reasons for Tedi’s visit. Tedi tended to be somewhat dismissive of the great works of classicism, frequently studying them carefully then, with a toss of her head, saying something like, “Well, that’s just not what I do ...” She was definitely impressed by the Turner collection at the Tate Britain, however, and especially by his watercolors with their extravagant use of color.



We did have one frighteningly near miss in London! While cruising around London on my own, I had discovered a harpsichord museum in an area called Hampstead Heath, which turned out to be a delightful village setting on a real “heath” just a few Underground stops from where the downtown area. I suggested we go up there one afternoon for a little break from museum hopping and other touristic activities, and we did so, having a very pleasant lunch in a park-like setting. After lunch, traffic was heavy as we went to cross the street at a pedestrian crossing. However, as Tedi went to step out she looked left, instead of right(!) and stepped confidently out into the street. As I realized what she was unknowingly doing, I grabbed her arm – just as there was a horrific squeal of brakes and honking of horn as a taxi swerved to avoid her. I’m still not quite sure how she managed to avoid being killed on the spot, but somehow the moment passed, leaving us both severely shaken! From that moment on for the remainder of the trip, Tedi never stepped out into any street (regardless of what country she was in!) without looking both ways several times and only then timidly advancing a toenail into the crossing ...

Our next English adventure was one I found totally unexpected – Tedi decided it would be fun to rent a car and drive out into the English countryside – specifically to Stratford-on-Avon and then perhaps to visit one of the university towns of Oxford or Cambridge. I suggested it might be a bit safer to simply take a train, but she felt she would not have experienced the country without having driven a car in it herself – an interesting take on things! We went to the local Hertz office, where the agent inquired as to her experience in navigating the English roads, and she calmly assured them that it would be no problem at all. The gentleman behind the counter looked at me for assurance, and I shrugged my shoulders and nodded in agreement, inwardly wondering if I had not just signed my own death warrant (the pedestrian crossing incident still being very much on my mind!). We climbed into a little mini gear-shift car with the steering wheel on the right and started off, with her behind the wheel and my giving a constant stream of detailed instructions as to what to do (for a right turn – look in right-side rear-view mirror, shift down one gear, merge right into the center lane, advance all the way into the crossing, then turn right into the furthest lane, etc, as for instance when simply making a right turn!). In this manner we managed to creep and crawl out of London in the course of an hour’s maneuvering and eventually made our way into the open English countryside. After half an hour’s driving along a two-lane road, she decided I should take a turn behind the wheel, which I did with a great sigh of relief. Even though I had also never driven on English roads, I had just finished a year of driving 2-1/2-ton Army trucks up and down slippery, unpaved hillsides and felt I had the required degree of alertness to be able to monitor things around me without requiring a constant stream of instructions! From then on, Tedi would start out driving each day, turning things over to me after a half-hour or so. There was also the problem of driving at night – Tedi had never admitted to needing glasses for distance vision (part of her Christian Science ethic!), and I was very relieved that she did not insist on doing any night driving!

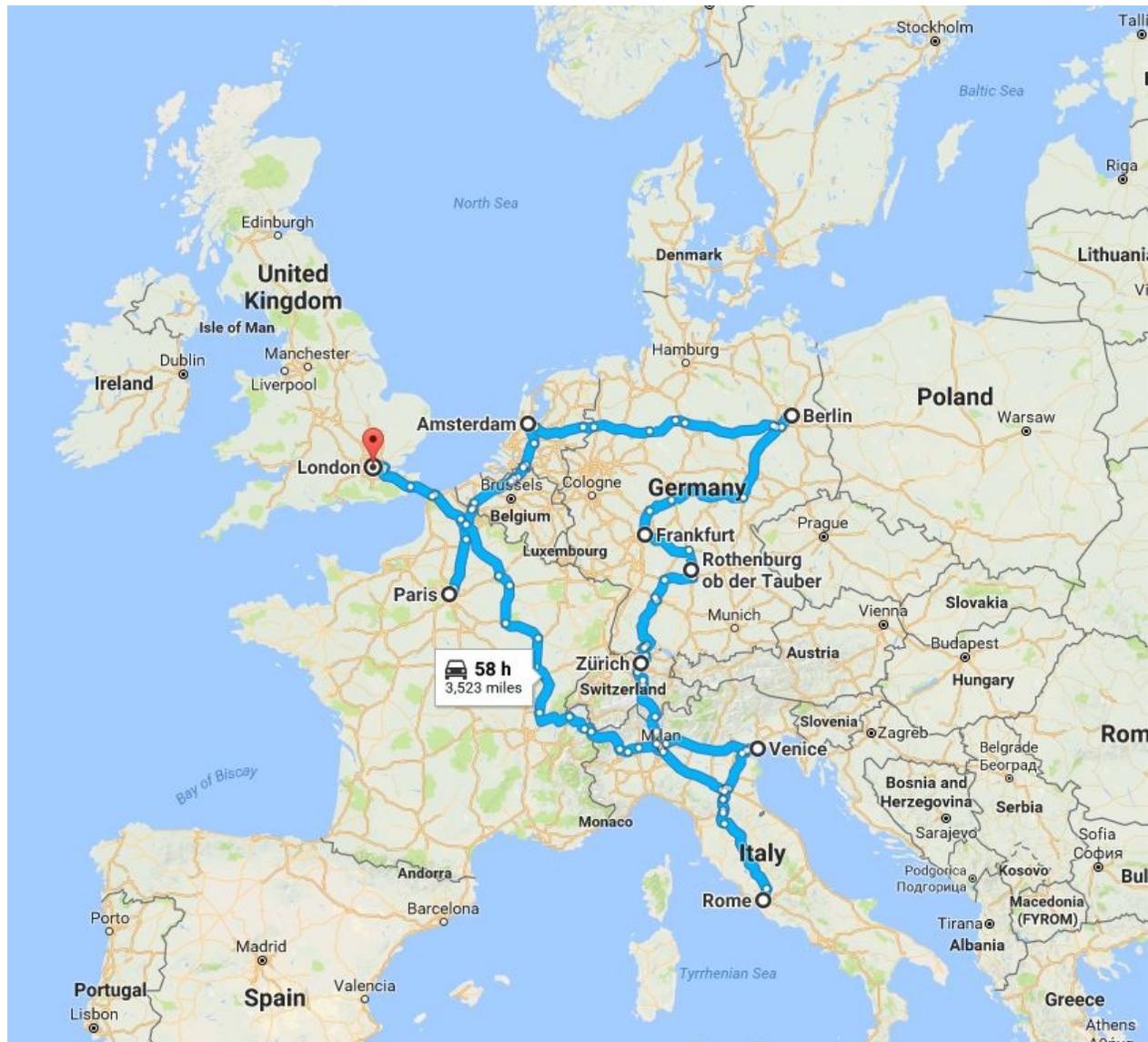
In the course of two days we were able to visit both Stratford and Oxford and experienced a good bit of the beautiful green English countryside, while at the same time musing over the quaint vocabulary of the English road signs, including signs such as “Road Subject to Subsidence,” “Eat Here, Get Gas and Worms,” and “Deformed Man Toilet,” among many others. We continued to stay in English B&Bs, which were uniformly comfortable with excellent huge “English breakfasts” – two or three eggs, “grilled” tomatoes, beans, “fried” bread, kidneys, kippers, mushrooms, black pudding (sausage), and, of course, a nice pot of English tea. Tedi was also fascinated by the selections on English dinner menus, compiling a list of items such as Bangers and Mash, Bubble and Squeak, Toad in the Hole, Spotted Dick, and Faggot! We eventually managed to get back to London in one piece, much to the relief (and perhaps surprise) of the rental car agent!



After a final day of some East London sightseeing (with Tedi surreptitiously pulling bits of paint and signage off of various very weathered billboards while I stood lookout!) we decided it was time to move on and set off from Victoria Station one afternoon on the train headed for France (Third Class!), spending the night at a very pleasant B&B in Folkestone and having dinner in a small local “buttery.” A delay with the ferry next morning sent us scurrying in a taxi for Dover – actually a quite pleasant drive along the coast. The trip across the channel was a typical blustery one, although Tedi always enjoyed getting out on the water (she had singlehandedly sailed a small boat in Los Angeles while in her early twenties – at one time completely tying up traffic at a Long Beach drawbridge as she struggled to tack under the bridge).

On to Paris (September 1963) -- The last-minute switch from Folkestone to Dover had us arriving in Calais, not Boulogne, which had been our original destination. No problem though, and we were soon on the train to Paris. Other than a quick trip or two to Tijuana, Tedi had never been in a country where hardly anyone spoke English, and there was definitely a wide-eyed moment or two as we negotiated our way around. Arriving in Paris at the Gare du Nord on a cool, somewhat wet late afternoon, we set about standing in line at the Office du Tourisme looking for a cheap hotel room for the next several days. We were actually set up with a Russian hotel a short taxi ride away, which was a bit of a kick!

Paris was probably the highlight of Tedi’s trip – first of all because it was the first “European” city she visited (London didn’t really count, since everyone spoke English there!). We spent about a week in Paris, doing a number



of galleries, along with, of course, a good shot at the “left Bank” – something Tedi had, of course, heard a lot about over the years. She was not big on the churches, other than Notre Dame for the name recognition. Her big favorite was walking around well-known places like the tourist stretch from Arc de Triomphe to the Louvre or around Left Bank areas like the Boulevard Raspail or Boulevard Saint Michel (the ‘Bull Mish’), then diving off into the neighborhoods inwards from the main streets and scouting around for old billboards she could pillage for scrap bits of deteriorating posters she intended to use as parts of her “collage style” paintings. She filled up several shopping bags this way, which then had to be shoe-horned into her two pieces of luggage, causing subsequent great puzzlement among customs’ inspectors! Tedi’s favorite Parisian dinner was the classic Steak-Frites (steak with french fries), which could be had without a lot of fuss at any number of sidewalk cafes, although the waiters always puzzled over her ordering a cup of coffee with dinner instead of a glass of red wine (and asking for several refills, of course!). And a scoop of French custard-style chocolate ice cream from a sidewalk stand would usually suffice for desert. For breakfast Tedi was big on a French croissant or two served with stiff black coffee, sugar, and cream, and lunch was almost always a French-style sandwich from a sidewalk stand along with, of course, a cup of coffee (no decaf in Paris, however, to her considerable amazement!).

North to Brussels and Amsterdam – After a week in Paris it was back on the train headed North for Brussels and Amsterdam. In Brussels we stayed in a little Russian-run hotel recommended by the Russian owner of the hotel

in Paris with whom I had carried on several conversations – as, for instance, how they happened to be running a hotel in Paris! Apparently many lower-nobility Russian refugees from the Communist revolution who managed to get out and who subsequently surfaced in various European cities had no real work skills, but did manage to get enough money out to purchase property they could subsequently use to ferret out a living. The family running the Paris hotel were second-generation Russian refugees who were simply carrying on the hotel business they had inherited from one of their families – sort of a second-hand existence, but like many of the Russian upper classes they had no real work skills .

One interesting aspect of my conversations with the owners of both the hotel in Paris and the one in Brussels was that their Russian was what is sometimes referred to as “emigré Russian” – i.e., it had developed in a different direction than the Russian which came to be spoken in the Soviet Union. This shouldn’t have been surprising, but it led to some novel constructions. The one I remember most is one evening as Tedi and I were leaving the hotel in Brussels to go out to dinner, the owner remarked as we passed the desk, “Падает ...” which means, simply, “It’s falling ...” I looked around, but all the vases and other ornaments seemed to be in their normal places! After one or two queries, I realized what he meant was, “It’s raining outside ...” I thought that to be a useful construction which I subsequently tried on several occasions on Russian-speaking acquaintances in other geographical locations (including places such as Atlanta, Moscow, and San Francisco), but which always evoked rather strange looks! Apparently the Russian spoken in Brussels was well on its way to becoming its own colloquial branch of the language. I’ve often thought it would be fun to go back through Brussels someday and try it on a contemporary Russian speaker to see if the construction had survived its early beginnings ...

We left Brussels after two or three days and headed North to Amsterdam, where we had another pleasant two-day stay, taking a boat-ride around the canals, visiting the Rijksmuseum and several other art attractions, and stumbling unexpectedly into the “red-light district” which in Amsterdam has the feature that the “young” ladies all sit in a state of semi-deshabillé in front of large windows opening to the street, apparently so that potential customers can assess the goods before buying! A variant on the “red lights” were the “blue lights” (sometimes only in the background) – a warning to potential customers that the “goods” may not be exactly what they are expecting. Tedi found this unexpectedly amusing, leading me to think back on some of her Hollywood drawings for Paramount Studios -- an era out of her much younger life.

Return to Berlin – I hadn’t originally planned to take Tedi to Berlin, but she expressed such curiosity about the place after having received my 18 months of letters home that we soon found ourselves on the train headed in that direction. I was a little uncertain whether I should be passing through the East Zone on a civilian train so soon after separation from the service (due to various clearance concerns), but my bicycle-riding friend who had returned to



Berlin after a few months cycling in Spain had done so, and so I decided to give it a shot. We took an overnight train from Amsterdam, which passed through Hanover before crossing the border at Helmstedt and on to Berlin, allowing us to get to Berlin early enough in the day to be able to get a reasonably priced hotel room through the Fremdenverkehrsamt (foreign travelers bureau) present at all German rail stations of any size (we never booked hotels in advance – a habit I have never kicked, to the great and continuing amazement of all our acquaintances – it simply limits one’s options too much and makes it difficult to change plans on the spur of the moment). There was also a certain mystery associated with passing through the East German sector at night, peering out at the passing guard stations manned by very young (almost teen-age) soldiers dressed in very heavy, thick uniforms (it’s not a warm part of Europe, even in early Fall) and carrying very ominous-looking weapons (apparently fully loaded – no one ever gave me or any of my mates a loaded weapon when we were occasionally called upon to pull guard duty!).

Berlin is, and apparently always has been, a fascinating place.

At the end of WWII it was divided into four administrative sectors (just as was the whole of Germany) – each administered by one of the four “major” powers – US, England, France, and Russia. The difference between the three Allied sectors was hardly noticeable, but shortly after the war Russia imposed the so-called “Iron Curtain” – shutting the East-bloc countries off from Europe, and in 1961 did the same in Berlin – shutting off East Berlin from West Berlin. East Berlin went into a steep decline, while the West German government pumped large sums of money into West Berlin to make it a showcase in the middle of Communist East Germany. This situation continued until about 1991 when both East and West Germany and East and West Berlin were reunited as Western powers. The map shows the layout from 1945 to 1991 – British sector in green, the American sector in orange, the French sector in blue (les Bleus!), and the Russian sector in red(!) – both for Germany as a whole and for Berlin in particular (shown buried in the middle of the red area along with its set of colored sectors). Since 1991 all of these divisions have disappeared. We were, of course, there in 1963 when they were all still in place, greatly inhibiting the flow of traffic between the three Western sectors and the one Eastern sector.

Tedi had been hearing about all of this through the letters I wrote home regularly (about once a week for about a year and a half), and she was fascinated by actually experiencing what it was like. We never crossed into East Berlin since I still had a “no-Eastern-Zone” travel restriction for a year after my separation, although we did see something of East Germany during the train rides between Helmstedt (Western border town) and Berlin. The affluence of West Berlin was particularly striking – an intended effect, of course, aided by the West German’s government pumping large amounts of money into rebuilding West Berlin after the war. We stayed in a little pension-style hotel



just a block off the Kurfürstendamm – the main drag of West Berlin -- and visited the main museums, along with doing the downtown gallery scene – at that time the galleries being full of Western Pop art in a variety of styles. Tedi had always been fascinated by the drawings of Käthe Kollwitz (1867-1945) – a German realist/expressionist artist who had died at the end of WWII, and we visited a gallery/museum where a number of her works were on display (probably not originals). Tedi enjoyed greatly just walking around the various areas and (of course) tearing lots of little bits of abandoned posters off whatever walls they were still hanging on! The German police would frequently look at us suspiciously, but I doubt that any of them suspected what Tedi was actually up to (they wouldn’t have believed it!).

Visit to Frankfurt – After several days in Berlin, we once again boarded the train for West Germany, this time heading south to Frankfurt, where John Rollinson was stationed and where we planned to drop in for a visit. The trip was a pleasant one through the rolling hills of central Germany and ended at the Frankfurter Bahnhof, where we visited our friendly local Fremdenverkehrsamt to find a place to spend the night. A call to John was rewarded by an invitation to dinner al fresco at a local Hungarian restaurant – a very pleasant experience right in downtown Frankfurt and one for which I owe considerable thanks to John. I even recall a local Hungarian trio (or quartet) coming to our table to perform one or two country tunes for our amusement – something that greatly added to the charm of the evening and which was greatly appreciated by my mother. I can still remember her sitting there with a shawl wrapped around her shoulders against the cooling evening air and looking quite enchanted by the entire proceedings (would only that my father had been there as well!).

At John’s not entirely unexpected suggestion we boarded the train next morning headed for Rothenburg ob der Tauber – the very charming little fortress town dating from the 16th Century and through which I had very recently cycled. If one wants to visit a “Burg” i.e., a German fortress town dating from the Middle Ages, this is certainly the one to pick, and Tedi enjoyed it thoroughly. With time running short, however, and Italy still to cover, we spent a very pleasant afternoon and evening there – with the following morning finding us boarding a train for Zurich, with an eye cocked for continuing on to Milan as an entry to the sites still to be seen in central Italy – Milan, Siena, Florence, Rome, and Venice! Our trip south through Switzerland took us through some spectacular scenery, the route being Rothenburg

to Zurich, then Zurich to Lucerne – first via train, then a cable car to the top of the Rigi Berg, then a cogwheel railway down the other side to Lake Lucerne, topped off by a ferry ride to Lucerne itself – a really spectacular trip which I was so impressed by that I repeated it in 1965 during a hitchhiking trip with my friend Dietmar from my later stay in Paris!

Our route through Italy eventually took us by train through Milan, Siena, Florence, Rome, and Venice. From Lucerne we took a train south to Milan, stopping only long enough between trains to take a quick look at the Cathedral (which fortunately was right outside the train station!). We continued on to Siena where we spent the night, then took an evening train the next night to Florence, spending 3 or 4 days there. From Florence we continued south to Rome, again spending 3 or 4 days. We then completed our tour with a swing up to Venice for another 2 or 3 days. That constituted a lot of sightseeing in a very compressed period of time, as well as pushing the time of year well towards the end of September! I could describe our Italian touristic activities in great detail, but by that advanced point in our trip Tedi and I had begun to get one another's nerves, and my main concern at that point began to simply be to make sure she saw everything she wanted before heading back to Atlanta. By the end of our Venice visit I was hoping that Tedi had become a seasoned enough traveler that she would feel comfortable taking the train back to London by herself to catch her flight back to Atlanta from Heathrow, allowing me to return to Frankfurt to pick up my bike and look for a place to spend the winter before the European cold weather really began to set in. Despite her lifelong sense of independence, however, Tedi felt it would be unwise (and unkind of me!) not to see her back to Heathrow, and so, there remained several more days of hotels and train travel. After bidding Tedi goodbye at Heathrow, I treated myself to the luxury of catching the midnight Paris train out of London's Victoria Station, and soon found myself reversing my former Frankfurt-to-Paris route – this time a much cooler (and sometimes rather wet) hitchhiking trip as it was rapidly moving into late October.