

## European Travels Oct 1963 to Mar 1964

Even though I had been in Europe for almost two years at this point, I was actually rather ignorant of much of the geography, since I had spent almost a year and a half in Berlin without ever having left the city (due to its being situated almost a hundred miles behind the East-West German border). I had tried to conserve as much of my \$150/month duty pay as I could in anticipation of my hoped-for extended post-Army stay and therefore had not once even made it as far as West Germany (with the exception of one brief overnight excursion to Frankfurt while pulling required courier duty). This put me at something of a disadvantage when it came to picking a place to put up for the winter, since my knowledge of the layout of the larger cities was quite minimal. I had hoped to have enough time to cycle around to several of the larger cities (Munich, Vienna, and Paris were the chief attractions at that moment in time), but my accompanying Tedi had used up so much time that Paris was the only one with which I had any familiarity. Since at that point I spoke only school-book French, finding an inexpensive place there would definitely be challenging since the Fall school semester had already begun and there would definitely be a shortage of cheap student-style accommodations available. This presented a real problem!

In addition there was the problem of finding some sort of employment (even if somewhat menial) to stretch out the period of time during which I could survive on my savings from the Army – about \$1500 at that point (doesn't sound like much now, but it was the equivalent of 10 months service pay!). My parents, of course, thought I was rabidly insane for hanging around in Europe when I could be working at a "normal" job in the engineering field for which I had been trained, but I just wasn't ready to return to that yet. I knew that once I had settled into working life my *Wanderjahre* would be over, perhaps for ever! And so the time had come for an existential decision ...

**A Brief Return Home** – By the time I made it back to Frankfurt, winter had largely descended. I found myself with no job prospects and no place to stay, and the prospect of using up my savings renting a small room for the winter didn't have a great deal of appeal. There was one other possibility, which I was very reluctant to consider, but which in the end was the one I took – I was entitled to a free return passage to the US for up to a year after the termination of my active service in Berlin. By returning to Atlanta for several months, I could discreetly "sponge" off my parents while lining up some kind of employment in Europe and then return in the Spring. John agreed to store my bike in his little BOQ basement storage area, and the next thing I knew I was sitting in the military section of Frankfurt's Rhein-Main airport waiting for my (rather low) priority to get me a free spot on a MATS flight to the States. Within 12 hours I was on a plane filled with screaming military brats and their families and on my way to New York! What a jerk back to reality ...

Upon landing at McGuire AFB ("located in beautiful south central New Jersey" as one website describes it!), I hopped on a Greyhound bus headed for NYC, then got on another bus for Boston, where I had gotten word that Clayton Coon (a close friend of both John R and myself) has settled in for a stint at Episcopal Theological School in Cambridge, Massachusetts, just down the road from my old alma mater of MIT. Clayton had been in the same Monterey Russian class as John R and myself and had spent his European time assigned to duty just outside the town of Lübeck in Northern Germany. While there he had regularly driven down to Hamburg on weekends to attend services at the local Anglican church, where he became close friends with the Bishop, who eventually encouraged him to pursue a career in the ministry – which he had indeed decided to do! We had a very enjoyable visit, even attending a performance of the Bach B-minor Mass performed with a chamber orchestra and chorus – very competent, with the conductor playing an electronic harpsichord he had built himself – no small feat back in the vacuum-tube days of 1963! Clayton had for many years been a great enthusiast of pipe organs and had made many trips by himself to quite out-of-the-way places to hear unusual organs! The next day after the concert we took the train to New York City and then the local commuter train out to Rutherford, New Jersey where John R's parents lived. We spent a very pleasant afternoon and evening with them, and I then headed back for downtown New York where I picked up a car (from a car-transport agency) that someone wanted "deadheaded" to Washington DC. Arriving at the agency in DC, I was lucky enough to be able to pick up another car to drive the rest of the way to Atlanta. I am still reminded of the somewhat haphazard nature of the car-transport business by the fact that when the burly clerk in the DC office opened his drawer to pull out the paperwork for the car, lying on top of the papers was a loaded revolver! I must have looked a bit startled, because he said somewhat menacingly, "You didn't see a thing, didja son – you do want that car, don't you ..." I grabbed the keys, scooted out of the office as quickly as possible, and was in Atlanta by evening of the next day!

My movements back in those days tended to be fairly sudden and without time for proper communication, and so my parents were quite surprised to see me pull up in front of their house at 521 Spring Valley Road, NW in Atlanta (in which I had never lived!) – especially driving a fairly late model, full-sized sedan. Perhaps our son has finally come to his wits, they might have thought! They were soon disappointed when I told them of my very tentative plans, but, in the accepted way of parents, they were more than happy to simply agree to put me up for a month or two while I tried to ferret out some kind of work situation. Although both of them have now long since passed to their rewards, they would be pleased to know that in the course of our almost 50-year marriage, Kathy and I have had many opportunities to transfer their kindness on to our own children (their grandchildren, of course, but whom my father never had a chance to meet!). In any case I was able to take advantage of their understanding at that time, eventually spending about 3-4 months there, re-acquainting myself with some folks whom I had not seen for several years, taking a French course, helping Malcolm a bit with his building projects, and, most importantly, lining up a job doing technical Russian translating. The job was through a government agency called JPRS (Joint Publications Research Service) and had the advantage of being something that could be done by mail. If I were to be living in Europe I would have to have access to US mail service through an Embassy (or perhaps a Consulate) in order to expedite passage of the material through a “diplomatic pouch.” Places that I was considering, such as Paris, Munich, Vienna, etc. easily fulfilled that requirement, however, and soon I was ready to set off for Europe again, much to the chagrin of my parents, but also with their grudging understanding (to their considerable credit!). I think, in particular, that my father felt a certain sense of envy at my being able to do what he had never had the opportunity to even consider doing -- having been more than occupied by the vagaries of living through two world wars and the country’s worst-ever depression during his formative days!

And so in late March of 1964 I was back on the road again, driving to New York City with a German friend of a classmate in the French class I had been taking at Georgia State in downtown Atlanta. It turned out she was glad to have me along, since somewhere in North Carolina her little air-cooled Karmann Ghia came to a dead halt in the middle of the night with a broken fan belt. We were able to flag a ride to the next little town and eventually rouse a mechanic who happened to have such an item on hand (Karmann Ghias were big in 1964!). It proved to be a little expensive for her, but at least nothing terrible came of it! In any case, after a brief stop in NYC, I was soon on good old Loftleidir again, this time headed for Glasgow, Scotland and just in time to witness from the air an early phase of the Surtsey Eruption off of Iceland which took place during the period 1963-1967 – a truly mesmerizing sight which looked like something from out of the early stages of the Earth’s formation, with large quantities of steam billowing out of the remote ocean into the middle of nowhere. It felt good to be on a plane high above it, even in the somewhat cramped seats that Icelandic Airlines had to offer its budget travelers back in those days (\$150 from NYC to Glasgow – half the usual commercial fare!). Shortly after landing in Glasgow I was soon out on the highway again, left thumb extended and headed in the direction of Newcastle upon Tyne to visit a couple named Bob and Jean Stott – Bob being the source of the Jaguar I had spent a good bit of time hunkered over trying to repair a malfunctioning starter back in Berlin in the Spring of 1963 (just about a year prior, although it hardly seemed it!). I had a nice visit with them for almost a week, eventually getting a ride to London with a friend of theirs who had been an accountant in Cyprus and whom the Stotts had known while serving there in the British Army in the late 1950s. From London it was off to catch the midnight Paris train at Victoria Station (a run I was getting to know quite well!).

Arriving in Paris I took the Metro from the Gare du Nord to the Latin Quarter, where I found myself knocking on the door of an ex-army compatriot-in-arms (and fellow Monterey Russian graduate, although about a year after me) by the name of Stewart Smith. Stew had also taken a European discharge and headed directly for Paris, where he found a little room to stay right on the Boulevard Raspail in the heart of the Latin Quarter and then enrolled in French classes at the *Association France États-Unis*. I stayed with him for a couple of nights, using a sleeping bag which I acquired from a Paris sporting goods store. This particular sleeping bag had been recommended to me by another Berlin cohort – Tom Schaefer – the same guy who had helped me acquire the Polrad bicycle now waiting patiently for me in John R’s Frankfurt BOQ cellar. It was a real mountain bag, but had the quality that it could be compressed into a very small volume for transportation and would fit very nicely into a German Kinderrucksack (a child’s back pack) – another acquisition I was about to make for my bike. Because shopping in France in the mid-sixties was always done by hopping from one little neighborhood store to another with grocery sack in hand, Stew was also kind enough to equip me with several valuable French phrases for obtaining the elements of my home-cooked French meals. Breakfast was -- *une demi-baguette et deux oeufs* (a half a baguette and two eggs – eventually to be soft-boiled!). Lunch was

*une demi-baguette, deux tranches de jambon, et un berlingot de lait* (a half a baguette, two slices of ham, and a carton of milk). And dinner was *une demi-baguette et deux cent grammes de bifteck haché* (a half a baguette and 200 grams of ground beef) or perhaps simply *deux cent grammes de biftek* (200 grams of steak – not chopped up!). These phrases freed me from the financial tyranny of having to eat in French restaurants – something that, although not unreasonable, was way beyond my austerity budget of \$2.50/day. (I obviously consumed quite a quantity of demi-baguettes, but I happened to be quite fond of them and knew that the number of days for my being able to enjoy them was in the end quite limited!). The other valuable bit of knowledge I acquired from Stew was the name of the agency *l'Association France États-Unis* which had furnished him with the name of the proprietor of his nice little room on the Boulevard Raspail (and which I would eventually use to find my own little *chambre de bonne* in Paris a year-and-a-half later!).

Another day or two of hitchhiking (*faire Autostop* as the French call it, or *Trampen* as the Germans call it) and I was back at the door of John R's little BOQ in Frankfurt, ready to reclaim the bicycle John had so graciously stored for me for 4 months and set out on my first really long road trip -- a trip to Scandinavia (Denmark, Sweden, and Norway) that would eventually run to almost 8000 kilometers!