

Round-About Return to Vienna

Finishing Up in Atlanta – 1967 was a traumatic year for me – my Vogel State Park accident resulting in a month in the hospital, my father’s death a few weeks afterward, and Tedi’s struggle to cope with the fallout of suddenly being by herself after 30 years of companionship with my father. Shortly after my father’s death in May of 1967 I twice received phone calls from her in tears late at night, asking me what she was supposed to do now that he was gone. For Tedi to ask me that meant that she was going through some really hard times – we had never been close, but apparently there was simply no one else she could turn to (Kim was living in Wyoming at the time and very involved with her own family) ...

In the end the coping device Tedi surprisingly came up with was to put behind her the body of essentially two-dimensional art work she had been involved with up to that time (very successfully!) and make a 180-degree turn to the medium of sculpture as her means of expression. In her mind, this made a clear delineation between the past and the future, which would perhaps enable her to put her life with my father behind her. She cleaned out the attic and the house, discarding everything that had belonged to him, saying it was now all part of the past – something she had to move beyond in order to preserve her sanity! It wasn’t that she wanted to forget him or to diminish his worth – it was simply that in order to go on with her life she had to transition to an existence with a different sort of meaning (a very CS-like way of thinking and perhaps encouraged by her CS friends). At that time she had an exhibit scheduled in Greenwich Village in New York City and asked me if I would accompany her up there, both to help transport several dozen large collages as well as to provide her with support at a difficult time. I agreed to it, but told her that after we returned I would be leaving Atlanta and probably returning to Europe where, over a period of several years, I had come to feel quite at home. She did not understand this at all, but Tedi and I were never really on the same plane when it came to understanding one another. Oddly enough, she had come to feel quite at home in Atlanta, whereas I regarded it simply as an interim place to live while I established my credentials as a bona-fide engineer (whatever that might have been!).

New York City – So we hired a medium-size U-haul truck, packed all of her collages into it along with a couple of suitcases, and set out driving the 800 miles up the coast to New York City. As part of her new-found independence, she insisted on driving part of the way – something that made for a very nervous trip – she was so small she had trouble seeing out the window, having to prop herself up on a mountain of pillows! Upon arriving (somehow!) we headed for the Village and found the little gallery she had made contact with (through Bernice, it turned out, who had a nephew who was worked as a sculptor in NYC). The place was called Koltnow Galleries (the owner’s name), and the sculptor nephew of Bernice’s was named Lloyd Glasson. The lady (Koltnow) who owned the gallery found Tedi’s work very interesting, but they soon clashed over petty details – such as the fact that Tedi was not only unwilling to pay for champagne to be served at the opening, but refused to even countenance having it served – something that one apparently does not do at a Greenwich Village art gallery opening in New York City! This resulted in a very unfortunate clash, with Ms. Koltnow unexpectedly trying to appeal to me to bring her to her senses. In the end, champagne was served, but paid for by Ms. Koltnow – a situation that did not improve relations between them. In a sense it was quite odd, because Tedi had grown up in Hollywood, had worked at several of the large studios (including Paramount for at least 5 years), and was very familiar with the entertainment/art world scene. Her reliance on CS had become so complete however, that she had simply turned her back on the reality of functioning in the real world – one she knew well, but refused to bend to. Unfortunately the results of the exhibit turned out to be quite marginal – the type of collage work Tedi was doing at that time was far too conventional for the mid-1960s in New York. That year (1967) had been the year of the counter-culture “summer of love” movement which had just taken place in San Francisco, with its far-reaching influence throughout the US (and the world, for that matter), and the New York scene very much reflected the newly-arrived “hippie” ethos (or rejuvenated “beat” ethos) – a far cry from the very skilled, but out-of-step, work that Tedi was doing at that time! People put “reserved” labels on one or two works (whether they sold or not she never said – probably not). In the end we packed a good bit of it back into the U-Haul and headed back home to Atlanta (I later learned that the hung works that remained unsold were shipped back to Atlanta at her considerable expense!). The experience was a very traumatic one for her, and she never attempted to penetrate the New York art market again. It was really unfortunate, however, because that particular group of works represented the peak of her accomplishments in painting and collage work and were really quite skillfully done. I often regret my inability to have helped in providing more effective support for her efforts, and I know that if she had had

the support of my father, things would have gone much more smoothly for her.

One positive bit of fall-out from the trip was a visit to Lloyd Glasson's studio. Lloyd was at that time a very active sculptor with a large working studio on an upper floor of an old building in the Bronx. I remember the building well because it had a built-in multi-story garage with semi-automated parking – something which (to us hicks from Atlanta) seemed like quite a novel idea at the time. As a part of his professional activities Lloyd gave sculpting classes, and on the day we went to visit him the class members were several older retired businessmen who came in one day a week for several hours to learn by practicing sculpting in clay. He threw us each a good-sized wad of clay and told us to join in, which we did with great fervor. Malcolm and I had been playing around with doing things in clay in Atlanta, and so the medium wasn't completely foreign to me, and we had great fun that afternoon, with my producing a fairly decent hand – to everyone's great surprise (in particular Tedi's who always considered me as being something of an artistic klutz – the sort of thing that didn't help to burnish our relationship) ...



Afterwards Lloyd and his girl friend took us out for a spaghetti dinner and a ride around Manhattan, which was also a real kick for us country bumpkins from Atlanta! Lloyd was a wonderful person who remained active in the New York City art scene for many years and eventually became Professor Emeritus of sculpture and drawing at the Hartford Art School of the University of Hartford – a well-deserved position because he was both a skilled artist and an excellent teacher. The whole experience with Lloyd and his girl friend made the trip to New York much more palatable, perhaps even more so for me than for Tedi. We both hoped the two of them would stay together for the long haul.

Tedi had never spent much time in New York City itself (perhaps once or twice in transit through the airport), but I had been through there many, many times before, both in transit to and from school in Boston as well as back and forth to Europe, and I had always made a point to spend a bit of time walking around the city (probably a bit slack-jawed in a hick sort of way!). Tedi was very eager to see as much as she could, knowing perhaps that she would probably have little opportunity to get back (which did, sadly, turn out to be the case). I suggested we take some time to tour the city both on foot and by using the city's excellent bus and subway system, and she was more than ready to take me up on that – perhaps one of the times we actually enjoyed one another's company. We literally spent several days on foot going up and down Manhattan, alternating with bus and subway, and both of us got a great deal out of it. We also visited a number of museums and galleries, giving Tedi a real chance to come up to speed on what was happening in the big broad world outside of Atlanta – the kind of place which can all too quickly “provincialize” one's outlook on life. A real example of that occurred one day as we were headed down New York's iconic Fifth Avenue from Central Park to Rockefeller Center, when suddenly in front of us appeared one of my colleagues from Lockheed in Marietta named Bill (an Auburn grad and very, very Southern!), along with his very attractive “Southern Belle” wife. They both threw their arms open and rushed to embrace us as though we were long-lost relatives – which in a sense we were – folks from home! We stood there gabbing for about 10 minutes, with Bill saying over and over again, “What a circus, what a complete circus this place is!” and his wife nodding her head in solemn agreement. And, of course, New York is a continuous display of almost other-worldly scenes of people and interactions between people on a scale which seems almost alien to folks from other parts of the country (and world!). None of this failed to make a lasting impression on Tedi, who perhaps suddenly realized how far she was from the 1930s-40s garment district of Los Angeles where she had first become aware there was a world outside the narrow home life in which she had been raised...

One More Swing Through Atlanta – Our return to Atlanta marked the final days of my living there as an adult (or as close as I could come to it!). I basically spent the next few days winding down my life there and, in my haste to simply get out, made what turned out to be a somewhat ill-considered decision to return to Europe, and in particular to Vienna, where I had greatly enjoyed spending a couple of weeks during the summer of 1964. Malcolm had feelings of envy, along with thinking I was crazy, but of course he had never even been in Europe before and so had no idea of what I was trying to describe to him. In the few months prior to that I had been exploring engineering employment opportunities in several European cities and for some reason had decided that Vienna might have something along the lines of what I was looking for. I was in such a hurry just to get out of Atlanta with its sudden jumble of bad experiences (going over a waterfall, Jimmy's death, Tedi's ongoing struggles, and a tricky relationship I was just coming out of!) that it just seemed imperative to me to put some distance behind myself and my life there.

Back(wards) to Vienna – Next thing I knew I had said my goodbyes at work and to whoever I was in contact with in Atlanta and was headed back for New York City and the Loftleidir terminal to get on a flight to Luxembourg. In the past I had always flown in and out of Glasgow when using Loftleidir, but my hitchhiking days were largely over and the train system in central Europe seemed like a much more flexible way of getting around! The train happened to be passing through Saarbrücken (not far from Frankfurt), so I even made a stop for a day or two to visit my old Paris comrade, Dietmar. He was finishing up his economic studies at the University in Saarbrücken and living with his very attractive (and pleasant) girlfriend, Marguerite, and we had a very nice visit before I re-boarded the train onwards to Vienna.

Arriving at the Westbahnhof in Vienna was a strange experience because I had no bicycle or motorscooter or any of the other accoutrements of my previous visits there! Being dressed in a semi-businesslike manner and carrying a couple of small handbags out of the terminal building seemed almost surreal – as though I were an adult returning to a place of my youth to take another look around, even though I had been absent for only two or three years. I checked with the Fremdenverkehrsbüro at the Bahnhof and made an open reservation in a small hotel within walking distance of the downtown area (not far from the Ringstrasse and the Innenstadt, all of which I knew well and where I felt comfortable walking around). I spent the next several days procuring a residence visa, looking around for longer-term accommodations (becoming familiar with the term *garçonnière* – Viennese for 'bachelor apartment'), and putting out feelers for a job in the engineering sector. I had saved a considerable amount of money from my time at Lockheed, and finances were not an immediate concern, so I had the luxury of spending a couple of weeks looking around and getting to know the city from a different perspective than during my cycling/motorscootering days!

After I had been there a few days and made several tentative contacts (pursuing leads I had made while still in the States), I began to encounter a phenomenon which I was to become all too familiar with later on in my career – namely the rate at which technical progress was being made in the field of engineering electronics. While in school in the period 1956-60 I had been caught in the transition from vacuum tubes to transistors – most of my course work focused on vacuum tube technology at a time when that technology was fast becoming obsolete. The advent of transistor technology was so new at that time that we were constantly receiving handouts of hastily assembled notes on how transistor design work was to be done – at the same time that the course work and lab work focused on vacuum-tube technology! By the time I went to work at Lockheed in 1965-67, not only were vacuum tubes functionally obsolete, but the even newer technology of integrated circuits (ICs) was coming into widespread use (superseding even discrete transistor technology). However, post-war Europe was still in the process of recovering from the terrible damage that had been sustained during the war, and technological progress in a place like Vienna was like being back in the US in the late 1950s – a great deal of the technological expertise I had obtained at Lockheed simply didn't apply – there was something like a 10-year gap in what was being done in the US and what was being done in a technologically relative backwater like post-war Austria. This was an issue I was vaguely aware of, but which I had perhaps chosen to ignore in focusing on Vienna as a place to live, rather than as a place to work!

While bringing myself up to speed on the discouraging side of things such as issues like these, I decided to indulge myself in a night at the Wiener Staatsoper (the famous Vienna State Opera). I checked the schedule, and that very night there happened to be a performance of Mozart's *Don Giovanni* – an old favorite of mine from Berlin, where I had seen it 3 or 4 times! I procured a ticket with no trouble (the Opera House was a short walk away from the little Pension where I had ended up staying) and that evening set out for an early walk downtown. As I was crossing a small

street in the middle of the block, I was suddenly and unexpectedly berated by an older gentleman walking with his wife who thoroughly dressed me down for having crossed the street without going to the corner – just the sort of thing a German might do, but unexpected in downtown Vienna! I shrugged it off and continued on to the opera house for a very commendable evening's performance. I had bought a ticket as usual up in the higher reaches of the balcony (probably simply from custom) and at the end of the second act I did my customary student thing of surveying the seats in the orchestra to see who might be leaving early, thereby freeing up a seat (something that always happened and was quite a normal practice among students). I easily spotted several couples on their way out and shortly before the beginning of the next Act I slipped downstairs and slid into one of the vacated seats. I was sitting there quite comfortably perusing the program and waiting for the lights to go down when an older gentleman in the row directly behind me began speaking loudly to his wife, berating the practice of cheapskate idlers such as myself descending from the nether reaches of the house and commandeering seats to which they were not entitled! The lights finally went down, and he was forced to retreat into silence, but I could almost feel his glare through my back – something I had grown accustomed to during my more penurious days, but which now seemed a bit excessive. At the end of the performance I rose to leave, but was again subjected to his glare and invectives, which seemed almost pointless by that time, since the performance was over and everyone was leaving. There was a certain Germanness in his inability to simply drop the matter and retreat from his invasion of my personal space. I nodded to him and smiled, which seemed to infuriate him only more, leading him to grab my sleeve as he continued his tirade apace. I looked down on him (he was a rather small, older man) and with my other hand removed his hand from my sleeve, saying, "Ich bitte, mein Herr ..." a fairly curt way of saying, "If you don't mind ..." This seemed to catch him a bit by surprise (lack of respect, perhaps?), and we parted with his mutterings still following me out of the hall.

Before I walked back to the Pension, I detoured a bit and spent an hour or so walking around the very attractive downtown area with its plethora of marble sculptures and heroic statues. It was hard, however, to detach myself from the two very Germanic encounters I had had in the course of a single very short evening. In the course of the next several days I experienced what might be termed a "heightened sensitivity" to such encounters – things which, as an outsider, I had always brushed off before as inconsequential, but which I realized would become a form of behavior to which I would either have to become accustomed or to which I would have to sternly conform. From time to time I would encounter similar short exchanges, some of them based on my somewhat non-conforming dress (still no suit and tie for me!). Oddly enough, in my several years of living in Europe I had always simply behaved as a temporary outsider – someone who was indeed living there for a somewhat extended period of time – but not someone who would be expected to meld into the surrounding world in an indistinguishable way. A day or two later, after I had found a place that looked like it would accommodate me very nicely not far from downtown Vienna, and while I was in the middle of applying for several potential employment vacancies, I suddenly experienced what one might call an "epiphany," – despite my having lived in Europe for a number of years and having learned to speak German (and French) quite passably, in the longer run (years and decades not simply a few years of student life) the world of old Europe was one into which my native American-ness would make it very difficult (both culturally and technologically) for me to fit in. It was as though I had been hit by a bolt of lightning – here I had been planning for several years to return to and live in Europe for the longer term, and suddenly the whole concept was in the process of being tossed out the window! I spent another day or two thinking things over and somewhat mechanically pursuing the course of looking for a job in a market where my skills were poorly matched to local demand when, one morning while sitting in a Viennese coffee shop stirring my Schlag into a large cup of very dark-looking Turkish coffee, I suddenly realized I was simply in the wrong place – all my planning had been a huge mistake! To my own considerable surprise, within a few hours I had checked out of the Pension and was on the way to the Vienna airport to catch a flight back to New York!!

Oddly enough, the fates seemed destined not to let me go so easily. After I had boarded the plane for my evening flight to London and on to New York, and as we were taxiing down the runway, an announcement was made that we would have to return to the terminal and deplane for a security check! The plane actually parked on a remote runway far from any buildings, and we all descended to the ground, where we were each then re-united with our particular bits of luggage from the baggage hold! It turned out that a threat had been called in as we were beginning our taxi – there was a bomb on board the plane which was set to explode somewhere between Vienna and London! We spent a couple of hours in the semi-dark on the remote runway while each of us was carefully unpacked our own personal baggage and had it checked, after which we returned to the terminal while the plane was subjected to further

security checks. An hour or so later, we re-boarded the plane. When I say 'we' I should mention that there were only a half dozen or so passengers who re-boarded the plane – the rest (perhaps wisely) having apparently chosen to seek out alternative means of transportation! The plane remained similarly empty not only during our flight to London, but also during the follow-on routing to New York – apparently word of the bomb threat had gotten out to potential boarding passengers, who had also chosen to look for alternate accommodations. The flight turned out to be one of the most comfortable I have ever taken – dozens of empty seats all around where one could stretch out in great comfort – and plenty of cocktails and first-class dinners passed out to those of use in “tourist” class. It seemed to be an odd way to finish off my aborted trip back to Europe, and it was hard not to read into the whole thing a bit of the proverbial as far as future prospects went ...