

Passages #10

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Today's date is August 13, 2001.

Sorry I've been gone so long.....

No, you're not rid of me; I think I finally have a couple of minutes to try to start typing a zine. It's been a very busy few months.

The twins have been growing and are thriving, cutting teeth and learning how to walk. My horse finally had her baby April 11, 3 weeks late.

June 9-16 we went to Anguilla, an island in the British West Indies, for our long-awaited vacation at a luxury villa, called Cerulean. It was wonderful; the villa was very private. Only Kyle's family was there, including his mother, his 3 sisters and their husbands, his uncle and his wife and 15-year old son, my daughter Cathryn, and of course, Kyle and me and our 3 little ones, Samantha, Haydon, and Cassia. We had a staff of 9, including 2 butlers, 2 housekeepers, a manager, a gourmet chef, a sous-chef, and 2 other guys that I'm not sure what their titles were, who set the table, served cocktails and hors d'ouvres, bused the table, poured water, carried luggage, and kept the mini-bar stocked with beer and sodas and clean towels on the lounge chairs.

The beach was not completely private, but there were rarely any other people there, and the closest resort was about a mile away. The villa had its own enclosed pool, 20 by 45 feet, just for us, and our own tennis court and weight room. There were 8 bedrooms which were air-conditioned, which I understand is a rarity in that part of the world, but very nice since it was so hot. I don't think I really got used to being waited on; I did like having my laundry picked up every morning and returned in the afternoon, clean and pressed, but eating gourmet meals 3 times a day did get old after a week; we were craving McDonald's cheeseburger and fries!

Now it's Friday, September 28, 2001.

The above was written, obviously, before the terrorist attack of September 11. Since then our perceptions of the world have been altered and many priorities have changed. I, for one, have been doing a lot of thinking about family and friends, and how I need to shift my priorities more toward my personal life and less to work. I did meet up with my best friend from high school at our reunion September 15, and made plans to have supper at her house in Columbia SC in two weeks. I've been trying to spend more time with Cassia, who has been distressed and displaced since the twins were born. I started riding my horse again and making plans to work toward my dream, showing as an amateur, and riding with Cassia (of course, all she does right now is sit in the saddle and hold on to the grab strap while I lead the horse from the ground!). Today is September 28, and I'm working to get this finished up and to FedEx.....

Once again, I haven't done mailing comments. I'll try to work on that before the next mailing.... This will be a quickie printed off my laser printer at work, so it won't even be double sided.

What follows is the itinerary from Cathryn and my trip to Germany. Cathryn was in Germany with a group of kids from her high school, from June 16 through July 22. They lived with host families and went to school (Gymnasium) with their host siblings for the month, then I flew to Germany and did some sight-seeing with Cathryn, and the two of us flew home together. It was a good time.

Itinerary: Germany, July 20-26 Janet Larson and Cathryn Lyons

Friday, July 20, 2001

- 10:00 A.M.-12:30 P.M.:** Janet to take van from Augusta to Atlanta Airport
EZ Ride, 4268 Frontage Rd., Augusta GA (706)860-4900
I-20 to Belair Rd. exit, turn left, then left onto Frontage;
they are behind Carter-Blanchard office
Pd in advance by AmEx; \$90 round trip, plus \$45 for Cathryn's return trip
s/w Frances, confirmation #1711, cancel 24 hr advance for full refund
<24 hr 1/2 refund; okay to leave car until 7/26
- 4:25 P.M.** Depart North Terminal Atlanta Airport, Lufthansa Flt 445
non-stop to Frankfurt, Germany, seat 24H, 8 hr 55 min, Ref YYWI7D
(note: Ursula, Euro Lloyd Travel, (215)928-3669, (800)225-1123)

Saturday, July 21, 2001

- 7:20 A.M.** Arrive Frankfurt, Germany
8:20 A.M. Depart Terminal 1, Lufthansa Flt 124 non-stop, 55 min
9:15 A.M. Arrive Munich, Germany
9:15 A.M. pick up rental car, Hertz, Franz-Josef-Strauss, phone# 089 9978860
(prepaid AmEx \$337.00; Voucher Number 0000736627, Account 264196889994,
#1 Club: 31969412, Group E Class with AC); give them voucher!
After car: call Cathryn at Sonja Torner's house: Bischof-Engilmar-Str. 12,
84347 Pfarrkirchen, Tel. 08561/71302 [*her host family where she had
lived for a month*]
Meet Cathryn at city hall, Rathaus, Pfarrkirchen
Afternoon: Verabschiedung [*the farewell ceremony for the American kids at the
German school, or Gymnasium*]
Evening: Altstadtfest [*a city-wide festival which just happened to be going on
that weekend*]

Sunday, July 22, 2001 [*my birthday!*]

- Morning:** leave Pfarrkirchen, drive to Stuttgart (approx. 3.5 - 4 hrs) [*we
followed the bus taking the American kids back to the Munich airport, then got on the
Autobahn*]
Afternoon: tour Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, [*town where I was born; the Army
base is no longer there; the building that used to be the hospital is now a local German
clinic*] 9-5, Mercedes-Benz Museum, Mercedesstr.137, Stuttgart-Unterturkheim [*this
was very interesting, history of Mercedes-Benz, I think 5 marks to get in*] page 2

2:00 P.M. Guaranteed Reservations (AmEx): *Hotel Mercure Fasanenhof*
Eichwiesenring 1/1, D-70567 (near Stuttgart Airport)
Tel: (49) 07 11/72660, email: H1574@accor-hotels.com
Res. # 35897; 196 DM; Free Parking, breakfast buffet

Monday, July 23, 2001

Check out by 12:00 P.M.

Morning: drive to Augsburg, walking tour [*I lived here for 2 years, 1964-66; the military base was closed in 1998; many of the buildings including the PX are still standing, empty, although many of the residences have been turned over to the locals*]

on the way: drive through Esslingen [*town where my parents lived when I was born*], Schwabisch Gmund [*town where my parents got married*]

Afternoon: drive "Romantic Road" to Schwangau [*in the German Alps*]

After 2:00 P.M., Before 11:00 P.M.: Confirmed Reservations:

Hotel Konig Ludwig Schwangau

Kreuzweg 11-15, D-87645, tel: 08362/8890

DM 222.80 per day, no credit cards, 2 nights

Tuesday, July 24, 2001

Before 9:45 A.M. Pick up castle tickets in the ticket center, Hohenschwangau
Not prepaid: Res. #AH001819, 2 adults, @ DM 28

10:45 A.M. Tour Schloss Hohenschwangau [*castle where King Ludwig grew up*]

1:45 P.M. Tour Schloss Neuschwanstein [*"fairy tale" castle King Ludwig started but never finished; Sleeping Beauty's castle in Disneyland is modeled after it*]

Wednesday, July 25, 2001

Morning: Breakfast Hotel Konig Ludwig, Drive to Munich, sight-seeing [*we took a side trip to see a 3rd castle, Linderhof, which King Ludwig also built in the 1860's and lived in for 8 years, by himself!*]

Guar. Hotel Res (AmEx): *ArabellaSheraton Airport Hotel, Munchen*

Freisinger Strasse 80, 95445 Schwaig, tel. 089/927/220

1 night, 2 adults, Eur 148 (\$125.26), deposit AmEx

Conf. C805223398,

Expedia (404)728-8787, booking ID 14397203(12)

Thursday, July 26, 2001

7:00 A.M. Return rental car, Hertz, Munich Airport, Franz-Josef-Strauss,
phone # 089 978860

8:30 A.M. Depart Munich Lufthansa Flt 67, non-stop, 1 hr 5 min

9:35 A.M. Arrive Frankfurt Terminal 1

10:25 A.M. Depart Frankfurt Terminal 1, Lufthansa Flt 444, non-stop 9 hr 55 min
Janet: seat 21C, Cathryn: seat 21A, ref: YYBFE4

2:20 P.M. Arrive Atlanta North Terminal

5:00 P.M. EZ Ride Van return trip to Augusta, Georgia, prepaid

Observations from Germany:

The *Autobahn* was not as scary as I thought it was going to be; in fact, it wasn't as bad as I-20 between Augusta and Atlanta. Every now and then someone in a Ferrari or Porsche would come screaming out of nowhere in the left lane, but that happens in Georgia, too. It was kind of neat that every other car was either a Mercedes or a BMW. In fact, over 90% of the cars were German-built (VW, Audi, Mercedes, Porsche, and BMW primarily), with the occasional Ford, Chrysler, Toyota, or Volvo scattered around. Many of the cars had bicycle racks on the roof. The Sunday we were on the *Autobahn* there were only very rare 18-wheelers, whereas on the weekdays, the right lane was packed with them; they are not allowed to be in the left lane!

The makes of the American **vehicles** were unfamiliar; my rental car was a Ford Mondeo, which seemed to be the European version of the Taurus, and I saw a number of them on the road. I did not see one Saturn or Cadillac, and very few Chevys. We were wondering if pick-up trucks are illegal in Germany, because we saw no pick-ups at all. SUV's were extremely rare; I counted 6 in the entire 6 days I was there, and 2 of them were the new Sport-wagons. Minivans are not as popular as they are here, but they were not infrequent either. Their version of the full-sized van was shorter and more squared-off, with a high top, like the dog pound trucks you see in the U.S. I think I saw one Suburban.

It was a little disconcerting not being able to read all of the **street signs**; some of them even Cathryn couldn't tell what they were trying to say. I figured out pretty quickly in the parking deck at the airport that *Ausfahrt* means "exit". The biggest problem was in the city, not being able to tell where it was okay to park. City traffic was pretty scary, especially when we didn't know where we were going, and couldn't read all the signs. Driving around Augsburg, trying to find a parking space, I got honked at several times; finally, I found a parking deck off a little alley, and one of the local patrons showed us how to put coins in the machine. Unfortunately, we had to keep going back, because the maximum time was an hour, and the last thing I needed was to get my rental car towed. I like the way they have yellow lights, both before and after the red lights. I never saw anyone in Germany run a red light, not like they do here in Georgia/South Carolina, where *everyone* runs red lights. Made me wonder if there were cameras on the traffic lights.

There were no **billboards** on the *Autobahn*, in fact, no billboards anywhere. And there was no garbage on the roads anywhere. It made me wonder what the penalty for littering is. Although I remembered reading that 90% of the littering in South Carolina comes from trash blowing out of the backs of pickup trucks, so if you eliminate all the pickup trucks, you eliminate 90% of the litter!

All of the rest stops had **recycling** bins, and Cathryn said that everywhere she went, everyone always recycled. Again, I wondered if there was a fine for failing to recycle. The Germans don't seem to share the American passion for disposable packaging. Most drinks were in recycled glass bottles. None of the restrooms had paper towels, despite the German passion for hand washing. I never saw a German leave a restroom without washing her hands, even little kids. All the restrooms had either cloth towel rollers or blow dryers. And all the toilets came equipped with a toilet bowl brush.

I did get some **language** tapes to study German, but never finished them, so I was only able to communicate a little bit. (I did figure out why Janice always uses yellow paper; "gelb" means "yellow".) I was surprised at how many people did not understand English, especially older people in the smaller towns. I'm not sure why I was expecting more people to speak English. Several of the waiters in different restaurants did not speak English at all. At first, I didn't realize that waiters get paid more so that usually their tips are much less, so the first night, when I gave the waiter a 20% tip, he was very surprised! Fodor recommended giving 5% to the waiter, and 1-2% to the busboy and maitre d', but one night when I gave a couple of marks to the busboy and maitre d', they looked at me like I was crazy.

I noticed how few **fat** people there are in Germany; in fact, I did not see one person who was morbidly obese. I did see a few mildly obese people, mainly older women. There were a lot of cross-country cyclers there, even in the Alps, and a lot of the cars had bicycle racks on top. It was sad that at Cathryn's school, none of the German kids were overweight, and 2/3 of the Americans were!

A significant proportion of the German population do not believe in **antiperspirant** or deodorant. This was immediately apparent upon disembarking the airplane in Frankfurt. Germans do not worship single-file lines, like we do in the U.S. We had to wait in line for the horse-drawn carriage to go up the mountain to Neuschwanstein, and I got quite upset when several natives tried to ignore the line and get on the opposite side of the carriage! Americans in contrast to the Germans seemed loud, rude, and obnoxious, and American children as a rule were much more likely to be misbehaving. I never saw a German parent scold or spank their child, however.

I bought a supply of **Deutschmarks (DM)** before we left, at a rate of about 2.2 per dollar. One of the hotels did not take credit cards. Most places took American Express, although I had to use my VISA card at one of the gift shops at Neuschwanstein. Most places listed prices in DM and Euros, and generally gave 2 DM per dollar.

German **hotel rooms** are generally much smaller than in the U.S. I was shocked when we entered the first room! I made sure all the rooms we got had private bathrooms and showers. All the shower heads were the hand-held type. Only the last, the most American of the three, came with washcloths and bar soap. All the others had only liquid soap and shower gel. The first two hotels included buffet-style breakfasts, which were very interesting. I discovered the German tradition of eating deli meats and cheese on hard rolls for breakfast. They also had hard-boiled eggs and Muesli-type cereal. The coffee was always excellent (and strong), although it seemed half of the Germans preferred hot tea for breakfast. They also drank a Vitamin juice for breakfast, which Cathryn warned me off, an orange-colored fortified vegetable juice; I didn't try it.

We ate **dinner** in the hotel restaurants every night, and the prices were always very reasonable, usually about the equivalent of \$7-10 per person, with beer or wine \$1.50-2.00 a glass. I tried to sample the local wines and ales, and all of them were pretty good. The portions seemed to be smaller than what we're used to in the U.S., and looking around, I noticed everyone else was fastidious about cleaning their plates; it was very unusual to see leftover food sent back. Sodas were served cold, but not on ice.