

**EUROPE TRIP
HUNGARY, AUSTRIA, GERMANY CZECH REPUBLIC
MAY 17 TO JUNE 7, 2000**

Wednesday, May 17

We are off to an almost disastrous start. The Magids arrive at McGhee-Tyson at about 3:00, but our Comair flight, Knoxville to Cincinnati, scheduled to leave at 4:05 p.m., is still on the ground in Cincinnati because of bad weather. The airport lounge is filled with nervous people, waiting not only for this flight but also for the 2:20 Knoxville to Cincinnati flight, similarly grounded in Cincinnati. *Mirabile dictu*, our plane arrives in Knoxville first and we leave at 4:30, easily making our 7:20 connection to the Delta flight for Frankfurt.

Hooray for Delta's *Business Elite*! (Ed. note: I hereby acknowledge the sacrifices of the peripatetic LJM who made numerous flights, packed like a sardine in tourist class, so as to acquire the frequent flier miles that allows her ne'er-do-well husband to fly in luxury.) The personal space on this MD-11 is vast (although not as cavernous as in the Boeing 747 that Sabena Airlines used for its Business Class [formerly first-class] when we flew to Brussels in 1998). Each seat must be equipped with as many remote control buttons as the pilot's seat on the space shuttle. Not only do we have electrical controls to move the head rest, back rest, butt rest (for want of a better term), and foot support through many degrees of freedom, ranging from (you should pardon the expression) "full upright and erect" to "sleep" but each seat also has its own fold-out TV monitor with control box for: (a) monitoring the plane's progress (location; altitude - always in positive numbers, I'm relieved to say; ground speed; time until arrival; etc.) (b) playing from a choice of ten computer games, including Tetris and solitaire; (c) listening to any of eight different radio channels; and (d) watching full-length movies (a wide choice of first-run and recent movies is available); Lee watches "Man on the Moon" plus selected shorts while I choose to read magazines: *Time*, *The New Yorker*, *Yale Alumni Magazine*. I "liberate" a copy of Delta's "operator's manual" that shows the seat controls and the choices of audio programs, games, and flicks. [On the very long return flight on June 7, Lee will watch "Boys Don't Cry" and "In and Out" along with portions of "Fargo" and others.]

Dinner is excellent, at least by airline standards, with substantial choice of wine, main course, and dessert (I "liberate" the dinner menu and wine list as well); so is breakfast the next morning. While we "privileged few" (the Internet entrepreneurs, the industrial giants, the robber barons, the two college professors) in the front of the plane are gorging on mountains of tasty victuals, those in steerage (they who are pulling the oars that keep the plane aloft) are being fueled with cold gruel and dried bread. Delta also provides its Business Elite customers with a "gift pack" that contains ear plugs and eye shades (suitable for tuning out a Chem. 350 lecture), socks and slippers, toothpaste and toothbrush, and a host of unmentionables that are ... well ... unmentionable. Having been "scolded" by Her Acquisitiveness for leaving my packet on the Sabena flight in 1998, I'm careful to "liberate" one on the flight over and another on the return, but I make it a solemn point of honor to open neither one. I manage to sleep for close to two hours; Lee, glued to the TV, gets less sleep than I do. After a while, I get up to stretch my legs and am treated to a spectacular sunrise as we approach the coast of England.

Thursday, May 18

We are worried when we arrive late at Frankfurt, but are relieved to find that our arrival gate is very close to that from which the Malev flight to Budapest departs. Our joy is then dampened by learning that the Malev flight will be delayed by 1.5 hours. Contrary to what we anticipated, there are surprisingly few smokers in the airport waiting room (compared to prior visits to Frankfurt) and the Malev flight is smoke-free (also unexpected); the snack that they provide is surprisingly edible. Lee had warned about the possibility of having to breathe cigarette smoke mixed with "essence of

Hungarian sweat" for the entire flight, but neither is the case even though the plane is full and we are "forced" to sit with the "peons" in the rear. The descent to the Budapest airport is interesting: we fly over many Soviet-era faceless and styleless concrete-block apartment buildings. Even though we are late arriving in Budapest and it takes some time to get money at the airport and for the airport bus to arrive, our room at the Marriott is not yet ready. We sit in the lounge and wait - ordinarily we'd order a drink, but we are eager to get upstairs and clean off our one-and-a-half day's worth of grime; one of us (and I ain't tellin' who 'tis) also would like to shave.

Most of the hotel personnel speak perfect English, a fortunate thing because the Hungarian language seems to be forbiddingly difficult for non-natives (confirmed by Zita, one of the KD Cruise staff, a Hungarian national herself - see May 25). Also, most of the airport signs are in English and Hungarian; the airport ATM (which gleefully accepts our codes but fails to give forth any money) offers a choice of English, Hungarian, or German; and at the hotel, the hallways, rest rooms, elevators, and other public areas have so many English signs (with no Hungarian anywhere in sight) that it is hard to remember that we are in another country. I ask the porter who carries our bags where he learned his fluent English and he replies that he paid for his own lessons after finishing school; in school, along with Hungarian they all learned Russian, a language that he professes to hate and that he says he has forgotten completely.

The hotel room (as expected for a Marriott) is spacious and air-conditioned (although not as well as it would be in the U.S.; in fact, the unit is cut into the outside wall and is encased by the drapes when they are drawn, a situation that we remedy by holding the drapes aside with several strategically-placed suitcases); the bathroom is spacious and very modern; and we have a beautiful view of the Danube. We had already paid for the room at a phenomenally low rate (available on the Internet to AARP members, one of the few advantages of "old age") of 240 DM per day (ca. \$120), even though the posted rate on the door is about 500 DM. After check-in and before feeling the effect of the lack of sleep and the time-zone change we go for a walk, among many visitors and locals, along the Danube; we are relieved that we have an air-conditioned room, as an electric sign near the hotel informs us that the temperature that afternoon is an uncomfortable 32°C.

Observations:

- There is surprisingly little smoking by the pedestrians in Budapest, although not zero.
- There is no evidence of gypsies, pick-pockets, or other dangerous types despite the warnings of both the guide books and my intrepid traveling companion (who reported having been surrounded by sticky-fingered swarms of children when she was in Budapest earlier in the year); nevertheless, I take the precaution of locking my wallet and passport in the hotel safe, carrying only credit cards and some money in one side pocket, and folding a photocopy of both passports in a rear pocket.
- The people (faces, hair-dos, clothing) look very Eastern-European. Well, DUH!!!
- There are, to my surprise (and some dismay), very few wild haircuts or crazy hair colors.
- Very tall platform shoes are popular among the young women as are short skirts, ranging from about four inches above the knee to just a few millimeters below ground zero; as for underwear, I suspect much money was saved by not wearing any. Lee is not the least interested in these observations and informs me that neither am I.

We eat a very good traditional Hungarian dinner at Duna, the casual restaurant of the hotel. Even though cognizant that the exchange rate is 280 HUF per dollar, it is still disconcerting to sign a dinner cheque for 11,330 HUF (a rather modest \$40 for two dinners, including tip); it is even more disconcerting walking around with over 10,000 HUF in my pocket. Nevertheless, during our two days in Budapest, I am continually doing the mental arithmetic of converting HUF into USD, always fearful that I'm off by a factor of 10 (or 100 or ...).

It has cooled off by early evening, so we eat at an outside table where there is a rich scene of promenaders along the Danube. Almost as enjoyable as the short skirts (to which I am, of course, no longer paying attention) are the variety of dogs that Hungarians own. Europeans (of all ages and all

social classes, in this city and others) love to stroll in the evening. Don't these people realize that it's un-American not to spend the evening watching TV?. Exhausted by the long trip, we hit the sack at 9:15 and don't get up until 7:15 the next morning. One could very easily become accustomed to 10 hours of sleep, I think.

Friday, May 19

The hotel provides a sumptuous breakfast, even more elaborate than what we expected based on earlier trips to Europe. There are two buffet lines: one (cold) for meat, cheese, fish, cereal, etc; the other (hot) for eggs, sausage, pancakes, potatoes, etc. Since breakfast is not included in the price of the hotel room but costs 3500 HUF per person (ca. \$12.50), we fill our bellies immoderately.

After breakfast, we walk across the Chain Bridge from the Pest side of the river (called Duna in Hungary, Donau in Austria and Germany, Danube to those of us in the "civilized world") to the Buda side, then take the funicular up to Castle Hill. This cog railway is not included in the Budapest Card [an incredible bargain at 2800 HUF (about \$12) for a two-day pass that provides free admission to nearly every museum in the city as well as free transportation on the trams and metro] but is well worth the cost as the hill is very steep and high ... while we are very old and feeble.

There are three contiguous museums on Castle Hill. The largest (in the center) is the Hungarian National Gallery, located in the former royal palace and restored from the rubble to which it had been reduced by the retreating German armies who used it as their Budapest headquarters in WW II. At first, I don't believe that it has been newly built, as it is terribly blackened by 50 years of government neglect - thus, it looks several centuries-old. The collection consists largely of native paintings and sculpture. Alongside it is the Budapest History Museum whose collection includes relics spanning several millennia from the stone age to modern times. On the other side of the National Gallery is The Ludwig Museum featuring works of (not-so famous) modern artists. Still it has its enjoyable pieces: our favorite is a stuffed pig that is "watching" a TV tape of several pigs being slaughtered and cooked - the artist's message is too subtle for us to comprehend; perhaps it is the language barrier; the pig, for its part, is silent about the matter. From Castle Hill, we walk [on this hot day!] to the Matthias Kirche and then to the nearby Fisherman's Bastion.

We take a bus followed by the metro to the Museum of Fine Arts (back on the Pest side of the river); unfortunately the museum's 20th-century gallery is closed to the public (a not-uncommon experience in this country that is still shaking off the yoke [yolk? - bad joke] of the past 50 years), but we do get to see some works by older artists like El Greco, Goya, Rembrandt, and others.

Bad Pun #1 - As a crossword puzzle aficionado, I know the answer to the question: "Where was El Greco born?" The question stumps Ms. Dr. Prof. M. (usually an inexhaustible and reliable font of useless information); the correct answer is Crete. I then ask her what his friends called him when he left Crete and went to Spain. She doesn't know, so I reveal the answer: "They called him an excretion!" (This results in the first of several blows, delivered to my rib cage by Lee's sharp elbows, over the course of our trip.)

We then take the metro to Kodaly House (Zoltan Kodaly's home from 1924 until his death in 1967). Finding the place is an adventure. The address is 1 Kodaly Körönd (1 Kodaly Circle); we find Nos. 2, 3, and 4 Kodaly Körönd, but not No. 1. All of the buildings on this circle show considerable wear but all seem to have been elegant apartment buildings at one time. We walk alongside the building that should have been No. 1; it is badly blackened, has stones loose, has some windows broken and bars over others, but Lee (not discouraged, her excellent instincts right in place) sees some evidence of hope. Sure enough, we turn the corner and there is a wall plaque with the name Kodaly. Unfortunately, there is also a big locked gate. As we are about to give up, a man (who lives upstairs) comes over, punches in a code to unlock the gate, and ushers us into the courtyard. (Lee, her instincts now badly out-of-joint, is convinced that we are about to be murdered.) We walk through the

courtyard to another door but, finding it locked, we begin to walk away. Much to our surprise, an elderly woman unlocks the door and motions us inside. (Now we're going to be murdered?) She speaks no English, but through sign language and grunts she hands us off to her colleague, another elderly woman, who escorts us through the four rooms; the museum's budget must be really tight because our "warden" turns on the lights only when we are ready to enter each room. We see Kodaly's study, his library, his piano, the salon where he entertained guests, many manuscripts, many photos on the wall. With an English language guide that we purchase, we maneuver successfully around the apartment. This is our fifth museum this day - little do I suspect that we ain't seen nothing' yet (see May 20).

We had planned to eat dinner at a nearby restaurant specializing in local cooking, but a sudden downpour convinces us to eat at Csarda, the more formal of the two restaurants in our hotel; even so, the cost (including tip) is only 11,505 HUF (ca. \$48). The restaurant features a violinist and pianist whose specialities seem to be American pop hits of the 1940s! The violinist strolls around from table to table, trying to cadge tips by playing customers' requests. He saunters over to our table and starts serenading Lee with "The Tennessee Waltz" - she tries to ignore him by continuing to discuss our plans for tomorrow's tourism, but he is neither discouraged nor dissuaded. With a huge leering grin (enough to have gotten him arrested in the U.S.) he edges even closer and plays ever more passionately. Finally Ms. Dr. Prof. Tennessee acknowledges his presence (he is practically breathing down her neck - I know, for sure, that he is looking down her dress!) but she refuses to tip him. Good girl! Because the afternoon's rain has ended and the air is somewhat cooler we go for another stroll. How pleasant it is to be in a big city where there are others who are strolling alongside you (and not picking your pocket or asking for money).

Observations:

- When I call from the hotel room to make the dinner reservation, the maitre d' says "You ate at Duma yesterday. Are you sure that you want Csarda for tonight?" Either they are very solicitous of their guests or this is a holdover from police-state-days when they did keep tabs on the movements of both citizens and visitors. I'm convinced that it is no coincidence that our Hungarian "Paganini" chose "The Tennessee Waltz" - he was almost certainly tipped off by the maitre d' (who probably knew not only our hotel room number but also our home address, our employer, our take-home salaries, our ATM pins, and our favorite breakfast cereals).
- Although the hotel is air-conditioned, none of the transportation vehicles nor any of the museums are. The National Gallery is particularly hot and sticky, but mindful of the adage "Different countries, different customs" I valiantly press on, moping and mopping and complaining only a little. OK, a lot.
- There are guards all over the museums. In the National Gallery, for example, every time we enter a new room, the guard rises abruptly from her chair (very few men serve as guards) and eyes us suspiciously while we are in her personal space. The guards are women in their 60s and 70s, probably all pensioners, again a holdover from Communist days when everyone was guaranteed of a job, no matter how boring or unfulfilling.
- The National Gallery features paintings of many battle scenes that are important in Hungarian history. By studying these works carefully, I come to the conclusion that the winning side in every battle is either the army with haloes above the soldiers' heads or the army that sports the bushier mustaches or, best of all, both.
- We see very few beggars, although there is an ancient woman on the Chain Bridge, bent over at the waist, wrapped in an ragged shawl, eyes cast down to the ground, hand outstretched, nearly motionless.
- One sees many elderly people in their 70s and 80s on the streets of Budapest - some look quite prosperous, but a few are in rags; some are crippled and some are amputees. Whether these infirmities are the ravages of old age or the result of many wars (or both) is not clear.

Saturday, May 20

After another very filling breakfast, we check out of the hotel but leave our bags in their storage room.

Yesterday's "forced march" from museum to museum resumes with a visit to the Museum of Musical History. As yesterday, a very untrusting woman follows us through the first large room as we look at a display of old musical instruments, some in sealed display cases, others (e.g. harpsichords and pianos) out on the floor. After a while she finally decides that we are to be trusted and, although she never lets us out of her sight, she does indicate (with lots of pointing and other non-verbal cues) that a particular piano was played by a particular pianist (an unfamiliar name to me) at a particular concert. We move to a second large room and suddenly we are no longer under surveillance. This room has many of the papers, letters, and original musical scores of Bela Bartok - fortunately some of his correspondence was in English or German, so we are able to follow it; there are also enough English-language legends, here and there, to help us make sense of things. From there, we go to the Franz Liszt Museum, a disappointment because there was almost no English on the walls nor a written English-language guide; as before, an eagle-eyed female "polizisterin" keeps us in her sight. Even without English legend, we recognize a painting of Cossima, Liszt's daughter, who first married the famous conductor Hans von Bülow, then left him in order to live with that harbinger of National Socialism, Richard Wagner. Finally, we make it to the Museum of Hungarian History which is exceptional and fascinating. The rotunda at the entry is devoted to those Hungarians who have won the Nobel Prize (including such luminaries as Eugene Wigner and George Olah). Here, nearly every sign is in English as well as Hungarian, so it is easy for us to follow things. Because of our time constraints, we skip the Roman era, but we do visit displays from about 800 A.D. to the present. It is amazing how many armies fought over and ruled the Hungarians: Holy Roman Empire, Transylvanians, French, Turks, Hapsburgs, Nazis, Russians, etc.

As yesterday, the hot, sunny day (not very pleasant) turns to cold, dark, and rainy (also not pleasant) in late afternoon when we return to the Marriott to retrieve our suitcases. The day before, we had walked to the International Ship Station (not far from the hotel) so as to get a rough idea of where our KD cruise ship would be docked. So we take a taxi from the hotel and the driver assures us that he knows precisely where our ship will leave from. We exit the cab, pay the driver, and realize that there are several cruise ships docked here, but none from KD! It then becomes evident that our ship is docked some 1000 meters away, not an impossible trek with suitcases on wheels but, in fact, a very dangerous journey because the sidewalk disappears after a while and we find ourselves walking in the street among fast-moving cars. Oh, yes, it's still windy and raining. Finally we arrive at the *MS Heinrich Heine* at about 4:45. (We had paid for tickets last December at a reduced rate: \$3718 for the two of us for seven nights accommodation, which includes all meals and travel insurance.)

A word about suitcases: On the flight, we check three pieces: (1) the Cougaroo, a large soft-sided case with my clothes on one side and Lee's on the other; (2) a large Dakota bag, semi soft-sided, on wheels, and containing nearly exclusively Lee's things with only a few of mine: two pairs of slacks, my socks; (3) a smaller Dakota bag with my sneakers and no other apparel - just books, travel guides, and (in the hope that we will be able to use them in our rental car) audio cassettes - nobody but the Magids would think to travel with a suitcase of books! (But we did it in 1998 when we visited Norway and Sweden, so why not this year as well?) Each of us also has two hand-held bags that we carry on the plane; these contain toiletries, clothes for one day, travelers cheques, etc. The way that we proceed from where the taxi dumps us to where the ship is docked is this way: I loop my carry-on bag over the large Dakota and wheel them while carrying the Cougaroo in my other hand; Lee throws her carry-on over her shoulder and wheels the small Dakota and wheels. Somehow we get to the ship in one piece.

We check in at the reception desk; I find myself on line behind a group of six women, all American, all with magnolia-and-julep-drenched Southern accents. (George Schweitzer had told us that KD was a better choice than other cruise lines because nearly all of the passengers would be German or Hungarian. So much for believing an inorganic chemist!) One of the women is complaining to the ship's "hotel manager" that her name tag has been removed from one of her suitcases! ("This is going to be a long trip," I say to myself.) Whether these women are divorcées or widows or married women traveling without their husbands is unclear, but since I (as nearly the youngest male on board)

am obviously a "good catch," Lee had better keep her eye on me.

We go to our cabin and, as expected, it is very small. It consists of a rather shallow couch that will make way for a bed that is stowed in the wall behind it; a desk and desk chair; and a second bed that is stowed in the other wall. Fortunately there is sufficient storage space that we are able to unpack completely and then stow the suitcases under where the beds will be when they are swung down into place. Every day during breakfast, the maids clean the room and close up the beds; every evening during dinner, the beds are made up and the next day's "program" (plus a candy) is left on the pillow. The beds are quite uncomfortable - narrower than a typical single bed and with a slope that forces one's body into a small depression; there is also the very real risk that if one suddenly sits up in bed, one will clobber his/her/its head on the storage cabinet directly above. This doesn't ever happen and, in fact, only the first night is a restless one for me - the remaining nights we are so tired from the touristic things that we sleep straight through. The bathroom, also as expected, is very small but it does have modern fixtures. Each cabin has an individual A/C control, a TV (that we rarely turn on, except to get a chuckle from the European commercials), and a phone.

After unpacking, we proceed to the dining room to choose a dinner table. This ship has a capacity of 102 passengers, but only 53 have booked passage so there is ample choice of a table. We choose a nice corner table for two, next to a window. (In retrospect, it might have been better to ask to be seated at a table with anyone else who might have also been seeking company; this would have made it easier to meet people.) Contrary to the pre-boarding literature's grim pronouncements about a dress code, coat and tie are not required at any meal except the banquet on the final night; each evening, I would simply change sneakers for shoes and put a jacket on over my knit shirt; some men do dress more formally. The Daily Program calls for the daytime attire to be "casual" and for the dress at dinner to be "casual chic" (which any independent observer would most assuredly attest that I was!)

At 6:30, we attend the Captain's Champagne Reception in the ship's lounge where the crew are introduced. There are 33 crew members on board: approximately seven are involved with sailing the ship, the rest with the hotel operations (reception desk, restaurant, tourism, maids, bartenders). It is a most international group: the captain, his first officer, and the chief engineer are all Dutch; at least one of the deck hands is Swiss, the others German; the hotel manager and his two assistants are German; the hostess/tour director and one bartender are Hungarian; the restaurant's maitre d' is German; the head chef is Dutch; the waiters/waitresses and the maids are Hungarians, Croatians, Rumanians, and Germans; alas there is a Hungarian husband/wife musical team on board, but their "entertainment" is gratifyingly not intrusive (unlike the leather-lunged J. D. Nadeau in Digby, Nova Scotia in 1996). All of the crew, of course, speak excellent English.

It had been my hope to speak German everywhere, but this turns out not to be possible. On the ship I have trouble understanding the hotel manager, the maitre d', and our waitress, so they talk to me in English but I answer, as much as I can, in German. [Later on the trip, I would find embarrassing that when I really needed to use German (e.g., when going into a museum or when buying tram tickets) I had trouble "finding" the correct words; more often than not, what would come out would be either English or French.]

At 7:00 there is a sumptuous buffet dinner downstairs in the dining room. All of the other dinners are sit-down service as are the lunches; only breakfasts are completely buffet-style. (I saved the menus for lunch and dinner from Tuesday, May 23 as an example of the quality and quantity - at lunch, that day, we were offered a choice among three wines or beer, salad (from the buffet), a choice of trout or ham as the main course, cheeses, sacher torte, and beverage; at dinner we were offered three wines or beer, crab cocktail, soup, pork or lamb as the main course, cheeses, chocolate mousse, and beverage; we were also provided with a bottle of mineral water at each meal. Unless we wanted to order special wines or drinks from the bar, everything was included in the initial cost.) Every afternoon there are snacks, either on the observation deck or in the lounge (we indulge only once) and every night there is an 11:00 snack (we opt for sleep every time). Most pleasing to me is that coffee is available (only about 50 feet from our cabin) 24 hours a day. Breakfast (every day) consists of juice

and/or fruit; a wide choice of breads, rolls, sweet pastries; cereals (hot or cold); cheeses of all sorts; a variety of deli meats; and (if one desired) eggs, pancakes (Lee ordered pancakes one day), and who knows what else.

At 9:00, Hermann Imlinger (the hotel manager) gathers us in the lounge and talks about the ship: its configuration, the rules, the facilities, the staff, etc. He alternates speaking in German and English as he goes down his check list. He tells us that of the 53 passengers, the majority (about 30) are English speakers from America, England, and Australia; in fact, about 24 are from a single tour group that had already spent two days in Budapest and would finish up with three days in Prague. [Hermann doesn't always translate the German words exactly when he gives the English. For example, at one point in German he says that "Even though we have a German hotel team and a Dutch captain and we fly under a Swiss flag, English speakers are the majority." The translation is, simply, "English speakers are in the majority."] As for the ship's layout: the top deck is where the bridge is located; there is also both a large covered and uncovered observation area with tables and chairs; the middle deck contains two suites and 31 rooms (including ours), a reading room with an assortment of books and current newspapers, the reception desk, and the lounge; the lower deck has the other 17 guest rooms, the staff's sleeping quarters, a gym and heated pool, and the dining room. Hermann also informs us that we'll remain docked in Budapest overnight but would leave the next morning and travel only a few thousand meters where we'll be boarded by a passport control person from Hungary who wants to see every person, one by one, in order to compare the face on each passport with the face on each body. (We had already turned our passports over to Hermann in order to facilitate passage between countries; Hungary is the only one that requires our active participation.) Scanning the room full of passengers, I conclude that Lee and I are among the youngest. There is one couple in their 30s, another about Lee's age, and that's it - everyone else appears to be past 65 (sometimes considerably past 65).

Ugly American Story No. 1: At the conclusion of Hermann's speech (about 40 minutes long), one of the American passengers says to a companion, "Why did he have to give a German version? Everybody on the ship speaks English, for Christ-sakes. We could have been out in half the time." [Ed. note - not every passenger speaks English - see later.]

Ugly American Story No. 2: One of the Southern belles asks Hermann, "Who was Heinrich Heine [which she pronounces as Hyne]? Was he a particular person?" OK, so this is unfair of me - I happen to know that he was a distinguished German poet, Jewish, (1797-1856) many of whose poems were set to music by Schubert, Schumann, and Mendelssohn. But still ... A related incident: Lee and I are sitting in the reading room for a while on Saturday evening where there is a painting of Heinrich Heine on the wall. Several passengers come in and wonder (aloud) who this guy is: Lee or I answer them, thereby establishing ourselves a couple of smarty-pants who are probably going to ruin everyone else's fun by actually trying to learn things during this cruise.

Ugly American Story No. 3: There is a map on the wall that shows the full extent of the Duna/Donau/Danube and the cities that it passes. One passenger looks at the map and asks her companion, "What in the world is Wine (sic)?" [Wien, the German name for Vienna, is pronounced veen.] Again I'm being unfair because although I know how to pronounce German and French words, I'm hopeless in Czech, Hungarian, and probably everything else. Nevertheless, I'll bet that these people who couldn't pronounce Heine and Wien are the same people who grumble about foreigners who come to our country (whether as visitors or immigrants) and can't speak English. After all, English is God's language and the language of the Bible. Right? Right!]

Sunday, May 21

As "promised" a Hungarian immigration official (sans rifle or Doberman) does board the ship while we are eating breakfast and each of us, as requested, presents ourselves for his inspection. Later in the morning, Mery [short for Marisa Györfalvi, the hostess/tour director] does a slide presentation of the

nine tours that KD is offering at the various docking points. Because Lee and I had already visited some of these places (Vienna and Passau) and have no interest in a concert in Vienna where the musicians and dancers dress as in Mozart's time, we choose only three [see Tuesday evening, Wednesday morning, and Friday morning; see, also, the sheet with all nine tours]. The total cost (for the two of us) is 206 DM (about \$103), considerably less than what it would have been had we also chosen the other six (an additional 474 DM for two).

We then spend a long relaxing day, cruising the Danube on the way to Vienna. The ship's progress is slow (at times we are traveling at the same speed as bicyclists on the shore) but steady. We sit on the observation deck and read a great deal. [I didn't record it in my journal but this must be where I finish reading the magazines that I had and begin to read *Kate Vaiden*. by Reynolds Price]. When a bridge is not high enough or when we are going under an overpass at the entry to a lock (see below), the captain has the capability of lowering the bridge, lowering the front and rear masts, and lowering the roof on the observation deck by bowing the sides outward. The only "touristic event" for the day comes at about 9:30 p.m. when we enter a lock. We don't know it at the time, but this turns out to be only the first of 14 locks, although this one is the largest of them all. After lock number three or four, it becomes quite commonplace, but at the start it is interesting to watch what happens: we enter the lock and hug one wall (where we rope ourselves); the doors close behind us; water comes in from below the front barrier; and we are raised to a level to allow us to proceed. (The next lock comes at 5:30 a.m. the next morning; I sleep through it, but Lee is awakened [because of the shutting off of the engines], looks out the window of our cabin, and - surprise! - sees a stone wall filling her viewing space.)

The Daily Program for Monday, placed on our pillow during dinner on Sunday evening, starts off at 7:00 a.m. with the intriguing "Sport with Mery." Lee expressly forbids me to have "sport with Mery" or with any other female member of the crew! (And I thought that this vacation was supposed to be fun!) The English version of the Daily Program typically would have entries that were not *quite* correctly phrased or spelled: on May 23, for example, for people not going on the tour there was the following: "Do you rather stay on bord?" The Daily Program always had a quote of the day: in English, it was usually something trivial like "That's how the cookie crumbles" or "It's never over until it's over"; these pithy *bon mots* never had much to do with cruising or sight-seeing and never corresponded even vaguely to that day's German version.

Monday, May 22

We dock at Vienna. While the tour group goes on a bus tour of the city (47 DM per person) Lee and I take off on our own. We need to get some Austrian schillings before we can even board the nearby metro; but with no ATM near the ship and with no AS available on board, we are forced to walk to a bank which charges a usurious 15% commission to exchange HUF for AS. We then go to a tabak to buy metro tickets. We negotiate the metro system like professionals, but the first museum we try to get into (the city's principal art museum) is closed because it was Monday. (My intrepid tour guide should have known that European museums are almost always closed on Monday, but I guess that you get what you pay for.) So we visit another museum, not far away, the National Treasury with its a display of the crowns, jewels, swords, coronation robes, etc. etc. etc. of a thousand years of royal rule. What an extraordinary and obscene concentration of wealth! These emperors and empresses, barons and dukes, earls and earlettes (?), convinced that they had been put on this earth to do the Lord's work for the Holy Roman Empire, fought wars of conquest and managed to steal and cheat and acquire goods so well that their flock (except for fellow members of the royal entourage) were penniless. For the cost of one bejewelled crown, they probably could have fed a hundred people for a year. But not all in the collection is jewels and gold and ermine robes - imbedded in several swords are two (sometimes three) of the nails from Christ's crucifixion (*guaranteed!!!*); furthermore, wood from Christ's cradle is enclosed in several goblets and figures (also *guaranteed!!!*); and there is a real unicorn's horn. Also *guaranteed*. Then after strolling down the pedestrian-only Kärntner Strasse (and finding the hotel we stayed in when we visited in 1982) and eating a strudel-plus-coffee at a coffee

shop (not at Aida, which we'd not found yet) we travel by metro across the city and locate the Arnold Schönberg Center. It has a special exhibit featuring Schönberg's music juxtaposed with paintings by his friend Wassily Kandinsky. In some cases the paintings inspired the music; in other cases it was the other way around. Also on display are many of Schönberg's own paintings (including his startling self-portraits) and those of other members of the Russian avant-garde and the *Blauer Reiter* school (e.g., Kasimir Malewitsch, Alexei von Jawlensky, others). An audio tape (that we rented) describes (auf Englisch, Gott sei dank) the relationship of the paintings to the music which is then recorded on the tape at full length. A fascinating and rewarding experience!

During the course of the day, the weather has turned nasty (cold, rain, very windy). Lee has a nice light-weight raincoat but I have only my much much much too warm anorak (and an umbrella that threatens to turn inside out - and does, once or twice). I've gotta buy something lighter weight before we do this again!! (It is either this evening or the next that the rain stops while we are having dinner and we are treated to the view of a couple of spectacular rainbows [das Regenbogen].)

Let us now consider the proposition "The Magids are the ultimate geeks" and let us offer as support of this statement the following: at dinner, these two lonely academicians do a mental calculation of the amount of water, in mL, that is introduced into one of the locks to lift our ship to the proper level. Because academician #1 (the male of the species), upon his return to Knoxville, can't locate the raw data, the following is semi-invented. The captain will tell us on the last day of the cruise that the ship has been raised a total of 190 m over the 14 locks; this suggests a rise of about 15 m per lock. At each lock, we are told its length and width; those are the raw data that have disappeared, so I'll use the numbers found at a web site for one of the locks on the stretch of river between Hungary and Slovakia: 275 m long, 35 m wide. Thus the volume of water is $1.44 \times 10^5 \text{ m}^3$; multiplying this by 10^6 gives the volume as $1.44 \times 10^9 \text{ cm}^3$; multiplying the m^3 by 264 gives the volume as 3.81×10^7 gal; multiplying it by 28.4 gives the volume as 4.10×10^6 bushels; multiplying it by

After dinner on the ship, I settle down in the reading room. (This is the day, I think, where I read in the *International Herald Tribune* that the blessed Knicks have won their series against the hated Miami Heat. This is also the evening when most of our fellow passengers have gone to the concert "in 18th century dress" - the musicians, not the passengers.) My reading is interrupted by a German woman (who speaks essentially no English or French) who proceeds to tell me her life story. It's truly fascinating - what little I can tell. (I had actually met her the day before; the reading room is somewhat isolated, is not well-lit, and has but five comfortable chairs; her husband had brought her to the room, then left her there - when she finished reading, she asked for my help in getting up, as she was unable to rise from the chair on her own.) She tells me that she is 81 years old and, although somewhat immobile because of the need for a cane, has cruised on most of the major rivers of Europe (Elbe, Rhine, Volga, etc.) She lives in Leipzig and has witnessed Nazi times, the DDR years, and the fall of the wall in 1989; she speaks about the bad treatment of the Jews in Prague (while making it clear that she is not Jewish). I doubt that I understand more than 25% of what she is saying. So much for my diligence in spending an hour a day for three months on my German tapes! But every time I try to get her into English or French she resists - English she doesn't know and French she had learned in school but hated. Every once in a while I request "Sprechen Sie langsamer, bitte" and she slows down, then forgets and speeds up again. When I get back to the room, where Lee has stayed behind to read, I tell her about my experience and implore her never to leave me alone with this woman again. Lee's understanding of spoken German is vastly superior to mine, although my spoken German and accent are better than hers. (The next morning at breakfast, the woman tells Lee that I deserve a medal for having listened to her. I readily agree. Let the record show I'm still waiting for my medal.)

Tuesday, May 23

This is the day for which I save the Daily Program and the menus from lunch and dinner. Because the ship will leave Vienna at 12:30 p.m., we have time for only one museum in the morning. And so while

the tour group gazes and gawks and gasps over the gross excesses of the royals who once lived at Schönbrunn Palace (something that the Magids were guilty of having done in 1982), we locate the Oberes Belvedere Palace (part of the former estate of Prince Eugen of Savoy, in case you want to know) and its "museum of sorta modern art" (19th and 20th centuries). As it is another cold and rainy day, I wear my anorak on the metro, then on the tram, and finally on the walk to the museum. Having outsmarted ourselves by taking the tram to what we think is a more suitable stop, two stops beyond what the tour book suggests; and, therefore, having to walk very fast and over a much greater distance than we anticipated; and then finding the museum to be grossly overheated, I remove my anorak but not soon enough to prevent my being totally drenched. Why do I mention this? Because it's the 21st century, for goodness sakes, and there's no good reason that the Europeans can't air-condition their public buildings!!! (Oops, if someone else had written that, it would have been enshrined as **Ugly American Story No. 4.**) The museum has many paintings by Austrians Egon Schiele (1862-1918) and Gustav Klimt (1890-1918) but not much of other important artists. We time our return (via tram and metro) very well and get back before the ship sails to Dürnstein (also in Austria).

We spend the afternoon reading on the observation deck, where I finish *Kate Vaiden* and begin John Irving's *My Movie Business*. Then, after dinner (served a half-hour earlier than usual) we join our first official tour, a walking tour and wine tasting in Dürnstein. Our guide, a resident of a nearby town, tells us that this is the second smallest town (population about 400) in Austria but it survives because of its interesting history (see below) that attracts many tourists. [He alludes to the fact that tourism is down this year "because of the sanctions against Austria," the only reference that we hear to the rise of Jörg Haider. I am reminded of the quip that some wise person made about Austrians: "They try to convince visitors that Beethoven was Austrian and Hitler was German." (Lee and I had originally planned to tour southeastern Austria after the cruise terminated in Regensburg, but the election success of Haider and his Freedom Party in February, 2000, prompted us to change our plans; nevertheless, having already booked the cruise we were obligated to spend some time in this country.)] Dürnstein is an ancient walled city. According to one legend, Richard the Lionhearted was captured and held prisoner here in 1191 until his brother paid the ransom. The castle where he was imprisoned is up a steep cliff which would have been a 15-minute hike - as the youngest people on the tour, even we are relieved that we'll be staying down below; so, I'm sure, is the rest of the group. (Truth in advertising - the original castle was destroyed by invading Swedes; what we could have climbed to is a re-built substitute dating back "only" to the 18th century.) We visit the Augustine Monastery, where we see skeletons in glass-sided crypts - cool!! Finally, the main purpose of this tour occurs when we sat down in a Weinstube and sample three or four of the local wines. Our guide, in fact, is a wine grower who belongs to a wine-producing cooperative; the cellar in which we sit and guzzle (oops, I mean "sit and sip") belongs to one rather wealthy family who bottle their own label.

Observations:

- Along the entire length of the Duna/Donau/Danube, the side walls are kept in excellent shape. There is one gorgeous small town after another, each with its church (or two), marred only by the occasional nuclear reactor. There is essentially no industry between Vienna and Linz. Along the river there seems to be a perpetual park that is used for play, for running, for bike-riding, for roller-blading by people of all ages. In fact, one of the most notable features of central Europe (both the countryside and the cities) is the very large number of people on bicycles.
- Most surprising, we see not a single cow, sheep, pig, or goat anywhere along the river side. Where are the farm animals? Is all of the meat synthesized?

Wednesday, May 24

The ship leaves Dürnstein at 5:30 a.m., arriving in Melk three hours later. We take part in our second tour - the Benedictine monastery, originally built in 830 but destroyed and rebuilt in the 18th century. The *Rough Guide* describes it as "a flamboyant Baroque pile ... with grisly remains such as skeletons that are fully dressed" and so it is. The most hallowed of the relics, alas not accessible to tourists, is

the skeleton of St. Koloman; nevertheless we are fortunate to see a tooth and his lower jawbone (unattached to the rest of his body, I should add) incorporated into a monstrosity: a golden cross with a piece of wood from Christ's cross inside (*guaranteed!!*) and covered with too many diamonds and other jewels to count. The monastery does have a spectacular library with some 100,000 volumes; it used to have a Gutenberg Bible, but this was sold in 1926 to a minor university in New Haven, CT. The kirche attached to the monastery is beautiful; it, too, sports fully-clothed skeletons in glass crypts. We walk through the streets of Melk; a guide book's apt description is "charming but strained, it exists for the millions of tourists who pass through."

The ship departs Melk at noon and arrives in Linz at 8:00 p.m. Fifteen minutes after leaving Melk, we enter a lock which, while it is not the largest, is big enough to hold us and two other cruise ships; then at 2:00, this "record" is broken by our finding ourselves in another lock with two other cruise ships and a barge. We spent the afternoon reading on the observation deck (when we aren't speculating on how many ships can fit in a lock or how many angels on the head of a pin or how in the hell the Knicks are going to defeat the Pacers).

After dinner, the "official tour" is a mini-train ride through Linz; Lee and I opt, instead, for a walk; we discover a house where Kepler lived. (As we continue our vacation, we keep finding Kepler homes which seem to be as plentiful as official pieces of wood from Christ's cross - *guaranteed!*) Upon our return to the ship, we sit in the reading room and this time, thank heavens, Lee is with me when the non-English-speaking old woman shows up. Parts of the conversation I follow, parts Lee translates as it occurs, and parts we reconstruct later in our cabin. The woman says that we are "nice and peaceful (!!)," unlike other Americans she has met, for having the patience to listen; she describes what life was like in Leipzig (since 1954) under the control of the DDR; she talks about the crowds that assembled at the St. Nicholas Church (Nikolaikirche) which the government tried to control but eventually gave up on (see May 29); and about how the wall came down shortly afterwards; and about the joy that everyone felt. She talks about her travels throughout Europe and the U.S.S.R. (including Siberia!). She speaks quite softly and is sitting closer to Lee; these factors plus my rotten command of German make it hard for me to hear her. And then ...

Ugly American Story No. 4: While I am straining to hear the conversation, three noisy woman (from the Southern Belle Cotillion) come into the room, grab the two issues of *USA Today*, and start sharing (loudly) their delight at which of their stocks have risen; this is followed by other chatter and gossip. Had they been at all sensitive, they would have realized that they had interrupted a conversation - and, while it certainly was a public room to which they had every right to come, they could have kept their damned voices down. In a final act of rudeness, after 15 minutes they leave the room, walking between the German woman and the Magids, never saying "Excuse me." So whatever happened to Southern Hospitality, I ask? Does it not apply to foreigners, even when one is in (or near) the home of those so-called foreigners? After a while, our conversation ends and Lee and I return to our cabin where I finish reading *My Movie Business*.

Ugly American Story No. 5: This time, it was I who made the *faux pas*. I ask Natasa, the waitress assigned to our end of the dining room, what her nationality is and she replies Croatian. I then say, "I suspected as much. You look very much like a student at my university who is Yugoslavian." The fact that Serbia and Croatia fought a bloody war just seven years ago never penetrates my thick skull. Natasa chooses not to dump a bowl of hot soup on my head.

Thursday, May 25

The ship leaves Linz at 7:00 a.m. and arrives in Passau (in southeastern Germany) at 2:00 p.m. The day takes an unexpected ... and painful course. At about 9:00 in the morning, Lee and I go to the observation deck to read but decide to play a little ping-pong first. (We had done this on two earlier occasions.) I hit a magnificent passing shot which she lunges for, catching the tip of her sandal in the indoor/outdoor carpet, causing her to fly face-first into the carpet and the side of the ship. (Had this

been an Olympic Event, the judges would have awarded her 9's and 9.5's with a degree of difficulty of at least 2.8!) What a bloody mess! She is bleeding from her nose (on the tip, from which she has removed a chunk of skin, and from the inside); her glasses are knocked off; and the bridge of her nose begins to swell and discolor; the hematoma quickly passes to her left eye and later to her right; her hand is covered with blood, but this is from the nose; her left arm is also skinned and bruised as is her left knee and lower leg. One of the passengers (one of the few younger than we) is a nurse, Jan, who commandeers a first aid kit from the ship and another from one of the passengers and begins patching Lee up. By this time we have her sitting on a chaise, stretched out and covered with a blanket. Members of the crew (both those who sail the ship and those who run the hotel) come over with ice, towels, etc. and are most solicitous (probably in fear of being sued by crazy Americans). After a while, Lee says that she'd like to go to the cabin because "I want to see what I look like." "No you don't!" Jan and I shout in unison. What I find amazing is that no lawyer (from among the large number of retired people on board) comes running forth to offer his/her services. Could it be that this is a lawyer-free ship? Nah.

Five hours later when we arrive in Passau, we are met at the ship by two medics who speak no English - a problem because Lee doesn't know the German for "I'm a clumsy oaf who tripped and went kerplunk on the floor"; but Zita (one of the ship's two bartenders) accompanies us to the hospital and serves as translator. It is a bit of a squeeze getting the wounded party, her two escorts, and the two medics into the ambulance, but this is accomplished by strapping Lee onto a chair that is lifted into the back of the vehicle; one of the medics drives while the other takes a tiny jump seat; only Zita and I sit comfortably. At the hospital, we are fortunate that the doctor is fluent in English; he had studied in the U.S. He is also very thorough. X-rays of Lee's head show nothing (pace Dizzy Dean) - no broken nose nor damage to the ocular orbital (nor to the atomic or molecular orbitals either); although her arm hurts badly, there is sufficient range of motion to determine, even without x-ray, that nothing is broken here either. He assures her that she'll not die of these injuries. When we are finally finished, Lee asks the doctor about the bill. He replies, "This is Germany. Don't worry. It will probably be sent to your home address. If it is, file it with Blue Cross. If not, don't worry about it."

On June 22, a bill does arrive, addressed to "Lee Tenny Magid Lind" (a fair approximation to "Linda Jenny (call me Lee) Magid"). It lists three costs, precisely calculated to hundredths of a DM: Konsilium mit Chirurgen DM 31.46; Schädelübersicht DM 82.08; Schädelteilteile, spezialproj. Nasenbein seitl. DM 41.04 for a grand total of DM 154.54 (about \$77). Our dictionaries at home aren't of much help, so I look at the large German-English technical dictionaries in the reading room; I'm only partly successful. Konsilium I can't find in the dictionary, nor will Alta Vista or Babylon translate it; it may well be a medical-Latin word meaning consultation. Chirurg is surgeon so my guess for the first entry is "consultation with surgeon." Schädel is skull and übersicht is survey, so the second item is probably "skull examination." I can't make any sense out of Schädelteilteile - literally, it means skull part parts; the closest thing in the dictionary is Schädelweichteile which is cranial soft parts; the Alta Vista translator "helpfully" offers head dividing hurry! Nasenbein is nose bone (that one is easy) and seitl. may be an abbreviation for seitlich which is lateral so the best that I can come up with for the third hospital charge is "skull part parts, special projection, lateral nose bone"! I wonder what the clerks at Blue Cross/Blue Shield are going to think about all this. (Perhaps we should get Christiana Barnes or Ulf Peters to help with the translation before filing the claim.)

We (and Zita) take a taxi back to the ship at about 3:30; Lee and I then take a walk (for a couple of hours) around the part of Passau that we remember from 1995 (a beautiful area, including St. Stephen's Cathedral with the world's largest church organ; and the many ducks and swans along the shore where the three rivers [Donau, Inn, and Ilz all come together] - and I'm thinking to myself that I'm glad that we didn't spend the money for a tour that we'd have had to miss!). I convince Lee to let me take a picture of her face. She's at the very height of fashion with her "raccoon look"; and she'll be at the height of style when we get to Prague because, after all, didn't Smetana write an opera called "The Battered Bride"? (Had I realized how colorful her arm was going to be, I'd have taken a picture of that as well.) Even though her vision is impaired and she finds it painful, nearly impossible in fact,

to put the glasses on the bridge of her nose, she still recognizes on the ship's arrival into Passau the terrace on which we ate an ice cream in 1995 and the very umbrella under which we sat - or so she alleges.

Zita and I talk for quite a while during the time that Lee is waiting for the x-ray technician. Zita is young (early 20s?) and a college student in Budapest, following a program in hotel and restaurant management. As an advanced student, she has the luxury of taking off the seven months required to be on the ship's staff. Between her limited English and my even more limited German, I learn the following: (1) the entire ship's staff work for seven months consecutively with no time off - this was also told to us by Natasa (the waitress assigned to our table) and Mery ("We are not allowed to get sick!"); even more surprising, they have to pay for their room and board out of their salary; their only time-off is those periods of the day when they're not on duty; (2) she wants to sign on for a three-month round-the-world cruise leaving from and returning to Genoa during the months when KD doesn't sail the Danube; (3) she loves the work and considers it to be part of her professional training, unlike many of her co-workers [maids and cooks, I'd guess] who do it only for the money; (4) she confirms our supposition that Hungarian is a very difficult language; when I ask if it isn't close to Finnish, she replies that the two may have common ancient roots but not they have only a few words in common - the result is that Finns can't understand Hungarian nor can Hungarians understand Finnish; (5) economic conditions are very bad in Hungary - for example, the medical system is in a shambles because physicians and nurses are very poorly paid (about \$10,000 per year) and the equipment is outmoded; low salaries also plague school teachers.

The morning of the "accident" I begin reading *The Rebel Angels* by Robertson Davies, the first book in *The Cornish Trilogy*. I would have made more progress on it if not for the clumsiness of you-know-who (oops - I mean "you-know-whom") and the need to squander valuable reading time on trivial pursuits like wiping up the blood and getting what's-her-name to the hospital.

Friday, May 26

The last of the three tours that we booked begins at 9:00 in Degensdorf. Lee, not feeling completely recovered, sends me off alone - with all those unattached women!! Such trust! A bus takes us to Castle Egg (pronounced Eck), "protected" by a huge white Hungarian Sheep Dog who lives there along with the current earl or duke or whatever he is. It is an impressive place (the dining room, the halls, etc.) and the dog turns out to be considerably less than fierce - in fact, she is a camera hog and a glutton for petting. [DISCLAIMER - No Hungarian Sheep Dogs were harmed in the writing of this journal.] We then take an hour's ride through the Bavarian forest to Straubing where we have a walking tour of the city. Our ship, meanwhile, sails to Straubing where we re-board it at about 1:00. On the bus, I talk with one of the passengers (there were three Walters among the passengers and this is one of them) who had grown up in Brooklyn (he is about 15 years older than I) and who attended Erasmus Hall where he had (or so he says) Mr. Levy for chemistry; for the uninitiated, my mother attended Erasmus and had Mr. Levy for chemistry (this would have been around 1916) and, if it can be believed, Mr. Levy taught chemistry at James Madison High School when I was there (1952-5). Walter and I chat quite a bit about Brooklyn, the Dodgers, etc. He now lives near L.A. where, before he retired, he ran what must have been a very profitable "learning center" that is now presided over by his son. He is something of a wiseguy, full of cracks - e.g., at Castle Egg when we toured the formal dining room, he wonders where the afikomen was hidden. Another of the Walters turns out to be a Yale alumnus, class of 1950, as he reveals when he sees me reading a *Yale Alumni Magazine* on the observation deck that afternoon. Walter No. 2 is a very chatty type who keeps returning to tell Lee and me about different exploits of his at Yale, all in active pursuit of not studying. Despite his protestations of having done nothing distinguished in college, his career (as an accountant) must have been very lucrative because he and his wife own two homes and they take these cruises very frequently. He tells us that his last name (Rossmassler) is very common in Leipzig and he urges us to consult a phone book when we get there. [In fact, we do this on May 29, although we don't find a phone booth with telephone book until near the end of the day; alas, there are no people with his

name or anything like it. Maybe we are the ones who screwed up - but maybe he's an impostor, perhaps a spy!]

Ugly American Story No. 6: On the bus through the forest, several of the women sitting behind me take offense at how the guide describes the passing scene in both German and in English; as on the ship, they are convinced that English is all that is needed. They are especially annoyed that the guide does not translate all of the German into English (a fair complaint, as one time we hear "sauerkraut" in the German but not in the translation). So to avoid having to hear the German spiel, they begin singing songs (shades of summer camp!), thus preventing the German speakers from hearing anything over the loudspeakers.

Ugly American Story No. 7: In Straubing there is both a German-speaking guide and an English-speaking guide. All of the German passengers dutifully go with their guide; most of the Americans and other English speakers rebel and choose to do some shopping rather than stay on the tour - after a while, the only people with our guide are an Australian couple, another couple in which the man is so terribly feeble that he can barely keep up, and yours truly. At least I get to ask lots of questions of our guide as we tour the churches, the convent school, and so on.

The "Mystery of the Missing Sheep" (see May 23) is solved! Lee, who stays on board, reports that a gazillion sheep (plus or minus a few) were drinking from the Danube on the way to Straubing. That afternoon we sit on the observation deck and read, a chore for Lee since she can't really keep her glasses on her nose. The nose swelling seems to have subsided but now both eyes are developing a terrific purple border; so is the left arm. Stupid Boat Trick: we had already observed (May 21) how the bridge, the masts, and the roof of the observation deck could be lowered for a overpass, but we thought that there was only one low position for the roof; in fact, there is another (the walls are bowed out even more) so that the roof is now as low as the net on the ping-pong table. (DISCLAIMER - No passengers were harmed during the lowering of the roof; presumably the crew always checks that nobody is on deck.) We dock at Regensburg at 6:00. We then get dressed up (a little bit) for the captain's cocktail party and buffet. The captain tells us how far we've traveled (Lee and I can't remember the number of km) and that the 14 locks have raised us a total of 190 m. He then re-introduces many of the crew (who are applauded by the passengers); those crew members who don't receive recognition in the lounge receive their tributes in the dining room.

Saturday, May 27

We disembark in Regensburg at 9:00, then take a taxi to AutoEurope/Avis. We had "ordered" an Audi A4 (since we're familiar with it) but we get an Opel Vectra Station Wagon - whether it's longer than a simple sedan is debatable, but psychologically it seems longer and we will have some trouble, over the next few days, trying to wrestle it into parking spaces. Much to my delight, it has a cassette player so my packing a few audio cassettes is vindicated. (Both of the cars that we had rented in Norway, two years ago, had only radio/CD player, no cassette deck.) Well, maybe I'm not completely vindicated - a couple of days later we discover that there is also a CD changer inside the glove compartment.

Observations:

- I had forgotten how fast traffic moves on the autobahns. When there's a speed limit posted, most people (obedient Germans all) hew religiously to it. But when there's no speed limit, "warp speed" seems to be the norm. For example, I'd be doing 130-140 (km/hr, not mph!) and I'd be passed by cars that must have been doing 180-200. Many American drivers wouldn't survive for five minutes on these highways. Reason: the left-hand lane is used only for passing, not for dawdling; and if one moves to the passing lane in order to go past someone who is really slow (say "only" 120 km/hr), a glance in the rear-view mirror will show a BMW or Mercedes or Porsche bearing down on you, lights flashing, telling you to get the hell out of the way.
- I had also forgotten the use of "universal" road signs throughout Europe. Unlike the U.S. where one

has to read the words on signs (low shoulder or do not pass or one lane ahead), everything in Europe is done with pictographs - of course, one needs to break the code, something that we succeeded in doing for everything except whether or not a right turn on red light is permitted.

I drive most of the way (about 210 km) to Erfurt, but Lee feels capable of driving the final 50 km or so. We have a vague idea that the hotel (LinderHof) is east of Erfurt [why did I forgot to pack the necessary maps and information?], so we plot a course for there ... and actually find it. The last hour or so of the trip we drive in cold/wind/rain. When we check in at the hotel, the receptionist has practically no English. Fortunately we know how to tell her (auf Deutsch) that the room she gives us is not ready (beds unmade, towels on the floor) so she assigns us to a different room but with only a shower (no bathtub); Lee had been looking forward to soaking her bruises, aches and pains, but this will have to wait. Our memory, from the hotel's web site, is that it is air-conditioned but this turns out not to be the case. [In fact, on returning to Knoxville and checking the web, I discover that A/C was never mentioned; this must have been wishful thinking on my part.] Nevertheless, the room is bright and spacious with ample storage space (a welcome change from the ship) and a modern bathroom with new plumbing fixtures; the bathroom also sports the largest magnifying mirror I've ever seen. The room features two of those terrific European windows that can be unlatched on the side and swung open or, if one prefers, can be re-latched so that they're hinged at the bottom and swing open from the top. The cost is modest (ca. \$120 per night, breakfast included). There seems to be minimal staff in the hotel. Whenever we try to leave the key at the desk, it's hard to find someone to give it to. On occasion, we have to go into the dining room to find someone. On our second day there when returning to the hotel from a day's sight-seeing, no hotel personnel are anywhere in sight nor is there any response to my "hello," so I walk behind the desk to get our key - a young man from the restaurant angrily comes out, glares at me, and slams the door behind the desk so that nobody would dare to be so boorish again. He, like the original receptionist and the restaurant waitresses, speaks very little English. When we check out on May 29, we encounter the owner whose English is impeccable; perhaps he doesn't work weekends..

The hotel is located at the end of a road in a little village called Linderbach. Our room looks out over some homes with small backyard gardens. When we arrive (at about 1:30 in the afternoon) and open our window, we hear a rooster crow - how nice, they found one who is on Eastern Standard Time, just to make us feel at home. By the time we unpack, the rain has stopped and so we take out across the countryside, passing through some lovely towns (all with their bright red roofs) in a search of an 11th century monastery ruins in Paulinzella. Although it is mentioned in a reliable guide book and although we have two maps, we never find the place. (We are not too surprised as, there are big red X's through all of the signs leading east to Rudelstadt - but as we don't know how close to Rudelstadt the ruins might, be we press on ... and find ourselves thwarted.) In defeat, we retrace our route, then proceed onward to Erfurt, a beautiful little city with terrific old buildings (lovingly restored), a handsome city hall, a pedestrian area, and a bridge over the small canal/river which is well stocked with ducks. There are numerous old churches and a cathedral that we visit. We return to the hotel and have an excellent meal (but very very very slowly served) of Thuringian specialties.

Sunday, May 28

The hotel restaurant, despite the small number of guests who are there overnight, puts out an excellent breakfast spread, as varied and generous as we found on the ship. The morning and early afternoon we spend in Weimar, some 30 km east of our hotel. We have an excellent visit to the Goethe Museum (located in the house where he lived for 50 years); the English museum guide that we purchase is essential. Goethe entertained all of the great intellectuals of Europe, not just in literature and the arts but also in science; in fact, he conducted many of his own experiments. We visit the Stadtkirche of St. Peter and St. Paul, badly damaged during WW II; in comparison with the baroque and rococo excesses that define many central European churches, this one is surprisingly plain, even severe; still it is in Gothic style, Protestant since the 16th century. We visit the Schloss Kunstmuseum with an excellent collection of Cranach and Dürer; the promised exhibit of works from

the Bauhaus group (Klee, Kandinsky, Albers?) is merely that - a promise. This is not only an art museum but also an old castle, so walking through the museum also gives us a castle tour (with rooms named after poets like Goethe, Schiller, etc.). We walk around the city, but don't find it anywhere near as attractive as Erfurt even though it is considerably smaller. At the town information bureau and at the museum, we again encounter people who speak very little English; it must have been the case that during the years of the DDR, only German and Russian were taught in the schools.

With some trepidation, I agree to visit Buchenwald (about 10 km from Weimar). It's in a beautiful wooded setting that belies its horrors. By a nice coincidence, the audio cassette that is playing gives us the boy soprano's aria (in Hebrew) from Bernstein's "Chichester Psalms" just as we arrive. We spend a lot of time in the museum where there is just enough English to tell us the story of the place. How much of what follows is propaganda, I can't tell, but this is what we learn from the signs. After WW II ended, the West Germans took a long time to come to grips with and admit their complicity in the crimes of Dachau and the like, but the East Germans wanted to erect a memorial to what had gone on at Buchenwald; however the regime chose to tell "the big lie" that the only people who had been imprisoned there were patriotic German freedom fighters who opposed the Nazis and were put to death. For two generations, there was no mention of Jews, Slavs, gypsies, etc. and all memory of what actually took place was lost. After the fall of the DDR in 1989 and the reunification of the two Germanies, the museum and the rest of the camp were re-dedicated to tell the truth of the place. One of the most dramatic exhibits was an audio tape (about 10 minutes long) of Edward R. Murrow's radio broadcast when he accompanied the U.S. soldiers who liberated Buchenwald in 1945. He spoke with people (former diplomats, physicians, scientists) whom he did not then recognize but whom he had known in Prague (and other cities) before the war. It was one of the most poignant and depressing broadcasts I've ever heard. After spending time inside (and viewing horrible photos of dead bodies piled on top of dead bodies on top of ...) we tour the grounds a bit, making note of the electrified barbed wire, the crematorium, the officers' barracks, the barracks where the prisoners were stashed, and so on.

After Buchenwald, we set out to try to find Paulinzella from another direction (driving south into Rudelstadt). This time, we do get to the town, but still no monastery. Nevertheless we park and walk around a bit - they are in the final day of a three-day fair and the streets are filled with people who are enjoying the food, drinks, games, rides, and an occasional politician's speech.

Observations:

- Reflecting on the DDR, who was it who remarked that the word "Democratic" in a country's name signifies that it isn't?
- During the DDR regime, a grotesque monument to the "German freedom fighters" was erected atop a hill at Buchenwald; it can be seen for many km in all directions.
- The locals at the fair in Rudelstadt look very different from the more urbane and prosperous Germans we see in the cities - one might liken it to the difference in appearance between East Tennesseans who come down from the "hollers" and those who live in Knoxville. Both men and women are rough- and tough-looking, sporting much more body piercing and dyed hair than we have seen anywhere else, along with washed-out blank facial expressions, nondescript clothes, unkempt hair. (Once again the parallel to Appalachian mountain folk could not have been more apparent.)
- Every town that we drive through has its lovely red roofed houses, its town hall, its church or cathedral. But also, every town of any size has its Soviet-era apartment buildings - nondescript concrete structures in a bad state of filth and disrepair.
- In Weimar, we have great difficulty navigating the streets in our trusty car; even with a good Stadtplan, every place we want to turn seems to be one-way the wrong way; and dead-end streets would crop up without warning. The closer we get to the city center, the more this is true.

We drive back to Erfurt, convinced that we can easily find the parking lot that we used yesterday. Not so! Once again, one-way streets and dead ends confront and challenge us - we wind up parking further from the city center than we had the day before. The facts that the skies are grey and dreary

all day, that the temperature doesn't rise above 15°C, and that the winds are fierce don't help our mood. Because of the unbearably slow service at the hotel's restaurant the previous evening, we eat at the Ratskeller in Erfurt (after discovering that most of the city-center restaurants are closed on Sunday). The food is excellent but again the service is slow. Perhaps this is a characteristic of life under the old regime ("We pretend to work and they pretend to pay us"); or perhaps it's just the more relaxed life-style that people here enjoy. Just as we had incurred the wrath of the clerk at the hotel, we seem to have done something to displease our waitress - every time she walks past or brings us food, she glowers at us - Lee thinks that it was because we asked to be seated (apparently one should know to just sit down, wherever) and we compounded our sin by picking up our own menus. OK, so we, too, are ugly Americans ... but I thought that we were being polite.

Monday, May 29

We check out of the LinderHof and drive to Leipzig where we spend a few hours (after getting slightly lost trying to find the center of town and a suitable Parkplatz). We visit the Church of St. Thomas (Thomaskirche) where Bach was Cantor from 1723 until his death in 1750. His bones were found in a cemetery in 1900 and moved to a vault in the church floor (cool!). The pipe organs in the church are not those on which Bach played but rather 20th century acquisitions. The church dates from the 14th century, but has undergone many transformations, not the least of which is its change from Catholic to Protestant. We then walk a short distance to the Bach Museum which offers a small but interesting display of his letters, music, biographical data, and so on. A nicely written English-language guide plus an audio guide (also in English) are very helpful; the audio tape also has an ample number of Bach musical selections to accompany what is in the display cases. During Bach's time as Cantor at the School of St. Thomas, he was responsible for: music at both the Thomaskirche and Nikolaikirche; performing motets and chant at the Neukirche and the Peterskirche; overseeing four choirs and directing the one at Thomaskirche; as musical director of the city, writing and performing secular music for the nobility at weddings, council elections, festivals, etc.; and traveling to small towns and cities to test and repair their church organs. During his first year in Leipzig, he wrote over 200 sacred cantatas (that still survive; others are lost). Somehow, with all of his activities, he managed to father 22 children by two wives (consecutive, not concurrent); four of these children became noted musicians. His second wife, Anna Magdalene, was forced to sell his manuscripts after his death in order to raise money, but still became destitute and died in the poor house. (So this is the thanks a mother gets? Oy!)

We then visit the Nikolaikirche, built in 1165, and we acquire a nice English-language pamphlet about its history. During the 1980s, young people would come to the church for 10-day seminars called "peace decades," dedicated to ending the arms race. The DDR, of course, opposed all public gatherings that were in opposition to the regime. As the pamphlet so aptly puts it, "The East German government strongly opposed human rights violations as long as they occurred outside of the Warsaw Pact's sphere of influence." The more the government cracked down on these peace prayer services, the more people chose to attend them. Starting in May, 1989, the Stasi (the state security police, Ministerium für Staatssicherheit) blocked the entrances and driveways to the church in an effort to keep people away. In September of 1989, a large group of citizens refused to leave the church. There were many beatings and arrests by the police, but still the number of people inside swelled. Quoting from the pamphlet, "Then came the all-deciding 9 October 1989. And what a day it was! There was a hideous show of force by soldiers, industrial militia, police, and plain-clothes officers." Many members of these militia were ordered to occupy seats inside the church so that ordinary citizens could not enter. The author of the pamphlet, a clergyman, contends that the peace message was so compelling that even the militia members, both inside the church and in the courtyard outside, were infused with the spirit of peace and joined the protestors. People holding candles poured out into the streets; the military initially confronted them, then withdrew. The protests were enormous and non-violent; they lasted two more weeks. A member of the Central Committee of the DDR is quoted as saying, "We had planned everything. We were prepared for everything. But not for candles and prayers." By the end of the year the wall separating East and West had fallen; and a few months later

there were the first free elections. Full unification of the two Germanies came in October, 1990.

From Leipzig, we drive on to Dresden, a much larger and more difficult-to-navigate city than we have encountered to date. We manage to get a little lost when seeking the hotel, but using a notional city map (from a guide book) and a rough spotting map printed off the Schloss Eckberg web site, we finally get our bearings set. We locate Bautzener Strasse, a principal east-west street with tram line on the north side of the Elbe, and we look for No. 134. We drive through some rough areas (buildings in disrepair, either from WW II damage or neglect by the DDR or both; thuggish-looking young people on the streets; lots of graffiti on the walls) and Lee becomes apprehensive, especially since she had read that the neighborhoods north of the Elbe were the preferred meeting places for the skinheads. I keep reassuring her (based on what I had read at the hotel's web site) that we are heading toward a bucolic and idyllic garden paradise, a non-violent Edenic region that is nothing like these neighborhoods we are driving through. But even I begin to have some doubts when we start seeing street addresses in the 120s without any improvement in ambience. I should have recalled a lesson, learned time and again in Europe, that building addresses don't change in the regular/logical pattern that we're accustomed to. For example, one might find 5 Main Street, but this is no guarantee that 7 Main Street is adjacent or that 4 Main Street is across the street. Finally (in rain and wind and cold) we find ourselves driving past some magnificent gated property on our right and a lovely wooded area on our left; and then we reach 134 Bautzener Strasse. What a treat!

The hotel's grounds and buildings are extraordinary. There is the "castle" (which houses the dining rooms and 17 guest rooms) that looks ancient but was built in the 1860s; it sits on a bluff overlooking the Elbe and it commands a spectacular view (from its terrace) of the river, the bridges, the main part of the city across the river, etc. Over the years it had been occupied by a number of wealthy families and then (as described in a pamphlet we picked up) "... ownership was transferred to the City of Dresden. During the DDR period, the castle was used primarily for union activities, as a meeting place for youth, and other similar purposes. After the political turning point, ownership returned to the von Mayenburgs (the owners from 1920 through 1947)." Rooms in the "castle" were quite expensive (410 DM for a double) so we had chosen to stay in the "Cavalier's House" (at 260 DM), a lovely building, recently built, with 67 guest rooms. The grounds also feature a lovely building (called *Remise*, French for coach-house) for meetings and seminars; numerous walking paths; statues (some quite surrealistic); and a pond complete with lily pads, several frogs, and one itinerant duck. In addition to the four-page history of the hotel (in English) we also walk off with the hotel's brochure (in German) that has beautiful color photos of the buildings and grounds. At Schloss Eckberg, we find hotel personnel who are comfortable in English, although I persist in trying to use my German. What is most charming is the English version of their multi-page web site, something we had chucked over when we were making our plans. Here are three quotations, *verbatim*, from the web page:

"Everything is offered to our guests at castle Eckberg, which does serve the purpose of your relaxation. You will have the choice amongst three different saunas in our oasis of rest. You may make your circulation getting a move on in the fitnessroom as well as you may cultivate your holiday's bronze in the solarium. You would like to get a massage or a rather individual cosmetic treatment, you are in good hands with us."

"A fairytalelike castle, dedicated to the guest. When entering the splendid park of the castle Eckberg you will be remembered to a fairytale of your childhood. Topping the river Elbe, in between the old city of Dresden and the district called "Weißer Hirsch", amongst old trees, this traditional mansion is sitting in state with its unmistakable charme of private atmosphere."

"Our attentive service is going to anticipate you each and every of your wishes. Jens Budde, the chef de cuisine and his rather engaged crew are experts in offering the classic pleasure de palette with a regional touch as well as a light fashionable international cuisine to you. Fine weather provided you are going to enjoy breakfast, lunch and dinner at the terrace right on top the highbanks of the Elbe."

Ah yes, that holiday "bronze," that regional "tough"! Our room in the Cavalier's House is a delight. It sits on two levels; below is a large well-furnished living room and bathroom (again very modern but, alas, without the full bath that Lee had hoped for); upstairs is a loft where the bedroom is located. The room is not air-conditioned (once again we seem to recall, incorrectly as it turned out when I had a chance to check, that it had A/C).

We eat dinner at the restaurant in the Castle: very expensive (about 190 DM, including tip) but excellent and beautifully served. By way of comparison, our meals in Erfurt (at the hotel and in the city) were only about 60-70 DM, including tip. We resolve to find other places to eat dinner on our remaining four evenings in Dresden. But we do take full advantage of the free breakfasts at the Castle, a magnificent spread of cold and hot things, fruit, juice, cereal, meats, cheeses, breads and rolls, etc. (At the first morning's breakfast, the *Herald Tribune* carries the good news that the Knicks have won game 3 against the Pacers and are down "only" 2 games to 1.)

Tuesday, May 30

We take the tram (the nearest stop is about 300 m from the hotel) to the city center and walk to the Tourist Information Office which had advertised itself as a place to buy concert tickets; the clerk says that no tickets are available for any of the concerts that we might have been interested in. We stop at an optician who, after much sign language and a little German, is able to do some adjustments on Lee's glasses so that they sit more comfortably on her nose. Lee then spots the Dresden Music Festival office and they do have tickets (25 DM each) for a performance in the Frauenkirche - see June 1. The Dresden Music Festival (classical and jazz) spans several months and uses about six venues, two of which are out-of-doors. While waiting to be taken care of, we listen as the clerk is explaining to a customer on the phone that she is unable to guarantee good weather for a concert at the Zwinger Palace. Is my German getting better? Probably not. But what she says on the phone is "Schönes Wetter können wir nicht bestellen. Wir erwarten gutes Wetter."

We walk to the Frauenkirche which, like everything else, was destroyed during the fire bombing of Dresden during WWII; it is just now being rebuilt. (Actually it survived the initial attack but collapsed a few days later because of severe heat stress.) It is covered with scaffolding and netting and is accepting only individual donations (nothing from the government) in the hopes that the restoration will be complete by 2006 (the 800th anniversary of the city); the cost is estimated to be 250 million DM. Beyond the construction fences are many pieces of stone carvings that will be put in place as the walls are built. This church (Protestant) has had an interesting history. It was built, once again by individual donations, in the early 1700s to protest the decision of Friedrich Augustus II (the son of August the Strong) to convert to Catholicism in order to become King of Poland while still holding the title Elector of Saxony. We view the restoration and also the small museum that shows what the church looked like prior to WW II, what it looked like after the war, and how the reconstruction is going to proceed. The Unterkirche (two floors below, the site for the concert we'll attend on Thursday) is already restored and is used for services.

We walk to the wing of the Zwinger Palace that houses the art museum. This proves to be something of a challenge. Housed inside the various wings of the enormous Zwinger is not only the art museum but also zoological, porcelain, and mathematics (!) museums. How to decide where the Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister is? There are no signs - anywhere - so one needs to ask. Arrayed on the steps in front of one wing is a very large number of well-dressed business people, all carrying identical briefcases (probably from some conference), assembling to have their picture taken. So I ask the woman who is organizing the photo session where the art museum is and she directs us to the far side of the courtyard. Either my German is rotten or she just wants us out of the way, but in fact the entrance is not across the courtyard but rather at the top of the very steps where the business people are standing. The museum (so many rooms, so many stairs, so many visitors!!) has a superb collection of mainly 16th and 17th century art: among the artists represented are Rubens, van Dyck, Rembrandt, and Raphael; the latter's famous *Sistine Madonna* hangs at the end of a gallery where it

can be seen from two galleries away. (This is the painting whence come those two fat angels that seem to appear everywhere nowadays - in TV ads, on greeting cards, in magazines - I had always thought that they were from some Botticelli work)

Bad Pun #1a - As the collection also has some El Greco paintings, I ask Lee (for the second time on this trip) where he had been born (shockingly forgotten by my traveling companion and normally reliable factoid-sponge) and what they call people who leave Crete ("Excretions," also forgotten). Why oh why can't I attract high-quality students? It's a curse, that's what it is, a curse. Of course this results in another sharp elbow to the ribs, not for the bad pun but for having chastised her for her short memory.

We stop for ice cream and coffee at a street-side café across from the Frauenkirche, then walk to the Stadt Museum for a dramatic (and depressing) exhibit devoted to the firebombing of Dresden on February 13/14, 1945. Through letters, photos, paintings, etc., the story of the city's destruction is revealed. Nobody knows how many people died (probably in excess of 30,000) but it's certain that some 35,000 buildings were destroyed in the two-day-long attack; one guide book suggests that since Dresden was of only limited military value, this firestorm was ordered by Churchill in retaliation for Hitler's attacks on the citizens of Coventry. Who really knows? The photos of the empty shells of buildings and of people with vacant stares walking through the rubble are terrible. Restoration of the city is still not complete, as we note many times when we round a corner and find yet another set of bombed-out ruins; nevertheless, the pace of restoration has picked up under unified German rule. The museum also has a display on the development of Dresden from medieval times until the 20th century. [It is at some point during our time in Dresden (I don't recall precisely when) that I come to the startling realization that my eyes have changed so much in the past couple of months that: (a) I don't really need my glasses for distance vision (although they do help in some situations) and (b) I do need the bifocal part to read the small print in a Stadtplan or telephone book. Is it possible that my eyes are, at long last, "normal" for a person of my age? How depressing!!]

We ask the Eckberg staff for a dinner recommendation, somewhere near the hotel. From ads we had identified a promising place, but the receptionist says that we'd enjoy much more Villa Maria, an Italian restaurant that is near our original choice. Our instructions are to drive east on Bautzener Strasse to the first right, drive down the steep hill to the Elbe, cross it, then look for the restaurant that is right under the bridge on the other side of the river. We are told, "It's a little hard to find, so ask someone for help. Everybody knows it." So we drive east, take the first right, plunge down a narrow winding road toward the river, cross the river, and can't find Villa Maria (although the other restaurant, the one in the ad is clearly in view). I proceed to the first light and, as I'm in a mandatory turn lane, turn right, then right again down a dead-end street toward the south shore of the river. I park there (not being sure whether or not it's private property) while Intrepid Explorer Scout Lee walks off in search of the restaurant. She returns after a successful sighting. It is, indeed, under the bridge, just to the right of where we were when we crossed the Elbe. Do we dare leave the car where it's parked now? Probably not, not without any signs indicating that it is public parking, so we drive back to the main street and make a left turn to go toward the bridge again. (This, by the way, is a famous 19th century bridge called the Blaues Wunder.) And although Villa Maria is on the left, its parking lot is on the right ... but not accessible from this street. So we go across the Elbe again and then try to find a place for a U-turn. Finally after climbing some distance up the narrow winding road away from the river, there's a street on the left. I take it, then make a U-turn in the first driveway, not noticing that it has a formidable fence behind which are steely-eyed men in blue uniforms. "It's Stasi headquarters!" Lee says in alarm. "Nonsense," say I, "the Stasi has been disbanded." She is not convinced. So we go down the road to the river, cross it, and this time make a left at the light. The parking lot we want is right there on our left, but there's no way to cross the traffic and tram lines to get to it. So we drive a bit east until I find enough of a break in the traffic to make a left down a side street; I then execute another U-turn, this time not under the gaze of the polizei or Stasi or whoever, and try to ease my way back into traffic. This proves to be very difficult, but I finally get back into the flow, which is barely a flow at all since it is proceeding at a molasses-like pace. Finally, finally, we get to the parking lot entrance, drive

underneath the road that we had traversed a number of times, find the restaurant, and are shown to a nice table. There is only one waitress who speaks some English so she takes us on as a pet project. We have an excellent meal (and much less expensive than last night's, a little over 100 DM). The waitress turns out not to be as fluent in English as I had thought because when it comes time to pay we ask her whether the service is included ("No it isn't") so I then ask how to give the tip. (Last night, we had run into trouble at the Eckberg's restaurant; the credit card slip, unlike those in the US, had no place for a tip - when I asked our waiter how to do it, he said that we should have told him ahead of time and he would have added it to the bill - now there was no choice but to leave the tip as cash, something he probably wanted anyway.) So I ask her about how to leave a tip - and I notice that her lips are moving as she tries to translate my question word-for-word; at the end, she is unable to give an answer. So I get the credit card receipt, once again with no place for the tip, and I simply write it in by hand and re-do the total. I hope that it works. (Although credit card receipts used by restaurants do not have a place for a tip, the receipt for hotel lodging that we'll pay on Friday morning does have such a line; the service economy seems to be slow in establishing itself in the former DDR.)

Wednesday, May 31

A dark, dreary, rainy day, not the best for a driving tour through the countryside, but, as the ticket seller told her phone contact, there are no guarantees when it comes to weather. (The sun does come out for a short time at about 3:00 and then for good after 5:00.) We take off for what we hope will be a beautiful drive through lovely scenery, but first we find ourselves stuck in traffic jam after traffic jam, construction site after construction site, all in one-lane traffic, just trying to exit Dresden to the southeast. Finally we get out of the city and then to Königsberg Fortress, built in the 15th century and considered to be impregnable. This is easy to believe, considering its size, its massive walls, its height (230 m above the river), and its commanding view of the Elbe in both directions. So confident were the Saxon rulers of its inviolability that they stored their money and jewels here. There is a foot path on which we began our climb; it starts off like a "bunny slope," then gets steeper, finally reaching an 85° angle. (OK, so I exaggerate - it's only 75°.) This gets us (out of breath and sweating despite the cool air) to the base of the fortress from which one can take an elevator the rest of the way. Who cares how much it costs? Let's go! Well, the view from the top is worth it; the buildings and ramparts are interesting; and we gawk at the commander's wine cask that could hold 250,000 liters. Hic! The elevator then deposits us at the base of the fortress from which the walk down to the parking lot is actually rather pleasant. We then drive cross the Elbe and to Bastei ("a gorge of bizarrely shaped rocks" says one of the tour books, and so it is!). After walking around a bit, eating an ice cream, and taking some pictures of the rocks, we drive to see the Castle at Stolpen and then we return to the hotel. Yesterday, we had asked the hotel staff to recommend a restaurant near the hotel that serves local specialties. Much easier to find than Villa Maria is Hubertusgarten with its numerous animal heads (all dead) on the walls, its gun racks (courtesy of Germany's NRA?) everywhere, but with good if simple food, nicely prepared and served; again no place to write the tip, so this time we leave it in cash. The cost is even less than Villa Maria, only 68 DM. Maybe we'll find something in the Krystal price range tomorrow? In the evening, I finish *The Rebel Angels* and begin Calvin Trillin's *Family Man*.

Hotels are in business to make money - that's obvious - but it's interesting the contrasting convention groups that they manage to attract. Yesterday, there is a seminar in the *Remise* run by one Guang Li, "noted Tai Chi master"; this morning, Mr. Li and his "Tai Chi-ers" are on the front lawn doing their thing. Today their place in the *Remise* is taken by "The Davidoff Cigarette Forum" consisting of solid-looking businessmen and -women who do not do exercises on the front lawn.

Observations:

- On our numerous walks past Schloss Eckberg's lily pond (on the way to and from breakfast or just going for a stroll), we would encourage the frogs to croak BUD WEIS ER. They refuse to respond. Perhaps my German isn't good enough for them to understand. Or perhaps frogs really are as stupid as the lizards in the commercial say they are.

- The further east we travel in Germany, the more body piercing, tattoos, punk clothes, wild haircuts, and unnatural hair colors we see in the population, even among some mainstream types.
- On the streets of Dresden, on the trams, in the stores, and in the small towns nearby, there are many elderly women, unaccompanied by men. Are they alone: (a) by choice; (b) because their husbands died of natural causes; or (c) because their husbands died during the war, either at our hands or the hands of the Russians?
- As I noted in Budapest, many old people limp or use canes or walkers; and some are amputees - again one wonders if these are the infirmities of old age or the result having been bombed. In any event, these people have suffered so much, from the wild inflation of Germany between the wars to the cruelties of the Nazis to the deprivations under Soviet rule, to the difficult transition to one Germany.
- Car drivers are remarkably well-mannered. Despite our small problem breaking into traffic when we looked for Villa Maria, most drivers are quite content to let people in, even though many of the main streets are one-lane (i.e., like Sutherland rather than Kingston Pike); in addition, the drivers almost never honk their horns; and "road rage" seems to be absent (except perhaps on the autobahns - see earlier). Is this behavior simply "good manners" or is it the upshot of having lived in a tightly controlled police state for so many years?
- Here's another illustration of good manners: although cell phones are not as prevalent as in other major European cities (e.g. Stockholm and Oslo which we visited in 1998 or Prague where we'll be next week), people do have them. When someone is sitting in a restaurant and the cell phone rings, the person seems always to step outside so as not to bother people (or, perhaps, to keep his/her conversation out of earshot of the Stasi who, I have it on good authority, no longer exist).
- Not so much in Dresden as in the countryside, we see some Trabants on the road among the Mercedes and Audis and BMWs and VWs. Apparently these so-called cars have become nostalgic collector's items, although it was clear that for some people their Trabant was their primary means of transportation and had been owned by them for many years. It was not pleasant to be behind one of them on a one-lane road, as its effluent was neither sweet-smelling nor healthful.

Ugly American Story No. 8: To an American's ears (and I include myself) it's difficult to read or hear certain German words without giggling. It took a while to get accustomed, even though I knew them from earlier trips, to: der Schmuck (jewelry), das Rathaus (city hall), and die Fahrt (trip) as in the sign "Wir wünsche Sie eine gute Fahrt!" Tomorrow, in fact, many attractions will be closed because of the sacred national holiday, "Maria Himmelfahrt."

Thursday, June 1

As we leave the hotel after breakfast and walk toward the tram stop, we hear - and then we see behind us - the tram approaching. Emboldened by the Olympic-class sprint of Jackie Joyner Magid, she and her rapidly aging consort manage to reach the tram before it pulls away. (I suspect that the driver, unlike his U.S. counterpart Crankshaft, saw us and delayed his departure.) This is a good thing, as the trams are on a holiday schedule, which would mean a fairly long wait for the next one. We take the tram to the city center and go to the concert in the basement of the Frauenkirche. The performers (a Russian violinist named Alina Pogostkin and a Polish pianist named Jan Gazdzicki) are excellent, even though both were only 16 years old. The program is the Bach Solo Violin Sonata No. 2, BWV 1003; the Mozart Sonata in C for Violin and Piano, K. 296; and the Franck Violin/Piano Sonata in A Major. Both artists are superb, although the pianist needs to lose his childish (impish) grin when he bows to the applause. When we emerge from the Unterkirche, we are pleased that it is not raining (and would not rain for the rest of the day).

Following the concert, we walk to the nearby Albertinum (the museum of 19th and 20th century art). My intrepid tour guide initially has egg on her face (the sign says that the museum is closed on Thursdays) but recovers beautifully because the museum happens to be open on this national holiday ("Ascension" doesn't sound as silly as Maria Himmelfahrt). Most of the artists are local; and the art is not especially provocative although we do see a bronze sculpture by Max Bill called "Halb Kugeln auf

Zwei Achsen" which is, in fact, "La Coupe du Roi." It is not available on a card in the museum shop, nor have I been able to find it at any of the web sites devoted to the artist.

Bad Pun #2 - While sitting on a bench, under a tree, alongside the Elbe and waiting for the time to walk to the Frauenkirche, we are assaulted by gnats. I ask Lee if she knew what little German gnats are called. When she replies that she doesn't, I inform her that they are called Gnatsies! Another elbow to the ribs is my reward.

We return to the hotel and pick up the car for a drive through the woods (finally - a pleasant region within Dresden's city limits) northwestward toward Moritzberg. On foot, we circumnavigate Schloss Moritzberg, a grotesque structure of great size and unimaginably poor taste, the summer home of August I; its ugliness is not diminished by the lovely lake alongside it. The guide book tells us that the palace has "the best collection of antlers in the world" something of which the curators must be enormously proud. There is a parking lot next to the palace where there is a brass band and drunken revelers (well it *is* a religious holiday!) who are singing songs and riding motorcycles. Nearly everyone has put bunches of branches on the front of the motorcycle or car or bicycle; this has something to do with Maria Himmelfahrt, but just what its religious significance might be is not at all clear. We eat at a small restaurant next to the parking lot, Bärenhäusel, for about 75 DM.

Friday, June 2

Today marks our last breakfast at Schloss Eckberg, our last walk along the pool, our last chance to get the frogs to say BUD WEIS ER. And it feels as if it's going to be a rather hot day, so maybe it's a good thing that we're vacating our non air-conditioned room.

Observations:

- As on previous trips to Europe, I'm convinced that I could make a fortune if only I could convince these good people that they need any (or better yet all) of the following, each of which is nearly completely missing from the culture: (1) big gas-guzzling SUVs; (2) screens for the windows in hotel rooms, museums, and homes.; (3) ice-water machines in public places, perhaps coin-operated? I know that they "need" these things - so how to convince them that they need these things?
- As was true at the LinderHof, our hotel room here also has those great windows that pivot either on the side and open that way or at the bottom and open from the top. Ingenious design, I say. And since both modes open inward, the idea of a bug-protecting screen is not so stupid - in fact, we have several insects inside our room because there are flowers in the flower boxes and on the vines just outside our room.

The original plan had been to return the car to Avis on Thursday before 10:00 a.m., but we called on Wednesday to extend the contract to Friday morning at the same time; because there was some difficulty in explaining ourselves in German - Lee handled most of the negotiation on the phone - we then asked the Eckberg staff to call for us and get another extension until 2:00 in the afternoon. I think that we'll be charged for two full days extra, but that's not so awful. So we check out of the hotel and drive toward the southwest. As was the case on Wednesday, we encounter terrible stop-and-go traffic within the city limits; just when we think we've escaped, I make a turn (at the express direction of my fearless, if also incompetent, navigator) and we find ourselves on a controlled access road that takes us a mile north, right back to where we had started! We finally escape from the city and drive to the town of Freiberg and admire the old city, the old walls, the old everything else from the 1500s. Then it's on to the Altzella Monastery Park (near Nossen) which is very interesting; the ruins date from the 12th century (perhaps this compensates for our never having found the ruins at Paulinzella?); this place is very much out in the country and features a rooster (related to the one from Erfurt?) who crows even though it is well into the afternoon. We drive back to Dresden and return the car, then take a taxi to the train station at about 2:45. It is very hot there - and our train which is scheduled to leave at 3:55 doesn't actually depart until 4:15 ("Toto, I think we're not in Switzerland any more"). There is no escalator or elevator to the train platform, so I lug all of our suitcases up the stairs, trying

to be careful that nobody steals them when they are either at the top or the bottom and unguarded. The train has one first-class car and our experience is that these are usually quite empty. Not this time! A Japanese tour group gets on, each person carrying something like 15 pieces of luggage which is then strewn everywhere: at the ends of the car, on the racks above, underneath the seats, and in the aisle. Because we need to get off at the first of the two Prague stops (where the train would linger for only three minutes) we ponder how we can get ahead of the Japanese and all of their luggage. As it turns out, they don't get off until the second Prague station, so all is OK. (Another indication that we aren't on a Swiss train is that having left Dresden 20 minutes late, we arrive in Prague 40 minutes late). Often the train travels much slower than a car: for example, the 40 km from Dresden to Bad Schandau is scheduled to take 38 minutes (less than 40 mph); the final leg from Ústí nad Labem to Prague, 103 km, is scheduled to take 77 minutes but actually takes 90. We are met on the train platform by a man who greets us by name. I assume that he is from the hotel (we had arranged for a car to pick us up for \$10) but that's not the case at all - after helping us down the stairs with our large suitcases, he delivers us to the man who is actually the taxi driver. So who is this guy? Just some enterprising entrepreneur who is trying to survive. I have no money for a tip, so I quickly change some German currency into Czech and tip the first guy, if I recall, 100 Ck (about \$2.50).

We had booked rooms for five nights at the Hotel Hoffmeister: they were able to offer a room in the main part of the hotel only for June 4, 5, and 6 (at \$242 per night plus \$10 each for breakfast - they quote everything in U.S. dollars) but all that they could offer for the first two nights was "a small room with queen bed on the terrace, not in main building, entrance to the room from terrace, but room with bath, TV and minibar, price per night incl tax USD 153" so we took it. Sure enough, we do have to walk from the reception desk through the dining room and out onto the terrace to get to our room, which turns out to be the complete antithesis of a "small room" - in fact, it may have been the largest hotel room I've ever seen! I pace off the size and come up with about 27 feet wide, about 15 feet deep. It has a queen bed (actually a Murphy bed that can be closed up in the wall) plus the following: a small dining room table and a rather large dining room table, both with table cloths and chairs; two writing desks, each with two chairs; a sleeper couch, two easy chairs, and a cocktail table; extensive storage space; a fully equipped bar with sink and running water; and a huge modern bathroom with (just for Lee) a bathtub! Clearly this room is usually used for parties rather than as a place to sleep. Best of all, it is air-conditioned!! We "liberate" a very attractive color brochure from the hotel; it doesn't show this room but it does have a picture of our second room, the one that we will move to two days later; and it shows many other interior and exterior shots, including a number of the drawings and paintings by Adolf Hoffmeister of most of the intelligentsia of Europe: Picasso, Brecht, Beckett, Dali, others; we also buy a book of his drawings, woodcuts, and paintings. Hoffmeister (1902-73) was a diplomat and artist and the father of the man who built the hotel in 1993; the paintings adorn the hallways, stairwells, dining room, and individual rooms. When we move to the room in the main body of the hotel on Sunday, it is smaller (it would have to be!) but still enormous: its writing table, sleeping sofa, two easy chairs, and cocktail table don't crowd the queen bed; it also has an excellent bathroom, again including bathtub. The hotel's location is also quite good, not in one of the busiest sections of the city but still centrally located, just below Prague Castle, about 10 minutes from the nearest tram and metro stops, and about 15 minutes from several important squares, the Charles Bridge, and other sights. This is in contrast to our room in Stockholm in 1998 which also cost over \$200 but which was minuscule with but two single beds that couldn't even be moved together.

We choose to eat at ADA, the restaurant associated with the hotel - very elegant (although many guests are dressed far more casually than we); rather than having a glass of wine, Lee orders a bottle (whose cost she doesn't know - it's nearly 900 Kč) but the total cost (including tip which they, unlike the Dresdeners, make very easy to give) is a mere 2475 Kč (about \$60). One marvels at how inexpensive everything (except hotel rooms) is in Prague. In the evening I finish reading *Family Man* and begin Ian McEwan's *Amsterdam*.

Saturday, June 3

Our only disappointment with the Hoffmeister is that the breakfast (at \$10 each) is the least elaborate of any on our trip: a small assortment of meats and cheeses; a small choice of bread, rolls; cereal; some eggs. It's so easy to get spoiled! Nevertheless, it's nice to sit on the terrace, not quite in the open patio but next to it. At the hotel desk we are able to buy tickets for the Kocian String Quartet concert at Lichtenstein Palace for Sunday afternoon at 5:00 (cost is 400 Ck, about \$10 each). We walk to the St. Nicholas Church (one of two that bear that name - this one identifies itself as The Church of St. Nicholas in Malá Strana ["♪♪ How are things in Malá Strana? Is that little brook still leaping there? ♪♪"]; it's yet another of those 17th century baroque churches ... yawn ... ho-hum; nevertheless, we pick up a pamphlet and we take pictures. There is an upper and a lower square (called Malestranské Nám); the church is located in one part, the Lichtenstein Palace in another. We then walk along Mostecká Street, the western extension of the Charles Bridge. What an extraordinary scene! We are looking for three things: an ATM, a tabak (to buy multi-day tram/metro tickets), and a place to buy film; we find all of these, but are amazed that interspersed, several to each block, are numerous money exchanges; we are also accosted by suspicious-looking men who whisper, "Psst, Meester - exchange money? Good rate."

Buying tram tickets is a bit of an adventure. The hotel has only single-ride tickets but the clerk tells us that we can buy four-day passes either at a tabak or in the metro station. Well, the tabak also sells only single-trip tickets (we buy four of these at 12 Kč (30 cents)); and (in a mixture of English and German - with probably some Czech that we never understood) the person in the booth at the metro station says that it is now after 11:00 and that multi-day passes are no longer on sale. (At least that's what we think he says.) That means that they won't be on sale on Sunday, either. We'll try on Monday - see June 5 for the next installment in this comedy of errors.

From Malá Strana we take the tram (the #22 tram, nicknamed "The Pickpocket Express" by one of our guide books) to Prague Castle on the hill above our hotel; one *could* have walked up the many steps but that seems a tad "in-your-face," n'est-ce pas? Here we encounter, in ways that our earlier touristic stops could never have prepared us for, CROWDS! There are tour groups everywhere: some are small assemblages and some are large; the guides speak in every known language; every possible age group is represented; the tour guides keep their flock together by holding aloft brightly colored umbrellas of one sort or another, often adorned with flags or balloons or flowers or other identifying symbols. What an incredible zoo!!! There are crowds in the squares outside all of the buildings and, obviously, inside the buildings as well. These people push, they pull, they impede, they glower. Entrance to, and progression through, a building is often accomplished with tiny shuffling steps; sometimes a group is so "entranced" by its guide that they block a hallway and stop all traffic flow; under these circumstances, a well-placed shoulder (à la Jerry Kramer clearing a path for Paul Hornung around end) and a mumbled *verzeihung* or *excusez-moi* or *pardon me* or *getouttadawayawreadyyzeeps* seems to work wonders. We visit the following buildings within the castle complex (one admission price for all, 200 Kč, about \$5): (a) the Castle Gallery (not an impressive or interesting collection); (b) St. Vitus Cathedral (the venue for some 30 coronations of kings and queens), a huge spectacular Gothic space - there must have been thirty separate tour groups inside - it dates from the 14th century and it boasts of a crypt (not accessible to the public) that has body pieces of St. Wenceslas; (c) the Old Royal Palace with its large banquet hall that could be entered either on foot or on horseback - still used for important ceremonies such as presidential addresses, presumably not on horseback; in 1618, it was the site of the defenestration of two Catholic governors and their secretary (male, one supposes, but perhaps not) that marked the beginning of the Thirty Years' War - the "defenestrates" survived their fall, presumably because they landed on a pile of dung; (d) the Basilica of St. George, dating from 920, Romanesque in architecture; (e) the National Gallery, housed in the convent of St. George, which features an outstanding collection of 13th and 14th century religious art; its collection of art from the 15th to 18th centuries is less interesting. Vaclav Havel, the President of the Czech Republic, lives somewhere in the Castle; many of his administrative people also have offices here. (The legislative branches of government are concentrated in Malestranské Nám.) The castle guards, armed with rifle and bayonet, who stand so very erect and motionless in their guard houses even on these hot days, and who march so briskly when going on or

off duty, wear uniforms that were designed by some friends of Havel's who do costumes for the theatre. It is very hot during the day and although the tour groups eschew classy locales like this art gallery, it comes time to seek some relief; so we walk down a very long set of stairs (Ayres Hill pales in comparison) to our hotel room and collapse in air-conditioned luxury.

Observations:

- As in Budapest, every museum here has guards who stare suspiciously at the patrons. They rise from a chair when one enters, walk around (without ever making eye contact), then sit down when one moves on. These guards are younger and better dressed than the pensioners in Budapest.
- Unlike the museums in Budapest, the Prague museums have ample English signage (very important if one wants to understand the history at all) and tend to be air-conditioned. And although the Czech-speaking guards would simply point the "correct" way for us to tour a museum, the people who sell admissions tickets (as well as many of the people in the stores) seem to speak good (or passable) English. If Hungary is considered the most Western-facing of the nations in the former Soviet bloc, why should it be behind Prague in this regard? (Of course, we don't know if English is spoken in the rest of Czech Republic.)
- As mentioned earlier, Prague is supposed to be a haven for pickpockets, especially where enormous crowds of tourists gather. For this reason, I carry only a photocopy of our passports; and I keep my wallet in my side pocket, a real annoyance since it interferes with my ability to prospect in that same pocket for change. As a result, I find myself spending nothing but paper money while accumulating dozens of coins.
- A curiosity - why do I have trouble finding the correct amount of money for purchases? As noted, I offer paper money and receive coins in return that fill up my bulging pocket. If I can plan ahead, sometimes I count all of my coins so that I'm ready to dump them at the next purchase; but more often than not I don't do this. Is it because I don't know the coins well enough that I can use my fingers to count what's in my pocket? Is it because my wallet gets in the way of rummaging in the pocket? Is it because even after I get the coins out of my pocket and into my palm I often have trouble finding the value of the coin, even if it's right there in large print? Or is it because I'm constantly converting costs (in whatever currency) into dollars and that part of the brain that deals with money sums is filled up?

After a rest of about 45 minutes (where we allow our bodies to cool off in the A/C and we allow our weary legs to recover), we take the tram back up to Prague Castle and visit the Steinberg Palace that is outside of, and west of, the main gate. This is an art museum of 15th to 17th century masters (Italian, Dutch, Flemish, Czech) and excellent. One Dutch genre painting is called "The Unhappy Bride" - the ever observant (but decidedly uncouth) Mrs. Prof. Magid notes that the bawling bride sports a large booger drooping from her right nostril. Talk about realism! We walk down from Prague Castle by a different staircase; I count approximately 100 steps (in groups of five) with landings between the groups that are sloped downward at about 10°; as noted earlier, walking up these steps would be no pleasure.

At the suggestion of the hotel staff, we eat dinner at U Vladare (about a 20-minute walk, just below Malestranské Nám and into the next square called Maltéžské Nám). We are offered a choice of eating outside (where the evening is still quite warm) or inside ("fully air conditioned" said the ad) so we choose the latter; big mistake - it is not "fully air conditioned" although there does seem to be a small window unit in an adjacent room that has a huge table set for a family gathering; when that group breaks up, the staff closes the door and probably stand naked in front of the unit while the rest of us swelter. The wall shows photos of famous people who have eaten here (David Copperfield [the magician, not the Dickens character], Gregory Peck, Vaclav Havel, etc.;). Despite the heat, the meal is excellent and although they charge for everything (including the bowl of nuts that is on the table when we sit down and the bread that is brought by the waiter) the total cost, including tip, is 1145 Kč (about \$30!!!). Because the neighborhood is somewhat seedy, we take the tram one stop, then walk the final 10 minutes to the hotel. A note in the hotel room, when we checked in, had indicated that the hotel restaurant would not be open this evening because it had been reserved for a special event. This turned out to be a wedding. In the afternoon when we exit our room to return to Prague Castle,

we have to walk through the crowd of assembled guests [it would have been tempting to grab an hors d'oeuvre or two] as we made our way through the terrace to the outside door. On our return from dinner, I say to Lee "I hope that the wedding is over and that the music wasn't too loud" - my hopes are dashed, as the party is still in full swing and even inside our room (which is well enough insulated to keep out traffic noise) the amplified music is horrible and intrusive. It is still going strong near midnight, but we managed to get to sleep.

Observations:

- Unlike the courtesy shown by drivers in Germany, drivers in Prague are aggressive risk-takers. They also show no cognizance of pedestrian crossings (unless there is also a red light stopping them). No matter where we traveled from the hotel, we had to cross at least one major street - avoiding the cars and taxis and trams and tour buses was an adventure. From the window of our second room (the day before we left) I saw a man get clipped, slightly, by the side mirror of a speeding car.
- The trams are hot and uncomfortable, not as nice as those in Dresden and other places. I'll report on the metro after we take our first ride on it.
- The city and its denizens are quite informal. People don't dress up to go to work (coat and tie are a rarity) or to play. I was overdressed (dress shirt and jacket) at the first two dinners.
- Food at restaurants is unbelievably inexpensive, as are museum admissions, tram tickets, concerts, etc.
- Let the record show that the next entry on my handwritten pages is: "People are not as xxxx xxxx but more xxxx than in Budapest or Germany." Two world-class experts at deciphering my scrawl have conceded defeat in interpreting these three words. I include this observation here in the hopes that people from the 23rd century, who may stumble across this document, will have a full (if also indecipherable) record of our travels.
- The young women of Prague sport short skirts, but not as short (alas!) as in Budapest. Also (as I almost forgot), I'm not at all interested in this.
- As noted earlier, nearly everyone who deals with the public speaks English, often fluently. Thus, it is much easier to get around, to make purchases, etc. than in Budapest (or even than in Germany where we supposedly knew their language even if they didn't know ours.)
- A perfect record on this trip - every hotel has had a modern and clean bathroom with fixtures that worked as advertised; the only downside was that there was a full bathtub only in Budapest and here in Prague.

Sunday, June 4

Yesterday was hot (about 84°) but Saturday's *Herald Tribune* predicts even hotter (88°) for today; in fact, the prediction is right on target. After breakfast, we walk to Mostecká Street and then very very very slowly across the Charles Bridge, sandwiched among some 6.02×10^{23} of our fellow human beings. There are 30 statues lining the two sides of the bridge, but even with Michelin and Frommer guide books we can't find agreement (among the books and the statues) as to which statue is which. If we identify one statue correctly, the next one (according to the one or both of the books) is missing. Maybe the city shuffles the statues every night? Most of the pieces are terribly blackened with grime but a few have been cleaned up. The statues commemorate a blend of historical and biblical figures. St Wenceslas (memorialized by one gaudy statue) met his fate by being tossed off this bridge. (Those crazy fun-loving Czechs - if they're not throwing people out of windows, they're tossing them off bridges.)

We try to visit the "other" St. Nicholas Church, but it's closed for services; when we return later in the day, it's still closed. Oh, well, we had no intention of worshipping there. We walk to the Jewish Quarter and tour most of the buildings (cost of one combined ticket 480 Kč, about \$12): (a) Maisel Synagogue, built in 1590 and named for its founder, Mordecai Maisel, a businessman who was the mayor of the Jewish town; he was a banker and an advisor to Emperor Rudolf II; the building now houses displays of goblets, jewelry, torahs, etc. from Jewish homes and synagogues; (b) Pinkas Synagogue (from 1535) featuring a modern wall, inscribed with the names of the 80,000 Czech Jews who died in the

Holocaust; in 1968, water damage led to the closing of the structure and during this time the Communist government took advantage of the situation by obliterating the names - these were not rewritten until 1992-6; there is a room upstairs with drawings and paintings done by children who had been sent about 30 km outside of Prague to Theresienstadt (Terezin), a "model" prison camp (or so the Red Cross was led to believe - most of the inmates had been shipped, temporarily, to other locations so that overcrowding wouldn't be seen when the Red Cross inspected) but really just a layover on the way to Auschwitz, Treblinka, and other death camps; of the 140,000 who passed through its gates, more than half were exterminated; there were 10,000 inmates under the age of 15, and of the 8,000 who were deported to camps in the east, only 242 survived; (c) the Old Jewish Cemetery, where over 20,000 bodies are buried, some of them 12 deep; nearly every prominent Czech Jew is buried here, including Rabbi Löw (d. 1609), the creator of The Golem (see the book of Golem legends that Lee bought); (d) the Old-New Synagogue, in Gothic style dating from the 13th century, still used for services; Rabbi Löw's Golem is supposedly buried here. [Briefly - the Golem was a fantastic "being" created to protect the community from non-Jews who tried to put dead bodies inside the Jewish Quarter as a "proof" that Jews were killing Christians. The Golem would frighten people, but after a while it was viewed as a friendly presence. Once Rabbi Löw's wife ordered it to fetch some water from the river; when she returned from an errand, she found a full river of water flowing through the rooms of the house. The book has this and other "true" stories.] We walk around that part of the city a bit more, then return by metro to the Hoffmeister where we check into our new room in the main part of the hotel. It is very elegant and spacious (see earlier description on June 2); it seems to be the same room that is featured in a photo in the hotel's handsome brochure.

Observations:

- Although Americans have the reputation of being rude, it is Europeans who tend to be pushy when they coalesce into crowds. Every place we visited in the Jewish Quarter was packed with humanity, making the interiors of buildings feel even hotter than they were; worst of all was the terrible crowding and pushing upstairs in the Pinkas Synagogue where the children's drawings were displayed. From previous trips to Europe, I had learned that it was French women who are the most aggressive in their pushing and the least willing to wait their turn by standing in line; even when they are moderate in size and slender in stature, they possess sharp elbows that they use to good effect. From today's experiences, I'm learning that it's not just French women but most Europeans who refuse to be patient and wait their turn. Only the British respect lines (I mean queues), but, then again, they don't consider themselves to be Europeans.
- A corollary to this is that once a group of Europeans has fought and bullied and pushed its way to a desired spot (e.g., with their tour guide in front a famous painting), it takes superhuman strength to move one or more of them so that someone can pass. Words seem to have no effect (see earlier); instead they only seem to understand (because it's their own style) brute force.

We return to the hotel where we have mid-afternoon coffee and cakes. Unlike Schloss Eckberg where such a snack set us back about \$15, here the cost for two is a mere 198 Kč (about \$5). A sudden (and rather brief) rain forces us from the terrace to the inside, but the rain has the benefit of cooling things off a bit. We walk to our concert via a different route to Malestranské Nám that takes us past the Belgian, Indian, and Polish embassies, contiguous to one another and sharing a lovely garden and beautiful grounds. The concert is in the basement art gallery at Lichtenstein Palace (which serves as the Prague Academy of Music) and although not air-conditioned, there are also not many warm bodies pressing against us. The concert is open seating, so we choose the second row (nobody is in the front row), not more than 10-15 feet from where the musicians sit. The concert by the Kocian String Quartet (see information from the web about their tours, recordings, etc.) is outstanding; they play Smetana's String Quartet No. 1 ("From My Life") and the Dvorak String Quartet in F Major ("American"), two favorites of ours. I'm sorry that I hadn't read up on the Smetana before leaving home, as there were no program notes available; thus, I had to wait until our return to Knoxville to remind myself about it. It was written when he was in his 50s (and only a few years from death) and it describes, movement by movement, his life in music and his loves. Midway through the fourth movement there is a horrible screech from the first violin and all of the music becomes very dissonant;

this represents Smetana's scream upon discovering, just two years before writing the piece, that he had become totally deaf.

We chose this concert because it was the only one (of the many that were advertised on fliers that were posted on walls or pressed upon us as we walked) that had two substantial works - all of the other concerts featured a movement of this, a section of that, etc. When we had asked the reception clerk at our hotel for a dinner recommendation near the concert venue, she said that we'd be out of the concert in a hour. "Ha!" thought I, "Not this concert. I am an expert in matters musical and I have carefully chosen this concert over all others because it has two substantial works." Wrong again, Magid - the hotel person had it exactly right. The concert begins at 5:07 (just seven minutes late); the Smetana ends at 5:32; the musicians leave the room for "intermission," then return in three minutes; the Dvorak lasts 26 minutes; there is no encore; we are out at 6:01!! The performances are exceptional; most interesting (and this is what I love about going to concerts) is that I am constantly surprised and shocked to see which instrument is carrying a particular part of the melody from a work that I think that I "know." For example, the principal themes of the first movement of both of the string quartets are played by the violist, although I had always believed that they were played by one of the violinists.

We eat at one of the restaurants recommended by the hotel staff, U Maltézských Rytířů (At the Knights of Malta), not far from the concert hall. There are three tables in the upstairs room, about 10 downstairs. The meal is outstanding and well-served. I start with a warm prawn appetizer and follow it with filet mignon that has been marinated in plum brandy and is wrapped with goose liver, and is served in a liquid cranberry sauce, along with green beans and potatoes. I wash it down with a Budvar (to my consternation, the bottle label said Budweiser) and I finish with coffee. Burp! (I have no memory of what my intrepid traveling companion ate, but in Czech it was called Bóto.) The cost for two including tip? An extraordinary 1525 Kč (about \$40!!!!). [How do I remember, several weeks later, what I ate at this meal? Because I wrote it down, that's how.] That evening in the hotel, I finish reading *Amsterdam* and start Peter Mayle's *Encore, Provence*.

Observations:

- Given that the bottle of Budvar carried the full name Budweiser, why weren't the frogs in Dresden able to learn to say BUD WEIS ER? Dumb, that's what they are! Dumb!!
- In a continuation of the observation about drivers who disregard pedestrians and other cars, they also drive very fast - it felt like Paris, not Prague. But, then again, maybe this is what Prague does feel like, and it's the Parisians who are the copy cats?
- There are very few bicycles in this city, except for those that are ridden by professional-looking Tour de France types in their tight shorts, goggles, helmets, etc. In contrast, in every German city and town as well as throughout the countryside, there were people of all ages riding bikes to the store, to work, to visit, for recreation, etc. Even the very busy downtown area of Dresden had bicyclists everywhere.
- Unlike former East Germany, where there were lots of expensive western cars (Mercedes, BMW, etc.), in Prague most of the cars carry unfamiliar brand names from Poland, Czech Republic, etc. Thank heavens, there seem to be no Trabants.
- Our hotel room has a Bible (New Testament only) in three languages: French, English, and German. Questions: Where is **THE** Testament? And where is the Czech version? (I never looked in the other hotels to see what Bibles were in their table drawers.)
- In almost every busy square and at nearly every church, cathedral, or other public building there are young people passing out leaflets and cajoling passersby to buy tickets for this or that concert. It seems as if there are at least five concerts every day from which one can choose. Most are hodge-podges, cobbled together with one movement from a Vivaldi concerto followed by a dance by Smetana, a Telemann suite, a Bach overture, etc., all to be "gotten through" in under an hour. No matter what one's tastes in classical music, it's easy to find performances of one's favorites; but only the concert that we attended offered a pair of complete works.

Monday, June 5

I promised the details of the Great Tram Scam, ma'am, and here it is. Having failed to buy four-day tickets on Saturday, we go to the same metro station (Malá Strana) and ask at the ticket window for two-day tickets. (I should add that there are several ticket-dispensing machines on the wall, but these are for single-rides and they take only coins, no cash.) The agent purports to speak no English (I suppose it's possible) so in a combination of his heavily-accented German and lots of sign language, he makes it clear that he never has multi-day tickets but that we can buy them if we go to the station at the end of the line (just three stops away). This makes no sense, but hey, we're guests in their city and maybe they do it this way. So we insert our last few coins in a machine and buy tickets that are good for an hour. We travel to the end of the line where, of course, we find no place to buy tickets. Then Lee reads something in one of the guide books that says that multi-day tickets are available at one of the major metro transfer stations (Můstek) where the green line (ours) and the yellow line intersect. Uh-oh, here we are with no coins left and we don't know if the one-hour limit on our tickets allows us to travel back in the other direction. Well, we have no choice, so we ride to Můstek station (it's on two very widely separated levels for the two lines) and spend a good fifteen minutes looking for the proper window. The regular ticket-selling booth is unmanned at first, but someone finally appears (10 minutes later) and directs us to another window around the corner. And there it is, just as advertised. So we buy two two-day unlimited-ride tickets at 70 Kč each (about \$1.70). We're now in the part of the city where we want to be, not far from the Jewish Quarter, and we (i.e., Lee) do (i.e., does) some shopping while we (i.e., Ron) tag (i.e., tags) along. Lee thinks that today is a trifle cooler, but I'm working up a good sweat, especially after discovering that four of the clothing and glassware stores for which she had secured addresses (from out-of-date editions of Fodor and Frommer) don't exist, at least not at the published addresses. We do, however, find a couple of the places on her list and we do buy some things. Thank heavens for that! I was afraid that we'd return to the U.S. with too much money.

One of the non-existent stores is supposed to be next to the Mucha Museum. Alphonse Mucha, 1860-1939, was a Czech painter who found fame as a young man in Paris by developing an art deco style and by designing all of the posters used by Sarah Bernhardt to advertise her many plays (see the brochure that we picked up). He returned to his homeland and did paintings intended to inspire his countrymen to replace their Germanness with ideas/music/poetry/religion more appropriate to Bohemia and Moravia.

Observations:

- Why is it that a country that produced great composers (Dvořák, Smetana, Suk, Janacek, Martinu) and great writers (Kafka, Kundera, Havel) did not produce any painter or sculptor more prominent than Mucha?
- At the Mucha Museum, the tickets are taken by a an elderly man who is dressed in a suit and tie; he gives us the most elaborate and gracious welcome, in heavily accented but beautifully flowery English (and, I assume, in other languages when needed), telling us about the collection, telling us when the movie about Mucha would begin, and so on. How charming! **Bad Pun #3** - Had it not been, I would have called it Mucha Do About Nothing.
- As for the metro, the train stations are spotless and the walls have interesting designs and are free of graffiti. Not so for the train cars, all of which are badly in need of paint and are covered with slogans and drawings done by graffiti artists. (They remind me of New York's subway cars.) Nevertheless, the metro cars are clean inside. (They no longer remind me of New York.)
- Who was it who said "Different countries, different customs"? Here's an incident that you, my faithful reader, will find hard to believe, but it really happened. When riding the escalator from a metro station up to street level, we are behind (and about four steps below) a young couple. He has his back to us and is wearing black pants and a baggy black long-sleeved shirt, an echt-Czech outfit. She is a step above him, facing him (and us), a very pretty woman in a very pretty short-sleeved dress (not that I would notice, of course). Nearing the top of the escalator, she notices a spot of something (food?) on the front of his shirt - and she obviously knows the secret Czech recipe for removing it. She raises her right arm and uses the fingers of her left hand to lift some perspiration (with its numerous stain-removing enzymes, undoubtedly) from her armpit and applies same to spot. Cool! Whether it is

successful or not, I don't get to see - but they exchange a quick kiss and head off in opposite directions.

- As I commented many times earlier, this city is friendlier to English speakers than was Budapest or any place in the former DDR. At the museum, not only did the ticket seller and the ticket taker speak English but all of the signs next to the paintings were in Czech and English. Again, I think about how uncaring we Americans are when a foreigner comes to our country and can't get help.

Back at the hotel, we get a recommendation that we try David Restaurant (not far from Malestranské Nám). As we head down the narrow street to the restaurant, we notice a police car with two police inside; also two more police standing near the curb, "policie" in white letters on their all-black uniforms; and two more police or army people who are dressed like the border-crossing guards on the train that took us into the country. (All of them seem oblivious to us and others who enter the street.) Then the reason for their presence becomes apparent: we are alongside the U.S. Embassy. "Who is our ambassador?" I ask Lee., She has no idea and neither do I, but by coincidence the *Yale Alumni Magazine* that I'm reading on our return flight indicates that it is a Yale graduate, John Shattuck. Actually he has two Yale degrees: a B.A. (1965) and an LL.B. in 1970. To his discredit, his position before becoming our ambassador was as a Vice President at Harvard; the good news is that he seems to have recovered quite nicely from that stigma. Back to David Restaurant - truly excellent! I have goose liver paté, medallions of veal, beer, coffee; my eating companion also fills her belly. Total cost, with tip, 2090 Kč (about \$50) - this is too good to be true! I have this nightmare that the credit card bills will arrive and that all of my conversions into dollars are off by a factor of ten ... in the bad direction. On our return to the hotel, once again we meet the challenge (but only barely) of crossing the major street without being impaled as a trophy on the hood ornament of a speeding car.

Observations:

- I note (and Lee agrees, grudgingly) that Czechs do not have the broad Slavic facial features that we saw throughout Budapest. A sizable portion of the population looks quite Germanic, no surprise considering the number of times the country has been invaded from both directions.
- We may have been fortunate when we were traveling, earlier today, with possibly illegal metro tickets because at two different metro stations in the afternoon we do encounter "control" officers. Both times, the officers are a pair of men who are wearing ordinary clothing, looking very much like commuters or tourists. At the first sighting, they are stopping about every seventh person coming down the escalator to the train platform; and they have back-up help, if needed, from two uniformed officers standing nearby. In fact, there is an incident where a woman balks at having to show her ticket - whether she has one or not, I don't know, but she is taken aside, surrounded by the four men, beaten within an inch of her life, and thrown onto the tracks. Just kidding - they never threw her onto the tracks. At the second sighting, the plainclothes men have no uniformed officers as backup; this time they stopped us, and when I saw that no armed backup police were nearby, I surrounded them and beat them within an inch of their lives and threw them onto the tracks. Just kidding, again. So I'm glad that we now have legitimate tickets, but I remember reading that the penalty for not having a valid ticket is to pay a fine on the spot that comes only to something like \$7.
- With all of these hot days, one after another, I've been wearing the same pair of grey slacks (since I had the khaki slacks washed and ironed on board the ship) and I'm reluctant to put on fresh slacks because I just know that I'm going to sweat profusely again the next day. The grey pants, now impregnated with some 10 days worth of sweat and dirt, nearly stand up by themselves when I remove them at night. Lee insists that I wear fresh slacks for our flight home on Wednesday; I reluctantly agree.
- Upon our return to Knoxville, Lee recalls that the U.S. Embassy in Prague (see above) played an important role in the collapse of the DDR. At Gorbachev's orders, East German citizens who wanted to leave the country were permitted to cross the border into Czechoslovakia (its name before it split into two countries); TV pictures in the States showed huge crowds gathered in the U.S. Embassy courtyard, seeking visas to enter our country.

Tuesday, June 6

This will be our last cholesterol-rich European breakfast (unless we can convince the hotel staff to get up really early tomorrow and feed us before our taxi leaves for the airport at 6:00 a.m.) Thus I overdose on meat and cheese and other goodies. Yum. The day begins cloudy; and the newspaper predicts a high of only 71° (with 64° predicted for tomorrow) but it still feels warm and muggy to me. (Yeah, yeah, I know - anything above 45° makes me uncomfortable.) We take the tram to up the hill, past Prague Castle, and stop at Strahov Monastery. Although it's an ancient structure (from 1140), it is still a working monastery. There is a spectacular library, our view of which is nicely obscured by one foreign tour group after another; the crush of people and the heat are unpleasant - I'm so glad that I insisted on wearing my unwashed grey slacks! From there we walk to Loreta, a copy of the Holy House of the Virgin that had been miraculously air-lifted in the 13th century (long before Federal Express or UPS) from Nazareth to the Italian town of Loreto; it is one of many copies that appear all over the world. Should I mention that it, too, is overrun by tourists? Well, it is. Among its many important features are: (a) a statue (which we never found) of St. Starosta, the "Bearded Lady of the Cross"; the story is that she had taken a vow of chastity, but her father, the King of Lusitania, married her off to the King of Sicily - she prayed to God to make her unattractive to her husband and she was rewarded with a beard - this pissed off Daddy so much that he had her crucified (see p. 113 of Frommer); (b) St. Apollonia whose teeth were forcibly removed (in 249 A.D.) as part of the torture for refusing to renounce the Cross - she is now the patron saint of dentists; (c) St. Otilie, the patron saint of eye doctors (although we have no information on how she achieved that status). There is an interior treasury whose most valuable item is the so-called Prague Sun, a monstrosity weighing over 12 kg and embellished with more than 6,000 diamonds - yet another example of grotesque and ghastly excess. Here is what a friendly web site says about Loreta:

Our Lady of Loreto: Patron of Aviators Our Lady of Loreto is the title of Our Lady which refers to the beautiful holy house where Mary was conceived and born, and where Jesus, true God and true Man, was conceived. In 1291 it was miraculously transported from Nazareth to Dalmatia. In the year 1294 it was again miraculously transported to Loreto in northeast Italy, where it has been a famous place of pilgrimage ever since.

Two metro rides then take us to the Museum of the City of Prague, a strange place, far from the city center, huge, and free of tourists! Nearby is a McDonald's and large Pepsi billboard, but we don't forget that this is still Prague. The museum turns out to be outstanding - and we willingly pay the "stiff" admission fee of 30 Kč (about 75 cents). Through a printed English guide (not for sale) and English signage (after we clear the first large exhibit room), we follow the story of Prague from prehistory to the present. Lee likes especially the Celtic weavings (from 3000 BC) that are the predecessors of the familiar tartan plaids; Ms. Know-it-all had just finished reading *The Urumchi Mummies* and finds many parallels with what was in the museum. The museum's most famous exhibit is an enormous scale model of the city of Prague, building by building, as it existed in 1850. This museum, too, is very hot, so we ignore the entreaties of the Pepsi billboard and slake our thirst on Cokes.

Observations:

- Returning to the question of begging: unlike Budapest where we saw a number of people (including the old woman on the Chain Bridge) with hand outstretched; and unlike Germany where we saw people of all ages (some of them organ grinders, others playing musical instruments); we've seen fewer (but not zero) in Prague. In any event, they are vastly less aggressive than in any U.S. city; never do they accost passersby - instead they stand there with hand or hat outstretched or with music case open.
- In the National Museum we see reference to one Eberhard the Locator (the first real estate agent?); in 1230, he was the leader of a band of German colonists; he was later honored by being named as Supreme Master of the Mint. (That's money, one assumes, not the green leaf.)
- Back to tour groups - they are nearly everywhere: on the streets, in museums, in galleries, in stores, everywhere! One hears an incredible assortment of languages, but one can be sure that when one hears a guide's presentation in French, those good French people will be planted firmly in the ground and cannot be moved. You can't get behind or in front of or through them, except by the application of

extreme force. (This is reminiscent of the story on NPR, a few years ago, about how in a Presidential election year the French government stops ticketing Parisians for parking their cars wherever they want: on a sidewalk, on the grass of a park, in someone else's driveway.) Should one manage to displace such a Frenchman by shoving him/her/it aside, another pops up (like Al Capp's Schmoo) to take his place and preserve the integrity of the group. In contrast to the slender French women with the sharp elbows (mentioned earlier) these sturdy French men are built like Dick Butkus, possess the sensibilities of John Rocker, and are as quick to anger as Latrell Sprewell. (DISCLAIMER - No French citizens were harmed during the writing of this journal.)

- A tram passes by in which the driver has hung a flag over the window that separates his space from that of the passengers. And what is that flag? Why, it's The Stars and Bars, perhaps imported directly from the dome of the state capitol in Columbia, SC? How bizarre!
- Returning to an old theme - all of the guide books warn about pickpockets in Budapest and Prague and so we take precautions (see earlier for what we locked in the room safe and what we carried with us). "Better safe than sorry" is a good motto, but I wonder if we aren't being overly cautious. Oh well, nothing is ever taken from us, so maybe we are doing the right thing.
- One contrast between the street scene from previous European visits and what we saw on this trip in Budapest, Vienna, Dresden, Prague, etc. - there are essentially no young people sporting T-shirts or sweaters with the logo of famous western universities (Oxford is usually very popular; so is Harvard, although it's difficult to understand why); similarly, there is essentially no clothing advertising professional sports teams, no American baseball/football/basketball teams, no sports icons (Michael Jordan, etc.); either this fad has ended or, perhaps, it had never even begun in these former Eastern Bloc countries.

We trudge back to the hotel at about 3:30 for some rest and relaxation as well as to dry off from a day's sweat. We then venture forth for one last touristic event. We notice the Japanese and Danish embassies, side by side on Mostecká Street; we also see the Yugoslavian embassy, adjacent to a McDonald's. Strange bedfellows, eh? As before, dark and mysterious men sidle up to me and whisper, "Psst, Meester, change money?" but I am never fearful of having my pocket picked as there are even more uniformed police (and who knows how many plainclothes police) than money changers on the street. Exhausted, again, we choose to eat our final European dinner in ADA (the hotel's restaurant); this time without an expensive bottle of wine but still with excellent food and wine by the glass, we squander 1435 Kč (about \$36). It's going to be a rude awakening to return to restaurant prices in the States. Just before dinner I finish reading *Encore Provence* and I begin *What's Bred in the Bone*, the second part of Robertson Davies's *Cornish Trilogy*.

Wednesday, June 7

We check out of the hotel, just before 6 a.m. and take a taxi to the airport. Our flight to Zürich is on time. In Zürich, we get the good news (which turns out not to be so good) that we are now confirmed on an even earlier connecting flight, the 4:05 Comair flight from Cincinnati to Knoxville. (Originally we were scheduled to leave Cincinnati at 11:00, then at 9:45, and then at 7:20.) Well, our flight leaves Zürich on time, but fierce headwinds keep our speed in the 400-450 mph range. Thus we miss our connecting flight and although we do make it back to Knoxville by a rather circuitous route, our luggage doesn't arrive until the next day. (See my letter to Delta for all of the gory details)

The final adventure occurs in Atlanta. "Atlanta? What are you doing in Atlanta?" I hear you say. Delta has rebooked us from Cincinnati to Atlanta where we have a 2 ½ hour layover before we board a 50-seat Atlantic Southeast flight to Knoxville. A woman (if one wanted to describe her using an old-fashioned phrase, she would be called a middle-aged *floozy*) boards the plane and immediately starts berating the one flight attendant and causing a disruption. Later, other passengers fill in the background details. The ruckus actually began in the airport waiting room (Lee and I didn't see it) when this woman discovered that she was flying on a commuter jet and that her "carry-on" was too large and would have to be checked. There was a fair amount of ranting and raving, or so we were told. So when she actually gets on board she is already in a high excited state. She "orders" the poor

flight attendant to find space for the bag; the attendant (Russian, from her accent) shows her that it won't fit in the overhead nor will it fit under the seat - it will have to be checked as luggage. The woman does not accept this - and after screaming a bit more (and causing the attendant to begin to cry), she sits down with the bag obstructing the aisle. One of the supervisors comes on board and tells the woman she will have to leave; she refuses. (For a moment, it seems as if she will leave - applause from the other passengers - but she returns to her seat.) Then a higher-up supervisor comes on and orders the woman off the plane. Again she refuses. This supervisor makes it very clear that if she continues to refuse, the police will come on board, arrest her, and take her to jail. Still she refuses. But after sitting and stewing for a while, she thinks better of her refusal and finally walks off (to more applause from the passengers). Before we push away, airline personnel carefully check to see if she has left anything on board - I suspect that this is to check for the possibility that she had had a bomb with her and that she had carefully planned the incident so that she'd be thrown off. Amusingly, her now-vacant seat is taken by a person wearing the uniform of a pilot/navigator - there is a fair amount of kidding about his having engineered the incident so that he could get a seat on the plane. The flight attendant "apologizes" over the intercom (the passengers' saying "it wasn't your fault - you acted properly") and, though quite shaken, manages to get through the safety announcements.

SUMMARY OF BOOKS READ:

Reynolds Price, *Kate Vaiden*; John Irving, *My Movie Business*; Robertson Davies, *The Rebel Angels*; Calvin Trillin, *Family Man*; Ian McEwan, *Amsterdam*; Peter Mayle, *Encore Provence*; Robertson Davies, *What's Bred in the Bone* (begun in Prague, finally finished on June 16).

ADDED, JULY 6, 2000

(continued from p. 12) Another bill for the notorious "Lee Tenny Magid Lind" arrived, yesterday, from our friends at Klinikum Passau. The first bill listed the charges associated with Prof. Dr. Rupp ("Röntgendiagnostik" = radiation diagnostician). This new one is for the services of Dr. Oberhuber whose specialty is Unfallchirurg, which must be "emergency surgeon." The charges are DM 20.98 for Beratung (consultation), DM 20.98 for Untersuchung, symptombezogen (investigation of referred-to symptoms?), and DM 34.09 for Befundbericht, ausführlich (detailed result report) for a grand total of DM 76.05 (about \$38). The diagnosis was Nasenbeinprellung (nose bone bruise) - hell, I could have told them that!

(continued from p. 23) Having failed to find a picture of the Max Bill *coupe du roi* sculpture at any web site, I sent an e-mail inquiry, on June 12, to "info@staat1-kunstsammlungen-dresden.de" asking if the museum staff could tell me where a photo might exist. Yesterday's mail brought a photo that they had taken of the sculpture, along with a cover letter that gave the correct name as *Halbe Kugel um Zwei Achsen* ("only" the first three words were misspelled in my e-mail message and earlier in this account); I was informed that "the invoice for cost of materials will be send (sic) separately by the administration of the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden"; this, I hope, refers to the cost of the photograph and postage, not of the materials that Max Bill used for his work. Armed. now, with the correctly spelled title, I went on the web again and found a German-language page on "Concrete art"; challenged as I am even by simple German, I opted for the Alta Vista Zooper-Dooper translator and was rewarded with a significantly nonsensical version in English. For example, the first mention of Max Bill in the German version is semi-translated as "The most important wortfuehrer Swiss became an artist max of Bill ..." The translation concludes with "The concrete art energized later above all art trends like the Op-type, hard Edge and minimum the type." Agreed.

ADDED, JULY 22, 2000

Much to my dismay, an invoice for the Max Bill photograph arrived yesterday: 11 DM (8 DM for the photo and 3 DM for shipping). As they seem to have provided no mechanism for charging this to a credit card, Lee says that the only sensible thing is to send it as cash; in fact, she is able to supply a 1 DM coin and a 10 DM bill.

ADDED, AUGUST 12, 2000

Yesterday's mail brought a bill from Rettungsdienst Bayern (Bavarian Rescue Service) for Ambulanzfahrt and Krankentransport, 4 km; Einsatz-Beginn: 25-05-2000 13:49; Einsatz-Ende: 25-05-2000 14:35; total bill 67.80 DM.