

EUROPEAN ADVENTURE: MAY 30-JUNE 12, 2001

Tuesday,
May 29, 2001

What a hectic day trying to leave school in good order but on time: for every step forward we seemed to have to take a step to the side. Finally left town at 3:30 and picked Ron & Linda up at 4:30. On the way at last! - with two stops in Clarksville. Decided to check into motel at 7:00. Ron & Donna drove up as Tommy & Ron came out from getting our room. Decided to wait and all ride to dance in Ronnie's van. Got to dance at 7:35 - missed first tip, but never missed a square or line dance after that! Great dancing! Over too soon at 9:30. Went to Steak 'n' Shake - their computers were down, so might take longer to get food to us (no other customers to speak of - don't know why it would take long). Didn't take long at all. Elliott & Kathy had joined us at the dance and now Elliott & Ronnie were swapping jokes. Poor store manager - kept coming to our table to check on us, hearing jokes, and leaving shaking his head. Fourteen days of this . . . ?

Wednesday,
May 30, 2001

6 hrs. 54 min. Cleveland to London's Gatwick Airport. Ate breakfast at Shoney's with Ron & Linda. Went to Brentwood to get a monopod for the camera from the REI store there. REI did not open till 10:00 & we needed to be back at the motel at 10:45 to get shuttle to the airport. Got the monopod and made the shuttle (a little later one). Met the other people on the tour at the airport. Flight for Cleveland left at 2:20 and arrived at 3:15 (4:15 eastern now). Flight from Cleveland to London left at 6:15 (eastern) - 15 min. behind schedule. Airplane has 2 rows of seats, 3 per side - cramped. We are in seats 30 A & B - good views out the window of Lake Erie and Lake Ontario. Would you believe . . . no caffeine free drinks except Ginger Ale on an international flight?!! But I have come prepared (by accident). We stopped at a quick mart in Brentwood to get sandwiches for lunch and they had my Mystic Zotics Acerola Berry drinks - I bought all 6 that they had and stowed them in the red carry-on bag, so . . . I have what I want to drink. Two movies (What Women Want and one about Ben Hogan) but I didn't sleep at all (after all, it is only 10:00 at home).

Thursday,
May 31, 2001

Interesting, we never completely lost light out our window (which was to the north) although we had a sunset and a beautiful sunrise out over a sea of clouds. Imagine! Sunrise at 11:00 pm (CENTRAL time!). And shortly after that breakfast of a croissant, fruit, and orange juice. Over Ireland now - can see lakes occasionally through breaks in the clouds. Landed at Gatwick Airport, London, 6:05 am local time (12:05 am Central time). Had to pick up last member of our group at Heathrow - took us almost an hour to get there. Could not get into our rooms till after 1:00. Rode the bus around London seeing many major sights, but not really stopping. Finally settled that we needed to get some money exchanged and eat lunch before meeting the group at Buckingham Palace for the changing of the guard. After that we walked through the nearby garden planted with beautiful flowers (in honor of Princess Diana? Don't remember). Went from there to the hotel to get some rest (about 2 hours worth.) Went out to eat - got sandwiches at a small deli/bakery in Covent Garden - enjoyed musical performance in Covent Garden as we ate. Went to the underground at Charring Cross, changed to the Victoria Line at Oxford Square, and went to Blackhorse Rd. station where we were met by Rai, our contact for the square dance. Dance was WONDERFUL! Very good caller and VERY friendly people. Had a super good time - danced and laughed for 2 hours. When we got through, dancers carried us back to the underground. We went to Piccadilly Square to get night pictures. Then Ronnie wanted to go to Trafalgar Square to get night pictures (Tommy went back to the hotel to sleep); unfortunately the monument at Trafalgar wasn't lit up! Walked from there back to the hotel. Most of us got no sleep on the plane last night so were very ready to get to bed for a good night's sleep.

Friday,
June 1, 2001

Started at 7:30 with breakfast downstairs. Boarded the bus for the Tower and Tower Bridge. Brad (our guide) took us right on in to see the Crown Jewels (good because when we came out it was crowded with lines everywhere). Crown Jewels were **VERY** impressive - especially the **huge** diamond set in the top of the scepter; it was hard to believe so many big stones could be gathered together in such a small space. They had moving sidewalks running down each side of the display: that kept people from crowding around and keeping others from seeing (you could get off and go back around and get on to go again as much as you liked - very equitable arrangement). Then we toured the White Tower (The Tower) which was the earliest part of the Tower Castle to be built. It became the armory for the kings and now houses a **VERY** impressive display of armor and weapons. We got pictures of Tower Bridge, but did not get to walk on it (did ride across it on the bus). After that, we returned to the hotel and then Elliott and Kathy and Tommy and I went to the British Museum. On the way we stopped at Covent Garden for a **DELICIOUS** lunch at Ponti's. Also saw a juggler on a unicycle and a "high wire" performer - there is entertainment at Covent Garden all the time and you put money "in the hat" for the performers. We walked the distance to the museum passing all kinds of shops along the way. Across from the entrance to the museum was a building with an historic marker saying it was the home of Randolph Caldecott, founder of the Caldecott Medal for illustrated children's books. There is not enough I can say about how fantastic the museum was: things I had heard about, read about, or see pictures of since I was very small were on display for me to see - the actual item. We saw the Rosetta stone, the Elgin marbles from the Parthenon in Athens, incredible wall sculptures from Egypt and Mesopotamia - and that only scratched the surface. We got to see the special exhibit they had on Cleopatra; I even got some pictures before they told me not to take pictures (Tommy wound up writing out a complaint form - or whatever they called it - because they **ONLY** place they had indicated no photography was on the **BACK** of our tickets. So who reads the back of a ticket? No one told us when we bought the tickets, when we entered the door - **WITH** camera in hand - or any time. But it was still a pretty good display - mostly busts or statue heads and that kind of thing to show Cleopatra's life from fact to myth.

Saturday,
June 2, 2001

We saw Stonehenge this morning. The weather was cold and misty - really in keeping with the mood of the place. They had ropes up to keep us outside the mound and ditch, but we still were rather close on one side. It was really a dream come true to be standing where this great prehistoric construction still stands. After Stonehenge, we went to Bath. The travel there through the countryside was beautiful: narrow streets with the houses built right up to the edge and flowers everywhere; beautiful old churches and walled cemeteries. Saw fields of hay, oats, and wheat and flax and peas that would be used for cattle fodder (so our local guide said). The city of Bath is very old - was a resort town even in Roman times. There were hot mineral springs there and the Romans developed them as no other group had before, building "baths" there and a temple to the patron goddess of the waters, Solis Athena. Touring the baths was **VERY** interesting - to see what the Romans had built and actually walk where people had walked for over 2000 years. The city itself was a typical resort town, not unlike Gatlinburg: little shops of local crafts and souvenirs - but with a distinctly British flavor: there were many street entertainers of all kinds. The beautiful abbey church at Bath was also very interesting: all the walls and floors were adorned with a variety of stone plaques noting the burial of many individuals connected with the church. As with any church of that size, the stained glass windows and other parts of the church were also beautiful. It also had a "Heritage Vaults" area that charged a fee for entrance, so we didn't see it, but it had more plaques and coffins/tombs, I'm sure. We then went on to Portsmouth where we boarded the P & O Liner for our overnight Channel crossing. The room was nice, but small - beds were built out from the walls with overhead bunks which could be pulled down (like trains). There was a bath with

shower - which was to be a problem for us. About 1:00 am, the toilet in our room got stuck on fill and wouldn't shut off; they had to move us to another room: we got a room with a "window" which looked east, so got to see the sunrise over the coast of France as we landed at La Havre. We found out later that the group in the room next to us had water in their room from our water overflow - seems they couldn't get it shut off in time to keep it from leaking into the next room (they really needed an easy way to shut that water off and apparently didn't have it; bet they'll work on that problem very quickly).

Sunday,
June 3, 2001

Back on the bus we toured Omaha and Utah beaches at Normandy where the June 6, 1944 D-Day landing took place. Also toured the American cemetery there; very beautiful place and very well cared for. Saw, at a distance, the Bayeux Cathedral where the Bayeux Tapestry is on display - did not get to see it for lack of time. Headed into Paris. Checked into the Hilton at Orly airport about 4:00. Had to be ready to go out to eat at 6:30. Went into Paris and ate at a really nice restaurant, a dinner where we had a choice of aperitif, then soup/ duck pate/ or escargot, then veal/beef/or salmon, and then cheeses. There were white and red wines on the table - most of the group had some, and some of the group had a good bit. Tommy had the soup, beef, and no cheeses, and I had the escargot, veal, and brie cheese. All the food was excellent (Elliott tried the escargot and said that although he had tried it many times and never liked it, this was actually good - maybe they just know how to cook it in France). They had a man playing an accordion who roamed around the floor. Our group wound up as the only ones in the place and the musician played a variety of songs. When he played a polka, Tommy & I got up and danced down between the tables - a **VERY** narrow space! We laughed and sang and had a wonderful time. From there we boarded the bus to go to the Seine River boat ride (our bus driver, Roland, told Ramey (our originally scheduled guide who had met us at the hotel) that he had swapped groups on him - this was **NOT** the same group he had left off at the restaurant. We got to see many of the sights of Paris including the Eiffel Tower with its new "millennium" display of blinking lights which comes on every hour on the hour for ten minutes. Our party spirit was apparently contagious - at one point Roland was taking us to see the Arch de Triumpe - it was dark and there were cars all over the circle around the monument - all driving like they were in a great game of "chicken." Roland slipped our bus right in the middle of it and took us for a thrilling ride around the "Star of De Gaule" around the arch (this is the road around the arch which is actually a huge "round-about" with twelve streets leading away from it and no lane markers in it: so you come from one street into the flow of traffic around the monument and then when you see the street you want to go on next, you have to cross all these "lanes" of traffic to get out - not any easy task as cars are going every which way trying to do the same thing coming in from side streets or going out other side streets). Roland had the whole bus alternately laughing and holding our breath - there are certifiable crazy drivers out there. Finally back to the hotel about 1:00 am.

Monday,
June 4, 2001

A holiday, of course, so many places are closed - particularly the palace at Versailles. But we did get to go to Notre Dame Cathedral (the beautiful stained glass windows, including the great Rose windows, and the gargoyles which are actually rain spouts: when it rains, the water flows into pipes and out the mouths of the gargoyles which keeps it away from the building) and then to the Louvre - just didn't have enough time. We rushed to see the Mona Lisa, then the Winged Victory and then the Venus d' Milo. After that we went to the Egyptian exhibit which was **EXCELLENT** - Sphinxes from Luxor and Saqqara and many beautiful statues of gods and goddesses as well as many written records - even some papyrus scrolls. Also a large granite sarcophagus. Below that was an area they have found below the museum and resorted: part of the original Roman foundations of the original fortress. After the Louvre, we crossed the Seine River to the "Left Bank" for dinner at a café there. Lots of fun, though it started out

rocky: we were in an upstairs room - old building (I could probably have almost touched the ceiling - very warm with 37 of us in there. The maitre 'd (or owner or whoever) was having problems - not getting our orders promptly (our guide wound up taking orders on foods) and taking **FOREVER** to get us any water because several of us did not drink wine. We could get soft drinks, but it was almost the end of the meal before our guide came around with a pitcher of Pepsi to refill drinks and Tommy then got his first drink. Tommy had the beef bourguignonne (sp) and I had a vegetable plate: zucchini cooked and spiced a little hot (still good) "filled" potato skin, carrots, and tomatoes stuffed and baked; really very good. The waiter finally began to relax and joke a little as he saw that things were working out and food was good. After dinner it was on the bus for an 8 hour drive to the Riviera. That was **AWFUL!** Worse than the airplane. Tommy had no room at all and slept very little. We did not get a restroom break until about 4 hours into the trip (though we could have used the tiny one on the bus if we HAD to).

Tuesday,
June 5, 2001

We got to the Riviera, beautiful hills with towns along the sides, but didn't take the right road to go beside the coast, so we finally see the Mediterranean when we get to Cannes - and the Mediterranean is really **blue!** We stopped briefly in Cannes for a restroom, view-of-the-harbor stop and then on to our hotel in Nice. Nice is much larger than Cannes, but also very pretty. Roland had to do some **VERY** tricky turns to get to the hotel because they missed the correct turn to get here - and because in Nice people double park wherever they want to. Our hotel is the Apogia. Tommy and Elliott wanted to rest, so Kathy, Linda, Ron, and I went out to find food. Ramey and I tried to find a place to get some French Francs as I was down to just 13 francs, but both banks we tried the automatic machines were broken or wouldn't take our cards. So I borrowed money from Kathy for a crab sandwich. Then we went to a fruit stand and Kathy & I got a box of strawberries apiece; Linda got a peach and a nectarine and some grapes (with seeds). We came back & rested. Met Ramey at 7:00 and walked to the restaurant - an Italian-style place - open front, but we ate inside. Had an interesting time in ordering, especially the dessert: Ramey had gone outside to make a phone call and we were left to order dessert "on our own." We had already seen the choices earlier, but did not know the French words for what we wanted (well, I knew the one for what I wanted, but the boy was expecting an English word and so missed it). So Linda and Ron, and Kathy ordered the apple tart. We had all remembered there was a third choice, but could not remember what it was, so Tommy & I played it safe and went for "glace" (ice cream). Then we had to make a choice of flavors; that was where the fun came in: we knew the English words, but the boy only knew the French words and the English translation for it had NOT been on the menu. SO . . . Kathy (veteran of 5 years of French, but who remembers little of it and understands less) picked out strawberry and I ordered that. Then Tommy's turn came and the boy gave the choices again and Kathy said Vanilla & Chocolate; Tommy asked what the other choices were and Kathy said, "Chocolate and Vanilla are your choices because those are all I can understand." We all laughed over that. **THEN** the boy comes back and says there is no chocolate (Tommy's first choice, of course). So Tommy chooses Vanilla (his only other choice, according to Kathy); the boy comes back and says, "No vanil, no chocola". So since we didn't know what the other words he was saying were, Tommy wanted strawberry; but now the boy did not understand strawberry - so I held up my dish and through lots of pointing got him to understand he wanted strawberry. All of it was excellent, but we had a lot of laughs over our ordering of dessert. (No air conditioning in the hotel rooms, but leaving the window open was all we needed - in fact, had to close it toward morning.) (Also no problem with bugs - during the whole trip! We had a fly in our room on the last night in Rothenburg, but other than that, no problem; this made strolling down the streets at night pleasant - which we would really enjoy in Rome).

Wednesday,
June 6, 2001

Left our hotel at 8:00 heading along the Riviera along a **VERY** winding road - many beautiful views of the Mediterranean. Got to Monaco about 10:00. It is a beautiful CLEAN country: manicured lawns, flowers everywhere (and no graffiti of which we had seen some in England and much in France; would see much in Italy, also). We walked along a garden walk below the main street to get to the palace where we split up to find our own food and see what we wanted to see. I had dressed to go to the casino at Monte Carlo (only a dress and no sandals could be worn inside; men were supposed to have on a tie), but on our garden walk, we passed the Oceanographic Museum and Tommy & I decided to go back and look at that. We spent our last francs on lunch (pizza for Tommy and a ham sandwich for me), then went to the museum. It was **SUPERBLY** interesting: had many species of fish and corals and nautiluses, starfish - and sharks: took pictures of sharks and a whale model they had so Gabriel could see them. They also had a bathyscape that had been used in the Revolutionary War against American ships. But the real highlight for me was some baleen from a whale: when we saw it, we thought it was some kind of bear fur. Turns out baleen is "hair" attached on "rods" of "nail" material; whales use it to strain food from the water - it is actually made from material like our hair and fingernails. When it was time to leave, we went to meet the bus, but it wasn't there: there had been two meeting places: one where we had left the bus which was set for 1:15 and the other below the casino (**ACROSS** the harbor on the other side in Monte Carlo) at 1:30. We figured out at 1:10 we had better head for the other meeting place; so Tommy and I did a "forced walk" and made it to the bus meeting place in 15 minutes - actually about a 30 minute walk. ON the way we passed the area where they were taking down the grandstands from having run the race at Monte Carlo last week. (We also saw the cathedral at Monaco where Princess Grace is buried, but didn't go in: ate our lunch outside the front steps.). From Monaco it was a 3 hour drive to Pisa (through Genoa) where we left the bus and walked into the old city (walled medieval city). We had supper there and were treated **really well** by the restaurant owner! We saw the Duomo (the church) and the Baptistry and, of course, the leaning bell tower. Much of the construction which has been underway to try to arrest the continued advancing of the tower's sinking had been removed. [Additional note 6/16/2001 - on CNN today one of the stories I saw several times over at Daddy's house was one which said the tower had been given back to the people of Tuscany and should be open in 5 months for people to start going back up inside it]. There were **MANY** souvenir stalls along the road beside the church with all the "touristy" stuff and we bought our share. At the bus area, walking vendors were selling watches, jewelry, and belts. Tommy and Ramey and Elliott all got belts. Along the road from Monaco we saw incredible villages all along the hillsides. Ramey said this was called the "Flower Riviera" because of all the greenhouses and shrub farms. And **EVERY** hillside was covered with terraces which had some form of greenhouse or other kinds of plants growing - and there was **NOTHING** but hillsides - we went through over 100 tunnels. Eventually we got to areas with olive trees - we saw orange "rolls" under them, stretched from tree to tree and we finally decided that they were nets which were spread under the trees to catch the olives when they fall. We also saw **many** grape vines throughout the area. Then we came to the L_____ area where 95% of the world's marble is quarried. We saw **HUGE** rail yard with stacks and stacks of containerized freight ready to ship (marble) all over the world. We also saw yards of marble companies with stacks and stacks of blocks of marble in all kinds of colors. But the real interesting part was seeing the mountains: they looked like they were snow covered, but actually were where the marble had been taken out exposing the white marble beneath. Almost forgot about our stop at Fragonard perfumery - toured the factory where they make the perfumed soap, still pretty much by hand. Very interesting - took a ton (I think) of rose petals to get a liter of perfume oil. After Pisa, another 3 hours to Rome - got into our hotel about 1:15 am.

Thursday,
June 7, 2001

Started out from the hotel at 9:00 since we got in so late last night (rather early this morning). Had to leave the bus outside the city of Rome (old city) since they have banned tour buses there. We walked in and met our guide, Mary, who took us through the Vatican Museums, the Sistine Chapel, and St. Peter's Basilica as well as on a bus tour of the Roman ruins: Coliseum and Forum and Circus Maximus. We then got off the bus and went into the Coliseum. Everything was just great! The Vatican Museums have absolutely beautiful art - just incredible to see these master works in person. The Sistine Chapel cannot be appreciated or described unless you actually see it - the size of the images is so much larger than you can imagine from any picture you will see. They asked us not to take pictures, but we did buy a book before we left. St. Peter's was just as impressive - saw the Pieta which Michelangelo sculpted when he was just 24 years old. Later saw the Moses (in the St. Peter in Chains Cathedral) which had been part of the tomb sculptures Michelangelo had been commissioned to sculpt for the tomb of Julius II, Pope at the time; but Julius interrupted the sculpting and had him paint the Sistine Chapel ceiling instead - which upset Michelangelo because his first love was sculpting. Anyway - I had seen the copies of the Pieta and Moses in the Smithsonian when I visited with Ron and Charlotte in 1963; never thought then that I would get to see the real ones. We had lunch (pizza crepes) in the colonnade on the side of the Vatican plaza. Then we walked to the bus for the tour of old Rome. Really interesting to see what was left of the Forum and the fact that it is still a market place - just businesses are in buildings on the side. Saw the Senate building and some temples. Much had been torn down by various groups since Imperial Rome as the "recycled" the stone into other buildings - one church had been built from the very beautiful marble which had been on the outside of the Coliseum - which has only one of three original walls still standing. Inside the Coliseum we saw beneath the floor (which has been long since gone) and could see where they raised and lowered the animal cages to bring the animals up to the arena level. Mary (our guide) said they would have 4 "acts" going on at one time so everyone around the arena could see. We saw the beautiful Arch of Constantine which is right outside the Coliseum; it is the arch that Napoleon patterned his Arch d' Triumpe in Paris after. Then we walked up a hill to see the smaller Arch of Which gave a beautiful view of the old Roman city. We drank water on our walk from a little wayside fountain, and Mary told us that all water from all fountains in Rome is potable. Tonight we had another excellent meal with Ramey at Il Travatore Roma (I think it was). Then we went for a walk and saw Navolor(?) Square - oldest square in Rome with a beautiful Bernini sculpted fountain. There were many artists here - could get your portrait or caricature done while you waited; also could get tattoos; many water colors and other prints available. Then on to the Pantheon - oldest Roman building still standing - 2nd century BC - had the first free-standing dome ever built (had hole in dome - no windows). We - Tommy & I and then Kathy and Elliott - peeped through the crack between the huge front doors, and we could barely see the altar and could clearly see the hole in the roof. Next we went to the Spanish Steps (154 of them - same number as the steps on Monk's Mound at Cahokia) - they were very beautiful and had another Bernini fountain (I think it was his) at the bottom of them - it was in the shape of a ship. These steps are called Spanish Steps because they led down the hill to the Spanish embassy back when the different Italian cities were independent; the people who lived at top of the hill wanted a fancy way of getting down from the top to the Spanish embassy at the bottom, hence the steps. Our walk ended at the Trevi Fountain (oops, we didn't throw a coin in, so we may not make it back to Rome). It is the largest fountain in the world and actually decorates the back of a church building. It got its name from the fact that 3 (tre) streets (vi) met together at that point (hence Tre vi). Here Ramey bought us ice cream and then we walked several blocks of interesting back streets to the Tiber River where we met Roland with the bus. Got back to the hotel about 10:30. Must be up early tomorrow - have to leave by 6:00.

Friday,
June 8, 2001

We were on the bus and leaving at 6:00 this morning - had a 3 hour drive to Pompeii. After we were on the road a while, Ramey learned from our local guide that the workers at Pompeii were going to be on strike today! - but only for half a day. So we swapped our morning and afternoon schedules in order to get to see Pompeii; we were very lucky it was a half day and not a whole day strike! Our first stop was at a shop that makes cameos. We saw how the process was done and then had opportunity to buy some. The designs were INCREDIBLE - all done by hand and VERY intricate - all sizes including framed pieces to hang on the wall. Process: Cameos are made from conch shells imported from Africa and the Caribbean. The shell piece to be carved is attached to the end of a large dowel which fits into a u-shaped slot on a work table. The artist has all sizes and shapes of blades on the table and puts the dowel in the table slot to give support for pressing down hard to carve the shell. The shell is mounted with the rough side out, colored side down so the carving exposes the white outer layer until reaching the colored bottom layer. Next we went to Naples to board the jet boat to go to the Isle of Capri. Once on Capri, we took the Funiculare (cable car) up the hill to the top of the island - or rather to the city of Capri; the top of the island was MUCH higher. We had lunch there at the Siren Hotel restaurant - on the patio overlooking the bay. There were palm trees and beautiful flowers everywhere. After lunch we walked a trail through the beautiful gardens there and then boarded another jet boat for the city of Sorrento on the other side of the mainland peninsula from Naples. In Sorrento we saw the old fortress there and then shopped for Capodimonte porcelain and inlaid wood items. They had a demonstration of how the inlaid wood was done - very interesting; woods used were all grown locally. The colors were put layer on layer (the layers were paper thin) and then the pattern was put on top and a very fine bladed jig saw was used to cut the pattern out. Then the pieces of wood were separated and reassembled into the pattern using the appropriate colors and these were glued together on a separate sheet of material and then applied to the box, table, etc. After that layers of laquer, etc. were put on and they demonstrated that the wood was impervious to heat by putting the flame of a lighter against it; it was also impervious to water. They had some VERY beautiful pieces. After our shopping, we caught the train (metro in other cities) and went to Pompeii. Of course Pompeii is the city that was covered in 25 feet of ash, rock and lava by the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius on Aug. 24, 79 AD. The destruction was so rapid that it preserved the city almost completely intact until its re-discovery in the 1840's. We got to walk the streets which were exactly as they had been in Roman times. We saw many household items - jars, etc. - well preserved even down to what was inside. There were even "casts" of people - like they were frozen in time just as they died. The people died from the hot gases from the volcano before the hot ash and lava covered their bodies and preserved their shapes. But one of the wonderful things to be preserved were the frescoes - the paintings on the walls. As we walked through one Villa, we could actually touch the beautiful wall paintings that were probably over 2000 years old! This was something I had wanted to see ever since I could remember - it was really a very exciting stop for me (but we only had 1 hour to walk around!) After touring the ruins, we went to a nearby restaurant for traditional Italian pizza which, again, was delicious. At this point Roland met us with the bus and we headed back to 'Rome and our last night in the Summit Hotel.

Saturday,
June 9, 2001

Left the hotel in Rome at 7:30 for a 3 hour ride to Florence - birthplace of the Renaissance. Saw the Duomo which has the burial place of Michelangelo and Galileo. Interesting fact: Michelangelo died the year Galileo was born and Galileo died the year Isaac Newton was born. We saw the Plaza d' Seniorina where the "David" statue used to stand (a copy stands there now). Did not get to see the David because lines were too long (not enough time). Same for the Uffizi (but I got a book for it, so can see what I would want to see if I ever get back)

which housed a great example of the progression of European painting - also long lines. Had a great lunch at a small restaurant down narrow streets. Saw a leather factory - Paruzzi - could get VAT left off and 10% off that, but had little time to shop and prices seemed high, though cheaper than in the U.S. for same quality. Saw demonstration of how they apply gold leaf. Churches and buildings in Florence truly beautiful. At 3:30 left for Jesolo - resort north of Venice on the Adriatic Sea. Arrived about 6:30 after beautiful drive through Italian mountains - saw many villages on hillsides all along the way, growing grapes and olives and fruit trees. Saw one medieval village on road this morning where the wall around it was carved out of the rock - it was right next to the road, so got a good view. Saw another at a distance which the Popes had built as their palace they could flee to when things were dangerous in Rome. Bad news after lunch - Ramey's father died this morning. He will have to leave us in Venice; Brad will be back with us. Arrived in Jesolo about 6:30 and went to beach. **SURPRISE!!!** There was an international professional sand sculpting competition being held. Absolutely incredible sand sculptures of scenes from Alice in Wonderland. Went out again after supper (supper in the hotel at 8:30 - chicken, salad, and pasta with ice cream for desert). Found a miniature golf course (there is a children's amusement park next to the hotel) and played; Tommy made par, but I didn't do well: the holes were completely concrete and the balls were rather rubbery, not like usual golf balls. Took a little work to get the feel for it. Tommy had 3 hole-in-ones in a row. The shop street was still brightly lit and **VERY** busy even at 11:00. We got ice cream (I got RASPBERRY!) And went to the beach to see the sand sculptures again. We voted tonight at dinner to stay here longer in the morning and leave out our stop at Salzburg tomorrow night - mixed review on that, but having more time in Venice will be good.

Sunday,
June 10, 2001

Up at 9:00 for breakfast at 9:30 then out to the beach. We picked up shells from the beach and then dug a hole in the sand just at the high water line of the waves so it kept water in it and we washed our shells there. The people were working on the sand sculptures, and we stopped and talked to the man working on the U.S. display - he had been in charge of organizing the people and displays we were seeing - the actual contest would begin the next day and he was not entered in it: he was just organizing the display. Also talked to the man working on the U.K. display. They were both fighting problems created by shells in the sand: when they pulled a shell fragment out, they had to patch the hole left by it. The U.S. man was working on a delicate "bridge" area when a shell fragment caused part of the bridge to collapse - he said that happened frequently; just one of the hazards of the profession. He said the sand was sifted to get out shell fragments, but of course that couldn't eliminate all of them; he also said the sand was packed before it was delivered and some groups packed their sand better than others producing a better sculpting material. We left the hotel at 12:00 to get a water bus to Venice. We had a short tour of Venice then went to a Murano glass factory and saw a demonstration of glassblowing - very interesting - and very hot! Then we went to a Burano lace factory to see lace-making demonstration - fascinating. The three different styles: Bobbin lace could use as few as 2 (4) bobbins or up to a hundred (I think). There were 7 stitches in Burano lace and each woman would learn to do one of those stitches and that is the one she would then do on all pieces. The lady showed a "collector" piece which had all 7 stitches and had taken 8 months to finish. From there we just wandered the streets. Ron & Linda went with Tommy and me. We wandered out of the designated area and found some interesting places; found a glass maker who was Murano trained, but worked in his own shop - his prices were more reasonable than what we found at the factory - factory had absolutely **BEAUTIFUL** glass with gold on it and pretty good prices - just too expensive. Back to St. Marcos Square at 5:00 to meet for the gondola ride. Our group had 6 in the boat, but one group had 4 in the boat and the singer and accordion player - our boats stayed together so we all enjoyed the music. Really interesting to see the "streets" from the water. Saw several motor boats - private individuals or

businesses with their own boats for transportation. After the ride we went to the restaurant for dinner - also excellent. We left at 8:00 for the water bus ride to meet Roland with the bus on the other side of the island from where we had come. Then we had an all night trip through northern Italy (which was German until Mussolini and Hitler struck a deal in 1943 - according to Roland who was now our "guide" as well; Brad could not make it and Ramey had left to be with his family - but we had little technical stuff left to do: everything was pretty much get to the destination, shop and then get to Frankfurt). It was a shame to go through what was probably some beautiful mountain country in the dark, but was the only way to get to Karlovy Vary and then to Frankfurt in time. Did not sleep well till about 4:00 in the morning; don't think Tommy slept much at all.

Monday,
June 11, 2001

Got to Karlovy Vary about 8:30. Shops didn't really open till about 9:00. Went to McDonald's for breakfast (and to use restrooms; one thing we learned about Europe: restrooms were not as easy to come by as in the US, but we could always count on McDonald's for restrooms!) After that, began walking through the streets. A beautiful town in Czech Republic noted for crystal and china. Stalls set up along one merchant street and we could "dicker" with these people. We bought a bag to use to take back stuff we had bought [cheap one, but served the purpose; handle came out on the escalator in Frankfurt (one of the 6 we had to go on to get to our terminal!) and I would up with bruises on my leg trying to get it back under control before I had to get off!], then I got a cup and saucer, a horse, and a stone elephant from India. After a lunch of sandwiches, back on the bus for the ride to Rothenburg, Germany and our hotel. **BEAUTIFUL** town!, but we got here at 5:15 and some stores started closing at 6:00 and we had to get our bags to our rooms so Roland could park the bus. Roland got us rooms in the hotel (really a quaint place - unlike any we had been in before - building had been there since time of Columbus! Then we hurried across the street so I could get a cup and saucer that I sw in the window. Later on to the Christmas store here where we got ornaments. After that, we had supper at a nearby restaurant: Tommy had deer and I had ham & fresh asparagus (it was large and white, but good); all was delicious. Back to the hotel to repack everything and be ready for 6:30 breakfast tomorrow and flight home.

Tuesday,
June 12, 2001

Left the hotel at 7:30 after a light breakfast. Passed this notebook on the bus for everyone to write a note to Roland. Got to the airport about 9:30, but had to leave one of our group at terminal 1, so we all got off there and then had to haul our luggage up 3 escalators onto an elevated shuttle to get to terminal 2. When we got there, we got checked in and finally found our gate (more escalators) and sat down about 5 minutes before they started boarding our flight! On our bus ride into Frankfurt, Roland showed us where he lived (the town) and the place where the bus company is located. We are on the plane now, and from the monitors we can see that we are over Bonn heading toward Amsterdam. Our flight left Frankfurt at 11:45 (15 min. late) [that 15 min. would be critical on the other end] local time. We got into Newark at 1:30 p.m. (Local time). Tommy checked as soon as he could get to the service counter to see if there was an earlier flight to Nashville: there was, but we were too late; it was just taking off. If we had left Frankfurt on time or if we had moved through the terminal faster, we might have made it. As it was, we were SUPPOSED to have a 5 hour layover. It is now 9:00 p.m. local time and we are in line on the runway (with about 50 other planes) for maybe an hour wait before we can take off - weather problems north and south of us are delaying flights coming in (so no planes to send back out) and flights going out. Well, we moved 12 feet. The flight is only supposed to take an hour and 50 min. - if we can ever get into the air. This is one of those express flights: one seat on the left, 2 on the right (our flight coming back over was 9 across with video games and in-seat monitors!) We thought for a while that Ronnie and Donna were going to get to stay here overnight, get a \$300 voucher with Continental, and

transportation to and from the hotel: the flight had been overbooked and they asked for volunteers to give up seats. BUT - as luck would have it - some of the incoming people did not arrive, so we actually wound up with one empty seat. 9:10 and we're still sitting. 9:25 and we are in "the middle of a long line" so Capt. Christine says - she has turned off the seat belt sign so we can move around (not a good sign). 9:45 the stewardess decided to give us our "peanuts and pretzels, yippee" (quoting her). Since we are still on the ground, she can't bring out the service cart, so she is having to get drink orders a row at a time - 10:05 she took my order: from the time before the peanuts till now, we have not moved; planes taking off on the right and landing on the left. 10:30 - still in the same spot. Captain says they are letting planes take off about one every 10-15 min. and there are about 50 planes on the ground waiting to take off. Yippee. 10:35 we MOVED - to another spot to wait - but we're closer to the runway: now we can see the silhouette of planes landing instead of just their lights! Finally took off at 11:30! Good flight - could see lights all the way - a little lightning in a few clouds, but cleared as we went west. Start out finally. Arrived Nashville 12:30 local time (2 hour flight). Another surprise: Red Roof does not shuttle this late (so what else is new) - so our three drivers - Tommy, Ronnie, & Elliott - rode with Phyllis & Bob to get the vehicles and come back to get us. We are the ONLY ones in the airport (who are not cleaning up)! Got Ron & Linda home at 3:12 and we got in at 3:18. What a way to end our trip!