

End of First Contract, Al Hada Hospital, Saudi Arabia

by Irma Kackert

OCTOBER 25, 1980

Trip from Jedda to Athens, Rome, Venice, Munich, Frankfurt, Luxembourg, Brussels, Germany, Chicago, Los Angeles.

I am starting my travels tonight, at the end of first 5 month contract, doing Hydrotherapy at the new hospital in Taif, Saudi Arabia. I am in the airport in Jeddah, heading first to Athens, Greece. The regular driver for the NME company, American company that secures personnel for the hospitals, brought me from Taif to the Jedda airport. The Haj, religious time for Muslims has just ended, and the pilgrims from all over the world are in the airport, on their way home. The airport is crowded, I see styles of dress native to many countries, and I feel conspicuous in American style slacks and pullover top. I see the flowing robes on men and women from Africa, some bright prints, some solid light blue, pink and white. There are many Saudi people here too, and people in native costume from India, Turkey, Sudan, Somalia, Pakistan, etc. It is very interesting to me, to observe the different styles of dress. One African woman has a child of about age 2 tied to her back, with the big cotton shawl – he is sleeping and she sits on a bench and leans forward so the child will stay supported better. What an international study here tonight.

We took off at 1:55 a.m., right on time. I laid my head on a pillow and went to sleep, later the stewardess awakened me, to eat a meal they were serving, and I dozed off and on after that. We arrived in Athens, Greece at 5:15 a.m., it was a good flight. In the airport I asked where to change money, did that and then got my baggage. (the money changer would not take my \$500 traveler's check, it was good I had the \$200 left from the NME cash given us when I came over here in May. I secured Greek drachmas, the money they use, and checked my suitcases in the "left luggage" department, taking only my shoulder bag with me. I asked a young fellow who was speaking English, where to catch the bus into town. He gave me a lot of information about Athens and the many Greek islands. Using his information, I took the bus to the main square, bought stamps there and mailed the granddaughters birthday cards, also ate an orange I had with me. Next, I took a taxicab to Pierous, the area where cruise ships and inter-island ferries are docked, bought a ticket at a booth, saying "I want to go to the end of the line, and return". No one spoke much English, but I got the ticket and got on the ship with the other people in line. Didn't know where I was going, but figured I would be o.k. As the ship stopped at an island, to let people off, I asked the man who let the gangplank down, "Where am I going" as I held up my ticket which was printed in Greek. He responded "Spetzae" as he grabbed the ticket from my hand – I responded, "Don't tear my ticket", then a gentleman standing near me, who spoke English said "Madam, can I help you?" I stated that I just wanted to know which island I would be visiting, and he told me it was the island of Spetzae, a most beautiful island. "My island". He owned a restaurant there, his niece was taking care of it, while he had made a trip to Athens. I thanked him, he invited me to have a coffee in the nearby area, which I did. We passed many islands, stopped to discharge, and take on, passengers. Each island looked fascinating, very "old world", tiny gravel streets or roads, sometimes no autos were seen, just motorcycles or horse carts.

At Spetzae, I went into the restaurant (very close to the docking area) that the Greek man had told me about, after admiring the beautiful, clear water and bright, sunny air, natural beauty all around me. I ordered an omelet with sausage, bread and coffee, from the menu. It cost 85 drachmas, equivalent to about \$2.12, was very tasty. I next walked the old, charming streets where there were shops and cafes with tables outside. There was a hotel close to the pier, the Greek man's friend owned it, and I looked at a room there. It was nice, but decided to try for more local color by finding a room for rent by a family. It was the right choice, followed the direction of a home-made sign to a home, set behind a low stone garden wall, and got a room in a private home. It was tiny, but clean, upstairs, with a balcony overlooking the garden area below. The cost was 300 drachmas, about \$7.50. I deposited my travel bag, relaxed a bit and refreshed myself, then spent more time exploring this little village. Felt very happy that I was now on an adventure trip, in the Mediterranean area, and would be seeing the "old world" of Europe and Asia for the first time. I had on my bathing suit, with cover-up over it, sat on the sandy beach for a while, waded in the comfortable, warm water, then walked about again. I bought a bottle of wine, walked on further, enjoying the local scenes. An old fisherman was mending his nets, I sat on a bench nearby and watched him do this task. Another man sat nearby, he spoke English, greeted me and welcomed me to this island. After a little conversation, he asked me if I would take a short ride in his boat, which he had newly purchased, it was also a fishing boat. Since I loved fishing, conversation was easy. I entered the open boat, which was moored very near us. The ride was pleasant, he relayed stories of his occupation, fishing, and of life in the village. He may have had other ideas, as he turned the boat into a beach, and an area with beautiful green trees covering the uphill area beyond. He kept saying "Air good -- Trees good", I agreed, it was a beautiful spot of nature, but when he jumped out and was about to tie the boat up, and asked me to take a walk into the forest, I objected. Not on your life!! Irma was not going to leave the boat!! I declined graciously, said I wanted to go back. Seeing that I was in earnest, he got back in, and started the motor. On the way back, he patted my shoulder, said "you - good". I told him that he was also good, he was a nice man, and I enjoyed the ride and conversation. Actually he was very polite, not aggressive, but I was not about to find out if he had other intentions. As we got back he asked me to go fishing with him at 8:00 tomorrow morning, and I would have loved to do that, but thought I had better not. Then he asked me to go in the boat on Sunday afternoon, he would take me all around 2 islands. I also refused. That would have been nice, I love fishing, but Irma, you have to watch these Greek men!! That makes the third amorous man showing attention, Charles the Englishman, and Abdulla, in Saudi, now this man, Nick.

Leaving the waterfront I walked back to my room, and there met Rita, a young German girl who spoke English fluently. She had the room next to mine, shared the balcony and the bathroom. We conversed, she comes to this island often for vacation, asked about my working in Saudi Arabia, and my travels. She said she was having dinner tonight, at a Greek restaurant up in the hills, with some friends also vacationing here, another couple and 2 young men who were working in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, and were on vacation, as I was. I accepted, even though I had just showered, was in pajamas, relaxing on the balcony, and intended to retire early, being without sleep for 24 hours. But this sounded exciting, to eat local Greek food, so I joined them after changing clothes. So glad I did!! The young men were British, working for the Minister of Finance in Riyadh, the others were a married

couple from Britain, on holiday. We all rode in a horse and carriage, far up a steep valley, to the restaurant where we had Greek food and wine. Rita knew what to order, having been here before, and I like Greek food. There was music, played by a small group of local musicians, so the evening was wonderful. If I had stayed in the hotel, never would have met local people, or Rita, so this is why I prefer a “bed and breakfast” type lodging, in my travels. After a pleasant evening in this local restaurant, we walked back down to our apartment and I retired right away.

SUNDAY OCTOBER 26

Awoke about 7:30 a.m., saw the sky was kind of cloudy, lay and relaxed a while. I heard the church bells ring, also the sound of voices of people in the garden below and in yards nearby. It was nice to hear the local color of this village, and felt it was nicer staying here and better than the hotel. I sat on the balcony, ate an orange, the landlady saw me and brought up Greek coffee – it tasted so good!! Later, Rita and I walked down to the pier area together, looked around. There were quite a few tourists here exploring different tours offered, I decided to buy a ticket to the island of Hydra, beautiful and world famous. Transportation was on a Hydrofoil, it was a one day jaunt. Arriving there I spent 5 hours near the port area, sitting and watching the huge liners dock, discharge their passengers and depart. Some fishermen were at the edge of the water, near a cement square where they beat the “heck” out of the octopus they had caught. More local color, they do this to tenderize the flesh. I bought a lovely hand crocheted beige vest from a little shop, and ate delicious shrimp at a small restaurant, enjoyed myself as I explored. Hydra is a beautiful island, and prices were reasonable here too.

After my explorations, I took the hydrofoil back at 3:30 p.m., from Hydra to Athens – was fun to have this ride experience, had read of the hydrofoil but never had a chance to ride “just over the water”. I found Rita was on this trip too, she greeted me, told me of the things she had done, while on Hydra. The ride was very rough as strong winds and dark clouds were around us. When we docked at Athens, a young couple that Rita knew, gave me instructions how to take the Metro (subway) to my hotel area – they rode to that station also, showed me where to get off and pointed to my hotel. It was a short walk to the Pan Hotel, the air was now pleasant, I felt proud of my day’s activities, was happy to be “seeing the world” by myself. At the hotel I took a hot bath and got ready for bed.

MONDAY OCTOBER 27

Awakened to the sound of thunder and very heavy rain but by the time I was ready to go the Acropolis, my destination for sightseeing today, it had stopped. From the Pan Hotel, I took the bus tour to the ruins of ancient Athens. On the tour, I met a young lady Christina Velasco, from Argentina. We became friends, she traveled alone also, spoke very good English. The Acropolis stood on a high spot overlooking the rest of the city, it was awe inspiring, felt lucky it was not overrun by tourists, since it was a slightly rainy day. Not too great for photos, but I did take several. One of our stops was at a private museum, filled with treasures from the past, we spent more time there than the bus allotted, with the o.k. of

the tour director, and Christina and I walked back to the hotel together, using directions given us. I had lunch at the hotel, then window shopped a little bit but the rain came again and I went back to my room, rested and dried out. In the evening Christina and I took the night club/dinner tour, saw the city lit up at night, enjoyed dinner at Pirous, were served the Greek liquor Ouzo with it (has a taste like anise), saw a lovely Greek dancing floor show, were delivered back to the Pan hotel, went to bed at 1:30 a.m. What a great day this was for me!

TUESDAY OCTOBER 28

Awoke to the sound of cannons being fired, and bells ringing, it is a holiday here called "National Day". I was leaving Athens today, bathed, dressed, had breakfast in the hotel and caught the bus to the airport, from the station near Constitution Square, where my hotel was situated. That was a great location. It was cool and windy but not raining, found I was sneezing often and felt like I was catching a cold. At the airport I got my flight to Rome, Italy, the next stop on my quest to see as much as I could of Europe/Asia, on my way to Los Angeles from Taif, Saudi Arabia.

I was on Al Italia airline, left Athens at 11:45 a.m., arrived Rome at 2:15 p.m., had lunch on board. Down below I could see the Mediterranean sea and shoreline often, then Italy and the airport. I procured my baggage o.k., changed money in the terminal to liras, the local money used. There were many taxicab drivers offering service to a "good hotel", I accepted one after his explanation of my being safe with him to go to the Bolivar hotel in central Rome, showed me pictures, described it's features. It was fine, got a room with bath, very nicely furnished, the location was good, cost was \$42, breakfast included. I felt I was lucky. Being avid to see Rome, I bought a map and in short time I was walking amidst the ruins of the Forum, saw a very old palace building, went into the Church of the Crucifix, also St. Marcello church. I knelt and thanked God for this lovely trip I am having, burned a candle for my deceased husband John. His spirit was with me. After filling my eyes with these wonderful old treasures I went back to my room, just before dark, rested until time to retire, reading pamphlets about the places I had visited. I have had no trouble going around by myself, enjoyed it all.

WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 29

I took a morning bus tour of Rome, with an English speaking guide it took us to many places including the Trevi fountain, the Pantheon, the downtown area, several churches and ended in St. Peter's square where everyone got out and walked around this great architectural place. I had seen so many pictures of it, now I am here in person. On Wednesday afternoons, Pope John Paul II speaks to the people gathered here, and gives his blessing to all. The tour bus could not stay past noon, but it was stated if anyone wished to remain and see the Pope, you could do so, but would have to return on your own to your hotel. I wanted to see the Pope, so said I would walk back and find my hotel, by following the National line car tracks. Another young man on the tour named Tom (from Scotland) said he would walk back too, and we could find our way together. He knew which hotel I

was in, for he was on the bus already when it picked me up at my hotel. It turned out that he was a wonderful young man, had studied briefly for the priesthood, but not continued. He knew more about the Catholic religion that I did, also knew all about the St. Peter cathedral and guided us through it. The Pope came out into the square, riding in an open jeep, with bodyguards around him. He drove past all roped areas with throngs of people there to greet him, reached over, shook hands, waved, then ascended a platform in the center of the square and spoke to all, in five different languages. It was remarkable! At about 2:00 p.m. he again entered the Jeep, and left, blessing, and waving to all. (Later – It is now year 2001 and I am typing up this journal on the computer, want to add that later that year, October 1981, Pope John Paul was the subject of an assassination attempt, by a man in the audience that day. He was seriously wounded, but lived. The assassin was caught, and jailed, and since then, the Pope travels before the people in a bulletproof Jeep, he is behind safety glass).

After the Pope left, St. Peter's Cathedral was opened, for people to enter. Tom and I went through it, saw the beautiful masterpiece, the "Pieta", the tomb of St. Peter, in an area below the main altar, Tom knew all about St. Peter's and the wonderful arts it contained, we saw them all. In the small chapels all around the ground floor central area, there were masses going on, we stopped at one and I received Holy Communion during the mass. How wonderful for me! Next Tom guided us down below the ground floor, went through the tombs there, I was amazed at all I was learning here in St. Peter's. Looking up from the main floor, toward the huge dome above, I admired the murals on the inside of the dome. We next climbed the 300 plus steps up to arrive at the domed area, found that the "murals" were not painted, but were mosaics of biblical scenes, composed of tiny pieces of colored stone, around inside walls of the dome. I was amazed, could not believe I was seeing all this, and hearing so much history about St. Peter's from Tom. What a gift that he was on the bus I was on that day. Leaving that area we went up on the roof of St. Peter's, looked over the Vatican gardens and the city of Rome. It was almost dusk by this time, we saw the sun set in the distance, remained there until the guards said we must leave, for they were closing the roof area.

Down on the street again, Tom studied his map and led us to the corners of Via Nazionale and Maggio, the location of my hotel. It was a very long walk, and now dark, but shops were open and it was interesting to look into many antique shops along the way. At one spot we came to a restaurant where chickens were being broasted, revolving on spits, in front of a wood burning fire. The aroma was delicious, so we ate there, had a delicious meal. I had a glass of red wine with my meal, true Italian style. Tom escorted me to my hotel, I thanked him for his friendship, being a wonderful escort at the Vatican area, and for all the information he gave. He replied that it was his pleasure, and that if he was still in Rome tomorrow, he would call, and maybe we could see some other interesting places – he had applied for a tour of Venice tomorrow, but was only on the waiting list, had not been confirmed for a spot. I forgot to write an important thing in this journal, I went to confession in St. Peter's.. As we passed many confessionals, one had a sign "ENGLISH" over the door, so took advantage of receiving this sacrament from the English speaking priest, in the Basilica of St. Peter. I had a wonderful day today, even with the runny nose, and slight cold.

THURSDAY OCTOBER 30

Tom did not come by my hotel this morning, he must have been able to do the tour he had applied for. What a streak of luck, to meet him on my bus and have him for a guide at the Vatican! About 9:30 a.m. I started walking along Avenida Nazionale, thinking of what I wanted to see next, and I suddenly decided to take a train to Firenze (Florence) the city with architectural treasures in great quantity. Walking to the train station, I purchased a ticket, left on the 12:30 p.m. train, arrived at 4:30 p.m. in Florence. It was a long ride, on a crowded train, had not realized Florence was so far from Rome. The city is up in the mountains, and I did enjoy seeing the countryside. Following a map, I walked about saw only a little of Florence, including large plazas, bridges, the domed cathedral, little narrow streets lined with shops, many carved marble statues, etc. One would have to spend much more time here, to observe the wonders of Florence. When I was hungry I stopped in a little café, had meat and cheese pizza, which was delicious, and some ice cream, then returned to the station and left on the 7:00 p.m. train for Rome.

About half-way on the journey back, at 9:00 p.m., the train stopped suddenly at a very small town and everybody was told to get out of the train!! I was sleepy, and startled, when it was announced there was a strike called by railroad workers, all trains could not travel after 9:00 p.m. We all got out, stood around on station platform, or on the ground, confused and wondering what would happen to us. Someone said we should re-board the train, everybody scrambled in, then were again told we had to get off, and the train doors were locked. What a situation, what an experience – no one seemed to know what would happen. It was quite cool outside, luckily I had a sweater with me. Suddenly an announcement was made that buses would take us on to Rome. When they appeared, everyone made a rush for the door, squeezed into the vehicles, with three people in a seat, and many standing in the aisles. They took us back to Rome, arrived at 12:40 a.m., we were let out at a transfer station. Normally there are taxis here to serve people, but they were all taken quickly, and there were no more buses waiting. Finally, after waiting about another 20 minutes, a taxi came, I secured it, arrived back at my hotel at 1:10 a.m. What a different travel experience, not a very good one. I heard later, that strikes like this happen quite often, always without warning.

FRIDAY OCTOBER 31 HALLOWEEN

This is my last day in Rome, and I must see the Sistine Chapel, so after breakfast in the hotel, I packed my bags, left them in the room, ready for travel. Checkout time was 12:00 noon. I took the No.64 bus to the St. Peter plaza, at the Vatican (I knew my way now), walked several blocks from there to the chapel, paid my fee to enter and was enthralled by the beauty of everything, and room after room of priceless treasures. I followed the descriptions in my guidebook, enjoying it all immensely. There were galleries, museums, art works, halls, which led in time to the “Capella” itself, a huge room with the domed ceiling all covered with the painting of “Judgement Day” by Michael Angelo. It was breathtaking, hard to realize how he could paint these scenes while in difficult positions up in that dome. I can’t describe it all here but looking at the color plates in the guidebook helps one realize

the grandeur of it all. My time was too short here to properly absorb everything, leaving the Sistine chapel I viewed the Vatican gardens from a small plaza area, then walked out and caught the bus back to the hotel, arrived at 12:30 p.m. They had carried my bags down from my room, to the lobby, now called a cab for me and I was driven to the airport. The fare was 28,000 lira, which was 5000 less than the fare I paid on arriving here – however, that taxi driver did take me to a nice hotel, as he promised.

At the airport I checked my bags, and waited for the plane to Venice to depart. It was a completely full plane, guess the train strike is making travelers use the airlines to get around. It was a short flight, just one hour, no food was served. It was almost dark on arrival at the Venice airport, I wanted to check my 2 bags here and just carry the overnight one, as I did in Athens. This terminal had no such services, so I had to take them all with me as I boarded the waiting bus, the transport to the central terminal, the end of the line for auto traffic. I tried to get some information about a hotel, but no one spoke English, and it was really dark now. I saw a neon sign for an Italian airline office, went in, but they could not help, looked for a taxi, none were around. Loaded with my bags, I headed across the circular area of buses to a neon sign “Hotel San Chiara”. Just as I was nearing the hotel, a cab driver came by, noted my heavy luggage, stopped and asked “ hotel??” I said yes, he pointed to the courtyard and said “o.k.” I went in, took a room, figured it was close to the bus line, just in case I had any problems in leaving Venice. I was also glad to not carry my bags any further. Well, the hotel was very old, like most everything in Venice, and I did not have a private bath, but it was a place to sleep, the room was on the third floor, it did have a sink with hot and cold running water. The toilet and shower was next to my room. However I found it was really in a good location, and out of the little window in the room (the pigeons roosted on a ledge outside it), I could see the station just below on a canal where boats picked up and discharged passengers.

This old building was probably very historic, it had marble floors, wide staircases, large, square doors to the rooms, each floor had a central area and the doors to rooms opened off this, no long, dark corridors like some of the hotels have. After staying in it, I felt I was lucky to have found such a piece of history, which is what I like to do when I travel. After getting my suitcases into my room, and relaxing a bit, I went down to the boat station, took one that went to “Rialto Plaza”. I explored the area, some of the narrow streets nearby, and the shops that were open. It was quite cool, and I wore the knit coat for warmth. There were so many beautiful articles in the shops, I enjoyed seeing them, also hearing conversations, in Italian, of customers. Soon they began closing, so I found the nearest boat dock and took a water transport to “Roma station”, where my hotel was, and after getting off it was just a few steps into my room. The canals in Venice serve as streets, all transport is on boats or gondolas. In my room, I did my usual light laundry, blouses and undies. As I travel, I never have dirty clothes, bring only quick drying items that don't need ironing.

Forgot to say that as I was walking this evening, passed a church on a little, narrow street, there was a mass being said so I attended, and received Holy Communion, this is the eve of All Saint's Day --- Happy Halloween!!!

SATURDAY NOVEMBER 1

When I awoke in the morning, found it was cold, and blustery, wind was blowing hard, I could see people down below pulling up their coat collars as they waited at the boat station. I went down to breakfast in the small dining room (included in room rate), then put on all the warm clothes I had with me, including a knit hat, and went out. I bought an all-day ticket on the transport boats, so I could ride to all the stations, even to the Lido, the Casino area, way over across the lagoon. I wandered around on the narrow streets, looking at shops, houses and churches, stopped in front of an area where two men were doing repair work on a gondola, probably this was their business.

Next I rode to St. Mark's square station, got off and started viewing this historic area. I was proud of myself, for getting around without a guide, followed the map and read in my guidebook of Venice. The square always attracts many tourists, but was not crowded today, because of the cold weather. The church here is huge and has wonderful mosaics across the front. The clock tower was right ahead of me as I walked, and nearby the leader of a small tour group was speaking (in English) and telling how the two little men would come out, on the hour, and hit the ball. It was almost 10:00 a.m, so I waited and sure enough, the two men hit the ball 10 times, the digital part changed to the Roman numeral X. Wonderful!!! I next went into the huge basilica, there was a High Mass going on, with the traditional three priests celebrating it. After mass, I examined more areas, enjoyed seeing the marble statues and elaborate decorations. Next I went up in the bell tower, took the elevator to the top, the view over Venice was great, but it was too cold and windy to stay very long. Coming down, I took another boat to a different station, wandered around streets there, passed a small grocery store where I entered and bought some cheese (it was so good!), a roll, some slices of sausage, sat on a bench in a sunny spot and ate it.

Later, as I walked toward a point of the land near St. Mary's church, I passed a little shop with food and wine, went in and had a glass of wine some food, and rested awhile. Then I took another boat back to St. Mark's Square, there I bought some mosaic pins, for gifts. I wanted to ride on a gondola, while in Venice, but the price was 30,000 lira to go out. That was too much for me, so I waited until someone else came and inquired (a German man and his son), then offered to share the cost with them. They were happy to do so, and we had a very nice, long ride in the gondola, from St. Mark's square back into the canals in St. Paul area, passed by the crossing of four intersections of canals, heard about the history of some areas, and finally came back to the starting point. I was sorry to see the water is polluted, and trash floats here and there – that is too bad. But it was a lovely, quiet, gliding ride / the boatman sang some songs, and then I sang a little of "Oh Solo Mio", he responded with "Bravo". So, now I've had my ride in a gondola, in Venice. I went back to my hotel room, in a shop bought a little bottle of wine, meat, a roll, an apple, ate this while I rested. My nose was a little runny, probably a head cold starting. Before it got dark, I took a boat again, rode out to the Lido and back. On the boat I met a group of young American students and their professor from Ohio, they are touring Europe as a part of their course. It was good to talk with Americans again, find not many Italian people speak English. By the time I returned to the hotel it was after 9:00 p.m., I soon got ready for bed, had eaten at the Lido.

SUNDAY NOVEMBER 2

Again, it was cold and windy this morning. After breakfast I packed everything up in suitcases, to be ready to leave the hotel about noon, then went out to have a last look at Venice, and to buy some more of the mosaic pins. As I walked over the bridge on my side of the canal, I came upon St. Piccolo church, and went in. A mass, said in Latin, was just starting. The custom of using Latin was normal when I was growing up, later the English language was used (or language of the country you are in) so I enjoyed hearing the old form of the mass, I knew the responses. I knelt on the old wooden, worn kneelers, and thanked God for this opportunity of attending mass on All Soul's Day, offered my prayers for my deceased husband John, for my mom and dad, and all family members

Following mass, I walked on a bridge over the Grand Canal, found the shop with the mosaic pins, purchased a few more. They are very pretty, and done by hand here in the artist's different designs. In a cute little café I had fish, rolls, little tomatoes and wine, then it was time to get back to the hotel. Walking across the circular bus area there, I entered the air travel terminal and found there was transport to the airport, at 1:00 p.m. I had time to make two trips, carrying my luggage, from the hotel to the bus, so departure was easier than my arrival here, when I had to carry all three at one time from the bus, to the hotel – in the darkness. I really enjoyed my visit to Venice, such an old, historic city, it had been a very wealthy, and strong, municipality back in the early days

The airport bus delivered me to the Venice airport o.k., I tried to change money there, but that place was closed, for it was Sunday. Also closed, was the airline office, where I wanted to confirm my flight to Munich. They really observe closure of offices and stores here in Europe, makes me feel bad the way nothing closes in America, on Sundays, business is carried on seven days a week. In the airport I had a meal, went through passport control without any problem, waited 'till flight time, boarded, and in 50 minutes the plane landed in Munich. On the way, we passed over snowy mountain tops, sticking up through the clouds, then was surprised, on landing, to see snow on the ground., the first of the season here. It was partly sunny, but much colder than the weather in Venice. B r r r !!

I collected my bags, put them on a cart, wheeled it outside to a waiting bus transport to the center of town. I had no problems here, the driver put the bags on for me. Seated next to me was a friendly lady, who spoke English, she was just returning from a trip to Athens. I asked her if she could recommend a small hotel for me, she told me of the Schliker hotel, it was right near the old cathedral in midtown, and handy to the points of interest there. I like to walk in the older sections of town. At the bus terminal I got a cab to the Hotel Schliker, got a room, with private bath. It was very nice, the bed had the down comforter, big and thick. After getting settled, I washed my suit and knit top and undies (I always carry soap powder, a small, thin line, and clothespins), then walked out to view my surroundings. It was a great location, and I noted there was a McDonald's very close to the hotel. They are all over the world! It was quite cold, and snowy underfoot in places, but the air felt good. I had no gloves, but the socks given to passengers on the airline, and which I had not used, kept my hands warm. Decks of playing cards were handed out too, with the airline name on them, so I can always play solitaire in the evening, before I retire. I had told the desk

clerk that I wanted to take a tour of the Bavarian Alps in the morning, it is off season and not much goes on here after October 31, but he found one going to some castles, including Linderholm, and I will take that. So, good night.

MONDAY NOVEMBER 3

The bed felt good, the down comforter was great, but I awoke a couple of times because my head was all stuffed up, guess I was in the cold for too long yesterday. Despite this, I rose early, showered, washed my hair (this permanent is great for traveling), and had breakfast in the dining room. There were good rolls, sausage slices, butter, jam and plenty of hot coffee. Then I took a cab to the place where the bus tours start, joined my tour. We rode through the countryside, there were beautiful views of hills, forests, creeks and some cleared land. The leaves on deciduous trees had turned color earlier, but were still clinging to branches, the sight was so colorful!! There were many areas of tall, thick, green pine trees, and I know the Bavarian people love to hike through their forests, the men wear knee-length pants, lederhosen, a jacket, and a hat with a feather on it. The temperature was just above freezing, there was a powdering of snow all over, a very nice early winter day.

Our first stop was at Garmisch, a lovely little town, we had time to wander around a bit. I went into the old church, St. Martin's, it had the onion-type dome on the tower, used in the Byzantine style of architecture. Inside there was elaborate décor in Baroque motif, with the gold and white finish. The pews were of hand carved wood, very plain, and well worn. Our tour guide gave us much information, she spoke English –but I must comment here on her appearance: she was older, tall and thin, had a dry sense of humor. She wore a black broadtail coat, large black felt hat, high boots, had jet black hair, reminded me of the “wicked witch” from the Wizard of Oz, but she was not ugly. Sometime she wore two pair of glasses at one time (one was a half-glass), and it looked funny.

After re-boarding the bus, which had only about a dozen people on the tour, we drove again on some lovely roads, passed hay fields and staunch houses, some had paintings on the outside. The next stop was Oberamagou, saw the place where the famous Passion play is held, once every 10 years, since starting in the 1600's. It was started after a plague took thousands of lives in the area. It is world famous. Next we came to Linderholm castle, a beautiful (but small, as castles go) edifice set on a steep mountainside. King Ludwig II had it built (1874-1878), the second one of his string of castles. As we went through the gorgeous rooms, a cleaning crew was working at the yearly cleaning, everything is kept in perfect order, all old furnishings are still in place. One room was outstanding, the walls were all covered with huge mirrors, it seemed you looked into infinity, as you gazed ahead of you..

We ate at a restaurant close to the next castle, Neuschwanstein, also built by King Ludwig II, (1869-1886), it sat up on a crag on the mountainside, was like a fairy-land edifice with towers and spires – a beautiful sight. I walked up the path from where the bus had to let us off, it took 40 minutes, was quite hard but well worth the effort, the cool, crisp air gave the energy needed to accomplish the trek. Gold colored leaves had fallen from the trees, and

were still floating down, making a carpet of red and gold under our feet, the sound of a rushing waterfall nearby broke the silence of the quiet forest – it was a very solemn, precious time with nature. The guide on this tour only spoke German, but had the same talk on tapes, for those who needed English. I met an American couple from Seattle, Washington, and walked part of the way with them. Inside the castle, the rooms were very large, ornately decorated, filled with precious carvings in marble or beautiful wood, huge candelabra of gilded brass, set with precious stones. There was room after room, filled with art treasures, damask hangings, tapestries, beautiful furniture. A large chapel was for the King's use. The kitchen, three floors down from the living quarters, was huge, very useable, with features not common in the 1800's. The huge stove was constructed with a reservoir, for hot, running water to the bedrooms above. There was also a furnace, for central heat, but several of the living area rooms had beautiful porcelain stoves for heat, and there were also fireplaces in some rooms. It was exciting to view this castle, but I don't think I would like to live in it, was probably quite drafty and chilly in winter months. The setting, up there in the mountains was most beautiful. I took some pictures out of windows, though it was cloudy, not bright and clear.

By the time I walked down from the mountain-top castle, and entered the gift shop near the bus parking area, it was almost time for the tour bus to leave, at 5:00 p.m. We were driven back to Munich, arrived about 6:30 p.m. From the bus terminal, I walked back to my hotel in the cold air – on the way stopped in a café and had some food. My usual occupation for evenings, writing in my journal, washing out a few clothes, was completed and I soon retired., feeling very happy I had been to these beautiful castles today.

TUESDAY NOVEMBER 4

I awoke to the sound of the beautiful church bells from the Munich cathedral which was close to the hotel. It is now used as the city hall, not a church. The location of Hotel Schliker is very handy to the shopping area, and I went out, noted the very high class shops, and prices displayed. Shoes for ladies were priced around 150 to 199 marks, the cheapest tennis shoes were equivalent to 10 American dollars, and I only saw them once at that price. I had breakfast, walked a little more in a market place, bought dates and a larger apple from fruit vendors. A few snowflakes were falling, the air was crisp and cold. I did not bring many clothes for cold weather (having lived in hot, desert country for the past 5 months) so I kept warm by wearing 2 pair of thin slacks, sweaters under the knit coat, a warm hat, and my hands in the socks from TWA airline, for mittens. I was traveling, seeing new sights, was happy and glad I came to Munich.

At 11:30 a.m. I returned to Hotel Schliker, paid my bill, took a taxi to the train station and there used transit service to the airport, where I caught my flight to Frankfurt. In about 45 minutes we landed at the Flughafen (Frankfurt airport). There I asked for a hotel, was informed no rooms were available as there are 2 conventions going on at the time, everything was full! This had never happened to me before – I went to another desk and while I was waiting I called Dr. Hans Keitel's cousin from a pay phone. He had given me their name, address and phone number and asked me to call them while I was in Frankfurt, spoke with Renata, the wife .I told her I was seeking a hotel room and would call them

again, later. I now took the commuter train into the city, arrived in the large train station, again sought out a hotel. Found the same problem, no hotels available. I called the Emil Faber Apothecary again, and Emil told me to stay right where I was, in the station and he would come and get me, asked what kind of coat I had on, etc. He would come from Worms, about 30 km's away, where they lived, and get me. I waited, had some food, stayed near gate 33 and soon Emil arrived. How nice of him! He drove me to the city of Worms, and to his pharmacy store and the apartment above where they lived. I met his wife Renate and daughter Annette, they were charming people who welcomed me as a friend of Emil's cousin, Dr. Hans Keitel. We worked together in Taif.

We had coffee and a sandwich, pleasant conversation about working in Saudi Arabia, then he told me that he had a hotel room for me, in Worms. His son had phoned 20 hotels in Frankfurt (after I had called them, and was waiting at Gate 33 in Frankfurt) and received the same information, there were no hotels available. This was truly unusual. That is when he secured the room in Worms, and about 10:00 a.m. took me to it, not far from their Pharmacy. It was large, clean, warm and comfortable, had the big down comforter on the bed. The Martin Luther cathedral was right across the plaza from the hotel, a very impressive building. Emil had given me some medication, from the pharmacy, for my sinus inflammation, I used it, took a hot bath, and retired. I slept very well, thanking these people for saving me, from spending a night in the Frankfurt airport.

WEDNESDAY NOVEMBER 5

Awoke to the sound of the cathedral bells at 6:00 a.m. I love hearing the church bells, it reminds me of the Sacred Heart (everyone called it the French) church, right around the corner from my home in Aurora, Illinois. There they rang bells at 6:00 a.m., 12:00 noon, and 6:00 p.m., I would always say the Angelus prayer then. I guess I still have my childhood habits, and I enjoy them. There was light snow on the roofs, as I looked out, the first snow here too – I guess I am taking it with me as I travel. I dressed in the blouse and undies, washed the night before, they were all dry. Then I washed out my pajamas, rolled them in a towel first, and placed them on the radiator, so they would be dry later. In the hotel breakfast room I had the usual delicious breakfast, rolls, cheese, slices of sausage and lots of hot coffee. European countries surely have tasty breads, and sausage.

I went into the Martin Luther cathedral, it is constructed of dark brownstone, and inside the marble was also of a dark color, not bright and light, as are many of the large churches I have been in. There was some restoration work going on at one end, some scaffolding was in place. Noting a travel agency nearby, I went in and inquired about tours, the only one available soon was a 3 day, Friday, Saturday, Sunday, to Paris, France. If I did that, I would not have time to go to Luxembourg, and I do want to find my grandparents home there. Leaving the hotel area, I walked toward the train station, looked in shops on the way, a pleasant walk although it was cold. At the station, I inquired about going to Luxembourg, found it was a 3 ½ hour trip, and I decided to go to the village of Esch-sur-Sure, where my maternal grandparents lived.. Before I left the train station, went into the Biertstube, and had a glass of German beer, then walked on in the direction of (what I thought was) the Farber Pharmacy. After a while, not knowing if I was headed right, I

inquired of a lady who was walking with her little girl, directions to Gaustrasse Street – I was walking in the wrong direction, and she walked to the intersection with me, pointed the proper way. She spoke some English. It was a long walk, but I finally arrived at the Faber Apothecary. Emil and Rene (she is a pharmacist too) greeted me warmly, wondered how I made out on my walk. She made warm coffee, we sat in a little room just off the pharmacy, so they could hear if customers came in. I told them I was going to Luxembourg next, on the train this afternoon. They were happy I found the transportation there, she said she would escort me to the train depot, later. We enjoyed more conversation, and visiting. They introduced me to the young doctor, who also had an office in their building, also to an engineer friend, Horst, who was working in Nigeria, and was taking back some bone cement to the hospital there. They had run out of it, just as we do in Al Hada hospital, in Saudi Arabia

Renate made an open face sandwich, and more good coffee, for lunch, then walked with me to the rail station, told them at the ticket counter where I wanted to go. It is a good thing she was with me, for I would be crossing the border of a new country, and some confusion arose on issuing the ticket. She talked to the conductor (in German), and he took me to the proper coach of the train to Luxembourg City, which was waiting on the tracks. A number 1, on the outside of the coach, was for first class passengers (I had that ticket) and the number 2 was for second class. I felt a bit insecure as the train started, and I waved goodbye to Renate, hoped I was going the right way. I had given her one of the mosaic pins from Venice, they were so kind to me.

When the conductor came to check my ticket, he made a big sigh, guess I was headed for Mannheim, Germany (my first change of trains) when it would have been simpler to go first in the opposite direction than I was now going, to Mainz, change there for city of Trier, and then take a train for Luxembourg. I learned all of this later, as I looked at the map of Germany, in the Lufthansa flight book. I had no map of Germany. His comments were all in German, and did not make much sense to me, then he wrote “Koblenz” on my ticket, but scratched it off. It ended up that I got off the train at Mannheim, retraced on another train to the next station, changed again, always asking what track to seek, and showing my ticket to Luxembourg. Some conductors spoke a little English – at Saarbrucken I changed for train to Trier, noted the countryside was of rolling hills and forests. It was dark on arrival at Trier, a conductor had checked passports as we crossed out of Germany, in the station I noted the money-changer booth, so guessed I would need different money again. I exchanged 400 German marks into Belgian francs, found each franc was worth about 30 U.S. cents, about the same as the Saudi riyals.. I found my seat in the compartment on the train,, another man entered also. He was going to Luxembourg too, this was determined by each of us saying “Luxembourg City”, for he spoke only French! Despite the language barrier, we made slight conversation, this was the first time I had another person in a compartment. I said I had come from Saudi Arabia, he smiled, asked if I spoke Arabic, I answered yes, he smiled and said “mai salama”, added a few more words he knew, the extent of his Arabic. He was a very well dressed man, and made an effort to tell me I should get a hotel at the “terminus”. I guessed this meant the train station.

We arrived in Luxembourg City, the capitol, at 8:08 p.m., these trains do travel on time! The gentleman said “Au revouir” to me, as we left the train. Outside the large station, I

started looking at the hotel signs across the street, many of them. The travel information booth in the station was closed, so I walked up and down slowly, for a block or two, checking out the area. It was a busy city area, cars in the streets, and pedestrians walking. I chose an Inn, that advertised a café also, asked about a room, the lady showed me one, and it was o.k.. I registered, settled in the room, then went down to the café and had dinner, including a glass of German white wine. While eating, I heard on the television, that Ronald Reagan had won the presidential election in the U.S.A. I retired soon, felt I had made my way to Luxembourg, despite the language barriers.

THURSDAY NOVEMBER 6

Today is son Tom's birthday, I well remember the day he was born. My water broke at 6:00 a.m., Dr said I should get to the hospital. Nothing else happened, I did not want to go too soon, and waited. Finally, at noon, Dr. Collins came to our home, scolded John for not taking me, asked me "if I wanted to have that baby on the kitchen table". I went, the baby was born 4 hours later. I slept quite well, awakened once, but returned to sleep, then at 6:00 a.m. heard the garbage man down on the street below, bumping cans against the truck, as he collected them. Guess this happens in every country, I've heard it in several places as I travel.

I dressed, had breakfast in the café downstairs, then got ready to explore Luxembourg City. In the train station, asked for a tour, found I just missed the bus for that event. Too bad, I know there are old fortresses here dating back to the 12th and 13th centuries, also the Grand Duke's palace is here .I set out, took a city bus from the station (cost 16 francs to the historic portion of the city. It was just like pictures I've seen, of German towns, huge, strong houses, this one had a deep valley where the casements from previous wars, were still standing. The remnants of forts were seen here and there, it was all very interesting. The air was crisp and cold, but I was dressed warmly, stopped sometimes in a shop, bought fruit and pastry to eat. I didn't manage paying out the proper money very well, and hardly anyone spoke English.

In the huge cathedral, I talked to 3 Australian girls with backpacks – they were travelers too. They gave me a map, and some tips on what to see. They have been staying at youth hostels, rode the trains in different countries, were heading south from here, probably to Venice, Italy. They travel on a low budget, as I do. I tried to follow the map, after leaving them, walked a very long way down into the valley, but then surmised I might not be going right. In a little bakery shop where I stopped, a lady spoke English, said I should retrace my steps, to get back to the train station. I did so, and finally reached "central gare". There, I asked about a train to the town of Esch sur Sure, where my maternal grandparents had lived, found there was one in 15 minutes, another at 6:00 p.m. connected with a van to take people to Esch sur Sure. (translation, the town of Esch, on the river Sure). I decided to take the earlier train, so I could see the countryside in daylight, wait in the station at Ettlebruk, for the van after the 6:00 train, to carry me on to Esch sur Sure. I had been assured, there was a hotel in Esch sur Sure.

As we rode along, saw that the terrain was hilly, mostly farmland or pasture, with small villages along the way. The houses all had neat yards and vegetable gardens, cold weather had just recently arrived, some gardens had wilted lettuce, tomato plants and cabbage plants still in them. The German people were very hard working and industrious, kept neat homes (white curtains hung perfectly in windows), yards and streets. What a contrast to Bedouin style of living, in Saudi Arabia!

The small town of Ettelbruck was the eighth station after Luxembourg City, and I got off there, entered the small train station to get some information. I asked a taxi driver how much it would cost to drive me to Esch sur Sure, he said "670 framcs". I decided to see the town first, on foot, and wait for the little van that would make the trip later. Entering a restaurant I had a meal of a good pork chop, lettuce with the sweet-sour dressing my mother taught me to make (have not had that in a long time) and potatoes. I read an English newspaper there, telling of Reagan's election and Jimmy Carter's defeat, in U.S.A. Then I walked about, enjoying the atmosphere of the town, shops of many kinds, passed a church, went in and thanked God again for this lovely trip, said a birthday prayer for son Tom. In a bakery I purchased a pastry, then walked back to the train station to await the van to Esch sur Sure. I could see myself living comfortably in a town like this - seemed much like Aurora, Illinois where I grew up, small and friendly like these people seemed to be to each other. The only problem -- they all spoke either Luxembourg or French language. A few flakes of snow were falling, sky was leaden grey all day, was not good for photos.

Later - I waited quite a while for the van, in the station that had a pot-bellied stove for heat, was glad I did so. As we rode away from Ettelbruck, the land rose up, was hilly, with beautiful forests and some cleared land. The van stopped at five different places, some were only groups of a few houses, passengers got off and walked away. Continuing around on winding, narrow roads, we finally came to a crossroads stop, three people (and myself) got off. I could see in the twilight, how picturesque the area was. The van driver pointed out that the hotel was the lighted building, about 1 ½ blocks down the gravel road. I walked on the lightly snow covered road, along the river, in that direction, passed only one lighted barn, no houses. The hotel du Moulin is very old, was built in the 1700's, had been a manor, the home of a ruler in the area, and seemed perfectly in place here. I entered, out of the darkness, probably surprising the proprietor who was a young man, spoke English and French, said a room was available. Ascending to the upper level, on an elegant, wide stairs with dark wood banisters, he showed me the room I would have and then I ordered some food. It was served in the large dining room, he joined me as I had my coffee and I told him why I was here, wanted to find the Gengler family home. He said there were no Gengler's living here now, quoted a few other names, De Muth and Wiltgen. My mother often spoke of these families who had also emigrated to America. I am so glad I made the effort to come here: tomorrow I'll explore the little town of 250 population. I only wish my mom could be here with me, how she would have loved it!

FRIDAY NOVEMBER 7

Slept very well in the big queen size bed, with the heavy comforters over me. Rooms over here are not kept as warm as we keep ours, their central heating systems are “few and far between”, but in traveling you learn to accept slight discomforts. Awakening a little before daylight, I heard the church bells ringing, calling people to early mass, also heard the rushing water going over the dam in the river, just outside the hotel. This building probably was constructed by the order of a count, or some person quite wealthy: it is beautiful, has very big rooms with dark wood paneling on walls, casement windows, curving staircases, all original and in very good condition. Looking across the river a high, wooded escarpment is seen, I was told this area is a tourist attraction in summer and fall, there are 2 hotels, and campsites along the river. Now the season is over, a little snow fell last evening, but has all melted, the air is a little warmer than yesterday, no tourists around now and that is why I could get a hotel room, without a reservation.

Before dressing, I shampooed my hair in the shower, a neat, compact compartment, added of course, since the time of the dukes and counts. My blouse and other garments, which I had washed last night, were all dry so I had clean clothes again. One learns to travel light, and still be neat and clean – I am carrying an overnight flight bag, my 3 pieces of luggage are still checked in the Frankfurt airport. Breakfast was served to me in the lovely, large dining room overlooking the Sure river, still flowing along as it did when my grandfather Gengler fished in it – my mom always talked to me about that. Maybe that is why I enjoy fishing so much! After breakfast (the tables were covered with yellow cloths and napkins, crystal goblets, gleaming silverware) I set out on a walking tour of the village. It is very small, has not changed in many years, and since it sits in the “hairpin” curve area of the river, physically cannot expand. As I passed sturdy houses of wood, or stone, noted the pure white curtains hanging just so, in the windows, cobblestone paths going between houses and sometimes, up into the woody area above.

I talked to a lady walking near me, she could not understand me, next spoke with a lady coming out of a small store, she said “Gud Morgan” I replied in English, and asked if she could speak with me. She knew only a little English, when I asked about the “Gengler house”, she could not help much, took me into the little store, there a man spoke some English, but was not much help. Then the lady proprietor said I should see the pastor of the church, which was quite close by, he could help me. I knocked at the door of the rectory, he spoke English and was very courteous. I explained that I was on my way to U.S. from Saudi Arabia, having worked there, and wanted to find the homestead of my maternal grandparents, in Esch sur Sure. He immediately called 2 different people on the phone, speaking Luxembourg with them and giving the names of Frederick and Maria Gengler. He then told me there had been 2 Gengler homes, one was no longer in existence, the other he would show me. Walking to it, nearby, it was occupied by a lone woman at this time, she had made the front part into a small shop. He explained my quest to her, she was gracious, spoke only in Luxembourg language, he translated for me. Anyway, I had succeeded, this is probably where my ancestors came from, I thanked both, bought an apple and post cards from the lady, and we left.

I asked Fr. Paul Marie Meier, the pastor, if I could hike up the paths to the fortress ruins above, he showed me the paths to take. I offered him some money, for his time helping me, but he refused. Knowing mail to me in Saudi Arabia was “slow and difficult” to receive,

I left my brother Stephen's address in America, with him. He had said he might find more Gengler information in old church records held in the capitol, Luxembourg City, if so, he would send it to Stephen, this was so nice of him. I took a picture of him standing in front of the house we had just visited.

After walking up the steep hills and through the fortress, and castle remains, and enjoying the wonderful view of village and river below, I stopped in the little post-office, wrote and mailed the cards. The air was very warm, and pleasant, temperature had risen a lot since early morning. Returning to the hotel du Moulin, visited with the proprietor, told him I would have lunch and then return by van, back to Ettelbruck. LATER: As I sit in the lovely dining room, the sun is coming out, through clouds, I had a delicious lunch of creamed chicken on flaky biscuit, potatoes, greens, and Luxembourg white wine. The waiter served me graciously, food was wheeled in on a cart, wine was poured properly, etc., the river flowed by as it has for hundreds of years, scenery was lovely. I surely am glad I made the effort to come here, have enjoyed it so much. I could have made a 3 day bus trip to Paris, at this time, but it would have been a hassle getting out of the Mainz rail terminal, and to the bus, this has been so peaceful, in the village of my ancestors.

I had an hour to relax in the hotel, then pay my bill. The proprietor and his wife were in the lobby area, visiting with a friend – I could hear their words flowing freely, in the Luxembourg language, just as I used to hear it between my mother and her cousins, from this area, when they came to visit. I never learned it. Preparing to leave here, it seems as though I made a pilgrimage, not intentional, to this village of my ancestors, and it has been gratifying. May the waters of the river Sure keep flowing for more hundreds of years! Leaving the hotel I walked toward the crossroads nearby, where I had been let off, to wait for the van that would take me back to Ettelbruck, and then the train to Luxembourg City. LATER: As I was standing on the road, near the tunnel, waiting for the van a man approached, walking briskly, had a walking stick in one hand and the leash for his airdale dog, in the other. He greeted me --- it was the pastor, Fr. Paul Marie Meier. I said I was waiting for the van to come, he promptly said "wait right here, I will get my car and take you to Ettelbruck". I said that was not necessary, I could use the van, but again he insisted "wait right here, I'll be back". Ettelbruck is 19 miles away. He walked briskly, was back in a few minutes with his small station-wagon auto, his dog was in the back part. I got in, he drove on. I was holding a 50 franc bill in my hand, for the van fare, offered it to him for his kindness. He absolutely refused any money, said he was glad I had found my ancestor's village. He dropped me off at the train station, said "Auf Weidersein" and wished me a good trip. How nice of him, more Luxembourg hospitality! We were always taught to be helpful to people, be hospitable.

I rode the train back to Luxembourg City, there were many school children on it, commuting to their homes, from school. A boy next to me was reading an English book, I asked him if they learned the English language, he said they learn German, French and English. The spoken Luxembourg is a different dialect, they pick it up by use with family. On arrival at the large train station in the city, I checked some tour literature and decided to explore either Paris or Brussels. I already had money used in Belgium, would have to change money for Paris, so decided on Brussels. I bought a ticket , 676 francs, and rode in first class coach to the downtown, central station in Brussels. Arrival was at 8:30 p.m., a 3 hour

ride. Walking out of the station, I found that all streets nearby were brightly lighted, could see the large cathedral about 2 blocks away. Many people were walking about, so I decided to walk a bit, instead of taking a cab to a hotel. The air was pleasant, not as cold as the past few nights, and I observed many shops with displays of paintings, beautiful crystal, and antique objects. I soon came to a busy, wide boulevard, with hotel signs evident. I selected Hotel Central, a large building right on the plaza, and took a room. After relaxing a bit, freshening up, I went out again to the plaza area, found a small, well lighted Truborg beer café, it had small marble-topped tables and chairs all over, was run by two older ladies. They did not speak English, but I just went to the one dispensing beer, pointed to it, smiled – she knew what I wanted. They served very good potato chips with it, had lot's of flavor, were just like home made chips. When I finished I returned to the hotel and retired, that ended a very full, rewarding day, was happy with my travel. In the morning, hope to take a tour of points of interest, here in Brussels.

SATURDAY NOVEMBER 8

Awoke early, as usual, my head was stuffy, but I had slept very well, was o.k. After bathing and dressing, I went to breakfast in the hotel dining room, which was very nicely appointed, had orange juice, rolls, butter and jam, and coffee. A lady came and sat with me, spoke English, was from Switzerland and came to Brussels to see the exhibit on now, of works of a famous painter. We had nice conversation while we ate, I appreciated her friendliness. Then I returned to the lobby, bought a ticket for a bus tour of nearby areas. There were many nicely dressed people around, most of the ladies wore lovely fur coats, some had fur hats too. Most people were speaking the French language, but one couple spoke English, they were from Phoenix, Arizona and were using an Eurail pass on trains, to see Europe.

The bus was full, it was one of those new ones that “bend” in the middle, I thought it must be hard to drive. We toured all parts of the city, saw many churches, the Parliament buildings, palace of King Leopold, etc., etc. Some stops were made to explore further, in a small shop the local ladies were making the Brussels lace, they demonstrated how delicate a process this is. Going on to wide boulevards, and narrow streets, stopped at the statue that is famous in Brussels, the “manikin pis”. It is a little boy peeing, and the water comes out in quite a stream! The Atomium structure is quite unusual, also the Common Market trade building which is built in the shape of a star, 6000 people are employed in it, 3000 cars can be parked in the underground garages! It was an interesting tour, but the fog became really bad after we crossed a canal going toward Antwerp, and it was difficult to see things clearly. The air was chilly, and damp.

After the tour ended at 12:30 p.m., I bought a roll, cheese and a banana in a little shop, went to the hotel and ate them plus a few dates, which I had with me. I had washed out my pajamas this morning, now they were dry, so packed my things and checked out of the hotel. I again walked about the boulevard, bought a couple of St. Nick chocolate figures – Belgium is famous for it's chocolate. Following this exploratory walk, I noted many seafood restaurants, so selected one, had a meal of local fish, broiled and served with rice and vegetables (very tasty), and a glass of beer. Now it began to sprinkle, so I walked into the indoor shopping bazaar, then stopped at various Guild houses, all trimmed in gold,

admired the huge, beautiful edifice in that market place. It was fantastic. Next, I walked to the nearby train station, bought a ticket to Luxembourg City, did not have a very long wait to board it.

Arrival at the train station in the city, was at 7:45 p.m. I walked from there to the nearby hotel, where I had stayed before, and got a room, did my usual nightly laundry and then retired. An American gentleman on our tour today, said that he had just come from Amsterdam in Holland, there was four inches of snow there that turned to slush, made it difficult walking. Luckily, I have not had rain or a real snowfall so walking has been good. I have been warm enough also, by wearing two pair of lightweight slacks that I have with me, layers of sweaters, and the knit coat. I have been living in a very warm country, no need for heavy clothing.

SUNDAY NOVEMBER 9

I awoke early, felt rested, showered and washed my hair. The clothing I had washed last evening was all dry, fresh and ready to wear again. I had set my watch and clock last night – now found they didn't jibe, I set one wrong!! Knowing there was a train at 7:15 a.m. that I wanted to take, I hurried downstairs, asked the desk clerk the proper time, it was one minute to 7:00 a.m. I hurriedly paid my bill, went back upstairs, gathered coat and bag and went to the train station, just ½ block away. Luck was with me, I bought a ticket to Frankfurt, Germany, boarded the train on time. I am now riding through the beautiful Mosele river country, after a stop at Trier, Germany. The villages we pass all have neat houses in a row, each with a garden in the back with rows of winter lettuce, cabbages, etc. It is a bit foggy and damp, but not raining and the air is not too cold. We are now passing through a famous wine making area, high hills go up on each side of the river, sculptured with rows of grape vines, each one staked individually, not tied to trellises. There are miles and miles of these vineyards, and the wine from here is world famous. I bought a bottle of it, from this area, before I left and am carrying it home with me. We just passed through another village with stone houses, all so neat, the streets are all clean and I saw a woman sweeping in front of her house. The rail line runs along the Rhine river, saw some fishermen trying their luck from the bank. A large barge was plying it's way, with a load of coal and sand. Each town has it's large church, most are built of stone, with high bell towers. I have seen a few churchyards with cemeteries, all have large grave markers and many have bouquets of brightly colored chrysanthemums. This is a nice, old custom, taking flowers to graves, something Americans don't do much anymore. Too bad.

We just passed through a very long tunnel, now there are a couple more barges seen: the river is used for transportation, as it has been for centuries. I had hoped to take a boat trip on the Rhine river, while in this area, but am too late for the season, tourist boats don't operate after October 15. However, I am seeing the country from the train. Now we're at Alken, a picturesque town across the river, with high hills behind it, where there are old fortifications with towers and turrets. Many wars have been fought along here. The houses are built right down to the river edge, and in some places are seen campgrounds, camping is popular in Germany. The pastor in Esch-sur Sure said his parish covers three of them, where he says mass on Sundays.

The German police checked passports as we neared the border. At Koblenz I had to change trains, rode along further, and at one point passed under a very high bridge that carried the auto traffic across the river. The super highways are called the "autobahn", they don't have a speed limit, traffic is very fast. We just passed an area where many excursion boats are moored, for the winter. I would like get back here sometime, and make that boat trip down the Rhine. Maybe, someday! When changing trains, I am getting more confident, though have to ask often if I am on the right track. The rail line is still alongside the river, there are many barges, going in both directions. The air is still a bit foggy, but the sun is trying to come through. It is a most beautiful area, with high hills and craggy rocks on both sides, the river flows majestically between in the valley. Here and there we see a castle sitting high up, on a crag, have passed at least five of them. At one point in the river, was a fortification on an island, with a tower, and square holes that a small cannon could be fired through. A fee always had to be paid by the river traffic, to the lord who owned the land here. I not paid, the barge owner could be fired on. Once, on the river, I saw a racing scull with six persons in it, rowing very fast. I also saw ferry boats a couple of times, carrying autos from one side of the river, to the other. After Koblenz, the conductor came through the train, said I must pay 4 more marks, for riding this express train. I paid him - they were the wrong kind of coins, were from Belgium. Luckily, I had some German marks in another purse and used them. The money is a problem, when traveling from one country to another, one has to carry several kinds.

Arriving in the train station in Frankfurt (banhoff), I bought a ticket for the train that goes to the airport (flughafen). I needed to hurry, and an American man riding on the train helped me in the airport, to find the Lufthansa airline desk. I wanted to change my flight to America from tomorrow, to today, had just 25 minutes to pick up my checked baggage (where I had left it here) and get way out to Gate 38 B, a long walk. I made it, but had no time to spare, boarded just eight minutes before takeoff. I am now flying over Germany, saying good-bye to Europe, the next stop will be in Chicago, Illinois, U.S.A. I had a very fine trip, at the end of my first contract doing hydrotherapy in Al Hada hospital, Taif, Saudi Arabia. My ticket home, to U.S., was paid by my employer.

LATER

I returned to Al Hada, renewed contracts continuously, in the hospital, enjoyed exploring Saudi Arabia and other countries, did scuba diving in the Red Sea, and finally returned to America in 1985. I am typing my journals now, on the computer.

Irma M. Kackert – May 2006