

69th infantry division bulletin

Bill Matlach's
story of the
European
Tour



THE MAKE-UP OF THIS NUMBER OF THE BULLETIN WILL REPRESENT A SUBSTANTIAL DEPARTURE FROM CUSTOMARY PRACTICE. AS WE PROMISED IN THE PREVIOUS ISSUE, THE ONE IN HAND WILL CONTAIN A DETAILED ACCOUNT OF THE ASSOCIATION'S 1969 TRIP TO EUROPE. THE UNUSUAL NOTE IS THAT, IN ORDER NOT TO SKIMP IN ANY WAY THIS ABSORBING STORY FROM THE PEN OF SAMMY WOOLF'S IMMEDIATE PREDECESSOR AS ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT, BILL MATLACH, E-273, THE ENTIRE BULLETIN WILL BE GIVEN OVER TO IT. THERE WILL BE, OF COURSE, INFORMATION ON THE FORTHCOMING RE-UNION, BUT CORRESPONDENCE, AND NEWS, OF NATIONAL AND LOCAL ACTIVITY, WILL BE DEFERRED TO THE ISSUE NEXT TO APPEAR. FOR THE PRESENT, TRAVELERS WILL HAVE THEIR MEMORIES REFRESHED, AND STAY-AT-HOMES THEIR ENVY PROVOKED, BY THE MOST NOTE-WORTHY LITERARY EFFORT EVER TO GRACE THESE PAGES.



On July 12, an anxious group of 69ers and their families and friends gathered at Kennedy Airport for the jump-off of the "Flighting 69th" Tour of Europe. The group included Anne and Irving Berkowitz (SV-273), their friends Mr. and Mrs. Jack Rosenblum, Eva and Francis Fournier (F-272), Mr. and Mrs. Edward Gildner (272), their daughter Karen and her husband Waldo Stahl, Wanda and Stanley Karas (E-272), Elsie and John Ledwidge (H-272), Miriam and William Lilien (B-272) and their sons Michael and Arthur, Jane and William Matlach (E-273) and their daughter Deborah, Ruth and Millard Mellinger (661TD), Carmella and Clarence Miles (HQ 724 FA), Dorothy and David Patterson (C-271), Laverne and Frank Perschbacher (A-271), Wanda and Stanley Olszewski (SV-273) and their daughter Diane, Ellen and William Snidow (B-661TD), Mr. and Mrs. George Taylor (L,K,M-271), Vera and Chester Yastremski (E-272), Raymond Fahrner (A-273), Emil Zerenga (A-271), Joseph Gardner, son of deceased 69er Joseph H. Gardner (273), and Miss Millicent Reed who participated in our 1965 tour and has found it impossible to resist attending 69th reunions ever since.

The flight across the Atlantic was pleasant, if uneventful, for as part of the tour plan American Express had guaranteed perfect weather for the entire trip. However, there was one discordant note for some of the ladies who wanted to do some quick airport shopping during the scheduled one hour stop-over in Paris: as might be expected, the arrival at Paris was late, and there was just barely time to make the transfer to the London plane.

Arrival in London found the Flighting 69th a bit bedraggled and anxious for nothing more than a few hours in the sack, for by now all had been at least 24 hours without sleep---and most of that time spent on the road. Three weeks later this would have presented no problem for by that time they would be hardened veterans---far more experienced than the raw recruits who arrived in London. London proved to be a fine initiation for the novice tourists---new terrain, customs, currency, etc., without the additional problem of a language barrier, although there were times when the British brand of English appeared almost as difficult to understand as, perhaps, Italian, or Spanish, or Portuguese. Of course, London's many historic sites and landmarks provided a fertile ground for sightseeing...the

Tower of London and its Beefeater guides, Parliament, Big Ben, Westminster Abbey, The Thames and the Tower Bridge, Picadilly Circus...hippies sunning themselves surrounded by pigeons at Trafalgar Square... double decker buses and the Underground... ordering "Lager" because it was the only brew served cold, and if you order another type drink be sure to specify plenty of ice or you'll get it barely chilled... the crowds at Buckingham Palace waiting to see the Queen pass during an official reception ceremony for a visiting dignitary...Bill Snidow snapping pictures... a glimpse of Prince Phillip leaving a theatre...Millicent Reed taking advantage of those wonderful bargains in English woolens...Ray Fahrner demonstrating a Hopi Indian rain dance at 3:00 A.M. in the lobby of the Hotel Waldorf, accompanied by the 60 year old night clerk doing his version of a Zulu war dance, complete with sound effects...a final bus tour into the surrounding countryside for a visit to Windsor Palace, Hampton Court Palace, and a glimpse of Eton...and time to move on.

Amsterdam presented a different picture, less traffic, less noise and bustle, somehow less hectic, perhaps due to its network of canals which is more extensive than that of Venice. The running gag was "They've put us up at the local gas station" (the Esso Hotel---a modern new hotel built by the oil company, complete with gas pumps, on the outskirts of the city).---Again, a tour of the city, including a visit to a diamond processing factory and several hours at the National Museum (Rijksmuseum) and its wonderful collection of Dutch masters (not the kind you smoke)...A day at leisure for individual sight seeing...Millicent Reed picked up a few more good buys...Bill Snidow gave his camera some more exercise ...the Amsterdam flower market located at canal side, barges loaded with stock. A final tour of the city, this time after dark and via the canals in a glass topped sightseeing cruiser, complete with refreshments in the form of assorted wines... a serene, peaceful glide through the most beautiful parts of the city, enhanced by municipal lighting along the waterways and taped music from the cruiser's speakers.

Departure from Amsterdam was by bus,

which would be the mode of transportation through to Rome. The route to Cologne included stops at the American Military Cemeteries at Margraten, Netherlands and Henri-Chapelle, Belgium where many 69ers are interred. A floral wreath was placed at each site, and tour members visited and placed flowers on individual graves.. so many 69ers...and so many marked "Here Rests in Honored Glory a Comrade in Arms Known but to God"...a serious moment during an otherwise joyful trip, but one which is recommended for any 69er managing to get overseas, whether in a group or as an individual.

A short drive from the cemeteries and the bus crossed the border into Germany, continuing on through small German farm villages of the type 69ers first came to know in those early days of 1945... except this time the beauty of the countryside could be properly appreciated, free of shell-holes and tangled garlands of communication wire, all houses apparently in good repair, complete with roof, and not a single dead bloated horse or cow to offend the nostrils.

By late afternoon the twin spires of the famed Cologne cathedral came into view on the horizon and shortly thereafter the group was settled in a small but comfortable hotel near the center of the city. After supper and a short walk to examine more closely the beauties of the cathedral and other local sites, a number of the group found their way to the historic Ratskeller where beer has been served for over 700 years. A truly memorable evening ...the roving old-time musicians with the educated accordians...the German M.C. who led the group singing and spoke flawless American English and claimed he never studied it, just "picked it up"...the tall steins of Lowenbrau, cool and fresh... the endless succession of German songs, not a word of the lyrics unknown to the natives who had, no doubt sung them through a lifetime of Ratskellers...and American songs too. U.S. service songs, Old Man River... if you haven't heard "The Last Roundup" sung in German and in complete harmony, you've really missed something...Elsie Ledwidge personally escorted to Ladies Room by the M.C., accompanied by two marching accordians...no one left till closing time.

The next day, more sightseeing...a modern new shopping mall, extending for

from the NORTH-WEST, coming down 70S and 240, turn left at the BELTWAY (signs saying BALTIMORE and SILVER SPRING); leave the BELTWAY at EXIT 20, CONNECTICUT AVENUE, SOUTH.

THE SITE OF THE WASHINGTON RE-UNION WILL BE THE SHERATON-PARK HOTEL, THE ROUTE TO WHICH IS EXPLAINED AT THE RIGHT. THE DATE, THE 20th of AUGUST THROUGH THE 23rd, THURSDAY TO SUNDAY. 14.50 PER PERSON WILL COVER THE BANQUET AND ALL ACTIVITIES, WITH THE HOTEL'S RATES 12.00 for a single, 18.00 DOUBLE, YOUNGSTERS (IN THE ROOM) AND PARKING FREE. ONLY SO MANY ROOMS ARE TO BE PUT ASIDE FOR THE 69th, SO AN EARLY RESERVATION IS RECOMMENDED; TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE ACCOMPANYING FORM. SO MUCH FOR THE DETAILS.

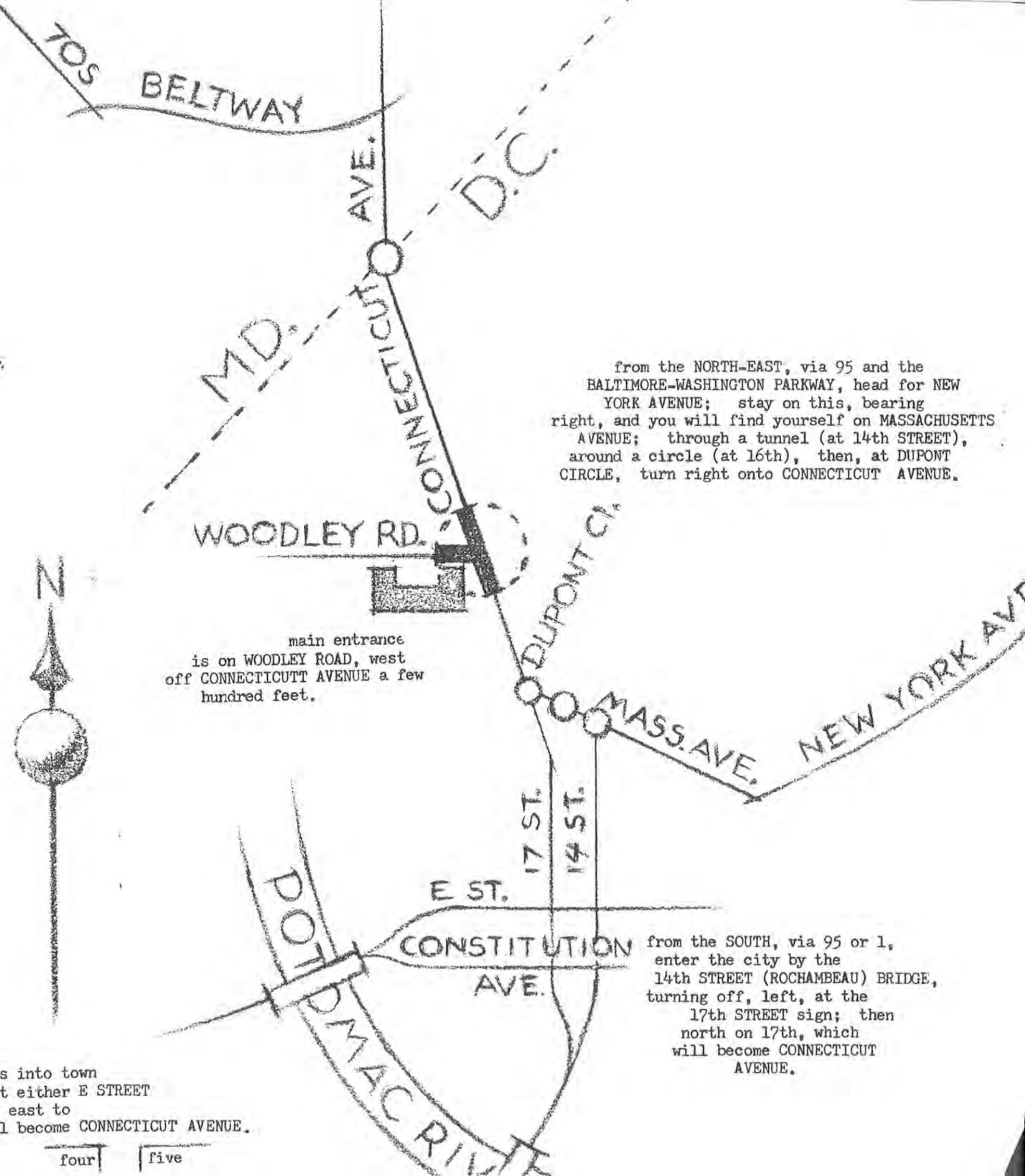
THE 1970 RE-UNION WILL BE DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF THE ASSOCIATION'S FOUNDER, GENERAL REINHARDT. IN CONNECTION WITH THIS THE GENERAL'S DAUGHTER, MRS. STEVENSON, WILL BE PRESENT, AS WILL GENERALS BOLTE AND LANHAM. THE NOTE OF SOLEMNITY ATTENDING THIS WILL BE ADDED TO BY THE FACT THAT WE WILL BE MARKING THE PASSAGE OF A QUARTER OF A CENTURY SINCE THE WAR'S END. AND, AS ALWAYS, WHEN WE MEET IN THE NATION'S CAPITAL, THE MAIN FEATURE OF THE WEEK-END WILL BE THE PLACING OF A WREATH AT THE TOMB OF THE UNKNOWN SOLDIER...

THERE WILL BE ANOTHER EVENT PECULIAR TO THE LOCATION. A GUIDED TOUR OF THE WHITE HOUSE HAS BEEN ARRANGED FOR THE ASSOCIATION. UNFORTUNATELY, IT HAS TO BE NOTED THAT THERE IS AN ABSOLUTE FIXED LIMIT TO THIS WHICH WILL CONFINE PARTICIPATION TO THE FIRST ONE HUNDRED TO PUT DOWN THEIR NAMES, STRONG REASON FOR FOR A THURSDAY EVENING ARRIVAL. WE ARE DUE AT THE WHITE HOUSE GATES AT 8 THE FOLLOWING MORNING.

from the WEST, on 50, 66, or 29, cross into town over the ROOSEVELT BRIDGE, leaving it at either E STREET or CONSTITUTION AVENUE, continuing east to turn left onto 17th STREET, which will become CONNECTICUT AVENUE.

from the NORTH-EAST, via 95 and the BALTIMORE-WASHINGTON PARKWAY, head for NEW YORK AVENUE; stay on this, bearing right, and you will find yourself on MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE; through a tunnel (at 14th STREET), around a circle (at 16th), then, at DUPONT CIRCLE, turn right onto CONNECTICUT AVENUE.

from the SOUTH, via 95 or 1, enter the city by the 14th STREET (ROCHAMBEAU) BRIDGE, turning off, left, at the 17th STREET sign; then north on 17th, which will become CONNECTICUT AVENUE.



blocks in all directions, with a tremendous variety of wares. The Liliens, Matlachs, and Ray Fahrner rented cars and drove back to the Belgian-German border to revisit the area of the 69th's Battle Baptism. The Lilien car broke down, had to be towed and replaced, but all managed to get through to the Giescheid-Riescheid-Ramsheid-Kamberg area. Mementoes of the Siegfried Line still remain...here and there, concrete rubble of blown-up pill boxes, half buried, silhouetted against the sky line...dragons teeth in a valley, overgrown with brush and barely discernible...the towns themselves, rebuilt but very much the same as in 1945.

Departure by bus the following morning, heading generally toward the Rhine and following it to Boppard for dinner at a delightful restaurant on the banks of the river. The better part of the afternoon was spent travelling by boat up the Rhine to the Lorelei, where, legend says, river boatmen were lured to their deaths in the swirling pools where the river bends sharply around the base of this famous rock. Then, back to the bus and on to Frankfurt and the large ultra-modern Hotel Intercontinental, with arrival just in time to permit watching the initial lunar landing on TV, with English commentary via a portable radio and the local U.S. Army radio station.

Early departure the following morning...a little sightseeing on the way out of Frankfurt...American military convoys passed on the road...Millard Mellinger snapping pictures of every manure pile passed ("Back home the folks refuse to believe that in Germany they keep the manure pile right outside the kitchen door!")...Bill Snidow recording a few with his own camera to help Mel...luncheon at the Goldener Hirsch in Rothenberg, a beautiful resort town, faithfully preserved in its original medieval state, for the benefit of visitors...fields of hops, the vines hanging down from a network of overhead supporting lines...and finally, the Hotel Deutcher Kaiser in Munich. After supper, an evening at Platzl's, a large beer hall...small individual kegs on each table...a floor show (actually on a small stage) including Bavarian yodelling, burlesque skits, and a contagious jovial atmosphere...a midnight walk through the park, stopping to watch couples dancing on the patio of an adjoining restaurant.

The following day started with a guided tour of Munich...historic points of interest...the Hofbrau, where Hitler used to meet with his cronies in the early days of the Party...the University, the Academy of Arts...Nymphenburg Castle and its beautiful grounds, just outside Munich...a mad dash back to town, to catch the

striking of the hour at the New Town Hall, where mechanical figures in the bell tower daily act out events from the past history of Munich. In the afternoon, the group split---some at leisure, others bussed to nearby Dachau where the campsite, still surrounded by barbed wire and unmanned watch towers, with only a few buildings intact, remains to remind visitors of the potential cruelty of man, though a park-like atmosphere prevails, marred only by the grisly museum mementoes and the nearby cremating ovens.

Departure from Munich took place at an unspeakably early hour, for the trip to Milan was a long one, by bus, and required a maximum use of daylight hours. Though a long drive, it was far from boring. First, a continuation of the generally level farm country traversed entering Munich, leading up to the foot of the Bavarian Alps which rose quite suddenly from the plain...the mountains themselves, green with lush pastures and forests, except for the very tops, which stand bare, pointing skyward...a constant feeling that Heidi and her grandfather were about to appear, just over the next rise...all cameras clicked away...ten o'clock break in Garmish-Partenkirchen, a beautiful little resort town under the shadow of the Zugspitze, the highest mountain in Germany...discovery of a men's room with urinals that flush automatically as one approaches or recedes, due to an ingenious electric eye. Then onward into Austria...luncheon in Innsbruck, a city surrounded by sheer peaks...souvenir shops where one can pay with German marks, but receives change in Shillings, one more currency to confuse and boggle the American mind, if only for a very short time...Millicent Reed made a few purchases, Bill Snidow snapped a few more pictures...the bus moved on, now continuously uphill, approaching the Brenner Pass, with Italy beyond. The views became staggering in magnitude, and occasionally the bus wound so close to the edge that the nearest ground to be seen was hundreds of feet below. On downward, into Italy, as the mountains took on a more scraggly appearance, the green growth somehow not quite as lush as before...mountain streams rushing down, pale green, almost milky white in color. Finally a late afternoon break, at a small roadside restaurant on the banks of a shallow rock-filled river. The bus refused to start, and eventually all passengers dismounted to push, luckily for only 100 feet or so before the Diesel engine became operative again. Then down the broad valley of the Adige, bordered by rocky cliffs, scarred here and there by marble quarries...misty, seemingly endless Lake Garda, and the road which follows its shore line passing constantly through

tunnels and arcades out through solid stone. Then, as the landscape faded into the night, a number of bottles appeared within the bus, and paper cups circulated up and down the aisle... the singing started and continued into Milano, and the hotel manager was highly upset to receive a busload of hungry travelers at 11:30 P.M. but, with his night skeleton crew, managed to prepare a reasonable facsimile of dinner.. one bus load of very very tired travelers, but not one complaint.

A drive through Milan the next morning, and departure for Rome. Lunch in Florence, and then a tour of the city... the Baptistery built in 1059, the Cathedral of Santa Maria Del Fiore (1226), the City Hall, the Cathedral of Santa Croce (1225), and the leather working school---more souvenirs...too little time, so much to see---but actually, Florence had not been on the planned itinerary. The unscheduled tour set back the travel schedule and arrival at the Ritz Hotel in Rome didn't take place until 8:00 P.M.

Sightseeing in Rome goes beyond the bounds of the ordinary sense of the word ...the Vatican, the Sistine Chapel, the Vatican Museum...St. Peters Cathedral, beauty and immense proportions defying description, St. Peters Square...the Pantheon, dating back to 27 B.C....St. Peter in Chains Church and Michelangelo's statue of Moses...the Coliseum, crawling with spirits of ancient gladiators...the Arches of Constantine and Titus...driving down the Old Appian Way, built in the year 4 A.D., on the way to the Catacombs of San Sebastian ...the Trevi Fountain...an evening walk down the Via Vendetto...the Trevi Fountain at night...side trips to the Isle of Capri, Naples, beautiful Sorrento, the ancient interminable ruins of Pompeii, preserved in volcanic ash for 15 centuries...back to Rome for a brief rest before flying to Madrid.

A quick Sunday morning flight (1 hour and 45 minutes) and the transition from Italy to Spain was completed. Time to get settled, refreshed, and then off to the bull fights---one could hardly visit Madrid and miss this spectacle...actually quite bloody and somewhat sickening if the matador lacks skill and proficiency.

Madrid itself was a lovely city---clean, parks and public property beautifully landscaped and well tended, perhaps reflecting a more regimented atmosphere than Rome. A visit to the Prado Museum and its exhibits ...another palace, this time decorated in beautiful Spanish style...more shopping, but not during siesta when all stores are closed. Pre-dinner drinks in the hotel cocktail lounge, where the Pattersons and Taylors (who had become inseparable) had staked a permanent daily claim on one of the tables. Incidentally, the Taylors were on their honeymoon, postponed until nine months

after their wedding...tremendous meals served in the hotel dining room, including a pitcher of wine, and live dinner music... the Matlach and Olzewski girls were finally explained the purpose of that third piece of furniture they'd been seeing in bathrooms throughout the trip...Mrs. Ed Gildner's chocolate ice cream soda, which virtually exploded and drenched the occupants of the table before she even touched it...dinner at a restaurant, Spanish guitars and Flamenco dancers.

The short flight to Lisbon took less than an hour. The language barrier now reached its peak, Portuguese bearing little resemblance to any language encountered previously. Fortunately, a knowledge of some English was prevalent among these natives accustomed to dealing with tourists.

Before heading out to Cascais and the hotel, the bus picked up a guide and made a round of the points of interest in Lisbon ...the Moorish castle overlooking the city and affording a panoramic view of the entire city and harbor...the Royal Coaches Museum ...the Belem Tower, where sailing captains paused for a blessing before leaving port for far off lands...The Monastery of Jeronimo and the Cloisters. At one point, the newly acquired Portuguese bus decided to copy its Italian counterpart, and the passengers again found themselves pushing. The relapse was only momentary, and no further mechanical problems were encountered on the way to Cascais and the beautiful Hotel Estoril Sol...suites, 2 baths (his and hers), balconies overlooking the ocean, outdoor swimming pool, beach, etc. Nearby Cascais, a contrasting combination of tourists and local residents of this fishing village... electric commuter train to Lisbon, donkey carts, women carrying shopping baskets on their heads, sidewalk cafes...the plush gambling casino in the next town...Bill Matlach and Emil Zerenga played a round of golf on a course with practically non-existent fairways. The lobby of the clubhouse was occupied by a flock of colorful finches...More shopping, more bargains. Portuguese brandy as cheap as 50¢ a fifth. ...And suddenly, time had run out. A farewell party at an old picturesque ruggedly-built inn, on the ocean, overlooking the westernmost point of land in Europe. A cocktail party, dinner in a large room overlooking the ocean, a wild surf crashing against the very foundations of the inn... Singing on the bus back to the hotel. The following morning was spent in packing, final exchanges of addresses, information, and invitations. Then the buses, loading, and the final trip to the airport, and seemingly moments later, final goodbyes at Kennedy Airport where it all started.

You missed it?...Too bad. You missed an opportunity for a tremendous vacation... Perhaps next time?...We certainly hope so.

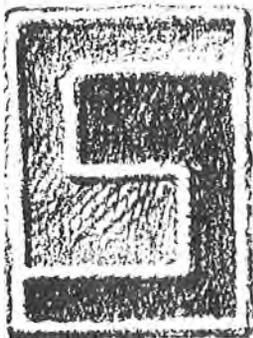
WORD HAS REACHED US ONCE AGAIN FROM THE EUROPEAN OFFICE OF THE AMERICAN BATTLE MONUMENTS COMMISSION THAT, ON OUR BEHALF, FLOWERS HAVE BEEN PLACED ON THE GRAVES OF EACH OF THE COMRADES LEFT BEHIND US TWENTY-YEARS AGO. THIS ANNUAL SERVICE IS VERY GRATIFYING, BUT IT MUST BE ADDED THAT WE ARE CHARGED FOR IT. NOT VERY MUCH, TO BE SURE, BUT STILL THIS IS ONE MORE OF THE MANY EXPENSES THE ASSOCIATION HAS TO MEET. WE GO VERY EASY ON THIS MATTER (MONEY), AS THE MEMBERS WELL KNOW. NEVERTHELESS, IT IS ALWAYS WITH US. SO, IF YOU HAVE YET TO GET AROUND TO SENDING IN THIS YEAR'S DUES, OR EVEN TO JOINING THE ASSOCIATION IN THE FIRST PLACE, IT WILL BE A GREAT HELP IF YOU TAKE CARE OF THIS, WITH EITHER THE REGULAR \$3.00 OR, IF IT CAN BE MANAGED, THE \$10.00 CONTRIBUTING MEMBERSHIP, WHICH LAST IS IN RECOGNITION OF VASTLY CHANGED CONDITIONS SINCE THE ORIGINAL FIGURE WAS HIT ON LONG AGO.



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