

TRIP TO GERMANY (BERLIN, NÜRNBERG, HEIDELBERG) NOVEMBER 29 TO DECEMBER 10, 2012

Germany in December??? Are you out of your frigging mind???

Gentle reader, never did I express such a rude sentiment to Lee, my lovely bride. And why not? There are three reasons: (1) it would have done no good; (2) it might have resulted in a stiff right cross to my nose; and (3) I never ever ever say "frigging" when I mean to say *fucking*.*

*During her tumultuous reign as editor of *The New Yorker*, Tina Brown instituted policies that nearly destroyed the venerable magazine. But she also introduced some changes that improved the magazine immeasurably. One of these was the relaxing of the prohibition of "dirty words." An author who has taken full advantage of this liberalized policy is Ian Frazier in a series of vignettes about "The Cursing Mommy." Here, for example, is an excerpt from "The Cursing Mommy Cooks Italian" (January 10, 2011): "Chop clatter chop skitter crash bang—FUCK!" For those whose curiosity is piqued, you might also want to look into Ian Frazier's 2012 offering, "The Cursing Mommy's Book of Days: A Novel." I read it and am a better person for having done so.

When Norman Mailer wrote *The Naked and the Dead* in 1948, his publisher insisted that the F-word be spelled as "fug" in the banter among battle-hardened soldiers in World War II. Mailer resisted but eventually acquiesced. Some say it was Dorothy Parker who, upon meeting Mailer, said, "Oh, you're the young man who doesn't know how spell 'fuck.'" "

So, gentle reader, if the F-word is now acceptable in all manner of publications (and, goodness knows, on cable TV, on street corners, and in the movies), then I will use it without further apology.

So my opening question is now formulated as:

Germany in December??? Are you out of your *fucking* mind???

To which *SWMBO** replies: "It's been years since we've been in Europe in the winter." *HWMO***:"True

* *She who must be obeyed*, but you probably knew that already.

** *He who must obey*.

enough, but that was also true last year and the year before and ..." *SWMBO*: "And our birthdays are in December." *HWMO*: "True enough, but that was also true last year and the year before and ... " *SWMBO*: "And German cities and towns all have Christmas markets." *HWMO*: "True enough, but that was also true last year and the year before and ... " *SWMBO*: "Because I said so!" *HWMO*: "Yes, ma'am."

In the course of the trip, I took some 1300 pictures!! Only a relatively small number have been uploaded to my Picasa account: some of the pictures were poorly focused; others were poorly lit; some were very very very repetitious; and some showed the two intrepid travelers in a less than flattering light. Also, many just contained pictures of text (as reminders for me) that was posted on the walls at various museums. You can view those that I've chosen to share at <http://picasaweb.google.com/ronmagid>. (To put the four Germany 2012 picture albums in the order that we visited the sites, click on *sort by*

ALBUM DATE at the top of the Picasa page.)

Thursday, November 29 to Friday, November 30

As reported in the Northern Europe travelogue from earlier this year, Steve from Brooklyn (I never did learn his last name) sold Harbor Taxi and Towncar and moved to Florida. There is a new taxi service in Gig Harbor, run by a woman and her daughter, but as this trip would last only 10 days we decided to drive our own car to Seatac and park in the airport garage. (For a longer trip, the economics would favor taking a taxi.)

So at 9:15 in the morning, we fight the moderate traffic (plus the rain and road spray) on SR 16 and I-5 and arrive at the airport at 10:00. Taking advantage of the priority lines at check-in and security, we get through these necessary nuisances and make our way to the Delta Sky Club in the South Terminal. (Yes, my faithful readers, we are again flying business class to Europe, but this time we're doing it "for free" - i.e., we turned in Delta frequent flyer miles and reward points from Lee's extravagant purchases on American Express.) This gives us a chance to finish reading the morning newspapers,* to have coffee,

*Our more-or-less reliable delivery person tossed a plastic bag containing two newspapers onto our driveway this morning. Included was *The Seattle Times* (as expected) but, instead of *The News Tribune*, there was a *New York Times* with an address label indicating that it belonged to Douglas Slayback, a resident of our development. Without going into all of the sordid details, I can tell you that Doug and Donna Slayback are not the most popular people in the neighborhood. In a dispute with their next-door neighbors over water overflow, they chose to sue not only those neighbors but also the homeowners' association, which, of course, included us. So when we moved to Gig Harbor in 2006, we found ourselves as defendants in a law suit! To make matters worse, the Slaybacks had also moved here from Knoxville - I can imagine the horror of other neighbors when they learned that the Magids, too, were moving from Knoxville. When the suit was finally settled out of court, every homeowner was assessed \$300! So ... when this newspaper arrived by divine providence at our door, we decided to keep it! (Besides, as we were busy packing for our trip, there wasn't time to "do the right thing" by taking it to the rightful owners. And, as it turned out, it served as a useful prop for a scheme that I would soon hatch, although I didn't realize it at this time. See p 13.)

and to overdose on snacks. I also finish the *TIME* magazine that I had begun.

At 12:20 we board the newly configured Delta 767-300ER which boasts of its "lie-flat seats" in business class. Lee and I have Seats 2C and 2D, but we are not quite side-by-side. The following description could be avoided if only there were some good pictures online, but I didn't find any - so here goes. The business class cabin has two aisles: seat A is on the left, seats B and C are in the middle, and seat D is to the right. Each seat is adjacent to a fairly wide console (about two feet across) that houses the tray table; other functions of the console will be described shortly. In Row 2, the order from port side to starboard is Window-Console-SeatA-Aisle-Console-SeatB-Console-SeatC-Aisle-SeatD-Console-Window. Got that? And this arrangement is "staggered" in the sense that Row 3 and the other odd-numbered rows have Window-SeatA-Console-Aisle Console-SeatD-Window. Confused now? Furthermore, Row 2 (for example) does not have Seats 2C and 2D directly across the aisle from one another. No, sir. To accommodate the lie-flat configuration, Seat 2C is ahead of Seat 2D and behind Seat 1D; in fact, it's significantly closer to Row 1. So, perhaps, people who want to travel together should choose 2C and 1D or 3C and 2D? Well, not necessarily. The "advantage" of 2C and 2D, the seats that we have, is that only an aisle separates them; were one to choose one of the other arrangements just mentioned, there would invariably be an aisle and a console in-between. In fact, the only way to truly sit "together" would be to select seats B and C (in Row 2 or any other) - only a console would separate the passengers - but RMM, like a child that he is, really really really wants to have a window seat. (Even so, 2D is not quite a window seat, given that the console separates it from the wall of the plane. Oh, well.)

Aside from housing the tray table, the console has two other functions: it serves as a convenient surface on which to lay one's books, papers, etc. and, more important, it serves as an open space for a passenger's legs when his or her seat is converted to lie-flat mode. How is this possible? Well, ya see, since the seats themselves are staggered from one row to the next, the person in the back row gets to stretch his/her/its legs not under the *seat* in front but in the open space under the *console*. Clever, eh? So why, then, are the rows arranged (as described in painful detail above) with each seat C between the lower and higher-numbered seat D across the aisle? That's because Seats 1A and 1D can be no farther forward than the lavatory in front of each, whereas seats 1B and 1C can be somewhat forward because only a wall is in front. (I'm doing my best to rationalize what is, really, a ridiculous seat arrangement, but what do I know, eh?) You can see a schematic of the seat arrangement in the 767-300ER at <http://tinyurl.com/chop3g2>, although it doesn't show the consoles.

Oh, yes, the console also has a built-in set of controls for positioning the seat and even for getting a massage, although I don't try it out - I figure that occasional air turbulence would have the same effect. On the back of the seat in front of me (really the back of the console for 1D) is a monitor which, once one is air-borne, allows the viewing of movies, TV, games, etc. but what I always like to do is to have the flight data (maps, speed, altitude, etc.) as I read books or magazines. What I discover, both on this flight and on the return 11 days hence, is that the flight maps are very unresponsive - that is, the touch-screen zoom control and the horizontal or vertical controls sometimes work, sometimes don't work, sometimes do work (but only after long delays), and sometimes (actually quite often) freeze. The touch-screen monitor also has controls that operate the flight-attendant button and the overhead light (that's not where I would have put them). The overhead light is actually positioned badly for me - when nightfall comes and the interior lights of the cabin are turned off,* I need to use the overhead light to read; but because the light comes

*Only when both lavatories are occupied does an OCCUPIED sign light up. But there's another way to tell when they are free. When the cabin lights are dimmed, an eerie blue light emanates from the open door of a lavatory; only when the door is closed and locked does the light disappear.

from the upper right, I (as a right-handed person) cannot do crossword puzzles or see what I'm writing in my journal because my hand obscures the beam. Were I in an odd-numbered Seat D (in any row), the light would come from the left and all would be well; or, alternatively, I could remain in 2D but learn to write with my left hand.

Even before the cabin doors are closed, we are asked to make our main course selection for the in-flight meal. The menu (aka *la carte*) is printed in English and French. I'll stick with English* for the following

*I'm reminded of an incident that occurred in 1984 when Lee and I visited Paris. I called a restaurant and, in my best French (which may not be perfect, but really ain't bad), made a reservation for two people at a certain hour. The officious maitre d' replied (in a pseudo-British accent) "Would you *rather* talk in your native tongue, sir?" Bastard! I thought that the French people appreciated it when one attempted to speak in their "native tongue"! I was about to remind him which country it was that liberated his in 1945, but I thought better of it.

descriptions. So, for my main course, I choose "Braised Beef Short Ribs" with red wine sauce, parsnip purée, and five-spice baby carrots.

I may have needlessly expended much energy and many too many words (as well as wasting your precious time) on the descriptions of the plane's cabin because I have discovered a blog that has excellent photos that make my words come alive. This shows pictures for a Delta flight to Brussels last August, but (amazingly) the photo of the menu reveals that it is identical to the one that we are given at the end of November. I suppose that Delta will keep using it until their supply of "Braised Beef Short Ribs" is depleted. The only difference that I note from our plane's configuration is that our "in-flight entertainment

system controls" are on the touch-screen monitor, not on a hand-held control module. (See <http://tinyurl.com/cuxfyjm>)

All pre-flight and in-flight announcements are made in English and then in French. I wonder if the announcements will be in English, French and German on the Paris to Berlin flight. We shall see. The captain announces that there will be significant turbulence during the first part of our flight - and this will delay the serving of our meal, not that we (or probably anyone else) are hungry. He estimates a flying time of 10 hr, 12 min, some 13 minutes less than the advertised times of departure and arrival; he also says that because of the turbulence, we'll be flying a more southerly route than normal, following the U.S.-Canada border before passing over Labrador and then toward Greenland; apparently the ride would be bumpier if we flew over Hudson Bay.

The plane's doors are closed at 12:50 and push-back occurs at 12:57. The sun comes out, but it's only a tease - it is still raining. The safety instructions are a video on the TV monitors: the audio is in English but there are French subtitles. (The return flight will offer a *very* different style of safety message - read on.) We are air-borne at 1:12 and heading south, but we quickly turn to the east and soon are above the clouds and unable to see any land. I begin by reading the October issue of *The Progressive*. There is intermittent turbulence during the next hour, accompanied by apologies about the delay in food service. The pilot says that he can't avoid the turbulence by going to a higher altitude (because of weight of the plane? because of air traffic control? because he doesn't wanna? because he doesn't know how? who knows?) but, in fact, it's nowhere near as bad as on many flights I've taken over the years. At 2:15 PST, I have a single malt (Glenlivet), accompanied by warm mixed nuts. By 2:30, I've finished *The Progressive* and begin the November 19 issue of *The New Yorker*. At about this time, the video screen comes to life and I can see the "vital statistics" of our flight: speed 578 mph, tail wind 23 mph, altitude 35,000 feet, 732 miles from origin, 4567 miles from destination, heading E, longitude 106°41'6"W, latitude 47°1'6"N. Whew! These figures mean little to me but, upon consulting a useful web site, I learn that our longitude is about the same as Chihuahua, Mexico's and our latitude is about the same as Budapest, Hungary's

At about 2:45 PST, the flight attendants begin bringing the food. The menu announces "Gravlax with Asian Pear Slaw" and "Tomato and Basil Soup" as starters; then a mixed green salad. For the main course, you'll recall that I've chosen *Côtelettes de Boeuf Braisées* (it *does* sound better in French). Everything is very tasty but too filling; I don't finish the beef. Nevertheless, for dessert, I opt for "Vanilla Ice Cream Sundae" with choice of sauces, whipped cream, and chopped nuts and "Selection of Fine Cheeses" with fresh fruit. Burp! With the meal I choose a Napa Valley sauvignon blanc. (What? A white wine with a beef meal? Yeah - wanna make something of it?) Of course, there is also coffee with dessert. I give the full descriptions here, not from memory, but because I "liberated" one of Delta's menus. For our meals at German restaurants, my descriptions will be much more brief (e.g., a typical entry will be "salad, soup, beef, dessert") but Lee, bless her heart, will wax poetic in her journal over some of the meals that she enjoys. As I'm finishing the dessert, I make the *startling discovery* that the cutlery is magnetic! Actually, that's not correct. The edges of the tray table are magnetic (so that they'll snap shut when closed) and the cutlery is some iron-based alloy and not, as one might have hoped, sterling silver. I demonstrate to two of the flight attendants that I can balance a knife or fork on the edge of the tray such that it's hanging (precariously it would seem) over the edge. Neither attendant was aware of this magical phenomenon. One actually accused me of pulling a trick on her, but the other one had a "logical" explanation: "Maybe it's because of the turbulence?" (So much for the efficacy of science education in U.S. schools!).

At a little after 3:00, we are entering twilight and soon it will be pitch-dark, quite a contrast from our flights from Seattle to Reykjavik (earlier this year), Paris (in 2011), and Frankfurt (in 2010) when there was perpetual daylight during the summer months. By 4:00 PDT, the cabin lights are turned off; our speed has increased to 623 mph; I won't bore you with the other data, except to note that we are now at about the longitude of Guatemala City and Tegucigalpa and the latitude of Chongqing and Odessa. Oy! We are still about 4000 miles from Paris. Oy!

At 5:30 PST, I move the seat to lie-flat mode and I stretch out, hoping to sleep. Not a chance! Even though I keep my eyes closed for nearly two hours, I doubt that I get more than 10 minutes of sleep. This is typical of me - I contend that the expense of business class is not worth it for someone who can never find sleep on a plane. (On the other hand, Lee is sleeping peacefully for several hours - I guess that she must have an untroubled conscience, goodness knows how!) Maybe I can't sleep because my body tells me it's only 7:15 PST? OK, I'll re-set my watch for Paris time, 4:15 am. But it doesn't help. So I un-recline my seat and check the flight data: we are still some four hours before arrival, but at least we're more than half-way (3200 miles from Seattle, 2100 from Paris). (Before reclining, I took my "evening" pills and after returning my seat to upright I take my "morning" pills. Weird.)

I take the time to review some German words and expressions from the various lists that I've accumulated over the years. I read about half of the issue of *The New Yorker* that I had begun, then set it aside and start on *Independence Day* by Richard Ford. (Several years ago I read his *The Lay of the Land*, the final book in the trilogy featuring Frank Bascombe, and enjoyed it immensely. So I purchased the first two books, but, for whatever reason - probably a lack of attention on my part - I'm now reading part two of the trilogy. I guess that I'll read part one, *The Sportswriter*, when I return to Gig Harbor.) Before leaving on this trip, I had read Ford's 2012 novel, *Canada*, which I thought not as good as *The Lay of the Land*. I notice that Lee, who is now awake, is reading *Canada* as an e-book on her iPad. This allows me to re-create that wonderful Allstate commercial in which a young man has dinged the car of an older driver who is surprised to learn that the young man is insured with Allstate and says: "I, too, have Allstate. Same agent and everything" to which the young man says "It's like we're connected." "No we're not." "Yeah we are." "No we're not!" To which the young man raises an eyebrow to display his incredulous mood. So I say to Lee, "I, too, am reading Richard Ford." She doesn't play the game with me and doesn't even raise her eyebrow, but does shoot me the finger. Sigh.

I read about 45 pages of the book and at 6:15 return to *The New Yorker*. About 30 minutes later, I finally figure out how to enlarge the route map on the console so that I can see where we are. Alas, the system works only sporadically, often freezing and requiring a re-boot. I just hope that the plane's captain has more reliable navigation tools than I have! But I do learn that we're now over Ireland and heading southeastward toward Wales, England, and (eventually) France. At 7:00, the cabin lights are turned on, although it is still pitch-dark outside. Of course, it's only 6:00 in Great Britain, which is an hour earlier than central Europe. (Sunrise in London is not until 7:40 at the end of November. Sunrise in Paris is not until 8:22.) And in a short while, breakfast (or, as they call it, the Pre-Arrival Meal) is served. It begins with "seasonal fresh fruit"; I then choose "Vanilla French Toast" which, like most meals, sounds more exotic in French: *Pain Perdu à la Vanille; oeufs brouillés au cheddar et saucisse au poulet*. And, of course, coffee.

As we cross the English Channel (at about 8:00) and enter French airspace near Le Havre, there is a spectacular sunrise, with the southeastern sky illuminated in bright red across the entire horizon, then diffusing to orange and finally yellow at higher elevation. People on the ground have no idea of this because they are shrouded in thick clouds that we shortly enter. The plane sets wheels down at 8:22 and there is dense fog everywhere. I assume that the captain can see well enough to find the terminal, but I wonder - we make many turns on many taxiways before finally arriving at the gate 20 minutes later. (At least there *is* a gate for us. When we flew into Charles de Gaulle airport in 2010, we were kept waiting on the tarmac while, it appeared, there was a conference of ground crew and eventually their bosses in suits, probably deciding whether we were worthy of disembarking; eventually we were exiled to an isolated part of the airport where a staircase was brought to the plane's door and we were bused to the terminal. On that occasion, we were not making a close connection, but today we are: our flight to Berlin leaves at 10:15, so we hope that things work more smoothly than they did two years ago.)

I ask one of the flight attendants if we're going to have to leave security and re-enter it when making our way to the connecting flight. The answer: even though our second leg is an Air France flight (as is this one, a code-share with Delta), we will be going from terminal 2E to 2A (if I recall) and almost certainly will leave the secure area before re-entering it. In fact, it turns out to be a surprisingly long walk, aided only

occasionally by moving sidewalks, as we approach passport control. This is in an enormous room, but we seem to be the only passengers entering it. Nevertheless, we are required to negotiate those strange crowd-control fabric dividers that force one to walk to the left, then to the right, then to the left, *ad infinitum*. (It would be tempting to just go under or over the dividers and head directly to the immigration officer's booth, but that's probably frowned upon.) Even weirder, the final aisle before reaching the booths should be a clear shot but it's not - there are dividers set up, about 15 feet apart, that force you to merge left, then right, then left, etc. I suppose that all of this helpful when there are crowds in the area, but such is not the case today. *Eh, bien*.

After being admitted to *La République de la France*, the really long walk ensues. Of course, we don't have our large suitcases (three in number) but we are schlepping carry-ons, briefcases, laptop holders, etc. And when we get to security, it's the same as in the U.S.: removal of shoes, belt, (explosive) liquids, etc. This all leaves no time to relax in the Business Class Lounge so we head directly to the boarding area ... which is a zoo! There are chairs, but all are occupied. And there are crowds of people everywhere, as the boarding gates are very close together. Also, there is an SAS Stockholm-bound plane at our gate that needs to load before our plane can pull up to the jetway.

We finally board our plane (an Airbus A320) at 9:55. Our seats are 4C and 4F. There is a single aisle separating three seats on the left from three on the right, but in business class seats B and D are not sold. So, again, Lee and I are not sitting right next to each other, but we're not far apart either. The safety and flight information announcements are made in three languages: French, English, and German. Now, as residents of Seattle, we are "required" to favor Boeing planes over those from AirBus - and here I have a good reason for doing so. As we sit on the tarmac, the plane's interior is uncomfortably warm and (surprise!) there are no air vents above. None! The plane's doors are closed at 10:27 (only 12 minutes behind schedule) but we are held at the gate because of "crowding" (whatever that may mean). Finally, we have push-back at 10:36 and we then begin the arduous "journey" (in the fog, of course) as we make our way to the runway. Finally, it's wheels-up at 10:50 and almost immediately into thick clouds. Berlin's weather is supposed to be better than what we encountered in Paris, but this seems not to be the case as we descend through thick cloud cover and land at 12:09, about 15 minutes past scheduled.

A staircase is brought to the plane and we descend to the tarmac, then walk directly to the terminal (no bus required) and immediately into baggage claim (no passport control because we're traveling within the EU). We get our luggage pretty quickly and take a taxi to the hotel. Based on a Google map, I have in mind a driving route from the airport to the city center, but our driver makes numerous unexpected turns that confuse me thoroughly. Nevertheless, he delivers us to the Hotel Adlon Kempinski at 1:00 at a cost of less than €20. (I note this because the hotel staff had sent me an email saying "Please be aware that we have recently had problems with taxi drivers charging excessive amounts. Should you decide to take a taxi and the fare exceeds ... 25-30 euros, ask for a receipt and come to our doorman before paying, we will assist you." Well, it not only did not exceed it, it came in under the figure.)

I was concerned that we have arrived "too early" because the hotel, at its web site, made it very clear that check-in is at 3:00 and that earlier arrivers might be charged extra, as much as a full day's tariff. The hotel is one of the classic old hotels of Berlin, having been built in 1907 and having survived not only two world wars but also the East German government's administration. Its location is superb: at the end of Unter den Linden on Pariser Platz, just a block from the Brandenburg Gate, near the U.S., British, French, and Russian embassies, and close to shopping, restaurants, and an U-Bahn station. For details, see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hotel_Adlon and <http://www.kempinski.com/en/berlin/hotel-adlon/overview/>

It is a magnificent hotel - and very large (over 380 rooms), occupying most of a city block. We enter the lobby and, as we make our way to the registration desk, we are greeted by one employee after another. The hotel does not stint on staff - they are everywhere and in great numbers. Each time we enter or leave the building, numerous people greet us with "Guten Morgen," "Guter Tag," or "Guten Abend," depending on the time of day. The central lobby is recessed and has a stunning domed ceiling some four floors up. The lobby, which also serves as a venue for afternoon drinks and snacks, is adorned with numerous

statues and holiday displays. These can be seen at the Picasa web site for December 1 and later.

Because our reservation was made by Stefan Bisciglia of Gig Harbor's "Specialty Cruise & Villas," not only did we receive an upgrade on the room and a €50 credit for use on hotel food (courtesy of Virtuoso) but we are greeted at the front desk by a supervisor and then by a tall, blond, young woman who identifies herself as "a lady in red," which is literally true, as she is wearing a red-dress, tight-fitting (not that I notice), who says that she or one of her colleagues, also in tight-fitting red dresses (not that I notice), will be available to help us and to answer our questions. After filling out the forms at the desk, our personal lady in red escorts us to our room to show us its features and how the various controls work. (The "room key" is a type that I've not encountered: to enter the room or, before that, to get the elevator to go to the floor, one holds the key in front of a magnetic reader ... *et voilà*, it works!)

Although the hotel is relatively old, its furnishings and, especially, the room's electric and electronic gizmos are up-to-date. In a drawer of the night stand next to the bed is a control panel that operates all of the different lights (a redundant system as they are also controlled by wall switches) and a room temperature control. Because the room is quite warm (as seems to be typical of European buildings in cold weather), we crank it down as far as it will go, which is 20°C. This should have been enough to diffuse the heat, but it's not - I suspect that it's a fraud. So we also open the windows to let some cool air in. Our suitcases, which were whisked away from the taxi by (I assume) hotel staff, are then miraculously delivered to the room. The room is described as "deluxe" and you can see pictures of it at the Picasa site and also at the virtual tour at <http://vrtour.kempinski-hotels.com/KIBER2/en/86.html> (click on deluxe room, red). (You can turn off the accompanying music if it offends.)

From our window, we have an excellent view of Unter den Linden (directly below) and of Pariser Platz and the Brandenburg Gate to the left. To make us "feel at home" there are also a Starbucks and a Dunkin' Donuts directly across the street. The platz (or plaza or square) when we arrived is populated with locals and tourists who are watching circus performers, a dancing skeleton, and Mickey Mouse, himself.

At about 3:00, we leave the hotel to do a little sightseeing before dark. We walk through Pariser Platz to the Brandenburg Gate,* taking lots of pictures of each, past the U.S. embassy (a truly ugly building that

*The Brandenburg Gate is one of the most recognizable features in Berlin. It stands at the dividing line between what were West and East Berlin. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brandenburg_Gate

seems impregnable and is well-guarded), and to the Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe which consists of some 2700 concrete slabs of varying height on a sloping field of 19,000 sq m. (See <http://tinyurl.com/ady9hp8> and the striking pictures at <http://tinyurl.com/qybbsh>.)

We are impressed by the large number of tour groups (on foot) and tour buses, many of them from out of town (or even country) that are clogging Pariser Platz and the environs. The streets are also filled with busy shoppers and people leaving work and heading to the U-Bahn station. We find an ATM and buy some euros; during the operation, the screen flashes some messages that imply that all sorts of service charges would be levied against the transaction, but when I return to Gig Harbor and access my online bank account I find that all is well and that the exchange rate is reasonable.

We retrace our steps past the hotel and walk east on Unter den Linden, past the Russian embassy and past the wide variety of shops, ranging from tourist traps (with cheesy souvenirs) to a Bentley dealership, eventually reaching Humboldt University. Dating from 1810, it was the home of many of the greatest intellectuals of 19th and 20th century Germany. Among its alumni and faculty were Otto von Bismarck, Max Born, Paul Ehrlich, Albert Einstein, Emil Fischer, James Franck, Fritz Haber, Otto Hahn, Heinrich Heine, Werner Heisenberg, Gustave Hertz, Max von Laue, Karl Marx, Lisa Meitner, Max Planck, Arthur Schopenhauer, and Erwin Schrödinger. Some 40 Nobel prizes, mostly in chemistry or physics, have been awarded to alumni or faculty of the university. (Several of the people named above, plus others whom I

didn't bother to list, were Jewish, something that Hitler considered a blight on the reputation of the place.) As we are returning to the hotel, it is getting dark (at 4:00!!) and, worse, it is beginning to sleet. Ouch!

At the hotel we stop at the concierge desk, next to registration, to make a dinner reservation. My lack of sleep on the plane is catching up with me (although I did catch a few winks on the Paris to Berlin flight), so we reserve at *Restaurant Quarré*, one of the five restaurants within the hotel. It offers a relatively straightforward menu of French cuisine and the prices are only slightly outrageous, but not as much so as *Lorenz Adlon Esszimmer* which has two Michelin stars and offers only a multi-course *prix fixe** menu. It actually has two different six-course menus, each at €130; it also allows à la carte ordering but this is even more

*I still chuckle when I am reminded of the restaurant reviewer for the *Knoxville News Sentinel* who described the multi-course dinner menu at a restaurant as *prefix* (sic).

costly: e.g., three different starters at €45; intermediate courses (whatever the hell those are) at €34; and main courses from €48 to €78. If you still have room (and money) for dessert, that will cost €24. Then, of course, there's the wine and water (which is never free) and coffee and who knows what else, a good way to shoot the entire travel budget at a single sitting.

An embarrassment: we (i.e., I) have managed to foul up the controls on the safe in our room, something that I've done on earlier trips (e.g., at Solitaire Lodge in New Zealand) but a cheerful person comes up and puts in a magic code to unlock it. I let Lee re-set the code; in fact, I refuse to touch the damned thing for the remainder of our stay.

For dinner at *Restaurant Quarré*, we each begin with soup. I make the mistake of ordering Zwiebelsuppe (onion soup, €9) which is very tasty but presents a challenge because the semi-melted cheese on its surface is amazingly stringy and elastic. (I hope that nobody had a camera to record my awkward attempts at managing the cheese.) Following that, Lee and I each have wiener schnitzel (€24), which I thought was "ordinary" if also very generous; along with it came lukewarm potato and cucumber salad, which was bland - it could have benefitted from a shot of vinegar. With wine and coffee (and, of course, the requisite bottle of water), the bill is €120, considerably less than it would have been at *Lorenz Adlon Esszimmer*. For details, see the menu (printed in both German and English: <http://tinyurl.com/c3mu6bf>)

The clientele at the hotel is certainly upper crust. In the lobby and in the restaurant people are not only very well dressed but also expensively, adorned with rich-looking furs and jewelry. And those are the men! Having become accustomed to the laid-back casualness of Seattle (some would call it sloppy) I feel somewhat uncomfortable. On the other hand we *are* Virtuoso customers, and as far as the staff knows we might be eccentric millionaires who don't worry about our costumes.

After dinner, we return to the room. Just as was true the first day in France and in Iceland, I have to fight falling asleep during dinner, but in the room I feel revived, dammit. So I do a bit of internet work on the laptop and a bit of reading. We go to bed at 9:20.

Saturday, December 1

Still on Seattle time, alas, I awaken at 2:20 and remain in bed, awake, until 3:20 when I get up to read. I return to bed an hour later but sleep does not come until about 5:15 when I manage to conk out and stay that way until 7:30. So, I get about seven hours (total) of sleep, not too bad. (During one of my out-of-bed experiences, I have a coughing/sneezing spell accompanied by a minor nosebleed, the first since mid-September.) When I look outside the window, I see that there is a light dusting of snow on Pariser Platz.

The hotel room offers all sorts of elegant *tchotchkes*: a very long shoe horn (for very long feet?); an enormous supply of stationery in a desk drawer that has cubbies for paper, envelopes, and who knows

what else (maybe condoms?); an enormous shoebrush (for those enormous feet?), hanging in the walk-in closet in an impressive leather sling that also has places for one's shoes (and might double as a horse saddle); oodles of bathroom amenities (creams, lotions, shampoos, soaps, Spanish fly - just kidding); and a delivery of *The International Herald Tribune* in the morning. A room service menu informs me that I can order meals ranging from €29 for an *Amerikanische Frühstück* (pancake, eggs, bacon, toast, coffee) to €680(!) for the *Lorenz Adlon Gourmet Frühstück* (coffee, juice, Baltic salmon with 20 g of caviar, omelettes with black truffles, angus beef steak with sautéed mushrooms, Graved(sic) salmon, smoked trout and mackerel, a bottle of Dom Perignon champagne, service and taxes included). This "feast" is supposed to reflect what was served in the 1920s when only the most elegant and well-heeled Germans could afford to eat here.

It's an easy decision to eschew (Gesundheit!) room service, and so we descend to the ground floor and head to last night's restaurant (the one that's supposed to be open for breakfast) only to find that there are no tables left; so we are directed to the second floor and to the very very very very pricey *Lorenz Adlon Esszimmer*. Well, who cares about prices, as the breakfast buffet is included in our room rate. (When we check out of the hotel, we see that the breakfast rate is shown independently of the room tariff, and it is €28 per person per day, so maybe the room service menu was not such a rip-off?) All of the seats inside the main rooms of the restaurant are occupied, but there are tables set up in a "lesser" room. (Is this like being directed to steerage on an ocean liner? Nah.) The array of food is extraordinary: hot dishes, cold meats, smoked fishes, cheeses, fruits, breads, rolls, juices, eggs, etc. etc. etc. I even try a soft-boiled egg, not usually a favorite of mine, and it is excellent. This is, undoubtedly, the most elaborate breakfast offering that I've seen in any European hotel. I've uploaded pictures of some of the food tables at the Picasa web site. From our breakfast table, we have an excellent view of the Brandenburg Gate, the various embassies, the DZ Bank (according to Lonely Planet, it has a "glass-covered atrium with its bizarre free-form sculpture that's actually a conference room," but attempts to see it a few days hence fail), and numerous tour buses plus the tourists in them and on the street.

When we've finished making pigs of ourselves at the various food tables, we wander through the hotel lobby, then the second-floor balcony over the lobby, the hallways that go on "forever," and the inner courtyards that can be seen through the hallway windows; I take pictures of nearly everything, including the pianist who seems to be pounding away no matter what the time of day. Some of the decorations are specific for the holidays. See the Picasa site for pictures. Before returning to our room, we stop at the concierge desk to ask for a dinner reservation at a place that serves echt-German food. The clerk mentions two; we choose Aigner for today and keep the other in mind for tomorrow; and we also purchase two museum passes* (good for three days, €19 each, which we make up after just the second

*Of the museums that we're planning to visit, all are included on the pass.

museum visit). As yesterday, we are amazed at the number of staff employed by the hotel: in the restaurant, at the concierge and registration desks, as valets and porters, as red-dress ladies (yum), as various sorts of supervisors who are stationed here and there. Near the exit, there is an upscale jewelry shop with a young, beautiful, statuesque woman (not that I noticed) standing at the entrance. The men who serve as concierges (and belong to some organization for such) are dressed in cutaway jackets, vests, and striped pants - this way, I suppose, they could stand in for an absent diplomat at one of the many embassies in the neighborhood. In the morning, as in the evening, the clientele are an impressive-looking bunch: well-heeled, very well-dressed, most of them middle-aged or older, and looking like they belong to Berlin high society. There are also a significant number of not-yet-middle-aged "young 'uns" in their 20s and 30s who look as if they'll comfortably grow into their elders.

At 11:00, we take a taxi to *Gemäldegalerie* (one of several *Staatliche Museen zu Berlin*), supposedly the best art museum in Berlin and specializing in old masters. Picture-taking is permitted, and we view many Renaissance works of religious art, along with paintings by Holbein, Cranach, Dürer, Bruegel, van Dyck, Rubens, Rembrandt, Hals, ter Borch, Vermeer, Steen, and Gainsborough. Name dropper! You can see

some of the paintings at the Picasa site; and you can read about the collection at these web sites: <http://tinyurl.com/dycs445> <http://tinyurl.com/csezzre> <http://tinyurl.com/ayptgw2> We stay at the museum for about three hours, but the last portion of this is devoted not to food for our souls but for our tummies (coffee and cake in the museum coffee shop).* Upon exiting the museum, we see (directly across the

*One of us (i.e., RMM) probably should not mention this because of the risk of ruining his otherwise blissful marriage, but an honest account of the day would include the following. After viewing the museum's collection, we return to the ground floor to retrieve our coats from the *garderobe*. I want to ask one of the staff where the cafeteria is, but the other one of us (i.e., LJM) says, "No need. I can hear the crowds and the clanging of dishes down below." So we descend a staircase, only to find a book store and souvenir shop ... and no food. So we return to the ground floor and finally see a sign indicating that the cafeteria is one flight up, not down. Oh, well, she does have many endearing and enduring qualities, so I really shouldn't complain.

street) the *Philharmonie*, the strangely shaped and weirdly painted home of the Berliner Philharmoniker. I make a mental note to use the web to see if tours are possible, as it turns out they are.

We walk to the *Neue Nationalgalerie* (another of the *Staatliche Museen zu Berlin*), just across the square. Because the collection in the first museum ended with the 1800s, we hope to find some modern art here. Both a brochure and the web site promise us works by German expressionists as well as international 20th century artists like Picasso, Klee, Barnett Newman, Frank Stella, and others but what we find (not on the ground floor, which is essentially vacant) on the lower level is a special exhibit called *Der Geteilte Himmel* (Divided Heaven), works from the 1945-1968 part of the collection and focused on the differences between how West German and East German painters and sculptors described what they saw through their different lenses and perspectives. (See the Picasa pictures and these web sites: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neue_Nationalgalerie and <http://tinyurl.com/d7efppw>)

When we emerge more than an hour later, it is quite dark and cold. We walk back to the hotel, passing carolers in Santa Claus outfits in Pariser Platz at about 4:00. We walk to Aigner for our 6:00 reservation. This restaurant that specializes in German and Austrian cuisine is located in Gendarmenmarkt* at the

*This square is also the location of one of Berlin's Christmas markets which we'll visit in two days. At some point, I ask one of the hotel's concierges why the first letter of Gendarmenmarkt is pronounced as a soft G, given that a hard G seems to be the norm in German words (e.g., in the first name of Angela Merkel, pronounced like the English word *angle*, not like *angel*). He says that perhaps it's because it comes from the French. So, I then ask, why is the G in *Orangensaft* (orange juice) also soft? He just gives a Gallic shrug of his shoulders, even though he is not French.

corner of *Französische Straße* and *Charlottenstraße*, about a 20-minute walk from the hotel. We have a wonderful meal. Even though I had had *wiener schnitzel* last night, I feel obligated to order it from what is purported to be an *echt-Viennese* restaurant. But first, I order liver dumpling soup (excellent! and not a challenge like yesterday's onion soup), then "Wiener Schnitzel from saddle of suckling veal or two small Wiener from saddle of pig of the Region Brandenburg with lukewarm potato-cucumber salad and cranberries" - I choose the veal, even though it is €8 more expensive. The meat is tastier and tenderer than last night's and the warm potato salad had some "oomph" to it. (For details, see either the English-language menu <http://tinyurl.com/d84uhtu> or the German <http://tinyurl.com/c2yeww6>)

We walk back to the hotel at 8:45. In contrast to last night, there is no rain, snow, or (Gott sei Dank) sleet to make us miserable. Both last night and tonight, the quiet of the room is penetrated by that awful wail of European sirens on police cars or other emergency vehicles. Unlike the rising/falling sequence that we are more-or-less accustomed to for sirens in the U.S., these sirens blare, sounding like the ooga-ooga that car horns of the 1920s made.

Oh, yes, before I forget - Do you remember the group of carolers that we passed on our return to the hotel earlier this afternoon? Their amplified singing was only modestly annoying at the start, but after a while either their numbers had increased or the amps were set to stun mode; also, amplified musicians joined them; and even with the windows closed we were "assaulted" not with lovely carols sung in German but by English language revival hymns. I heard "I love Jesus, you love Jesus" at least three times before we left the hotel for dinner. They were gone by the time that we returned.

Sometimes the superb hotel service goes too far. Last night, we turned down the "turn-down service" because we were still in the room before going to dinner. Tonight, we were already at the restaurant when the "Agent(s) of Turn-Down" arrived. He/she/they took all of our personal bathroom items (hair brushes, Q-tips, pills, toothpaste, etc.) and arranged them neatly on our used wash cloths that are spread out next to the sink. At first we think that they've not given new wash cloths, but then we discover them in another location.

We read for a while, then go to bed at about 10:30. I find myself dozing off several times around 9:00. Perhaps I'm finally on a European sleeping schedule? Not a chance - keep reading.

Sunday, December 2

Sleep does not come easily. I doze for a bit, but at 11:30 (still Saturday evening) I'm wide awake. I remain in bed until 1:00, but finally give up and get out of bed to read. (Maybe I can't sleep because I don't know who won the Georgia-Alabama SEC Championship Game? Nah.) I return to bed and finally manage to sleep until the alarm goes off at 7:00. (Meanwhile, Lee has "caught" my disease - she's awake and reading from 4:00 to 5:00).

Breakfast, again, is available in the various rooms of the gourmet restaurant on the second floor. But because the hotel is full and everyone, it seems, has come to Sunday breakfast ahead of us, we are seated in a hallway. But this has advantages because it places us very near the room with all of the food. Of course I return to the line too many times and eat too much. (Before returning to our room, I get an excellent picture of the ornate domed skylight over the lobby and of a spectacular gingerbread house which is lit from within and has figures of furniture and people inside, next to which is a sign admonishing NO PHOTOGRAPHS. Tough! *Ich kann Englisch nicht verstehen.*)

At about 10:00, we take a taxi to *Alte Nationalgalerie* (another of the *Staatliche Museen zu Berlin*), located (along with several other museums) on Museum Island. This is an art gallery specializing in European art of the 19th century. The building, itself, dates from the mid-19th century and resembles a Greek or Roman temple. It is also much in need of an exterior cleansing, as are most of the buildings on Museum Island. Inside (when not pestered too much by the guards who are in great abundance), we see paintings and sculptures by Renoir, Rodin, Cézanne, Manet and Monet (or is it Monet and Manet?), and van Gogh plus a number of German, and Austrian artists whose names are only vaguely familiar (e.g., Carl Schuch, Wilhelm Trübner, Wilhelm Leibl, Hans Thoma, Fritz von Unde, Franz von Lenbach). Picture-taking is permitted and I take ample advantage of this (see the set at Picasa). Familiar names among the German artists and well-represented in the gallery are Max Liebermann and Caspar David Friedrich. More information about the museum can be found at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alte_Nationalgalerie and at the official web site <http://tinyurl.com/a379ht8>

After about an hour-and-a-half, we leave the museum and walk but a short distance to *Neues Museum* which features classical history ranging from Egypt, Greece, and Rome to Europe in the middle ages. The highlight is the head of Nefertiti (actually, not her head but a plaster and limestone model thereof). This is of much more interest to Lee than to me and, besides, picture-taking is not permitted, so after a while I let her continue exploring while I seek the museum café. Eventually Lee joins me and we enjoy a coffee and pastry before moving on. For more information about the collection, see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neues_Museum and <http://www.neues-museum.de/>

We take a bus back to the Brandenburger Tor stop and walk to the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, hoping to visit the information center that is located below the outdoor display of concrete slabs. We find the door locked and a sign saying that it's closed for renovations but will re-open on December 4. Walking back to the hotel, we are astounded at the enormous police presence, not only around the U.S. and British embassies,* but in the plaza itself. One reason might be a political demonstration in favor of a

*One has to feel sorry for the policemen who are assigned to stand outside the embassies, doing their best not to freeze and occasionally taking short walks to thaw out. It's not clear what threat they're forestalling, but someone, somewhere, probably considered them to be essential. Nevertheless, today there are numerous police vehicles on the square, itself, with large numbers of police and what look like SWAT squads deployed both inside and near the vehicles.

more liberal immigration policy. It looks non-threatening, but what do I know? Another might be some actors wearing the World War II military uniforms and carrying the flags of Russian and U.S. soldiers; its purpose is also unclear unless it's to divest unsuspecting tourists of a euro or two in exchange for having a picture taken with the *faux* soldiers. And at the eastern end of the plaza, near the hotel, is a large contingent of singers and musicians (along with huge amplifiers), courtesy of the Norwegian embassy, who are going to serenade (and assault) us with Norwegian Christmas songs. There are also booths for Norwegian delicacies like Gløgg (a red wine with various spices and raisins), Vafler (Norwegian waffles), and Norsk Roklub (which, it seems, is neither a food nor a drink but a rock club, as the name suggests).

OBSERVATION As in the U.S., cigarette smoking seems to be on the decline. Apparently it is forbidden indoors (in offices, stores, hotels, restaurants, etc.) because we see people standing outside, in doorways, having a puff or two with friends. Smoking is prohibited in our hotel except in a smokers' lounge on the ground floor.

We are back in our room at 2:30. I take advantage of the time by connecting to the internet on the laptop, reading *New York Times* op-eds, and attending to email. The sounds from the Norwegian sound stage penetrate the room, even with the windows closed. Yes, there is singing and instrumental playing, interspersed with what seem to be political sermons spoken by a male voice. And then, at about 5:30, they crank up the amps, making it impossible for me to concentrate on any reading in the room. Fifteen minutes later, a light snow has begun to fall. We take a taxi to *Fassbender & Rauch, Chocolatiers* at the Gendarmenmarkt, at the corner of Charlottenstraße and Mohrenstraße. What an amazing store! (<http://www.fassbender-rausch.com/>) Every aisle is a treat to the chocolate-fancier's eyes; and every aisle has wall-to-wall people, some of whom are gawking and a few of whom are buying. I've posted pictures at the Picasa web site. Very much "over the top" are large chocolate models of Berlin's most famous buildings: there's one of the Brandenburg Gate that's probably three feet across and two feet high. There's an enormous model of the Reichstag. Another shows the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church. And there are Santa's elves, about two feet tall, made out of chocolate and wearing clothes.

We then make our way to the other German restaurant recommended by one of the concierges, *Lutter & Wegner* (http://www.restaurantlutterundwegner.de/menu_en.php) at the corner of Charlottenstraße and Taubenstraße. I have delicious potato soup followed by sauerbraten. We walk a block to the Christmas market at Gendarmenmarkt but postpone buying a ticket until tomorrow; I do take some (poorly focused) pictures and hope for better when we return. On the walk back to the hotel (there is light snow), I take pictures of the store on Unter den Linden that specializes in artifacts related to Ampelmann, the imaginative red or green figures that are illuminated for walk/don't walk signs. (See <http://tinyurl.com/co5qhc3> and http://ampelmann.de/html/geschichte_english.html) All of the trees on Unter den Linden are wrapped with Christmas lights and make for beautiful pictures. Pictures of these and the illuminated Christmas tree and Brandenburg Gate at Pariser Platz are at the Picasa web site.

Back in our hotel room, I turn on the TV for the first time and marvel at the number and breadth of available channels. I count nearly 200 possibilities, ranging from the mundane (e.g., CNN, BBC,

SkySport) to the exotic (e.g., Al Jazeera, Baghdad TV, Bahrain TV, Dubai Racing, Russia Today, Kurdistan TV, and Yemen TV). Lee and I read for a while, then go to bed at 10:15. Maybe sleep will be peaceful tonight? Maybe not.

Monday, December 3

I'm wide awake at 3:00 because my subconscious, without any input from me, has been hatching a scheme. Do you remember the *New York Times* that the fates had delivered to our front door the day that we left for the airport? Of course you don't. So you should return immediately to the indented paragraph on p 2. Go ahead, I'll wait.

Ready? OK, so I wrote on p 2 that this would serve "as a useful prop for a scheme that I would hatch, although I didn't realize it at the time." What the unconscious ME had decided to do, absolutely independent of the conscious ME who had not pondered the situation at all, would be to create a fake newspaper article centering on our Knoxville friend, Al Vazquez. And why would I do this? Because it would serve as retaliation for a prank that he pulled a few weeks ago.

Here's the background - and it also involves newspapers. A month or so ago, our morning newspapers were tossed onto our driveway in a plastic bag. Inside were *The Seattle Times*, *The News Tribune*, and (ready for this?) *Le Monde*! What in the hell is a French-language newspaper doing in this bag? Well, we know that there is a French-speaking person who lives in our community, so I sent him an email asking if he had a subscription and if he was missing a paper. He said that he didn't subscribe. Several days later, we went to the movies with Al and Sam (that's his wife, real name Martha) Vazquez. While eating dinner in a restaurant, I told them about the strange newspaper delivery and that we had no idea who the intended recipient was. As we walked to the movie theater, Al mentioned (quite matter-of-factly) that he thought that the color picture of Mitt Romney on the front page was quite well-done. I walked a few steps further before it hit me - HE was the one who put the paper in a plastic bag and got up early enough to deliver it to our house. In fact, he and Sam had been in Paris, before going on to Germany and Jerusalem a few weeks earlier. I vowed (and told him so) that I would get back at him, someday, somehow. But I had nothing in particular in mind.

So in the very very early morning hours of December 3, the unconscious ME recalled the fake newspaper article that I created for our Knoxville colleague, Earl Wehry, upon his retirement from the university. What I did, at that time, was to invent an outrageous tale about Earl's mischievous behavior, type it (using correct *New York Times* font) in a vertical column of the proper width, and paste it on top of a real column of exactly the same length on the front page of the newspaper. Photocopying the result gave a result that looked exactly right - the "article" about Earl really did appear as if it belonged on p 1, right where I put it. (Because my invented article was too long for the "front page," I continued it onto an "interior page" but without actually inserting it into a real page of the newspaper.)

So the unconscious ME woke me up at 3:00 am and said, "Hey, conscious ME, let's write a fake story about Vazquez. Make it as outrageous and outlandish as WE want. Then when WE return to Gig Harbor, WE'll finesse it so that it fits perfectly onto the front page of that very *New York Times* that miraculously came OUR way last Thursday. Wide awake now, the most absurd, ridiculous, inconceivable ideas began to swirl through conscious ME's brain, and I had to get out of bed to write them down. After filling a full sheet of paper with my typical indecipherable scrawl I finally return to bed at about 4:30, hoping that I'll actually be able to read what I had written when I would view it in the morning.

So was it worth the loss of sleep? I'll let you decide. At the end of this travelogue, I've posted the *New York Times* "article" before its insertion into an actual page of the newspaper. (All of the people named in the story - Porter, Merrill, Melchior, and "Backslay" (= Slayback) are neighbors of the Vazquezes; and all of the commentary has a basis, sometimes very much stretched, in fact.

OBSERVATION: On the streets, in museums, in restaurants, and everywhere that ordinary Germans congregate, one can't help noticing that many of the young* people are tall, athletic-looking, healthy, and

*Of course to this 74-year-old, most people are "young" but you know what I mean.

blond. Which reminds me of something that my friend Mait Jones heard on the radio some years ago. The program featured an interview with the commander of German forces in World War II's Battle of the Bulge. When asked if the Germans had learned a lesson from their defeat in the battle and, ultimately, the war, he replied, "Ja! Vee are all zhe zooper race, ja?"

PUN ALERT: I was beginning to worry that I had gone four days without "committing" a single pun. This is very much unlike me, as perusal of my earlier travelogues would suggest. In the manuscript from last summer's Nordic cruise and travel through the low countries, there were no fewer than eight that I recorded (and goodness knows how many more that I may have forgotten). Well here is the first pun for this trip. The doors in hotels, museums, stores, and restaurants are often labeled either DRUCKEN or ZIEHEN for PUSH or PULL. Well, as the pundit says, ziehen iz believin'.

Breakfast is in the hotel again. Following that, we take a taxi to *Jüdisches Museum Berlin*. It is housed in two buildings: an old one (1933) that's now used for administration and a striking new wing (2001), designed by Daniel Libeskind, that serves as the museum. Photos of the exterior, including one taken from above, show the shape and design of the structure. (See: <http://tinyurl.com/9wdyzi7> and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_Museum,_Berlin) Outside the building, there are several police on patrol and there is a little hut where they can get relief from any inclement weather. Inside the museum, Lee's purse is searched and we then pass through metal detectors. This degree of security is chilling, considering that this is "just" a museum.

The zig-zag design seen in the exterior photos makes for an interesting excursion through the museum itself. After passing through security, we descend to an underground level that has three arms, called Axis of Continuity, Axis of the Holocaust, and Axis of Exile. Each of these tunnels (as they're called) is adorned with wall displays giving information about the history (both glorious and tragic) of the Jews in Germany. At the end of the Axis of Exile is a doorway to the outside, leading to the Garden of Exile, a stark place with some 49 stone pillars on a tilted surface. Even more striking is the doorway at the end of the Axis of the Holocaust that leads to the Holocaust Tower, described (in Wikipedia) as "a 79 foot tall empty silo. The bare concrete Tower is neither heated nor cooled, and its only light comes from a small slit in its roof."

Using the stairs or an elevator, one can go up three flights to Level 2 and the start of the permanent exhibition called "Two Millennia of German Jewish History." There are paintings, photos, physical objects (a Torah and other "items of faith," books, kitchenware, clothing, letters, etc.) Most interesting are the extensive displays devoted to two people: a business woman named Glickl bas Judah Leib (1646–1724), who wrote a memoir that survives; and the philosopher Moses Mendelssohn (1729–1786), the head of a very accomplished family (Felix and Fanny Mendelssohn were among his grandchildren). From there, we descend to Level 1 which describes the accomplishments of the various Jewish communities in the early 20th century followed by the dark days of National Socialism and the Holocaust. We stop at the café for a coffee and pastry, and then it's down one more staircase to the ground level and the exit. In all, we spend more than two hours here - and we could have easily spent two more but it was time to move on.

From there, we walk about 1.5 km to *Topographie des Terrors* (whose translation is pretty obvious). It is an outdoor museum, erected on the site of the offices of the Gestapo, the SS, and the Reich Security Main Office. The buildings were bombed to rubble during the war; and the broken pieces of concrete are left in place as a reminder of what had been. The site is at a dividing line between the American and Russian occupation zones, so a section of the Berlin Wall was located here; part of the wall is still intact. For details, see <http://www.topographie.de/en/> and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Topography_of_Terror

At the western edge of the outdoor museum is one of the three original Bauhaus* Schools (the others

*I confess: I have the artistic taste of a Neanderthal. I've been told this by many people, some of whom are actually knowledgeable. Nevertheless, I consider the edifices erected by disciples of the Bauhaus School to be cold and unappealing. But others think that they're wonderful. *Chacun à son goût, nicht wahr?* (as a confused language student might say).

were in Weimar and Dessau) founded by the architect Walter Gropius* (1883-1969). As at the Jewish

*One can't help (no, one cannot) being reminded of Tom Lehrer's song, inspired by the obituary of Alma Mahler Gropius Werfel (1879-1964). Her first marriage was to Gustav Mahler, but then "While married to Gus, she met Gropius./And soon she was swinging with Walter./Gus died, and her teardrops were copious./She cried all the way to the altar./But he would work late at the Bauhaus/And only came home now and then./She said, 'What am I running, a chow house?/It's time to change partners again./' Alma, tell us,--all modern women are jealous-- /Though you didn't even use Ponds',/ You got Gustav and Walter and Franz." Brilliant!!

Museum, one could have spent many hours inside The Documentation Center, because room after room has displays that detail the rise to power of National Socialism, its noose around any vestige of independent thought and public opinion, its instruments of control, the acquiescence of much of the population, its expansion into other "Germanic" countries, "The Final Solution" (an attempt, largely successful, to destroy non-Aryans like Poles, Slavs, Gypsies, Homosexuals, and - most of all - Jews), and the meticulous record-keeping and documentation of these crimes. The evil of the principal leaders (Hitler, Göring, Himmler, and Goebbels)* is documented as well as the eager participation of those who

*The following is not a Tom Lehrer song, but it's worth introducing here (sung to the tune of the Colonel Bogey March from *Bridge on the River Kwai*): "Hitler had only one big ball/Göring had two but they were small/Himmler had something sim'lar/and Goebbels had no balls at all." I hadn't realized it, but this song (and numerous variants) were sung in England during World War II as a confidence-boosting effort: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hitler_Has_Only_Got_One_Ball

took orders from them. This was one of the most depressing (and also informative) museums I have ever visited. One is struck by the manner in which modern Germans view these atrocities with dispassion and disgust, as if they were performed by sub-humans called Nazis and not by their own grandparents and other "good" Germans. Of course, we Americans can be smug and patronizing, realizing that nothing like this has ever happened here. But it's not impossible - the thesis of Philip Roth's 2005 novel *The Plot Against America* is that Charles Lindbergh is elected president in 1940, signs a non-aggression pact with Hitler, and fosters a campaign of persecution of the Jews and the stifling of free expression. Of course this is fiction ... and it could never happen here ... (A significant minority of morons in our country is convinced that Barack Obama has a secret agenda to turn the U.S. into a Socialist Dictatorship. On the other hand, when Robert Reich, in an interview in the November 2012 issue of *The Progressive*, was asked to comment about Obama's politics, he said that the president is a centrist who would have fit comfortably in the progressive wing of the Republican Party - in those days when the GOP actually had a progressive wing; and when asked if Obama is a socialist, he replied "To think of him as somebody on the left is often almost laughable.")

It is beginning to get dark (although amazingly there are no clouds in what remains of blue sky plus bright sun) when we leave at 4:15, having spent over two hours at the outdoor and indoor exhibits. We walk back to the hotel in the cold, deliberately not making a detour to Checkpoint Charlie* which is nearby.

*When we were here in 2010, our tour bus took us to the Checkpoint Charlie Museum. On a

neighboring street is a guard house, alleged to be the original Checkpoint Charlie separating East and West Berlin; according to our guide, the "soldiers" standing there in World War II uniforms are actors who will gladly pose for a picture or two in exchange for a few euros.

We check in with the concierge to determine that we do have a dinner reservation for an Italian restaurant, *Bocca di Bacco* (which translates as Mouth of Bacchus)

OBSERVATION: It is amazing how many tour buses, including some from Czech Republic, Switzerland, and France are crowding the Pariser Platz area as well as the areas where the museums we've visited are. Berlin is a very popular destination, even in cold weather.

At about 5:00 we take a taxi to Gendarmenmarkt,* or as close to it as the driver can get, to visit the

*Gendarmenmarkt looks a wee bit different from when we saw it in the summer of 2010 during our bus tour of Berlin. Not only is it much more congested, but it must be 50°F colder and snowier than it was then. The Christmas market is adjacent to the three main buildings of the square: the French and German Cathedrals (both from the early 18th century), and the Konzerthaus (early 19th century). The first two are now museums, whereas the last is the home of the Berlin Symphony Orchestra (we'll see the Berlin Philharmonic's home tomorrow). In December, 1989, to celebrate the fall of the wall, Leonard Bernstein led an orchestra made up of musicians drawn from both East and West Germany as well as the four occupying powers. The central work was Beethoven's 9th symphony, the "choral" symphony, featuring Schiller's "Ode to Joy" in the fourth movement. Bernstein, however, had the singers replace the word *Freude* (joy) by *Freiheit* (freedom).

Christmas Market. After paying a small entrance fee, we pass under a lighted sign *Weihnachts Zauber* (Christmas Magic) and make our way through the throngs as we examine what the various vendors are vending. There seems to be every variety of food (Bratwurst, Crêpes, Soups, sweets, and of course beer). There are, of course, *tchotchkes*, many of them related to the Christmas season (see the Picasa site for the pictures that I take). And the crush of locals (and some tourists) is amazing. Then it's just a few blocks to Friedrichstraße and the Italian restaurant; see <http://www.boccadibacco.de/eng/index.html> Our meal is wonderful (I start with pumpkin soup with chestnuts followed by pan-fried veal liver), but I find myself dozing off because of my lack of sleep during the night.

We return to the hotel to read and use the internet,* but first I try to take a picture that will illustrate what

*My internet search reveals that the Philharmonie offers tours, in both English and German, at 1:30 in the afternoon; no reservations are required; cost is €5. Perhaps there'll be time to do this tomorrow?

Lee claims must be where Picasso got his idea for cubist treatment of faces. That is, the toilet room (between the entrance hall and the bathroom) has a pair of mirrors separated by a vertical wooden post; were the piece of wood missing, the mirrors would give the appearance of a single mirror that had been scored in the middle and bent forward on each side. When viewing oneself in the mirrors, one sees a split image with part of the face to the left, part to the right. The Picasa picture will show this better than my description does, but I'm not convinced that I've captured the essence of Picasso in my photograph. (Picasa of Picasso? Sounds weird.)

OBSERVATION: I had invested many hours, over the past several months, trying to become more accomplished in the German language. Although I had studied German for two years in college; and had followed the training program (on cassette tapes) from the U.S. Foreign Service Institute before going to Switzerland in 1984 and to Germany in 2000; and had accumulated several lists of useful words and phrases (e.g., "I need a tourniquet") my German was very weak. Early in 2011, I had bought DVDs of

French Lessons from a company called FLUENZ. I started early enough that I was able to complete Levels 1 through 4, each consisting of 30 sessions, before we went to France in September-October of that year; I didn't complete Level 5 until May 2012. Having found those lessons very useful, I purchased Levels 1 through 5 of German in July 2012 from the same company, but only had time to complete Level 1 and half of Level 2 before this December trip. Using vocabulary from these lessons and from my earlier studies, and using the pronunciation skills and grammatical rules learned from them, I felt confident that I could say almost anything I needed to say in German. Alas, I have the same problem that I have in trying to speak French: invariably I fail to comprehend what's being said to me because I often get hung up on translating the first word and, thereby, lose the remainder of the sentence. My good fortune is that Lee seems to be able to hear and understand enough of the other speaker's words that she conveys the information to me (even in French, which she had never studied!). What was new, this time, and very strange (at least to me) is that on more than one occasion I would try to say something in German (e.g., to announce that we had arrived in a restaurant for our 6:30 reservation) only to discover that I was saying it in French! What a disappointment after all of the hours that I had invested in German study. Nevertheless, people were quite accommodating and so many were fluent (or at least conversant) in English that we got along quite nicely. Nevertheless, I'm embarrassed at not having been able to do better.

PUN ALERT: Lee and I are talking about the stalemate in Washington with Obama vs. the Republicans. In today's *New York Times*, Paul Krugman argues that the GOP must make specific proposals over exactly which programs should be cut and by how much. Lee: "Right! It's easy to determine what each government department will save if cut - do the triage." Ron: "Triage? What has counting a tree's rings got to do with cutting the deficit?"

ANOTHER PUN ALERT: On several occasions, we walk past the British and American embassies on the way to or from our hotel. As always, I'm struck by the number of guards standing nearby. I ask Lee why they're using local police to guard the building. I wonder, "Where is the CIA?" Lee: "Or, for Britain, MI6?" Ron: "No you're not. You're going to be 66."

Tuesday, December 4

Again I have trouble sleeping but I stay in bed, unlike previous nights. Because I'm asleep when the alarm goes off, I guess that I got more rest than I thought. When we look outside the window, we see another dusting of snow, much like yesterday, but it's not enough to impede pedestrian and automobile traffic. The early morning sky is filled with dark clouds - it feels like home to us denizens of the Seattle vicinity. It appears as if the blue sky and sun that I noted yesterday afternoon will not make a repeat appearance today.

At the concierge desk, we purchase full-day passes for the U-Bahn and any other public transportation that we'll take. When we venture outside at about 9:45, we note that it is colder than yesterday and that there are some icy patches here and there. It's only a few steps from the hotel entrance to the U-Bahn/S-Bahn staircase. Our destination is the *Gedenkstätte Berliner Mauer* (Berlin Wall Memorial) on Bernauer Straße. There is an S-Bahn exit just across the street from the site. Although most of the memorial is out-of-doors, there is an information center where we pick up maps. The wall ran along Bernauer Straße for a considerable distance before continuing its zig-zag meandering; to the north (where the information center is) was West Berlin, to the south East Berlin. See: <http://www.berliner-mauer-gedenkstaette.de/en/> and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gedenkstätte_Berliner_Mauer

We watch a short movie and are, then, given four maps for Sections A, B, C, and D of the memorial, running from west to east. In Zone A, we walk between the original wall (more or less on Bernauer Straße) and the inner wall. Guard houses are everywhere. Between the walls were a patrol path (where military vehicles could reach quickly anyone who had penetrated the zone), a wide open area with sensors and barricades. People who had tried to scale the wall (and either made it or were shot) are

commemorated; also one of the tunnels that was dug to burrow under the wall is memorialized. The first web site (above) provides excellent discussions of the history of the wall, the attempts to get over or under it, and the families that were split apart. The accompanying pictures are quite telling and disturbing.

We go to the Documentation Center at about 11:30 for maps of where the wall was, where the guard towers were, etc: <http://www.berlin.de/mauer/museen/dokumentationszentrum/index.en.html>
 We decide to separate at this point. Lee wants to go stay at the center, then do some shopping - and has already picked out the store and how to get there by S-Bahn. I'll go to the *Musickinstrumenten-Museum* and then to the nearby Philharmonie for the 1:30 tour. We plan to meet, somewhere, later in the day. So I take the S-Bahn to the Potsdamer Platz station, but make the mistake of exiting the underground station at the "wrong" end. That is, when we visited the *Neue Nationalgalerie* the other day, we walked on Potsdamer Straße past both the Philharmonie and the Musical Instruments Museum, but upon emerging from the train station I see no familiar landmarks, nor do I know in which direction I'm walking. I also have no map (aside from the U-Bahn and S-Bahn route system and a hand-drawn map that I had made from Google Maps the night before). I recognize some landmarks from our 2010 tour (e.g., the Sony Center) but that's all. When I find myself adjacent to the Tiergarten, I realize that I'm lost (even though very close to my intended destinations). So using my "best" German, I stop fellow pedestrians and ask to be pointed in the correct direction to the Philharmonie.* Eventually I find myself on Ben-Gurion-Straße and that's

*Which reminds me of the old joke - a tourist stops a New Yorker on the streets of Manhattan and asks, "How do I get to Carnegie Hall?" The local answers, "Practice, practice, practice."

good because I know that the museum is also on this street and that the Philharmonie is just around the corner from it.

The museum is a bit of a disappointment. None of the legends are in English, although I do manage to figure out which harpsichord belonged to J. S. Bach. According to the web site, the museum houses "... a portable harpsichord once owned by Prussia's Queen Sophie Charlotte, flutes from the collection of Frederick the Great, and Benjamin Franklin's glass harmonica" although I have trouble identifying these. There are numerous clavichords, harpsichords, pianos, organs, brass instruments (some of truly weird design), woodwinds, drums and other percussion, and (of course) all variety of stringed instruments. See <http://www.berlin.de/orte/museum/musickinstrumenten-museum/index.en.php> After my tour of the facility, I'm too early for the Philharmonie tour, so I stop in the museum's café for coffee.

I then walk the short distance to the Philharmonie. The web site instructs people who want to take the tour to use the artists' entrance; the problem is finding the artists' entrance, but with a little help from some employees I do so. I'm the first to arrive (at about 1:05) but others come in over the next half-hour. The tour guide begins talking to us, first in German and then in English, but when she realizes that most of us are English-speaking and that the only German couple are fluent in English, she uses English exclusively for the tour. This is beneficial because it allows her to convey much more information than if she had to do short speeches and then translate them.

Not only is the exterior of the building radical in design (and color!), its contours match those of the interior. The lobby and halls are not carpeted and there is a complete absence of luxury (undoubtedly deliberate). Architect Hans Scharoun designed the principal hall such that it would feel intimate and have seats on all sides of the orchestra, quite unlike the typical rectangular boxes that had been built for the past two centuries. It seats 2,440 and the nearby chamber music concert hall (also with seats on all sides) holds 1,180. We visit the latter first because a rehearsal is going on in the large hall. Both venues will soon be in use: the small one for a recital by Andrés Schiff, tonight, and the latter for a performance of Verdi choral music, conducted by Christian Thielemann, tomorrow. The foyer, itself, is used for lectures and for occasional concerts, as (for example) at noon today for a free concert by members of the orchestra. What is so striking about the rooms and hallways is that there is not a right-angle anywhere - walls come together at unusual angles as do walls and ceilings. When the rehearsal in the main hall has

ended (except for a few wind players who stay behind to perfect some passages) we are allowed to enter; our guide takes us to various sections, near the stage and far from it; in the rear, on the side, in front - the acoustics, as far as one can tell (from the small number of players present), are excellent everywhere. In designing the hall (pre-computer days), scale models were built; and in the construction, the materials used for the seats, as well as the relative heights of the seats, were chosen so that the acoustics could be tested even with no audience present. Pictures and descriptions of both halls and the rest of the building can be seen at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Berliner_Philharmonie and at <http://www.berliner-philharmoniker.de/en/philharmonie/>; the latter includes the floor plans of both halls and a video tour of the entire facility. I've also posted pictures at the Picasa web site.

At 2:35, as I am asking my final questions of our guide on our way toward the door, Lee surprises me by showing up in the lobby. We had not planned to meet here, but it's nice that she was able to coordinate her shopping trip with my "adventure" in music. We walk the short distance to the *Gemäldegalerie* and to its café, whose location we know now even though "we" didn't earlier ("we" = Lee, p 10). We order a pastry for Lee and two coffees; the bottled water, which we also purchase, turns out to be highly carbonated and, thus, undrinkable, at least by me.

Lee's sense of direction is obviously better than mine because she knows exactly how to find the Potsdamer Platz S-Bahn station. As we walk there, we stop at the Ritz-Carlton hotel to check the menu for its well-regarded French restaurant, but we reject it because of its limited number of choices. We then stop at a *Lutter & Wegner* branch restaurant and find that its menu is the same as that for the Gendarmenmarkt restaurant where we ate two days ago, so we reserve a table for 6:30 this evening and take the S-Bahn to the Brandenburg Gate stop. At the hotel, I stop at the concierge desk to cancel the reservation we had made, in the morning, at Margaux, a French restaurant directly across the street, but with only a fixed-price menu for €200. Lee makes a brief excursion to the Ampelmann Store to make a few purchases.

At about 5:00, we head to the underground information center at the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, which was closed for renovations two days ago. The door is, again, locked(?) - but then someone points us to the correct entrance, which is open. As at the Jewish Museum, we pass through airport-like security before we can view the exhibits. There are several connecting rooms, all with exhibit windows, wall displays, and displays on the floors: the starting hall (an overview of Nazi policy from 1933-1945); the Room of Dimensions (diary entries, letters, photos); the Room of Families (Jewish lifestyle and culture before the Holocaust); the Room of Names (names and biographies of everyone murdered in the concentration camps). <http://www.enlightermagazine.com/projects/information-center-memorial-murdered>

It's been a long day and I'm beginning to flag a bit, so I leave Lee at about 5:45 and head back to the hotel. At least that's what I try to do. Upon exiting the underground center, it is pitch dark and I am not at the spot where the entrance was. Instead, I'm surrounded by the stone pillars in the surface memorial, with no way to figure out which direction I need to walk. Fortunately, I see a tall office building that I know is at Potsdamer Platz, so I walk in the opposite direction, *et voilà*, I'm at the back door of the hotel on Behnrenstraße. Finding it unlocked, I walk north toward the main lobby (and elevators), passing all sorts of courtyards, dining rooms, and conference rooms that I didn't know existed. I head to our room, then Lee in the lobby at 6:15 and we take the S-Bahn to the restaurant. I have a green salad, followed by "Rindertafelspitz mit Gemüse in der Brühe gegart dazu Erdäpfel und Krensoße" which translates as "Boiled beef with vegetable in the broth served with potatoes and horseradish-sauce." This proves to be an adventure in painful taste: what look to be strips of cheese on top of the meat are, in fact, pieces of shredded horseradish. Whew! But when I avoid consuming more than the first bite of this "delicacy" I greatly enjoy the rest of the meal. As we walk back to the hotel, the wind picks up and it begins to sleet, just in time for us to be driving a car tomorrow.

PUN ALERT: In an open area near Potsdamer Platz there is a fake ski-run (made of Teflon?). Nobody is coming down on skis, but Lee remarks "It looks like they're coming down on a tire" to which Ron says, "I hope it's the correct attire."

Wednesday, December 5

We pack our suitcases, have breakfast, and check out of the hotel at 9:00; a lady-in-red bids us farewell. After early snow showers, the skies have cleared and are bright blue, but the air is still cold. We take a taxi to the AutoEurope office, about 4 km away, on Kurfürstenstraße (at the southwestern corner of the Tiergarten). We are given an Opel Insignia, a bit larger than the Opel Astra that we requested and that we drove in Netherlands and Belgium this past summer. I would have preferred the smaller car, but ... The dashboard controls are similar to those in the Astra, but I assume that we'll be able to find a manual (maybe even in English) online. In addition, this car has the same emergency brake button that the Astra had - I assume that it won't take me as long as it did in the summer to get accustomed to it.

We are equipped with an excellent Michelin map of the entire country, an older Michelin map of Southwestern Germany (including Nürnberg* and Heidelberg), and detailed driving instructions/maps

*Nürnberg is the name of the city, but in English translations it appears as Nuremberg. Often, a word with an umlaut is converted into its English equivalent by adding an -e-, as in the name Schröder which becomes Schroeder. But why Nürnberg does not become Nuernberg and, more important, why the n is changed to an m is mysterious.

printed from Google Maps before leaving Gig Harbor. One would think (yes, one would!) that it would be impossible to get lost even before leaving Berlin. But my intrepid navigator misses (or misreads) a sign directing us to merge from the A100 onto the A115 and we find ourselves on a city street (Messedamm), heading in a northerly direction whereas we should be heading south. When, finally, we find the opportunity on this divided highway to turn around, we retrace our steps, re-enter the autobahn, and (finally) drive out of the city. The most interesting sight along the way is an unexpected exit sign for a Zollamt (customs/passport Checkpoint Bravo), but we soon realize that this was left (deliberately, I'm sure) to remind people of the dividing line between West Berlin and East Germany.

The small amount of snow on the roads is no problem: there are plows moving it to the side and the roads are heavily salted. These people obviously know how to deal with winter weather, even though today's is hardly severe. (We are reminded of the pictures of Berlin, from early 2012, that showed record-high piles of snow everywhere.) The only disadvantage is that the slushy mix gets sprayed onto our windshield (and everyone else's, I assume) obscuring vision until the wipers and window cleaning solution can do their work. At about 11:20 (100 km) we have a "pit stop" (for the lady of the house) where we change drivers. Lee drives the next 170 km. The snow flurries have picked up a bit, but the roads remain easy to drive on. At about 1:30, we exit the highway and have coffee and cake at a McDonalds.

OBSERVATION: The speed limit on this section of road is 120 k/h. I would typically drive around 130-140 k/h but find myself passed by cars going at least 170-180 k/h; because of the salt on the road, they make a whooshing sound as they go past (spraying, of course, crap all over my windshield). Lee would drive a bit faster (although she would not admit it) and still be zoomed past as if we were stationary.

While Lee is driving, I experiment with the controls of the Infotainment (sic) System. Yes, my friends, even our German friends have succumbed to the ugly word portmanteaux* that Americans seem to love.

*I hadn't realized it, but it turns out that Lewis Carroll is given credit for first using *portmanteau* to describe a new word made up by the fusion of two others (e.g., smog = smoke + fog). According to Wikipedia, the poem Jabberwocky has made-up words like *slithy* = slimy + lithe and *mimsy* = miserable + flimsy. When Alice (in *Through the Looking Glass*) questions such "words," Humpty-Dumpty replies "You see it's like a portmanteau—there are two meanings packed up into one word." (Of course portmanteau [a suitcase] is, itself, an example of a portmanteau word as it is made up of French words *porter* = carry and *manteau* = coat.)

But, then again, they're the ones who invented them (e.g., Bushaltestelle = bus(bus) + halt(stop) + stelle(location)). There is a GPS navigation system that I figure out how to activate - it does show our location quite nicely, although whether or not it can be programmed to plot a route I don't know; maybe we can find a manual online. There is a limited number of radio stations, none of them devoted to classical music (a surprise) although we do find one (called Kultur) that intersperses classical and popular music, along with significant chatter (auf Deutsch, of course).

Lee has continued driving after our snack stop. The snow has picked up, again causing some vision problems as the wiper blades are only marginally effective. I take over and drive the final 75 km (out of a total of 450 km), entering Nürnberg from the east. Intrepid guide Lee misses one final turn (when we are close to our destination) but the GPS system comes to our rescue and shows how to get back on-track easily. Finally we are at the Grand Hotel, part of Le Méridien chain. A hotel valet drives our car away and parks it (where?) and we and our suitcases enter the hotel.

What a difference from the Adlon! The lobby seems a bit shabby, and there are but two desk clerks in sight (in contrast to the vast number of "helpers" at the Adlon). It's also hard to believe that this place is more expensive than the Adlon, but it is. (The Adlon charged €250, breakfast included, whereas the Grand charges €224+ €19 for internet + €22x2 for breakfast; plus, of course, €17 for parking.)

At about 3:30, we ask the desk staff for a dinner recommendation. They reserve a table for us at 6:30 at Weinhaus Steichele in the old town, relatively near the *Germanisches Nationalmuseum* which is our primary destination. We cross the busy Königstorgraben and stop at the tourist information center for a city map. It is a cold, dark, damp afternoon as we walk through the old town and its pedestrian areas on the way to the museum (whose entrance, it turns out) is hard to find. According to Wikipedia, "With current holdings of about 1.2 million objects, the *Germanisches Nationalmuseum* is Germany's largest museum of cultural history." And it is, indeed, an amazing place, made even more "exciting" by our difficulty in maneuvering from one collection to another, even with an excellent museum plan in hand.

For a description of the collection and a map, see <http://tinyurl.com/9wuzwqx> The color coding in the overview and map, pp 1-3 at the URL, should make it simple to find galleries of interest, no? No! On some levels, the floors in some wings do not connect to other wings, and so it is necessary to go up or down (often both up and down, as well as down and up) to get from Point A to Point B. There are museum staff scattered throughout the building, but they express distinct exasperation as the American tourists tell them, in broken German, that "we tried to follow your directions but got nowhere."

Such annoyances aside, the museum collection is spectacular. We begin in "Art and Culture of the 20th Century" (p 23 of the above-cited pdf file) for its exhibit of paintings, design, and sculpture from pre-war, Nazi era, and both East and West Germany during the last part of the century. See, also, my pictures at the Picasa site. Lee then explores "Pre- and Ancient History" (pp 5-6) while I wander, hopelessly lost at first, trying to find "Scientific Instruments" (p 19), a fascinating collection of historic telescopes, globes, clocks, and measuring devices of all sorts. While *en route* to the scientific instruments, I pass through the section devoted to "Renaissance, Baroque, Enlightenment" (p 15) where I see a superb collection of paintings by Dürer, Cranach, Rembrandt, and others.

Our plan was to reconnoiter in the lobby near the entrance after we've finished our individual excursions. I get there first, although I have trouble recognizing it as the lobby through which we entered 90 minutes earlier. The reason? After 5:00, there is no admission fee to enter the museum. Thus, not only are large numbers of people streaming in, but all of the desks and tables that had been devoted to ticket selling are now covered with white cloths. Lee shows up about 15 minutes after I do. I tell her about the room of paintings that I happened upon for Dürer *et al.* She wants to see the art, so I manage to find my way (with no wrong turns!) to the room that I had left just a short while ago. (Christmas is only a couple of weeks away, but I'm pretty sure that I'll put "sense of direction" on the wish list that I prepare for Santa.)

Before leaving the museum, we ask for directions to the restaurant, as the city map that we've got does not show Knorrstraße by name. Even with some key landmarks in mind, we still have a bit of trouble finding Weinhaus Steichele, one reason being that it is now dark and the streets are not well-lit. But find it, we do, on the first floor of Hotel Steichele <http://tinyurl.com/a3oqku2>. Upon entering the foyer, we initially turn to the right, only to discover that we have come into a private dining room; turning to the left, we are greeted and seated at a small table. The room, itself, is small although there seems to be another room around the corner. Along the wall where we sit are two other small tables; across from us is a table with 16 seated at it, whether friends or family we have no idea. But the dynamics are interesting. One man, sitting among three women, seems unusually sullen (perhaps the conversation is of no interest or perhaps he can't get a word in) but when he moves to the other end of the table he becomes much more animated. Servers continue to bring trays of food and steins of beer, mostly the latter, but these people's capacity seems unlimited and they show no signs of drunkenness. To our right is a table for three, but our best guess is that two of these people are together and the third person is a stranger who was seated with them. At any rate, the food is good: I have Wiener Schnitzel with French fries and a mixed salad plus beer. The bill for the two of us is an unbelievably modest €58. We walk back to the hotel and read until going to bed at 10:30.

Thursday, December 6

It has snowed a little overnight, but the streets and sidewalks are clear, at least in this downtown neighborhood. My initial somewhat negative impression of the hotel is mitigated by the modern bathroom facilities, the comfort of the bed, and the suite of very impressive rooms where breakfast is served. There is a sumptuous array of cheeses, cold meats, eggs, warm dishes, cereals, juices, rolls and bread - but not as spectacular (and how could anything be?) as at the Adlon. Also the soft-boiled egg is closer to hard-boiled, something that will be true again tomorrow morning.

Having purchased passes for the city transportation network, we take the U-Bahn and connect to bus that leads us to Nürnberg's Christmas market in the Hauptmarkt (located in the northern sector of the old city). It is much less crowded than Berlin's and it has no admission fee. The stalls offering food and souvenirs (not all related to Christmas) are fascinating and I take many pictures. The day is also quite cold and my fingers feel like they may break off. (Memo to self - buy good gloves before taking this sort of trip again.) The market is in the shadow of Frauenkirche, built in the 14th century on the site of a former synagogue. In the 19th century, the church was given to the Catholic community of the city. It is a beautiful structure, both on the exterior and within. We walk past the historic city hall (from the 14th century) with its elaborate gargoyles gracing the walls.

PUN ALERT: (sort of) I created two excellent puns, earlier today, but I didn't have a chance to write them down - and now they're forgotten. You'll just have to take my word that they were, indeed, excellent.

From there, it's but a short walk to St. Sebalds which has been Lutheran since the Reformation. It was nearly destroyed by allied bombing in World War II, but has been rebuilt. Among its most felicitous interior features are the stained glass windows. Pictures of it and Frauenkirche are at the Picasa site.

PUN ALERT: To punish her* not being able to remember my superb puns from earlier, I "engineer"

*Although she resists it, I have put Lee in charge of remembering my numerous *bons mots* (whether puns or rhymes or ditties retrieved from my childhood). Thus, I am deeply disappointed that this morning's puns are lost to posterity. I'm sure that you are too.

another, one that was spontaneous when first spoken inside churches in France and Netherlands. (If interested, these are on p 31 of my France 2011 travelogue and p 49 of my Northern Europe 2012 travelogue). So, here's the conversation that occurred inside St. Sebalds. Ron: "What is that thing over

there?" Lee: "It's an organ." Ron: "Is it big or small?" Lee: "Big." Ron: "Please put that in a sentence." Lee: "What a big organ!" Ron: "Oops, is my fly unzipped?"

We return to the main market place and Lee goes off to buy something while I take a picture of a horse-drawn carriage. It has begun to snow as we make our way back (bus and U-Bahn) to the Plärrer stop where we switch to another U-Bahn that takes us to Tiergärtnerter. As we ascend the steps from the train station, we discover that the flurries of 30 minutes ago have changed to snow: big, heavy, wet snowflakes that make navigating and walking somewhat challenging. We are concerned that this may turn into a significant snowfall that could impede our return to the hotel later in the day.

Our destination, two long blocks from the U-Bahn station, is the Palace of Justice (Nürnberg Court House) where the trials of Nazi war criminals were held. Nürnberg had been the city in which the Nazis held their annual rallies, attended by hundreds of thousands of people (most of them from the SS, SA, Hitler Jugend, and the Wehrmacht). Thus, it was chosen as the site for the war crimes trials that began within just a few months following the end of the war. (For photos showing the sites of the Nazi rallies and the same sites today, see <http://www.thirdreichruins.com/nuernberg.htm> I recognize the Hauptmarkt, Rathaus, and Frauenkirche all of which we visited earlier today.)

At the desk, where we pay the €5 admission fee, we are given audio guides that allow us to hear English translations of the presentations in the Memorium Nürnberger Prozesse (Memorium Nuremberg Trials) upstairs. But first we visit Courtroom 600 where the trials were held. It is a functioning courtroom but is open to visitors when no trial is in session. The room has been remodeled in the intervening six decades but the audio guide (and some photos) allow us to visualize the original layout: where the accused sat, where the judges were positioned, where the lawyers sat, and where the press was stationed. According to the audio guide, the trial featured the first *simultaneous* translations of such proceedings, something that is now the norm at the U.N. and other international bodies. This saved enormously the time that would be spent had the words been translated only after the speaker had paused.

There were judges from the victorious powers. The chief judge was Robert Jackson, an associate justice of the U.S. Supreme Court. We listen to a major portion of his opening statement where he described the authority of the court over the defendants and welcomes the world to witness the fairness of the trials. In that statement, he declared "the wrongs which we seek to condemn and punish have been... so devastating that civilization cannot tolerate their being ignored, because it cannot survive their being repeated." Each defendant (most prominent among whom were Hermann Göring, Karl Dönitz, and Rudolf Hess) had access to highly competent attorneys. And every word was transcribed and, then, transmitted to the outside world. Although Hitler, Himmler, and Goebbels had all committed suicide, there remained 24 major figures who were put on trial in late 1945.

Through wall displays in the various rooms upstairs, mercifully translated into English by the audio guide, we learn that each defendant was required to face one or more of four charges: Gemeinsamer Plan oder Verschwörung zum Angriffskrieg (Common plan or conspiracy to wage aggressive war), Verbrechen gegen den Frieden (Crimes against peace), Kriegsverbrechen (War crimes), and Verbrechen gegen die Menschlichkeit (Crimes against humanity). Göring was indicted and convicted on all four counts and was condemned to death; he swallowed cyanide the day before he was to be hanged. Several defendants were convicted of fewer charges and, depending on the case, were sentenced either to prison or to be hanged; twelve received the death sentence. Following the Nürnberg trials, subsequent trials were held over the years in other locations, as some minor military figures and several private citizens were accused of war crimes. Among the more interesting defenses offered were: "It's war. Everybody does it" and "I was just following orders." Amazingly, some of the defendants not only received very light prison sentences but were often paroled before their jail term had ended.

The displays are compelling: many are shown at the Picasa site, alas in German (without the benefit of our English-language audio guide). As one moves from room to room, the unbelievable cruelty of the crimes really weighs on us, but we go on to the next room and the next as if compelled to learn as much

as possible. We leave after 3.5 hours, although we could (and should) have stayed longer. For some excellent detailed descriptions about the trials, see these three web sites, courtesy of the U.S. Holocaust Museum: <http://tinyurl.com/nwvln> <http://tinyurl.com/3gx5rxn> <http://tinyurl.com/at33ycp> <http://tinyurl.com/bdoehy3> and the various links within them. One of the wall displays shows the Grand Hotel (where we are staying) that was used as Allied headquarters during post-war occupation.

Upon exiting the building, we are relieved to see that the snow has not accumulated and that the streets are bare. We walk to the U-Bahn and take the train to the Lorenzkirche stop to see, as you might expect, the Lorenzkirche. (This is in the old city, not too far from our hotel.) Erected in the 13th century, it was badly damaged during the war but has been rebuilt. It and St. Sebalds are the two principal Protestant churches in the city. The original artwork on the interior walls is superb. From the church, we try to find the nearby Fountain of the Seven Virtues, but either it is behind a construction fence or has been demoted for not being virtuous enough; and so we never find it. Sigh - according to a guide book, the fountain has water spewing from the breasts of the virtues. But that's okay, because at the *Germanisches Nationalmuseum* yesterday I saw a painting of St. Ursula who martyred herself along with 11,000 "fellow" virgins. Such a waste, eh? Wikipedia treats this "tragedy" with a touch of disbelief, as follows: "Her legend, probably unhistorical, is that she was a Romano-British princess who, at the request of her father King Dionotus of Dumnonia in south-west England, set sail to join her future husband, the pagan governor Conan Meriadoc of Armorica, along with 11,000 virginal handmaidens. After a miraculous storm brought them over the sea in a single day to a Gaulish port, Ursula declared that before her marriage she would undertake a pan-European pilgrimage. She headed for Rome with her followers and persuaded the pope, Cyriacus (unknown in the pontifical records), and Sulpicius, bishop of Ravenna, to join them. After setting out for Cologne, which was being besieged by Huns, all the virgins were beheaded in a massacre. The Huns' leader shot Ursula dead, in about 383 (the date varies)."

We walk on Königstraße toward the hotel, stopping at Casa Paul for a coffee and pastry. Lucky me, my piece of pie has a cherry pit on which I nearly break a tooth! And just for good measure, another pit is found in a later bite, although by this time I am chewing more cautiously. This morning, we had asked the hotel desk clerk to recommend an Italian restaurant for tonight. She made a reservation for us at *C'era una Volta* ("Once Upon a Time") on Johannesgasse, a narrow street (actually more of an alley) off Königstraße; so as we are heading toward the hotel, we make note of where Johannesgasse is so that we can find it in the dark.

We had checked out the menu, this morning, and found it satisfactory, even if the TripAdvisor reviews were, at best, only mildly encouraging. The restaurant's web site is in German, but Google provides a rough (a very very rough) translation. For example, "Who in *C'era una volta* in Johannesgasse 51, however, think of a pizza, you are wrong. Because there shows the Italian-born Franco, who has spent 20 years in Swiss francs that Italian cuisine has to offer more than pizza." Noted. (I think.) Franco's co-owner is his wife, Franziska, as we learn from the web site: "Welcomed here and advise you Franziska Szabó, the owner of *C'era una volta*, each guest. Personally, 'I suppose I realize time for our guests,' says the boss. Profiterol limoncello at the next table. This light, airy sponge cakes with lemon cream is also the boss's favorite dessert. Food and ambiance have something fabulous. Chef Franco leads now with Italian temperament before the menu: spaghetti with lobster. If you like, must look me in my kitchen over his shoulder: 'I make everything fresh, the pasta,' said Franco, who loves besides Franziska and Italian cuisine and Eros Ramazzotti and Juventus. Especially lobsters are Franco Spezialität. Davon believe also regular guests from Italy, the Franks and the world. No wonder that even the 15-year-old son, Mario Koch would want to, just like the father. Therefore, he often helps with the restaurant. Therefore, not only is the family atmosphere in *C'era una volta*. 'For us it is just important that our guests feel at home.' Finally, not only decides the Culinary about whether a restaurant visit is unforgettable." Whew!

Well, we make our way down the narrow alleyway and are greeted at the door by Franco, himself: a large man with the forearms of a lumberjack, elaborately tattooed, and very gregarious with his hugs, but (alas) not a word of English, despite his claim of having been born in the U.S. Nor is his German easily comprehensible, as it has a strong Italian accent. His second-in-command is not much better. The

restaurant's walls are covered with pictures of Italian-Americans from Hollywood: Sinatra, Brando, Pacino, Gandolfini, etc. Much to our surprise, we discover that the regular speisekarte is not available. Instead, there is a fixed price Christmas menu, with a choice only at the main course. We start with cold veal slices in tuna sauce (sounds weird, but it was good) followed by tortellini with cheese and wild mushrooms; for the main course, Lee opts for Seezunge (sole) but I have a bison in cognac sauce plus potatoes and zucchini; we have tiramisu for dessert and coffee; and of course a bottle of wine. (Although Franco has no English, the young man who serves us does ... up to a point; and so we are able to communicate, more or less).

We walk back to the hotel. There has been no more snow, but it is very cold. We read and then go to bed, ready to head to Heidelberg tomorrow, with a brief side trip to Rothenburg ob der Tauber for its Christmas market.

Friday, December 7

I don't know why, but I had lots of trouble sleeping during the night. I fell asleep quickly, but was wide awake from about 1:30 to 3:00 and, again, from 4:00 to 4:45. We have breakfast at the hotel. Today, the dining room is crowded with what appear to be large numbers of American women in tour groups, all probably traveling from one Christmas market to another. Whatever floats your boat, I guess. There is also a conference of Novartis sales reps in the hotel and they (mostly American men) occupy many of the other tables. Because C'era una Volta did not take credit cards, we "squandered" all of our available cash, and so before checking out today we walk to an ATM to get some more euros. We check out at about 9:30 and, without a single wrong turn (my navigator is getting good!), succeed in driving due west from Nürnberg in the direction of Heidelberg, some 400 km away. About 1/3 of the way on the excellent A6 (snow-free, for which we are grateful), we exit and drive some 30 km north to Rothenburg ob der Tauber (a town that dates itself from about 950), where we arrive a little after 11:00.

PUN ALERT: As we are making our way out of Nürnberg, Lee says to me "Take the second exit" to which I reply, "Oh, you mean the one after the Fürth." [It's unfortunate that some puns, such as this one, require explanation, but that's the way it is. You see, as we were driving on the highway, there was an earlier exit sign to - you guessed it - the neighboring town of Fürth. Now do you understand?]

It is a lovely old town and we take many pictures as we make our way from the parking lot* to the center of

*I think that we're fortunate not to have received a parking ticket. We pull into a large lot, right next to the town wall, and look in all directions for a pay station. Seeing none, we proceed on our touristic way. Only as we leave, an hour or so later, do we see the pay station that we had missed. And, to compound our worries, the car's GPS lights up with a message telling us that we need to obey all local and national driving laws in the country. Gulp! Is it possible that the local gendarmerie has some sort of device that sends messages to the GPS units of scofflaws who do not pay for parking?

the city. The city's glorious history notwithstanding, it also bears the scars of the Hitler era, as explained by Wikipedia: "Rothenburg held a special significance for Nazi ideologists. For them, it was the epitome of the German 'Home Town,' representing all that was quintessentially German. Throughout the 1930s the Nazi organisation 'KDF' ('Kraft durch Freude') Strength through Joy organized regular day trips to Rothenburg from all across the Reich. This initiative was staunchly supported by Rothenburg's citizenry – many of whom were sympathetic to National Socialism – both for its economic benefits and because Rothenburg was hailed as 'the most German of German towns.' In October 1938 Rothenburg expelled its Jewish citizens, much to the approval of Nazis and their supporters across Germany."

We stop at St.-Jakobs-Kirche (which dates from the early 14th century), a handsome building that is considerably less ornate than the churches we saw yesterday. Not that some of its decorations are not over the top, it's just that they're not as aggressively baroque (whatever that may mean) as some others

are. From there, we wander to the Christmas market, spread out over several squares, which is not as extensive as was Nürnberg's. Nevertheless, there are many interesting sights and stalls to warrant having their pictures taken (and posted to Picasa). And these Christmas markets must be popular: the streets are filled with Japanese tour groups, so many, in fact, that many signs are printed in German and Japanese. Among the curiosities is a man in a Santa Claus suit, playing an accordion, with a dog (not a monkey) perched on his shoulder. It is a very cold day - a thermometer on the side of a building reads 4°C. And the wind has picked up, making the wind-chill factor something like -40°C (or lower). As was true at the Nürnberg Christmas market, my fingers really do feel as if they're about to turn to stone and break off.

So we gather the car shortly after noon. Intrepid navigator-cum-tour-director Lee suggests that we drive to Schwäbisch Hall, another third of the way on the A6 to Heidelberg. It's a medieval town that's celebrated for its half-timbered houses. Wikipedia is much more low-key: "Schwäbisch Hall has a mix of historic buildings and modern buildings." Ho-hum. So we take a brief detour from the A6, drive into town, see nothing of particular note, and drive out of town toward Heidelberg. On the way, we stop for fuel: gasoline for the car (43 L) and coffee/pastry for the humans. The rest stop, as is typical of highway rest stops in this country, does not provide free access to the toilets. Instead, it costs 70 cents (or whatever 0.70 euros is called) - money is deposited into a slot, change (if appropriate) is dispensed, and one can pass through a turnstile on the way to the loo. A stern matron is on guard to ensure that nobody cheats and that everyone takes the ticket stub spewed out by the machine that provides a discount on the food in the rest stop (if only one had thought to do this *before* having the coffee and pasty).

As described in the entry for December 5, we find a "confused" radio station called KULTUR that plays full-length classical works (e.g., Mendelssohn's "Italian Symphony" and Smetana's "Ma Vlast") along with short classical works (e.g., a Chopin waltz) and pop songs (some even in English) and talk, lots of talk, all of it (of course) *auf Deutsch*. When the signal becomes too weak, we find another station in which all of the talk is in English, American-accented English at that. It doesn't take long to realize that this is a station associated with a U.S. army base in Stuttgart. The announcer conducts interviews with U.S. soldiers about such "fascinating" topics as a project to instill "army values"; and she plays truly ugly pop music such as "God Bless Texas"! However, there are also canned news broadcasts from APR or NPR so all is not lost.

Al Vazquez, a Gig Harbor friend who is mentioned on p 13, assured me that sometime during this trip, when we least expected it, the radio would play Joaquin Rodrigo's *Concierto de Aranjuez*. Here's what I had written in my travelogue from Belgium, earlier this year: "It's a melodic work whose very traditional style belies its having been written in 1939. Why do I make note of this? It's because KING-FM in Seattle seems to know the moment that I get into my car because that damned piece is on the air much too frequently than to be just a bad coincidence. It's actually a pleasant work, but as often as KING-FM plays it, one would think that they hold it as equal to Beethoven, Mozart, Bach, and that ilk. Even on our New Zealand trip in early 2010, KING-FM must have sent word to their antipodean radio counterpart that the Magids would be visiting and would just *love* to hear the work." But we are fortunate not to hear it, either today or on any other driving day in Germany.

However all is not well. What we do hear today is a brass band orchestral version of "Stout-Hearted Men" by Sigmund Romberg. Why do I mention this? Because (horrible flashback time) at my junior high school graduation, some 60(!) years ago, we graduates were forced to sing two songs from Romberg's grotesque operettas: the love song "One Alone" and the rousing "Stout-Hearted Men." I guess that one or more of our teachers must have loved such *dreck*. And though I've suppressed any memory of those songs for all of these six decades, just hearing the music caused the lyrics to emerge from my deep deep subconscious: "You who have dreams, if you act they will come true./To turn your dreams to a fact, it's up to you./If you have the soul and the spirit,/Never fear it, you'll see it thru./Hearts can inspire, other hearts with their fire,/For the strong obey when a strong man shows them the way.//Give me some men who are stout-hearted men,/ Who will fight, for the right they adore,/Start me with ten who are stout-hearted men,/And I'll soon give you ten thousand more./Shoulder to shoulder and bolder and bolder,/They grow as they go to the fore./ Then there's nothing in the world can halt or mar a plan,/When stout-hearted men can stick together man to man ..." (Well, you get the idea.)

On the final approach to Heidelberg, there are two significant highway slowdowns, whether because of heavy traffic or an accident or the snow that has started up again and is beginning to stick on the pavement. We are following the directions given by Google Maps and, for the first time, we find that they are completely screwed up! Had we followed the directions given by the Hotel Hirschgasse, we'd have been much better off. Fortunately, the car's GPS helps get us straightened out. Here are the details.

Because the snow is swirling strongly, daylight is almost gone, and there is considerable commuter traffic in the commercial section of Heidelberg, we drive (hesitantly) in what we think is the correct direction (east) and we cross the Neckar River, as both sets of instructions tell us to do. According to Google, we're supposed to leave Uferstraße (which becomes Landstraße and follows the north bank of the river); and we're supposed to climb the hill to the north before heading south on Philosophers Weg through what looks like a wooded park. But what the hotel's instructions *and* the GPS *and* common sense tell us is to continue driving along Landstraße until we reach its intersection with Hirschgasse, then turn left. And that's what we do - or at least try to do. Granted, there's a sign for the hotel at the intersection, but the road leading up is a narrow one (heaven forbid there should be a car descending at the same time) and there is a nice layer of snow and ... the car seems to be holding, but who knows how snow-worthy it is. Well, we get halfway up the hill but see no hotel, so I pull into a parking area - and brave Lee walks down the hill to see if the building we had past might be the hotel. It isn't, but she meets a local who tells us that we need to ascend a little further and the hotel will be on the left. So I back out into the very narrow road, say a prayer to the gods of tire traction, and manage to get the car moving forward and upward and - whew - to the hotel. Best of all, although the hotel's web site indicated that we'd have to park across the river, the large lot at the hotel's front door is where we are directed to leave our vehicle. (When I show Google's driving instructions to one of the hotel staff, she laughs and says "I don't know why they take you that way, given that the path through the wooded park is for pedestrians only." Shame on Google Maps!)

According to the hotel's web site, "Count von Bismarck fought duels here and Mark Twain wrote about us in his book *A tramp Abroad*." <http://tinyurl.com/a9f89p7> We enter a small lobby with a fire going (in the fireplace, of course) and announce ourselves to the young woman who is at the registration desk. She then takes us via the elevator to our room (very lovely) and shows us where the two restaurants, one casual and one elegant, are before we return to the car to retrieve our luggage. She also makes a dinner reservation for us at Nepomuk in the old city, just across the pedestrian bridge (about a 20-minute walk). Our room bears the name *Blauer-Saphir-Suite*; there's even a name tag with Lee's name on the door. The bedroom and sitting area are spacious, although the decor and furniture are much too fussy for my modern tastes (see the pictures at Picasa). Worst (or best) of all, the toilet bowl and seat are adorned with paintings of vines! But the facilities, themselves, are modern. There is a large radiator in every room, each with its own thermostat cranked up to a maximum value of 5. Before going to dinner, we turn them to zero, an over-reaction (as it turns out) because the room is too damned cold when we return.

Cautiously (very cautiously) we walk down the Hirschgasse hill, praying that no cars (from either direction) will try to crowd us against a wall; and we make it to the bottom where, amazingly, there is a walk/don't walk crossing light. Crossing the street and walking along Landstraße, we get wonderful views of the river, of the lighted buildings on the other side (including Heidelberg Castle), and of the pedestrian bridge that we cross to get to the restaurant. Despite the snow and cold, many people are moving about, in cars, on foot, or on bikes.

The restaurant is on the ground floor of Hotel Zur Alten Brücke. I assume that something went horribly wrong with the English translation found at the hotel's web site <http://tinyurl.com/bgkc8hv> (with my comments in brackets): "Namesake and patron of our inn is a Baroque statue on the other side of the Old Bridge, looking over this and the river. John of Nepomuk 'Nepomuk,' as Vicar General of the Archbishop of Prague, was the wife [really?] of King Wenceslas* IV of Bohemia and Germany, Emperor of the Holy

*Who can forget Walt Kelly's version of the Christmas song, as sung by Churchy LaFemme, the turtle friend of Pogo: "Good King Sauerkraut look out / On his feets uneven"?

Roman Empire, was elected confessor [what?]. Wenzel [who?] tried to force John to break the seal of confession, but refused were tortured and thrown into the Vltava [huh?]. The queen had an apparition of five stars, which revealed where his corpse [obviously!]. These 5 stars are still a hallmark of St. John of Nepomuk in his halo. John Nepomuk was spoken in 1729 by Pope Benedict XIII sacred [say what?]. He is the patron saint of bridges, skippers, rafters, millers, the confessor, confessional, against floods and for secrecy." Whew!

It's a charming place, as the out-of-focus pictures at Picasa will attest. And the food is excellent. I start with *Kartoffelsuppe mit Sahne und krossem Speck* (potato soup with bacon and cream) followed by *Maultaschen mit Füllung vom Schwäbisch Hällischen Landschwein, nach Hausfrauenart gebacken mit Ei* (Fried Swabian past squares filled with meat and spinach and egg). I had never heard of maultaschen, but Lee encourages me to try it - and it is delicious, despite having pasta (which I have promised myself to avoid, along with rice, just to make my physician happy). (Swabia, as I understand it, is a loosely defined geographical region south of Heidelberg and against the Swiss border; it encompasses most of the state of Baden-Württemberg.)

On the return walk to the hotel, the weather has become considerably colder and windier, but we persevere. We read in our room until about 10:00, then retire to bed. (After turning up the radiators, that is - see above.)

Saturday, December 8

The hotel has two restaurants: *Le Gourmet* and *Mensurstube*. The former is an elegant dining room with prices to match; the latter is more casual and, in fact, where we have booked a table for tonight. But today's breakfast is served in *Le Gourmet*. Upon sitting down, we are initially disappointed: there seem to be only some bread, juice, jams, and fruit on a central table. This is what we get for €21? But then a waitress arrives and asks if we want the continental breakfast or the "big" breakfast. We, of course, choose the latter; and in short order delivered to our table are a coffee urn, a basket of rolls, platters with cheeses and cold cuts, smoked salmon, butter, fresh fruit cocktail, a carafe of water "with energetic stones" (sic), and two small individual cups, one with yogurt and fruit syrup, the other with (maybe) muesli.

Disgustingly stuffed, we venture out at about 10:00 and follow yesterday's path along Landstraße and across the bridge into the old city. Along the way, we take many pictures. Our first stop is at Heiliggeist Kirche, built in the 15th century. It is a beautiful building, inside and out, but most unusual are the very modern stained glass windows (e.g., one of them shows $E = mc^2$ along with the date for the bombing of Hiroshima; see Picasa).

Upon emerging from the church, we are in front of Hotel zum Ritter St. Georg, dating from the 16th century, one of the places that we considered booking. In front of the hotel, on a soapbox and coated completely in white, is a "living statue" which, unlike other such "statues" leers at passing women and caresses and pinches those who come too close. He winks at Lee and blows her a kiss - lucky girl!

Just a short distance away are the buildings of Heidelberg University's old campus (Germany's oldest college, founded in 1386). There are several more campuses with modern buildings scattered throughout the city. We first visit the student jail which was set up to "punish" students who had run afoul of the law. Apparently the city police were quite content to let the university handle this. According to one web site, "As you enter the tight prison, it is clear the homework included art. The walls and ceilings are completely covered with graffiti, preserved for nearly a century. They satirized the Kaiser and his lieutenants while honoring Perkeo, the legendary drunken dwarf at Heidelberg Castle. Mark Twain wrote about his visit to the jail, 'The walls were thickly covered with pictures and portraits (in profile), some done with ink, some with soot, some with a pencil, and some with red, blue, and green chalks; and whenever an inch or two of space had remained between the pictures, the captives had written plaintive verses, or names and dates. I do not think I was ever in a more elaborately frescoed apartment.' You begin to understand the student jail

was not a penalty, but a rite of passage."

At the souvenir shop near the staircase to the jail, one finds what one would find at any university souvenir shop: T-shirts, sweaters, sweatshirts, coffee mugs, and beer steins all with the university logo; and had there been a football team, as any self-respecting university ought to have, we would probably have seen paraphernalia related to that "academic" endeavor.

When one enters "Heidelberg University" into a Google search box, the first two hits tell you that it's located in Tiffin, OH and that it has a football team. This is *not* the same as Universität Heidelberg! The old campus, where we are now, has the university library and an administration building that serves mainly as a museum of university history. There are reproductions of learned texts from the Middle Ages, portraits of notables down through the years, displays of the great scientists and their instruments from the 19th and 20th centuries, and wall plaques featuring all of the Nobel Prize winners who had been students or faculty at this place. Also detailed is the horrible time under the rule of the Nazis, when Jewish professors were fired, others were forced to join the party, and the scientists were required to study eugenics and "German physics" - meaning that "Jewish theories" (e.g., relativity) were banished. My fellow chemists will recognize the names of Karl Ziegler, Georg Wittig, Richard Kuhn and Johann Friedrich Wilhelm Adolf von Baeyer. Of course, it's not just scientists whose names we recognize: among the others are Robert Schumann, Hannah Arendt, Georg Hegel, Karl Jaspers, and Helmut Kohl. A magnificently appointed lecture hall and meeting room is open for visitors, although it would be difficult to imagine holding a general chemistry lecture in such a place.

PUN ALERT: Pointing to wall sconces in the lecture hall, Lee says "Look at those big ones" to which Ron replies, "Don't tell me that my fly is open ... again!"

Leaving the building, we wander a bit through the Christmas market, which sprawls over several squares - the scale and quality both pale in comparison to those that we've seen in other cities. And then we head to the base of the hill upon which Heidelberg Castle stands to buy tickets for the funicular. (Lee sees a sign saying that there's a grade of 28%. "Not in any of my classes," replies Ron.) There are beautiful views down into the city (see Picasa) but most of the castle's buildings are either closed or just ruins or open only to those on organized tours. So we stay at the mountain top for only a relatively short while.

Taking the funicular down to ground level, we go to the nearby Kurpfälzisches* Museum, devoted to art and

*According to Wikipedia, this is the origin of the name: "The County Palatine of the Rhine (German: *Pfalzgrafschaft bei Rhein*), later the Electoral Palatinate (German: *Kurpfalz*), was a historical territory of the Holy Roman Empire, a palatinate administered by a count palatine." And now you know.

archaeology. We stop in the museum's café for coffee and a pastry before beginning our tour. The paintings are largely by German artists of the past 500 years. Among the names that I recognize are Wilhelm Trübner, Alexei Jawlensky, and the expressionists Karl Hofer and Max Beckmann. No photos are allowed, so I have no permanent record. We seem to make it a habit to visit museums whose halls and rooms are difficult to negotiate and this one is no exception. Although armed with a floor plan, we find that we often cannot get from Room A to Room B because the intervening room is devoted to a string quartet who are playing Mozart and are being filmed. Getting around this room by going upstairs/downstairs/zigzagging is possible, but very annoying. Furthermore, different wings of the building seem not to be connected to others, requiring visitors to actually step outside before going in again. Leaving the painting gallery, we make our way to the archaeology collection where Lee is overjoyed to see the 500,000-year-old jawbone (with teeth!) of Heidelberg man (*Homo Heidelbergensis*, if you please), along with artifacts from Roman and medieval times in the city. Yawn!

We make our way back to the hotel. There are only occasional icy patches (which are to be avoided) but most of the snow and ice has melted away under the feet of the numerous visitors, many of them (from

their accents) from Japan, Italy, and even America. Along the way we see a salt-covered Renault (German license plate) with an Obama '08 bumper sticker (so what about 2012?) and another bumper sticker advertising Doug's Fish Fry in Skaneateles, NY. And as cold as it is, we see a crew of eight women in Santa hats on the river and a group of four individual kayakers, batting a ball back and forth. Crazy, eh?

From 4:00 to 6:30, we read in the hotel room, then go down to the casual restaurant (Mensurstube) for dinner. The room is fascinating: on the walls are pictures of notables (such as Bismarck and Mark Twain), college men engaging in duels (well, it's probably safer than binge drinking), and photos of other notables; there are military uniforms, tankards, and swords on the wall. We are seated at a large round wooden table (there are also rectangular and square tables) in front of an old blue-tile stove. In the center of our table, carved in a spiral, are the names of students who had fought duels here. At the restaurant's web site, one reads "Sit at over 200 year old tables, in which even count von Bismarck no less has carved his name into. Scurrilous tankards, mugs or swords let you have an air of studentic traditions." (OK, I admit it, their English - strange as it is - is better than my German.) You can see pictures of the restaurant at my Picasa site and at the restaurant's web site: <http://tinyurl.com/benvw22>

On one wall of the restaurant is posted the following: "A big plea: Respect that it is already forbidden since 1918 for 'Outsiders' to leave traces on the listed historic tables. Restaurators will remove scribble, which is a costly matter, and charged accordingly! You are invited to leave traces in our guest book at the reception." Not having any "traces" that I want to leave, we go ahead and order dinner. I have *Kürbissuppe mit steirischem Öl und Kernen* (Pumpkin soup with Styrian oil and seeds) followed by *Gebratene Poulardenbrust mit Blattspinat, Quarkklößchen und leichter Rieslingkrem* (Roasted chicken breast with spinach, curd cheese dumplings and light riesling cream) and it is excellent. Alas, their coffee-making machine is broken! Kaput! Oy! We return to the room to read and do puzzles until about 10:30 when we retire.

Sunday, December 9

As veterans of the breakfast routine at the hotel, we know to order the "big" breakfast (see above). It is a cold, grey morning - it has snowed overnight (about 1-2") and is still snowing. We check out of the hotel at 10:30. We (figuratively) pat ourselves on our backs for having had the foresight to bring a *small* ice-scraper with us until we see just how much snow needs to be removed from the car's windows, roof, and hood. To the rescue comes the hotel which has a *large* ice-scraper-cum-brush available for the guests. Also to the rescue comes Lee who stands outside and guides me as I maneuver our car past a Volvo SUV that is nicely blocking the path. Forward, back, forward, back, repeat as needed - and finally we are clear.

Were it up to me, we'd head directly for Frankfurt but our intrepid tour guide/navigator/frau/weather maven wants to explore two small towns to the east of Heidelberg. Hirschhorn is called "The Pearl of the Neckar Valley" and Eberbach's claim to fame is that Queen Victoria was conceived there!* Whoopee!! (This

*Victoria's parents, it is alleged, were on vacation in Germany when they did the deed that produced the seed that led to the future queen. One can even visit the house where the Royal *shtupping* (Yiddish for "intimate congress of a carnal nature") occurred. Victoria's parents were Edward Augustus, Duke of Kent (one of six sons of George III, the only monarch whom Americans know about) and the Duchess of Kent whose full name and title was Princess Marie Luise Victoria of Saxe-Coburg-Saalfeld, Princess of Leiningen. According to Wikipedia, "The Duke of Kent died suddenly of pneumonia in January 1820, a few days before his father, King George III. The widowed Duchess had little cause to remain in the United Kingdom, not speaking the language and having a palace at home in Coburg, where she could live cheaply on the incomes of her first husband, the late Prince of Leiningen. However, the British succession at this time was far from assured - of the three brothers superior to Edward in the line of succession, the new King, George IV, and the Duke of York were both estranged from their wives (both wives being past the age when they were likely to bear any children) and the third, the Duke of Clarence (the future William IV) had yet to produce any surviving

children through his marriage. The Duchess decided that she would do better by gambling on her daughter's accession than by living quietly in Coburg, and sought support from the British government, having inherited her husband's debts. After the death of Edward and his father, the young Princess Alexandrina Victoria was still only third in line for the throne, and Parliament was not inclined to support yet another impoverished royal. The Duchess of Kent was allowed a suite of rooms in the dilapidated Kensington Palace, along with several other impoverished nobles. There she brought up her daughter, Victoria, who would become Queen of the United Kingdom, and eventually Empress of India." All very interesting, I'm sure, but is this any reason to want to travel to Eberbach, I ask you?

reminds me of the numerous houses near my home in Brooklyn that claimed the distinction that "Washington slept here.")

The road to Hirschhorn, just 20 km from Heidelberg, meanders along the meandering Neckar and is built on a hillside at a place where the Neckar makes a hairpin turn. It (the weather) is also snowing very hard. The rational member of this household says to the other one, "There's a fine line between tourism and idiocy - and you want us to cross it." "Drive on," says the other. And so we do. As the Picasa pictures will attest, there are some half-timbered homes in Hirschhorn along the roadside. More important, the snow is thick and heavy and beginning to accumulate. As we drive through the city, we see one of those cute electronic speed control signs with a smiley face if one is under the speed limit. I make a mental note to take a picture of it when we return after Eberbach, but the signal is visible only in one direction. Sigh.

We drive a further 15 km to Eberbach and take pictures of the handsome half-timbered houses, of the central square, and of the approaching blizzard. OK, I exaggerate, but it is getting dicey. "Can we turn around now?" I ask plaintively. "No, we have to visit Hirschhorn Castle." "And where is that?" "We go back to Hirschhorn, then up a winding, twisting, turning, snow-covered road with steep drop-offs to the side." "Oh." We manage to reach the summit - Lee gets out of the car to take pictures of the castle while I remain inside, warm and dry (and fearful that we'll not get down from this mini-mountain in one piece).

At about 12:30, we begin retracing our "steps" back to Heidelberg and from there to the autobahn that will take us to Frankfurt. It's only about 90 km from Heidelberg to the airport, but the snow is challenging and the heavy traffic often causes us to slow down from 100 k/h to about 40 k/h. There are snow plows doing their job and our car is getting sprayed with salt/water mixtures, but we are in 100% approval of these efforts to keep the road free of ice. We stop at a rest area for a coffee and pastry (and another 70-cent fee to use the toilet). The remaining 30 km are really very slow at times; often we are reduced to going only 20-30 k/h. But we finally arrive in the airport area. We know that we're there because we see airplanes (duh) but, of course, we miss the exit that the hotel's web site had advised us to take. So we turn at the next exit and return to the exit that we missed.

OBSERVATION: As was true when we drove in France and Belgium/Netherlands on a Sunday, we see very few big trucks on the highway. Is there a truckers' union rule against driving on Sundays? Is there a law against it? It's not that trucks are completely absent, but there are very very few of them. (An alternative thought - maybe, unlike my slave-driving tour guide, these truckers have spouses who encourage them to stay off snowy/icy roads?)

We are looking for the Hilton Garden Inn whose location is in "THE SQUAIRE." What is this strangely-spelled word (always written in caps)? Well, we discover that it is one enormous building that is described this way at its web site: "A city under one roof, at Frankfurt International Airport, built above the ICE highspeed train station, close to one of Germany's most important motorway junctions: THE SQUAIRE. This impressive landmark building is 660 metres long, 65 metres wide and provides about 200,000 sq m floor space – for about 7,000 people working here and another 3,000 visitors, customers and hotel guests. THE SQUAIRE is a new dimension of working and living. Its innovative concept is called 'NEW WORK CITY.' NEW WORK CITY facilitates corporate success. The innovative use concept 'NEW WORK CITY' optimises the working environment of the people working here by saving time for the relevant things in

business and private life, facilitating personal communication, streamlining daily tasks and increasing the feelgood factor." Aha, so now we know. Let's hear it for that old "feelgood factor"!

According to the driving instructions at the hotel's web site, "At the end of the lane parallel to THE SQUAIRE, turn right to enter the parking area of the Hilton hotel, which is located adjacent to the Hilton Garden Inn." All well and good, but it's not clear which parking area they mean or, even, where the damned hotel is. We pull into a curved driveway (there is no sign forbidding parking there) and enter the building. We see stores everywhere, but no hotel until a helpful Deutsche Bahn ticket agent directs us to an upper level. There is an elevator or an escalator that will take us to the main level, where we see stores, restaurants, office buildings, and (*mirabile dictu*) the hotel! The desk clerk checks us in, says that the car is perfectly safe where it is (we are dubious), and suggests that we retrieve our luggage and take it to our room before returning the car to AutoEurope. So, down the escalator, get the suitcases, up the elevator, into the hotel, and up the elevator to the 11th floor. (This sounds as if we're in a high rise, but in fact the lobby level was at floor 6 or 7, I forget.)

So back to the car (which is still where we left it) and, following the instructions of the desk clerk, we find a place to fill* the gas tank and proceed to AutoEurope's return location. We return the car and exit the huge

*The two fill-ups on the trip totaled 61.33 L over 908 km which calculates to 14.8 km/L or 34.8 mpg, all for a cost of €99.55

parking garage into a corridor, but can't find our way to anything that looks sensible. There are no signs posted nor is there a map of this part of the airport. We head one way, realize that it's unprofitable, then head the other way and ... finally, we are in an area where we see the desks for the various car rental agencies. As we received no receipt when we turned the car in, we stop and ask for one. And it's probably a good thing that we did, because we actually owed a little bit more money (about €5 for some sort of licensing fee).

The Frankfurt airport is huge (an understatement!) but we finally find our way back to the hotel. In the hotel lobby is a map that shows the airport layout, but (despite its color-coding) it is very confusing. We know that we'll need to get to Terminal 2 for tomorrow's Air France flight; and we know that the hotel's sky bridge leads to Terminal 1; but it's just not clear how we'll get from here to there. So we decide to do a trial run (without the luggage that we'll have tomorrow). In fact, here is a URL that shows the very airport map that has us confused: <http://tinyurl.com/caj4zr9> The skybridge takes us to Level 1 of Terminal 1, and we walk long distances, past lines of passengers waiting to check in for flights and past stores and kiosks, looking for signs to Terminal 2E/2D. We find that we need to ascend and descend several times as we make our way; this time we use escalators, but we also make note of where elevators* are available (for when we

*To compound the weirdness, at one place where we need to ascend from one level to another, a single escalator does the trick, but it requires two separate elevators, not even very close to one another, to accomplish the task.

have our luggage). There is a great deal of walking and upping and downing (I do not exaggerate) and finally we find the Sky Line train that goes between the two terminals. Luggage carts are not permitted on the train, so we know that it would be foolish to try to find one tomorrow. At the terminus of the train ride, we are in Terminal 2 and we identify the ticket counter for Air France. This enterprise takes 26 minutes. I'm glad that we did the trial run without our suitcases. (We hope that we can remember, tomorrow, where the elevators are. "We" may not remember, but stalwart Lee definitely will. I'm so glad that she hasn't deserted me!).

We retrace our steps and return to the hotel (another 26 minutes). We go to the hotel's business center to print our boarding passes for tomorrow. I'm surprised that this gives us not only the Air France tickets to

Paris but also the Delta tickets from Paris to Seattle. We then have a light meal in the hotel's casual restaurant.

OBSERVATION: Why are all German hotels and restaurants and museums so over-heated in the winter? Do the German people have a memory, deep in their national DNA, of how cold it was in the late 1940s as the country struggled to recover from the devastation of the war? Even the Hilton room is much too hot - and, of course, because it's a "modern" hotel the windows cannot be opened. To summarize: the Adlon did have that space-age controller in the bed-table drawer, but it seemed to have no effect on the room temperature, even when set at its lowest possible value of 20°C; the Grand had a wall thermostat that seemed to have no effect; the Hirschgasse had those four huge radiators, one in each room, each with a control knob - but it was difficult to find a comfortable setting between torrid (when we entered the room) and Arctic (when we turned the radiators off); and the Hilton has a wall-mounted thermostat with no numbers, only notches, on the dial, but turning it to the lowest notch has little (if any) effect.

Monday, December 10

We get out of bed at 4:15, finish packing, and check-out of the hotel at 5:10. Even with the long long long walk and the many elevator rides up/down/up/down ... and the train ride, we get through security by 6:05. Our flight does not leave until 7:25, so we make our way to the Air France lounge, only to find that their coffee machine is broken. (Apparently it was a catastrophic break-down as the floor in front of the coffee maker is covered with brown, soggy newspapers. The desk clerk says that this came about because the airport lost power during yesterday's snow storm.) So we have juice and cookies. Newspapers from many countries are available (dry ones, that is, not those on the floor) but no *Herald Tribune*. *Sacre bleu!!*

Yesterday, Lee and I had made a wager about whether we'd be bused to/from the plane here in Frankfurt and in Paris or whether there would be jetways for us to board. Her vote is for buses here in Frankfurt and on arrival in Paris, but a jetway for the Delta flight to Seattle. I bet on jetways for all three. Guess who won? You're right. I'm glad that no money was riding on the outcome.

We read books or magazines until our flight is called. It looks as if we'll depart on time, a good thing as the connecting time in Paris is fairly short. (Actually, it's a lay-over of 1 hr 45 min, but we recall how long it took to change terminals when we arrived on November 30, not to mention having to pass through security.) Yesterday's snow has been cleared from the taxiways and runways; right now, a light rain is falling. Much to our delight, the plane fills up quickly and the doors are closed at 7:10, fifteen minutes early. We'll certainly get to Paris on time! But then the doors are re-opened at 7:14 to admit some late-arriving passengers. Boo!! I would have voted to leave them behind. At 7:21, the doors are closed again, this time for good, and the plane embarks on its long, long taxi to the runway. Are we driving all the way to Paris? It wouldn't surprise me, but the plane finally is air-borne at 7:43.

At 8:00, we are served a small (but nice) breakfast: juice, ham, cheeses, yogurt, fresh fruit, rolls (alas, stale), croissants, and (most important) coffee. We are flying above the clouds, but there is (again) a spectacular sunrise lighting up the sky, just as when we flew from Seattle into Paris. We are on the ground at 8:35, 10 minutes ahead of schedule. And, as happened when we arrived in Europe, we go through passport control (a surprise to me since we've come from an E.U. country) and we are forced to leave security, walk some distance to the Delta gate, and go through security again. (I wonder if European security agents will honor the new U.S. rule that people over 75 do not have to remove their jackets, belts, or shoes - next December, I'll reach that magical age.) Although I pass smoothly through the security sensors, Lee (a well-known terrorist) is taken aside and patted down. (I would have gladly patted her down for them, but they never asked.) Then her carry-ons are thoroughly searched. Because of the short connection time, we're unable to take advantage of the business-class lounge. And then, at the entrance to the jetway leading to the plane, we are questioned about our luggage (has it always been in our possession, did we accept gifts from anyone, etc.) And for the third time in just 15 minutes, our passports are swiped (i.e., scanned, not stolen) and Lee's belongings are searched again. Maybe she just looks

guilty?

PUN ALERT: As we are walking down a hallway and looking for our departure gate, Lee looks through a window and proclaims "There's a Delta tail" to which her idiot husband comes back with "And therein lies a tale."

Speaking of idiot husbands, as we near the gate for the Delta flight I realize that I've left the file folder with my NYT crossword puzzles* on the previous flight. Not only are they lost forever (Lee refuses to allow me

*At least this folder did *not* contain my notes from the trip, my outline for the fake NYT article I was planning for Al Vazquez (p 13), my list of useful German words and expressions, my photocopy of my passport, and my photocopies of our credit cards. These are safely in other folders that are still in my briefcase. So only the collection of crossword puzzles and Sudokus is lost, no great tragedy, except it would have been nice to have them on the long flight to Seattle.

to retrace my steps) but also lost is the "official-crossword-puzzle-solving-lucky-pen" that was lodged inside the folder. Why I even got these puzzles out of my briefcase, I don't know, considering how short the flight was. And, worst of all, I did exactly the same thing when we landed in Los Angeles on our return from New Zealand in 2010. And, again, when arriving at Charles de Gaulle airport by car in 2011, I realize that the pen that I had been using to write notes during the drive was missing. And on our return flight from Amsterdam earlier this year, I lost on the plane (somehow, somewhere, someway) the final page of the notes that I was writing about the trip. I need a minder to take care of me and my belongings.

We board the Delta B767-330ER at 10:00 (for a 10:30 departure); our seats are the same* as on the flight

*Quoting from Lee's journal (the bracketed comments are mine): "Lee's neighbor [in 2B] this time is a real asshole; he wants to use her console [the one between 2B and 2C] as his own - though he was his own [to his left] - as his armrest. She finally has to lecture him, which he doesn't take well. So she builds a 'book block.' " If this makes no sense, please return to pp. 2-3 to refresh your memory about the juxtaposition of seats and consoles.

from Seattle. The doors are closed at 10:30, but we're held at the gate by ground control until push-back at 10:55. All of the flight attendants in our cabin are Americans; perhaps there are French speakers elsewhere. We are "treated" to a brand-new safety video, different from the one that we saw just 10 days ago. It is filled with good humor and stunts, things that it is hoped will attract the attention of the jaded traveler who usually tunes these things out. Rather than my describing it, why not watch it for yourself at <http://tinyurl.com/bowacz8> (this is the version for a B737, but it's essentially the same one that we get to see). Hours from now, after we have landed in Seattle and we're waiting for the doors to be opened, I chat with two of the flight attendants and I tell them that I think that the humorous video is an excellent idea. A couple of them disagree, arguing that people won't take them seriously. Lee and I think that they're wrong. They also tell me that Air New Zealand produced a humorous video of their own in which the flight crew are naked, save for tactically- and tactfully-applied body paint: <http://tinyurl.com/ngxaky>

Again, there is a long circuitous route from the terminal to the runway, but at least we're not in dense fog as was the case on November 30. We take off at 11:15; the captain announces that our flying time will be 10 hr 20 min, a full hour quicker than expected; either that, or I've screwed up the arithmetic associated with the nine-hour time differential between the two cities. And it's especially surprising, considering the strong head winds that we encounter (e.g., just 68 miles from Paris and at an altitude of 30,000 feet, our ground speed is only 395 mph because of 128 mph headwinds).

At 11:45, we are served Delta's specialty: warm mixed nuts, along with a beverage of choice (a neat Glenlivet for me). I don't usually drink spirits before noon, but I can rationalize that it's really 2:45 am PST

which means that this drink is coming at the end of a very long day. At 12:15, the actual meal service begins. We start with a Mini Corn Cake with salmon, asparagus, and pickled onion plus Cream of Onion Soup; then comes Fresh Mesclun Salad with sweet peppers, radishes, and walnuts. For the main course, I choose Grilled Beef Tenderloin with peppercorn sauce, mashed sweet potatoes, and sautéed spinach. From among the three desserts, I opt for Vanilla Ice Cream Sundae with a choice of sauces, whipped cream, and chopped nuts. Well, it really sounds more elegant in French, so here we go: *Mini-gâteau de maïs avec saumon, asperges, et oignon mariné; Veloute d'oignons; Salade fraîche de mesclun; Filet de boeuf grillé avec sauce au poivre, purée de potates douces, et épinards sautés; Crème glacée à la vanille.* The plane follows a northwestern course: over Dover England to the Irish Sea between Northern Ireland and Scotland, to the south of Iceland and across the southern tip of Greenland before entering Canada's airspace. I resume reading my Richard Ford novel, *Independence Day*, but I find myself distracted by the movie that a man in front of me is watching: it's the latest Bourne movie and it consists exclusively of chases, guns, chases, explosions, chases, etc.

I've now re-set my watch to PST. At 10:45 a.m., we are served a "pre-arrival meal": I choose the grilled shrimp salad (for which I'll dispense with the long description in English and French). By the end of the flight, I'm within 30 pages of finishing my book. It's excellent. Ford is a master of physical descriptions of places as well as the inner workings and motivations of his characters. During the final couple of hours of the flight, my TV monitor keeps freezing when I'm trying to watch the flight information. One of the flight attendants tries re-booting the computer several times, but the system works for a short while and then locks again. One hopes (yes one does!) that our pilot's flight data systems are more reliable than this one.

It is a very cloudy day as we begin our descent into Seattle. In fact, the clouds and fog are so dense that we don't actually see the ground until just 15 seconds before landing at 12:15 (about a half-hour sooner than the published ETA). We encounter a very long line at passport control - although Lee and I were among the first off our flight, there must have been other flights that had come in just ahead of ours. And although the line moves very slowly, we derive amusement from a hefty young woman in an earth-mother type of loose-fitting garment who proclaims to the person standing next to her "I don't need to work. I just do it so that I have something to do." Sigh.

So, we collect our bags, make our way to the car (still in its space in the garage), and drive home in the rain and fog. Ah, yes, Seattle - just as I'll always remember it. After our adventures of driving in snow, skidding on the pavement, having our fingers frozen to the point of falling off, I stand by my opening complaint:

Germany in December??? Are you out of your *fucking* mind???

And I can now, unequivocally, answer, YES!!

On the following two pages are the prank newspaper "article" that is described on p 13. The first page shows the single column that was then pasted over a column of the same length in an issue of *The New York Times*. The second page is the continuation of the article.

PETRAEUS SCANDAL SPREADS

CIVILIAN AND MILITARY PERSONNEL IMPLICATED

By PEGGY and STEVE PORTER

GIG HARBOR – In a shocking follow-up to the sex scandal involving General David Petraeus, it has been revealed that Holly Petraeus, his estranged wife, has been carrying on a clandestine love affair with a former Air Force officer and United Airlines pilot for some 40 years. That person has now been identified as Alfonso Vazquez, 66, of Gig Harbor, WA.

When asked why she had violated her marital vows, Ms. Petraeus replied, "If David can have his own bimbo, then so can I." Asked to comment about Holly's behavior, General Petraeus said, "Holly who?"

Martha ("Call me Sam") Vazquez, 25, the child-bride of the alleged fornicator, was understandably upset at the news of her husband's peccadillos. Said she, "That's funny - I always thought that the word was peck-a-dildo."

The Vazquezezezes and the Petraeuseses have known one another for years, dating back to the early military service of the two men. At the start of his career, Mr. Vazquez chose to dangle his ding-dong in the secretarial pool at the base; little did he suspect that it would be Mrs. Petraeus who would grab at the bait. The extent of their affair is described in some 100,000 emails over 40 years, even before email was invented.

Gig Harbor neighbors of Mr. Vazquez were reluctant to comment on these revelations. Paul and Rae Ann Merrill professed not to even know the Vazquezes. Mrs. Merrill had chaired the Grand Jury that investigated the misbehavior of Barry Bonds, OJ Simpson, Michael Milkin, and Bernie Madoff and would have been a credible witness in the Vazquez affair if only she hadn't slammed her door when this reporter called.

Neighbors Doug and Donna Backslay (of the Knoxville Backslayers) were eager to reveal what they knew. Mrs. Backslay drawled, "Ah'm not at awl surprised. That man (meaning Mr. Vaquez) has been doin' us wrong fo' years. Why, he even brought in a contractor to slope his driveway such that the slightest rainfall caused our home to flood. And besides, he's not a real captain. And he has a mortgage!"

Bonnie and Clyde Melchior were not at home. Witnesses report having seen them fleeing across the Canadian border in a stolen Volvo. When intercepted in British Columbia, Clyde said "Nous ne parlons pas anglais."

The only neighbors willing to talk were the kindly and beloved Irish priest Father O'Ronald O'Reilly O'Really O'Magid, 74, and his comely live-in "housekeeper" Sister

PETRAEUS SCANDAL

From Page A1

Maria Theresa Luciana Lollobrigida Madonna Betty-Sue Magio, (allegedly 25). Monsignor O'Magid, despite having been excommunicated decades ago, said, "Aye, laddie, I've been hearing the confessions of young Alfonso for years, but my professional vows prevent my revealing what I know." Nevertheless, O'Magid has been spotted speaking to a reporter from *National Enquirer* and has recently been driving around in a new Jaguar that costs more (much much more) than his yearly stipend.

The Vazquezes' minor children were asked for comments. Jennaire, 15, said "I'm shocked, shocked to find that adultery is going on in here!" Matthew, 12, said "Don't bug me man, I'm busy with Level 5 in Dragons and Dungeons." Jennaire's fiancé Ryan R. Ryan, 17, said "If my future father-in-law chooses to live a life of depravity, indolence, sloth, and avarice - well, is this a great country or what?"

Martha ("Sam I Am") Vazquez, initially not aware of her husband's infidelities, had given up her privileged life as a patio princess when she made the mistake of marrying down. By way of retaliation, she has befriended all of the teenage boys in the neighborhood, where she is affectionately known as "Uncle Sam, the candy lady."

Mr. Vazquez grew up in Hardscrabble, PA, so named for the triple word scores on its city blocks. One of his boyhood friends revealed, "Al was a weird kid, different from the rest of us. In fact, our nickname for him was Vaz Deferens." After an undistinguished career in the Air Force (ours!) in which he single-handedly wrecked five very expensive fighter jets, he was dishonorably discharged from the service, but continued his discharges (you should pardon the expression) at United Airlines.

Having lived in sin for decades, Al ("Honey Bunch") and Martha ("Pumpkin") were married just last year by the kindly and beloved Irish priest Monsignor O'Magid, who said "Who cares if the man is a creep. In the eyes of God, everyone (even creeps) are of value."

Mr. Vazquez is a member of the John Birch Society, the Ayn Rand Marching and Chowder Society, and the Ron Paul, Rand Paul, and Peter Paul Societies.

At the time of this report, a Grand Jury is being convened, chaired (of course) by Rae Ann Merrill. A guilty verdict seems inevitable and should be delivered within a day or two.