

Around the World ----Backwards
Journal by Margareta Jonell
September 9 – October 4, 2012

September 9, 2012

You may wonder why the title! In my attempt to get a Round the World ticket through United award miles, I learned that my available 65,000 miles was enough to get me to Europe and back; or to China and back – but not to both places. A typical round the world ticket costs 180,000 – and that, I did not have!! An ingenious United award miles representative suggested that I could travel to both places for 65,000 miles IF I was willing to travel backwards on my way home. Instead of crossing the Pacific on my return trip, I will be flying from Beijing to Munich to Los Angeles. The only downside of this arrangement is that the trip to LA will take 36 hours! Time I have; money I don't!!

Early Sunday morning, Gary picked me up to take me to DIA. Both flights, to Dulles Airport and the trans Atlantic flight to Zurich went without incident. Economy seats tend to be narrow with little legroom. But I was able to sleep a few hours and the trip went well.

In Zurich I found my way to the extremely efficient Swiss train station at the airport. I purchased my ticket for Uberlingen, Germany, which is my first destination. The trip took me north from Zurich into Germany – trains running exactly on time. I was happy that my suitcase only weighs 38 pounds – easy enough for me to handle, even going up and down stairs. Two train changes later (at Konstanz and Radolfzell) I arrived in Uberlingen – met by some “old” friends.

So what, you may ask, is this trip all about? Why a trip to two totally different parts of the world? My class of '60 from Canadian Academy in Japan is meeting for a reunion. In the last several years we have met fairly often – every two or three years. Why? Because we are all getting older and we figure we have to take advantage of the time, good health and the ability to travel. Uberlingen was chosen as our destination because Gertraud (Rilz) Meschede lives there. We actually have two of our classmates who come from Germany – Gertraud and Astrid. We will be spending five days together learning about this part of the world, enjoying the sights and history, and renewing “old” friendships.

The second part of the trip is to Jiaozhou, China, where my grandparents, parents, and aunt and uncle worked for many years (1894-1951). My grandmother, Hedvig Rinell, began a school in Jiaozhou in 1905. My parents both worked in the school until 1948 when we left China. Some former students who are now in their 80's and 90's have commissioned a statue to be raised at the school for the first Chinese principal, Mr. Wang.

The ceremony will take place on September 26 at the Jiaozhou Number 1 Middle School. My sister, Alice, with a group of six other missionary kids will be coming from Sweden. Sven Ohm, former Swedish Baptist mission secretary will also be traveling with a group of Swedes for this occasion. All in all we will be 18 people from Sweden and the US who will enjoy the festivities. But, more about that later. Just wanted you to know the purpose of my “backward” travel this fall!!

September 15, 2012



Some of my friends have wondered why our CA group is so significant in my life! Well, many of us grew up together in Japan. Several of us lived in the dormitories and spent very much time together. Anyone who has a similar growing-up experience in a foreign country seems to just have a natural – and lasting – connection. Somehow we are able to pick up where we left off the last time we met. In other words, we speak the same language although we live continents apart.

Our first day we spent walking around the beautiful lakeside city of Uberlingen on the north-east shore of Lake Konstanz. The city has a picturesque cathedral and parts of a remaining city wall and towers that dot the landscape. The next day we spent on a 12 hour boat ride. Leaving early in the morning we visited three lake-side cities – Lindau, Germany; Bergenz, Austria; and Arbon, Switzerland. In a matter of a few hours we visited three countries.

Germany, Austria and Switzerland have very similar architectural styles, but each of the towns had something different to offer. In Bergenz we took a gondola ride, the Pfaender, to the top of the mountain. In six minutes 80 of us were lifted to the top where we enjoyed gorgeous views of the Alps in one direction and a lake view in the other. Here some of us took nature hikes, as others enjoyed an ice cream cone or coffee.

The day on the lake gave us ample opportunity between stops to talk with each other and laugh about our childhood/youth experiences while in Japan, as well as to catch up on our present lives.

Another day we spent traveling to Freiburg, a university city. Both Gertraud and Heinz attended school in this 700+ year university. There is also a 700+ year cathedral in the middle of the city where we were given a very interesting guided tour. Here we also enjoyed a city open-air market. This was our only day of rain and chilly weather.

On our last day together, we went to Weingarten and Meersburg. Weingarten has an incredible baroque church on the hillside above the lake. Although the baroque style is more garish than I like (for my simpler taste!!) it was interesting to see. Surrounded by acres of vineyards, the area is beautiful, lush and green. A brief visit at Meersburg completed our sightseeing for that day.



Evan Bryson, Phil Muir, Paul Gillespie, Margie Jonell, Gertraud Meschede,
Charles Stanley, Harald Hoas

On Friday our group began dispersing. Some were heading back home after having spent extended time traveling in Europe; others were heading out for more European adventures; and I headed on to my next destination.

What an amazing time we all had together! We pored over old year books and albums; talked about old friends and teachers; reminisced about our lives in Japan. I do believe that most of us left part of our hearts in Kobe, Japan. What a privilege it was for us to have had some of our growing up years in Japan!

September 16, 2012

On Saturday morning I left Uberlingen by train, heading for Kandern. My train passed through beautiful lush countryside, first along the shore of Lake Konstanz and later along the shores of the Rhine. My traveling partners were a group of middle-aged bikers!! The trains have space for people to bring their bicycles on board – and the train car I chose was filled to the brim with bikes and their owners! It was a noisy, good-humored group of men and women, somewhat overweight and all dressed in spandex bike shorts and tops! Quite a sight to behold!!

I was met at the Basel station by my second cousin, Carey, and Holly Holmquist. They are missionaries under Proclaim! International. (For those of you who read this and know our family, Carey is the grand-son of Oscar and Hellen Rinell.) First stop was a flea market!! Not unlike what you would find in the States or in Sweden!

Carey and Holly bought a 200 year old farm house in Kandern about six years ago and spent two years gutting it and making it into a most beautiful, modern, and comfortable home. It is located right in town, just at the south end of the Black Forest region. Their home is decorated with all kinds of antique furniture and decorations from Germany, Poland, Sweden, Italy, etc. Truly a cozy home. Simon is their beautiful dog who protects them!



Holly and Carey Holmquist and their 200 year old home

Today is Sunday and we attended the Black Forest Christian Fellowship church this morning. There are many foreigners who live in this part of Germany. There is an international school here, the Black Forest Academy, for mostly missionary children, with a student body of about 350. The man who gave the sermon today is a teacher at the school. He gave a very powerful message about his year of battling leukemia and being healed from this disease.

Next journal entry will be sent from China.

Margareta Jonell