

Being in Europe doesn't make things 'fantastic'

By ELOISE LEWIS

Hi, hi! It's another travelogue edition. I was prompted to write this, because I spent last year studying (?) in Germany and when I came back, people would say: "Oh, how was your year in Europe?" It must have been fantastic! I would like to set things straight without sounding like a spoiled brat: being in Europe doesn't automatically make life "fantastic" — in fact some of the times, I felt more miserable than I've ever felt in my life. Then again, there were the other times too, that really were great and, as the ole' cliché goes, just about made up for the bad. I'm also writing this just in case there's someone out there who might be interested in spending a year over there as I did, in which case this could help.

The reason for my going to Germany (besides the fact that I'd been to Europe before and this was a good excuse to go again!) was that I was majoring in German and I felt that my chances of learning the language were a lot better if I simply went and lived in the country where it's spoken. A logical spot was Germany (brilliant conclusion, no?) My plans were somewhat unorthodox according to UNB standards but with a lot of help from my German professor Dr. Eppert, the technicalities got smoothed out and off I went with great visions of returning a year later, with complete command of the German language.

I was to attend the university of Freiburg starting in October but in order to pass the language entrance exam, I needed a bit (minor understatement) more than my German 1000 and 2000. So in August (1972) I attended an eight-week course at a Goethe Institute in a German village. This is a school of comprehensive German courses and people of ages ranging from 18 to 80 come from all over the world either to Germany or to institutes that are actually set up all over the world. We were all placed in German homes in this village called staufen that almost came straight out of a fairytale as far as we foreigners were concerned. It was set in the Black Forest, so the surrounding countryside of mountains, rolling

hills and thick forests was beautiful. The home I was allotted to was built in 1700 and was really very comfortable. I had a roommate from the Philippines who froze just about the whole time she was there! Some of the other students came from Venezuela, Chile, Vietnam, Turkey, Korea, Nicaragua, Belgium, France, Spain, U.S.A., etc. The common language started out to be German but it developed into a mixture of German, English, French, Spanish and sign language. For five hours, four-and-one-half days a week, nothing but German was spoken in class, so I think we did improve somewhat.

In our time off, groups of us would get together for picnics (nineteen of us went on one, my first weekend there). The real temptation was the cafes with their irresistible cakes; our mid-morning breaks often got stretched (as did one's waistline!) over one cup of coffee and a little sweet to go with it.

Another discovery in the field of eat and drink was the "be merry" that goes with it at a German "Weinfest" or wine festival. They usually take place in the fall and since my courses went into September, I was in luck. To describe a Weinfest is... well... the closest I can come, is to say that it's like an amusement park but instead of going and having a coke, you sit at long tables and have a glass of wine... then you sample another... and another... then you go on a ride... then you vow never to do that again. Two weeks later, there you are doing the same thing at a Weinfest in the next village!

We often took advantage of our geographical location for afternoon or weekend excursions. If you drove west for about 40 minutes, you were in France; the same distance south, was Switzerland. Still, you can't help but do a double-take when someone says: "Let's go to France for dinner"

The end of the course conveniently coincided with the dates of Munich "Oktoberfest" — this time, a beer festival. I'd heard it was something not to miss, so nine of us decided not to miss it. It has the same amusement park idea with huge long tents, inside which

one's time is devoted to beer drinking and listening to the "oom-pah" band. Everyone was in gay and friendly spirits so you were welcome at any of the hundreds of long tables, upon which one is not supposed to dance (we discovered from a not-so-gay and not-so-friendly waitress). Munich's year-round beer halls eg. Hofbrauhaus, Lowenbrauhaus and others are also worth a visit, especially to drink out of the enormous glass mugs that contain three bottles' worth. I don't mean to harp on the beer and wine aspects but these were the occasions that really were fun — and German beer and wine aren't famous for nothing! There's a lot to see in Munich and getting from one place to another is made interesting by the city's extensive but organized subway system.

Alac, alas, the good times came to a halt as the time came for me to settle down to some serious studying (ahem) in Freiburg. This town of about 180,000 is twelve miles north of Staufen where I'd taken my eight-week course, so the surroundings were familiar. At the time, that was about my only comfort, as I didn't know a soul and I rated my rented room about as comfy as an igloo — until I saw some of the holes other kids were living in. At least where I was it was clean, somewhat modern and I had good kitchen and bathroom facilities at my disposal; other students had no shower or bath whatsoever! I shared these facilities with three other German working girls who were nice but that was about all. We all remained on formal terms — i.e. "Miss Lewis" — the whole year. But people are much more formal over there on the whole anyway. Then I had to get used to little things like

having to light a gas heater every time you wanted hot water, and most students having no phone at all, so there was no way of contacting each other except to trek over to where they lived.

As if life wasn't complicated enough at the beginning, little did I know what bureaucracy and running around was involved in registering at the university and with the police (compulsory for a foreigner). The police needed

photographs and some certificate from the university who needed photographs and a certificate from the police, who needed a signature from my landlady, etc., etc. Plus, both offices were only open mornings (which I found out in the afternoon). The good part about the university is the tuition fees: about \$40 a semester, i.e. \$80 for one year. But paper, books and such are relatively expensive, and stamps cost double to what we pay.

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S.A.A.

Spring Elections, Wednesday, February 13, 1974

Nominations are now being received for candidates who wish to run in the Spring Elections of the Student Athletic Association. The following positions are open:

PRESIDENT: To be in third, fourth or fifth year in the year he or she holds office.

FIRST VICE PRESIDENT: To be in Third, fourth, or fifth year in the year she holds office.

ONE FACULTY REPRESENTATIVE: from Science, Physical Education, Arts, Law, Forestry, Business Administration.

TWO FACULTY REPRESENTATIVES from Nursing, Engineering, Education.

Nominations close Saturday, February 2 for President and First Vice-President. All nominations shall have the name, Fredericton address, and telephone number of the candidate, nominator, and seconder. Nominations for President and First Vice-President shall also be accompanied by the names and signatures of eight other full time students of UNB. Nominations shall be submitted to the Student's Athletic Association at the Athletics Office, Lady Beaverbrook Gymnasium.