

Soldier explores the countryside of Amsterdam

By JOHN BALL

When I crossed the Dutch border the customs officer didn't believe that I had no cigarettes or booze hidden in my single travel case. He didn't press the point though and just asked how much money I had. Perhaps the fact that he looked more like a naval officer in dress uniform than a customs officer of North American appearance took me by surprise and I hadn't time to get as nervous as I usually do when crossing borders.

I had no real first impressions of Holland that I can remember now, except that the countryside, as seen through the train window, was flat, green, and very farmed. Actually, my thoughts were concentrated on the glorious week ahead sight-seeing in Am-

sterdam, Brussels and Paris before returning to my army unit in West Germany. But I was particularly excited about spending a couple of days in A-Dam. Like most young Canadians, I had been well briefed on the hospitality extended by the Dutch to any Canadian visiting their country and I must admit, I was nervous about the reception I had been lead to believe awaited me.

My buddies back at the Base told me when I got off the train to ask any taxi driver to take me to a hotel in the Canal Street district. This I did. I approached a likely looking cabbie and asked, haltingly for fear of receiving a blank look of non-comprehension, if he could take me to a hotel in the Canal District. An amused look of total understanding immediately appeared on his face.

I felt sucked-in, but not too badly and soon was absorbed in the local colour, euphoric in just being there.

The hotel Anco was a wonderful place. Thirty Guilders a day with breakfast; and not one of those rolls and jam continental jobs either, but a full fledged bacon and eggs, toast and coffee feast served with a smile any time before 11:00 a.m.

Of course you rented a bed and not a room so you might wake up in the morning and find a guy from anywhere in the other bed in the room, but I got used to it. I also got used to seeing towel clad figures darting about the corridors. You see the john and the shower were on the next floor down.

I should have had some inkling of what was in store for me when the girl who registered me took the serial number of my army identification card. She also gave me a card with the address of the hotel on it for use in case I got lost or otherwise indisposed. I still didn't think I was getting the full treatment though because she didn't ask for all my money. Many of my friends had told me of giving their money to the management of the hotel in which they stayed. They would set themselves a daily ration which would then be dispensed as agreed by the staff of the hotel. Apparently many of the hoteliers of A-Dam wanted to ensure that their young guests had an enjoyable time during the entire length of their stay.

My first sortie into this strange new city came later that evening. I had freshened up after the train trip and drank, in a most self-conscious fashion, a beer in the hotel bar. Being at loose ends, I then decided I should go for a walk and perhaps get a newspaper. Oh boy it was exciting to be in A-Dam.

The street was like a train track cut into a mountain side. On one side were the tall narrow buildings typical of Holland and on the other was a deep, dark

canal. The streetledge was narrow and bustling and there were trees shading the buildings and water ways. Cars, parked out to the lip of the canal, completed the picture. The most obvious rapid transit systems were motor scooters and feet.

So I was walking along, not really knowing what I was going to do now that I was in this exciting city, when I felt a tug on my sleeve. It was like an electric jolt and I immediately jerked away in reaction at the same time looking around to see who could be so forward to a perfect stranger.

She was blonde, young, very pretty and had thirty guilders written all over her face. I shook free and mumbled some excuse about not tonight and walked away. But I must admit, I was quite shaken. I had never been accosted by a real live prostitute before and especially not in the middle of a bustling street in plain view of the whole world.

That was the beginning of my week in Amsterdam. As I mentioned earlier I had planned to do a grand tour but things didn't work out that way. The local Amstel Pils was too good, the company in the hotel was excellent, and I was just having too good a time. Oh I didn't turn into a whoredog. The nearest I came to a lady of the night after my experience on the first night was to try to photograph one in a picture window. An acquaintance from the hotel was successful in this endeavour but they were extremely camera shy and I got nowhere.

I spent my days taking boat tours around the canals and going on walks about the historic parts of the city. I was amazed at the facility with which the boatmen handled their craft, turning and backing with apparent abandon yet in my experience never once striking the canal sides. We had great fun one afternoon climbing

to the top of the bell tower in the New Church, built in "sixteen something or other."

The Royal Palace particularly fascinated me. These places usually are to average North Americans who don't have too much direct experience with royalty. I thought it was kind of cute hearing about one rather prominent member of the Royal Family who liked to window shop. I don't know if the stories were true but my Dutch acquaintances insisted they were. The palace itself was an unpretentious building. It was grey and squat, and I was told supported by thirty thousand pilings for a foundation. There were no palace guards and I think if I had wanted to I could have walked up to the building and chipped off a chunk for a souvenir. I'm not convinced it is an official residence of royalty these days.

Holland, I loved it; and if I'm ever back to Amsterdam I'm going to the Hotel Anco. I may even find my old membership card to the Engineering Undergraduate Society thumb-tacked to the bulletin board behind the bar, though it would probably be buried by years of accumulation of similar donations. But you never know.

Names out of Western US?

Skunk Hollow, Deadmans Ledge, Squirrel Jump Gulch, Horseback Ridge. Names out of the American West? No, they're all in New Brunswick and so is Utopia, Sugarloaf Mountain, both Upper and Lower California and even Loch Lomond.

These are some of the 14,000 names of populated areas and natural features listed in a new edition of the Gazetteer of Canada for New Brunswick published for the Canadian Permanent Committee on Geographical Names by the Department of Energy Mines and Resources. The last edition, issued in 1956, contained only 7,000 place names.

The bilingual gazetteer includes a glossary of terms, a map of New Brunswick showing counties and parishes, the exact geographical position of each place and a map with instructions on how to obtain maps of regions within the province on a scale of 1:50,000.

Other exotic place names found in the province are: Push and Be Damned Rapids, Pull and Be Damned Island, Slingdung Brook, Spit Shoal, Skull Island, Hells Kitchen (a ravine), Left Hand Leg (a bay), and The Old Sow (whirlpools). New Brunswick also has 33 Mud Lakes, 4 Devils

Elbows (river bends), 10 Dead Brooks, a Five Fathom Hole (a cove), the Kouchibouguac River and Scodawabscook Bend. And there are some lyrical names as well: Diffin Heath, Frosty Hollow, Little Dipper Harbour, Raspberry Cove, Strawberry Marsh and Woodpecker Hall.

The Gazetteer is one of the most advanced in the world. Committee staff went into the field interviewing, checking spellings and verifying geographical features over a two-year period. Up to this point, names in gazetteers have usually been drawn from maps and records. It has been found, however, that field studies result in an increase of 100 percent in the stock of names. They also reveal an inaccuracy rate of 20 percent in documents and maps already printed. Gazetteers based on this field-study method are now in preparation for Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia.

The Gazetteer of New Brunswick is available from Information Canada for \$4.00.

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