

Jim and Emmy's Travel Journal

The Country of Belgium

1970, 1979, 1980, 1983, 1985, 1988, and 1991

1970

We arrived in West Germany on Aug. 18, traveled to Austria a few days later, spent several days in Italy, crossed Switzerland, then entered France. By Hovercraft we crossed the Channel to England. A few days later we returned, by ferry, to Belgium!

Arrived in Belgium at 10:00 AM and drove across the countryside to Brussels. Went downtown and looked around for awhile. We found the statue of the little boy, Manikin Pis, a few blocks from the Brussels city hall. The name tells it all.

Teen aged girls sometimes have little off-hand comments they use for no good reason. In 1970, Linda H. said, from time to time, something about a "big 'ol hanging thing" when talking about a huge Cathedral, a bridge or whatever. Wonder if we will ever forget Linda's comment, "I thought it would be a big 'ol hanging thing," when she saw the statue of the little boy in Brussels, with the very natural water fountain!

We crossed into The Netherlands, then across West and East Germany to West and East Berlin, then visited Emmy's cousins near Germany's western border. We left Frankfurt for the US on September 14.

1979

We arrived at the Luxembourg Airport on August 26, bought a camper at the US Army base in Mannheim, and visited Emmy's cousins and Germany for a few days. We traveled by ferryboat to Denmark, another to Sweden, then by ferry from Stockholm to Helsinki, Finland, and another ferry back to Sundsvall, Sweden. We then visited along the Norwegian coast (including many small ferryboats), and another ferry to Denmark. We crossed Germany, spent a few days in The Netherlands, then to Belgium.

We arrived in Antwerp at 3:30 and drove down what looked like a main street, a very rough cobble stone street, until we found a parking place. Emmy stayed in the camper to rest while Jim went looking at the town, and looking for information. The information is, the campsite is closed for the season. We drove around some more and found the Antwerp Youth Hostel is still open, and will

let us spend the night in a room with an upper and lower bunk, for \$8 including breakfast.

The refrigerator in the camper runs only on the second 12V battery or on 110V electricity, not available in Europe. That makes it impossible to run the refrigerator at night. We bought a battery charger that runs on 220 V to at least keep the battery charged—we think, or we hope! (But how wrong we were!)

B. Antwerp, Oct 11, Thu

They closed the doors at 11:00 PM played music at 7:00 AM breakfast at 8:00 we left by 8:30. The beds were very hard, and we were right near the freeway. The room was hot, so we had to leave the hotel windows open and that let in all the noise from the Antwerp Freeway. The camper just proves to be better and better, each time we try something else.

Emmy has the idea she wants a new, larger wedding ring with many diamonds. Since we are in the diamond capital of the world, we made a few stops trying to get information. The problem is, we know nothing about diamonds, either here or in the States.

Seems \$900 to \$1100 per carat, plus cost of the ring for a total of \$1200 to \$1400, but she really saw nothing that looked right.

It's raining this morning, but we went to see the house of the painter, Peter Paul Rubens. Beautiful old home, dates from the 1600's. His parents were from Antwerp, but he was born in Germany, returned here at age 10, and died here in 1640.

Then drove to Leige and looked a little, but these Belgium towns don't seem as interesting as the towns in Holland. Near Limburg we asked for information about a campground as we bought gasoline. A customer heard our problem and said, "Follow me!" Great!

B, Limburg, Oct 12, Fri - 26 - 182 - 5,277

Visited with cousin Josef in Germany for a few days, then back to Belgium.

We left Essen and drove toward Antwerp. Soon after we entered Belgium, we were trying to drive across a very wide street in a very small town and got caught in the very middle when the light changed. The police, with nothing better to do, stopped us and made some threatening signs, but then looked in the back of the camper and waved us on.

Camper motor is running very rough so we looked for a mechanic. We found one, but he was too busy now and said come back tomorrow. He had parking space next to his house, just in front of his garage, and gave permission to plug in our electric cord and spend the night next to Garage Peters.

B, Garage Peters, Oct 18, Thu - 27 - 242 - 5,617

Slept so well he had to wake us up this morning. He was very busy, so only looked at a few things and did a couple of adjustments, nothing solved, but runs a little better.

It must be either the carburetor, or the transmission because when Jim tries to move slowly in heavy traffic it doesn't want to move until he pushes a little more on the accelerator, then the Dodge wants to jump.

We went back to the jeweler in Antwerp and looked and talked some more, but since it would take 10 days or so to make the ring, Emmy decided she would wait until we got home.

Went on to Brussels. When we got near downtown we saw an auto garage with a Chrysler sign. It's no longer in that business, but the man gave directions to a large Chrysler dealer on the other side of town, near Louise Boulevard. It was rather easy to find, but it would have been a help if we had known how they designed this main street.

A wide road has been built around downtown in the space where the city wall used to be. At most intersections, people who want to go straight, have an underpass, and those who want to turn, stay to the right. This is fine for those who know where they are going, but doesn't do much good when we don't know where we are, or where we are going, and can't speed-read Brussels street signs displayed in two non-English languages, French and Flemish.

We travel with the idea that, "If we don't care where we are, we aren't lost." But right now we care, and are trying to find this garage. When we got there, found the dealer in a large building that appeared to cover most of a city block. It looks like they should know what they are doing. We asked them to give the camper a complete tune-up, whatever it needs. We then rode the streetcar toward the downtown area and just walked and looked around.

Went to the American Express Office to get some money, visited a diamond dealer in the same building, and just walked some more. The shopping mall has a store containing only Marilyn Monroe memorabilia. Lucky for us there is also a Baskin Robbins 31 Flavors ice cream parlor. Tastes good.

The buildings around the Grand Place in Brussels make it one of the fanciest, and most exciting in Europe. For a couple of days in August each year, they decorate the Brussels Grand Place with thousands of pots of colorful flowers, placed in a very meticulous design.

We returned to get the camper, and found the engine runs so badly we could hardly drive it to the campsite. Wonder what on earth they did, or didn't do.

B, Brussels, Oct 19, Fri - 28

It was difficult to get back to the dealer, and when we did, the mechanic drove it for 20 to 30 minutes, and pronounced the transmission needed work.

We told them to adjust the carburetor so we could drive, and we would try someplace else. Don't know why they didn't clean the carburetor yesterday, as we had asked them to do. We will see what we can find in Paris.

Emmy is still looking at jewelry. In the past, so many things Emmy liked (and we bought), didn't make much sense to Jim at the time of purchase, but after she has worn it for awhile, he likes it very much. Emmy found an 18 carat gold bracelet with pearls. They call used jewelry an "estate piece." Why not just call it "used" like a car dealer would. \$150. It's beautiful! Excellent!

In a shopping mall we bought a little electric heater. It has 1000 watt and 2000 watt settings. That will be much better than a gas heater or more blankets. Wish we had thought of this a month ago.

B, Brussels, Oct 20, Sat - 29 - 132 - 5,479

Decided to go the Hilton Hotel for a Brunch they have advertised. There is bad news and good news. The bad news is, the cost is \$22 per person, and the good news is, the buffet at the Brussels Hilton is closed today, for some reason. We found 34% was for service (tip) and tax.

In a super market we found a large oven with a continuously moving belt. The customer places dough on one end, and gets a fresh-baked loaf of bread or rolls at the other end. Sure was delicious.

We left Belgium, on our way to Paris. After several days in Paris, we drove across France, and continued to Spain. For the next two or three weeks, we visited in Spain, several days in Portugal, rode a ferry across the river from Portugal back to Spain, then spent two days on a tour to Morocco in Africa.

We visited several more days in Spain, and spent a couple of days resting in Palma, on the Island of Majorca (off the coast of Spain in the Mediterranean Sea). Returned to Barcelona, Spain, and a couple of days later, drove on to France, then Monaco, across Italy to another part of France, a couple of days in Switzerland, and through Germany to Mettlach. We parked the camper at Toni's neighbor (for several months), and from Luxembourg's airport, on November 29 we flew to Iceland for a couple of days, then home to the US.

1980

We had arrived at Frankfurt, Germany on May 9, spent some time in Germany, traveled throughout central and southern France, tiny Andorra, a tinier piece of Spain, tiniest Monaco, then into Italy to visit Pisa and Florence. By ferry we went to Corsica, Sardinia, Sicily, back through Italy from the "toe" through Rome and dozens of other fascinating places, to Venice. We crossed into Yugoslavia, for a couple of days, then into Austria and Hungary, then back through Germany to Mettlach, then after a couple of weeks visiting Paris, Brittany and Normandy, France, we crossed into Belgium.

We never knew for sure when we crossed the border to Belgium, there was no border control point at all. We went into the town of Tournai, Belgium where there is a very interesting church with five large steeples. The buildings around the town square are also interesting, but dirty.

We missed the flower show at the Brussels Grand Place by only a few days. They still had the chalk marks on the pavement, used to arrange the flower-pots in precision patterns.

Emmy returned to the jewelry store where she bought the bracelet last year, and lucky Jim, it was closed. (Hey, she bought a beautiful bracelet last year, but could she be so lucky two years in a row?!)

We find the city of Brussels an interesting place to visit. In addition to the walking streets, and the shopping mall, there are the Hubert Galleries, a covered shopping mall built in the late 1800's. In the new shopping mall there is a store that seems to carry only things about Marilyn Monroe. We see her picture all over Europe.

We stayed at the same campsite we were in last year. It's not very nice, but we can find it and don't know where another one is, if at all. At about 10:00 PM we were reading when we heard some shouts and looked at the tent next door and saw something inside the tent was on fire. Jim grabbed the fire extinguisher and ran and put the fire out. They had been cooking inside the tent and there were three different fires inside. The man had burns on his face, and a little boy had a burn on his ankle.

Other people had first aid kits, and we had an extra electric light we loaned them to use so they could see for the clean up. The next morning the light was outside our camper, but the people acted very strange. Last night we had the same impression. Don't know if it was because they were Greeks or Turks, (at least they appeared to be) or if as Jim thinks, they were mad that he messed up the tent and their dinner with the fire extinguisher. No way we were going to just standby and watch a fire in the next campsite.

B, Brussels, Aug 23, Sat - 84

There's a large square that was used as the marketplace for many years. The Brussels flea market looks like a place where they sell real "fleas!"

Bought a few small items and went to the antique market a few blocks away, in another open square nearer downtown, where things are much more expensive.

We visited with a "cousin" of Ida's, Stephie and Michael and their daughter Anne. They said homes in their area sold for up to \$125,000. Reasonable price. Their home has four floors. A basement on the first level with a foyer, store room, 1/2 bath, garage, and laundry room. Next floor had kitchen, L shaped living/dining room, and on the next floor were three bedrooms and bath. The top, an attic, was being converted to a den. A very nice home.

Stephie is German, but works for the European Common Market, and so receives some kind of bonus because she works in a country other than her home. Stephie fixed a cake mix she had bought in Germany, seems they have few if any cake mixes in Belgium.

We drove to Ghent, and found the campsite was a very nice and run by the city. It's located near Ghent's water sports area where there's a long straight channel, maybe two or three km long, where they have boat races of some kind.

B, Ghent, Aug 24, Sun - 85 - 219 - 11,042

We left the campsite at 9:30 and found a nice laundromat in the midst of a group of apartments. Surprised to find it was open on Sunday.

There was a lady doing her laundry, and she helped us figure out how to work the soap and other buttons. She had her dog with her, and someone who seemed to be in charge of the area, asked her to keep it outside the building. She was very upset anyone would treat her dog like that. She said a dog wouldn't be treated like that in the US. We assured her in the US dogs are not permitted in

any store, restaurant or laundromat. She was shocked, and we figure we won't see any sign of her in the US.

In downtown, along with the Cathedral (Ghent), and other old buildings, there is a McDonald's right near the picturesque bridge over the river. It's a two story restaurant and is decorated in an attractive manner. We had French Fries, hamburger, and a large coke for about \$6. Jim asked if we could buy some ice, but the McDonald's manager insisted on giving us a large can of ice, sure a big help. When a coke is ordered, we must ask for ice, then they give us one or two cubes, unless we ask for more. They also use some kind of sauce with their French Fries. Of great importance, every McDonald's has available, clean, restrooms!

We drove on toward Brugge. We have been hearing on the British radio that the French ferryboat strike is very bad, and there are long lines of people waiting to get on boats leaving from Belgium and Holland.

As we neared Brugge, we found lines of cars, and what looked like a big traffic jam. We were able to get around the jam, and decided to go to Oostende to find out what problems we might have getting to England. When we arrived at the harbor, there were no cars, and we were told to just drive on the ferryboat. We said we would be back in a day or so, and went back to Brugge to see what was going on.

While we were asking about the ferryboat to England, a small boat (maybe 20 feet long) was just docking. Someone said the man or people in it (don't know who or how many) had just completed a trip across the ocean from the US to Oostende.

Found there was still a big traffic jam near Brugge, but we drove into a city park with many other autos and found a place to park. Walked toward downtown Brugge and found hundreds of people in all kinds of costumes and unusual medieval dress, and many horses waiting for a parade. Brugge puts on this pageant once every five years, and it tells the history of the town in about 90 scenes depicting various incidents. There were dancers, singers, flocks of sheep, and hundreds of people in costumes. There was a brochure that gave information about each scene. We didn't have a brochure, but Jim read the English subtitles from a brochure held by a little girl in front of us.

It was very interesting, although we learned more than we really wanted to know about Brugge's history. We usually don't go in for things like this, but the pageant was interesting. The campsite was easy to find.

B, Brugge, Aug 25, Mon - 86

This morning we took the opportunity to see the town, and it's something to see. Brugge must be the most interesting and beautiful in this part of Europe.

We walked all over the place, and could not get enough of it. There is a high tower in the town market place, and the Brugge city hall is in another market square. At the moment there is a large grandstand in place for concerts, or something associated with the pageant we saw yesterday.

There are shops selling lace, and at one place there was a woman and two young girls who are weaving Belgium lace. It looks very complicated as they

weave many little wooden bobbins, each with fine thread. They keep rotating and intermixing them in a very complex intricate pattern.

We went to the Holiday Inn for lunch. Emmy had a \$12 Buffet, expensive for what it was—couple kinds of rice, smoked fish, stuffed salmon, tomato (excellent), cold chicken, dessert, and ice water. Jim had an omelet with French Fries for \$4, very good.

Took a drive to Damme. The countryside is beautiful with canals and dykes and it looks a lot like Holland. Continued on to DeHaan—a beach town—and drove along the coast. There were many campsites, mostly more or less permanent trailers, but not too many permanent people. We can't see the English Channel as there is a mountain of sand between the road and water.

The homes in Belgium are mostly built using brick, many painted white, and most have orange tile roofs. The campsite we stopped at, seems to be very narrow, and very, very deep. This one must have room for thousands of people, and there are dozens of campgrounds nearby, just across the street from the English Channel, but it's not too crowded at this time of the year. Later we crossed the road and walked on the sandy beach along the English Channel, but it was very cold for us. We each wore two pair of pants and a heavy coat to keep a warm.

B, Oostende, Aug 26, Tue - 87 - 128 - 11,170

Slept in until 6:00 AM so we could try to get on one of the crowded ferryboats.

We boarded a ferry for a visit to England, drove to Wales, a ferry to and from Ireland, to Scotland, more time in England, then by another ferry to The Netherlands. Crossed West and East Germany to West and East Berlin, then back to Mettlach, Germany. With Hannah and Toni as passengers, we traveled again to the Alsace in France. After a couple of days we returned to West Germany, and on October 26, we returned to the US .

1983

We arrived in West Germany on July 6. We bought a camper on the US Army base at Nellingen, near Stuttgart. We spent a couple of weeks in Germany, a night in Luxembourg, and after 10 days in Paris and other parts of France, we are entering Belgium.

We crossed the border into Belgium, and found no one cared we were there. Arrived in Brugge at 2:00 PM and parked and ate lunch. In Belgium, things seem to be more expensive than in France. Of course we don't buy enough to really compare, but it seems that way. We see a lot of big American autos in Belgium, an awful lot of brick houses, and most people speak English in addition to their own two languages—French and Flemish. A lot of street and information signs in Belgium are in both languages. But since the multi-language thing results from multi-nationalism, it still causes problems at times for the people.

The weather is still not good, but Jim went to the top of the main tower in the market square anyway. They only let people visit as a group. They let a given

number of people go up and spend some time, and they must come down before others are permitted to go to the top. Traffic control for the narrow steps.

We went to the nearby campsite early, and thought we would go back into town later in the evening, but neither of us felt like moving that much. We think our cooking gas problem is fixed now, there is no sign of a leak, but for some reason, now the new battery is dead.

We wonder about the meat in Europe. For some reason it looks and tastes different. The cows in the field look the same, and they are eating green grass, and appear nice and plump, but the flavor of the meat and the milk leaves something to be desired by our tastes.

B, Brugge, Aug 2, Tue - 12 - 95 - 1,590

We left early and dropped the camper at an auto dealer for them to see what could be the problem with the battery.

We walked to a bus stop, and rode downtown. We walked along the river, took many pictures, bought a lot of big delicious cherries, and some cookies. Nice and sunny at the beginning of the morning.

The Cathedral is unusual in that there are seven aisles (called naves), a large one in the middle and three smaller on each side. Makes the Cathedral (Brugge) almost square, rather than long like most. We have looked at some interesting brass items and other fleas, but did not buy this time. There were some brass plated old milk cans in Brugge for \$80, but no sale.

By the time we were ready to pick up the camper it was raining, so we took a cab. It had taken a while for the mechanic to find the problem, but when he did find it, all that the Dodge needed was a fuse. Cost nothing much to fix, but \$12 to find. They gave us an extra fuse just in case.

An hour later we discovered the battery was still not being charged and found the new fuse was blown, so replaced it with the spare. What next. (Later found it needed a much larger fuse than they had provided.)

We drove to Ghent in the rain. We had planned to drive back into Brugge and take a boat ride, but in the rain it's not worth the effort. There are a couple of scenic views in Ghent that are almost as interesting as in Brugge. In all our driving and thinking of other things we almost forgot to buy gasoline, so bought a little, and will buy more at a gas station where they take our Visa card.

We stopped on the bridge over the river on the main street of Ghent. Jim stayed in the camper while Emmy went into the very nice McDonald's for some French Fries. It sure took her a long time, but then Emmy came out with two Egg McMuffins for Jim! Almost impossible to find in Europe since most people do not eat eggs for breakfast, and not many eat breakfast outside their home. In Ghent, McDonald's fixes Egg McMuffins all day, and they made a nice lunch.

We now drove to Brussels, and Emmy was disappointed to find the jewelry store where she bought the gold and pearl bracelet a few years ago was closed again. We walked the city streets, the Grand Place, and visited the flea market just as it closed for the day.

We left at about 4:30 PM intending to stop at the campsite that was supposed to be just north of town, instead of the one south of Brussels where we have

camped a couple of times in the past. The road construction, the lack of signs, then we followed the wrong color sign, so we not only did not find the campsite, we almost ran out of gas before we found a station. We finally did get to Antwerp, and found the campsite, near the youth hostel we slept in last time we spent a night in this city.

We see many more bicycles in Belgium than we see in France and Germany. Holland is the champion in that department though. In the residential districts, the pleasant houses have shrubbery in front that needs trimming, apparently no one thought it necessary. No electricity in the campsite tonight, and no one seemed to know where the next campsite might be. This one only cost \$1.50.

B, Antwerp, Aug 3, Wed - 13 - 132 - 1,722

We slept well, and did not need the heater after all. Used the flashlight to read, as we are not yet sure what the problem is with the battery. Turned on the gas for the refrigerator last night and it did fine and we have plenty of ice this morning.

The day is starting out sunny, with pretty clouds. We drove to the area where there is an antique auction today, and found a parking place. Emmy saw a couple of things she wanted to bid on if she only had some idea what the Antwerp auctioneer was saying and what was going on.

A man suggested we visit the printing museum next door, and we found it interesting. It's called "Plantin-Moretus Museum," a 16th century printing works. They have one of the thirteen copies of the Guttenberg Bible. Elsewhere we have been told there are 12 copies printed on vellum, and 36 copies on paper, and another place says there are 21 complete volumes, but then who's counting! If only we could find just one copy somewhere! There was a big "Educational Opportunity" tour from America, there at the same time.

The St. Paul Cathedral (Antwerp) is in the process of being cleaned on the inside. They have completed the cleaning of the western end, then constructed a floor-to-ceiling partition, and are now cleaning the other end. On the outside, the east end has multi-storied buildings built right up against the Antwerp Cathedral, completely hiding the lower part of the east end. Have not seen that before, except in Seville, Spain where there were buildings very close to that huge Cathedral. One man said they have been cleaning this Cathedral for 30 years, and they don't know when it will be completed.

Antwerp's Grand Place is not as grand as the one in Brussels, but the outside of city hall is very fine. Emmy also found a library stool/end table in an antique store. Jim said he could make a copy, and he can, but will he? Would have purchased it if the price had come down a little. As a table, it was 17 1/2 inches high, and half of it folded up and made a step stool with four steps. Very sturdy construction, and each step was inlaid with leather. Remember the price was about \$150, plus any shipping costs.

We took the subway to the main RR Station and walked around the area and ate another Egg McMuffin at the very nice two-story McDonald's with sidewalk tables. Emmy had a McRib that she liked. McDonald's had a lady at the restroom door who collected a small sum of money. Don't know if that system is

to keep the restrooms clean, or to employ old women. Sometimes it seems to be the one, and sometimes the other, and it works for both reasons.

As we neared the Dutch border, we stopped and waited for a small store to open so we could spend some of our Belgium money, then spent the rest for gasoline.

After a couple of days in The Netherlands, we visited cousins in Germany, and with Linda and Margit we toured southern France, crossed Italy to Venice, then they went home. We continued through Italy, across Switzerland, Liechtenstein, and back to Mettlach. With Toni as passenger we visited France, then with several cousins in Germany. Spent a couple more days in France before we parked the camper, and returned to the US on September 30.

1985

We arrived in West Germany on May 30. For the next two weeks we did some sightseeing in Germany, spent a few days in The Netherlands, and these couple of days in Belgium.

We stopped at a little town near the Belgium border to buy groceries with the last of our Dutch money. The wind was blowing so hard, we almost lost the bag of groceries. We stopped at the border to try to get a return of the tax we paid for the camper repair, but they told us we must spend more money before they refund anything. The rules vary from country to country, and year to year.

When we got near Antwerp, the off-ramp sign said "Antwerp North" and should have said "only." We forgot, until we were almost to the other side of town, they only have one off-ramp. We looked around some, and made several phone calls trying to find the cost to send the camper and us home on the same ship, at the end of this trip. The camper alone would cost about \$2500 to ship to Los Angeles, and \$400 less to New York. Autos are much cheaper, as ships are made especially for cars, but the camper is too high to fit in the place that a car will fit. But no one has room for us on the same ship, at any price.

The streets in Antwerp are rough, we think more so than other large cities. Many streets are cobblestone, and others are just rough. We looked around in the area near the city hall and the Cathedral (Antwerp), then left for Ghent. Found a nice campsite, nice showers and all, then settled in for the night. We are on the edge of a large recreation area. Belgium and Holland are very big for this kind of thing.

B, Ghent, June 14, Fri - 7 - 165 - 1,048

Left the campsite at 8:30 and spent the day in our favorite two towns in Belgium, Ghent and Brugge.

We stopped at the flower market, then looked for food in the outdoor market. Emmy bought a smoked Mackerel, some olives, American cheese, sourdough bread, and cherries. At one fish market in Ghent the young woman was broadcasting her sales pitch in a sing-song manner. Emmy asked a man nearby what she was saying, and he said it was a sing-song sales pitch about the low price, and good quality of her herring. She kept wrapping up the people's orders, and throwing in a small amount of onion. She was so serious looking, and just kept up this chatter—never have a tape recorder when we need one.

We found a wedding in progress in the Ghent City Hall. They were dressed in gown and tuxedo, and went through some kind of ceremony where they signed a book, then went into another room, and we think they went up some stairs. There was an organist playing while this was going on, but this didn't seem to be a church or chapel.

Jim ate an Egg McMuffin and Emmy ate chicken McNuggets at McDonald's in Ghent. We ate in the upstairs eating area where we can look across the beautiful town square, one of the most remarkable views from a McDonald's,

anywhere in the world. At a local book store we found a copy of "Gone with the Wind" in Flemish, for Linda's collection. (Later we were told Dutch and Flemish are mostly the same language, and she has the book in Dutch.)

We looked around the town some more, then drove on to Brugge. We walked for a while and the sun did shine a little. We always look at the tourists in the boats taking the tour of Brugge, and we think it would be fun to take a boat ride sometime. We are always so busy just looking, we can't be bothered spending our time in a boat where all we could do is look up at the buildings. Instead, while we walk, we can see up, down, around and inside. Maybe we just ain't got no romance!

They have a lot of horse drawn carriages, and unlike any other city where we have seen horses and carriages, they have a plastic sheet, like a diaper, extending from under the horses tail to a little storage place, and it keeps the street of Brugge (and shoes) clean.

We stopped in the McDonald's and talked to the Hostess. She said they tried Egg McMuffin, but it did not sell well in this town. A very interesting lady, from England. This McDonald's also had a cleaning lady who is tipped when the washrooms are used. Most McDonald's do not charge for restrooms, but this does provide income for some old ladies. We didn't eat at this McDonald's, but did stop at an outdoor cafe on the main town square for hot chocolate. (1991—This McDonald's is now out of business.)

We easily found the campsite, and after we were hooked up to the electricity and all, two police cars came in, driving very rapidly. Then more police came and they had heated discussions with a couple groups of people. We would just as soon not be here. We asked one of the police if we should leave and find another place, and he said no.

After the police left, there were a couple of groups of people talking and having a loud, but apparently friendly, discussion right near our camper. We felt if we left, it might make someone mad, and could make more problems. This whole thing didn't seem to bother other people, including a lot of little kids who were playing around among the groups of people. Soon all was quiet and we went to sleep. Have no idea what was going on.

B, Brugge, June 15, Sat - 8 - 35 - 1,083

We had no more problem, but are glad to leave this campsite. It's only 7:30 AM and no one else is up, and the sun is shining. We drove to the English Channel then south along the coast. Near Nieuwpoort there is a large brick Gothic style church, and many, many large apartment buildings. The beach is sandy, with plenty of small changing booths.

We spent the next couple of weeks in northern France and in Paris, then back to the cousins in West Germany. We then crossed France and Switzerland to visit many places in Italy. We crossed the Adriatic Sea to spend a week in Yugoslavia, including Dubrovnik, Split, and Zagreb, then crossed the border into Austria.

We went into Czechoslovakia, visited Poland, then across East Germany to the West. We boarded a ferry to Denmark, another to Sweden, then back to Denmark. We crossed Germany for another visit with the cousins in Mettlach. We drove across Luxembourg, and now we entered Belgium.

We crossed into Belgium at 8:20 after 25 miles in Luxembourg. There was no reason to stop at the border, just a flashing yellow light. As we are driving in Belgium we see gasoline stations advertising they are in Luxembourg. What we have figured is that the entire road and everything on the left is Belgium, but the gas stations setting a little back from the road on the east are in Luxembourg, and their gasoline is cheaper. Luxembourg issues its own money with their own pictures, etc., but they are really using Belgium money.

We are now driving through Bastogne, Belgium famous for the Battle of the Bulge in WW II. (This is where the General said "NUTS" when the Germans asked him to surrender.) We see dozens of "Friteries" along the road. There are more of them here than in other parts of Belgium and in France, but these small roadside restaurants are closed because this is Sunday.

We stopped in downtown Brussels at about 12:00 noon. There's a lot of traffic for a Sunday. We see a lot of police cars and many police in the area. We found a parking place right at the curb in the back of the City Hall, and we walked through it to the Grand Place, where there was a bird market underway.

When we went to the tourist office to get some information, Jim asked what was going on. The girl in Brussels said they were protesting about the missiles, and Jim said that must mean they were protesting against the Soviets. She said, "The US also, we don't like your military position." Jim said, "Did you like our Military position in 1944 when we liberated Belgium?" The girl said she wasn't alive then, and Jim said she better study her history.

A big parade was to start sometime in the afternoon and the last thing we want is to be stuck in a big traffic jam. We drove past the antique market because there was no place to stop, let alone park, for blocks from there. Emmy was so sad that we missed the flea market!

We left Belgium and drove to Rotterdam, put the camper and us on a ship and on October 21 we sailed to London. Then we spent 10 days crossing the Atlantic Ocean to Montreal, Canada on the SS Stefan Batory. From there we drove the camper home to California

1988

We only spent a couple of hours in the edge of Belgium, in 1988.

We decided to drive to Leige, Belgium to see if that was the town we remember. Usually as we leave the campsite in the morning, Jim eats a banana, and Emmy has a piece of fruit of some kind, then we stop near noon for brunch. So on the way out of Aachen we stopped for our brunch, then drove on in the rain. Border crossings in places like this, and most other places these days, are just no problem, many times we are just waved on without even stopping. The Autobahn in Belgium, and the approach (detour, etc.) to Leige was a construction mess.

Little towns, and all the houses in Belgium really do look different from those in Germany. Many Belgium houses are made from a red brick, with white trim and dark roofs. Pretty countryside, many farms, and pastures filled cows. Leige is interesting, a long, long main street, and while it looks a little different than we remember, Jim thinks Leige may be the city we almost, but not quite, remember from some years ago.

We returned to Germany, and visited with cousin Reinhold. We spent time in France, Switzerland and Italy. More time in Yugoslavia, Austria, back to West Germany and returned to the US on Dec 6.

1991

Our plane landed in Frankfurt, Germany (no more East or West!) on August 9. On the exact day that Gorbachev was thrown out of office we picked up our rented RV. We were concerned that the Soviet Army in Eastern Germany might be called to Moscow, so we took it easy for a couple of days.

We visited former East Germany, including five nights in Berlin. We then drove to Poland and visited friends in Poznan and Gdansk, on to Warsaw and Kraków, then into Czechoslovakia and magnificent Prague. Back to Eastern Germany, especially remarkable Dresden. After another week in Germany, we drove across Luxembourg (again!), on our way to Paris. After a couple of days we returned to Mettlach, picked up Hugo, Maria, and Monika and crossed Luxembourg (again!) and France to Montivilliers, saw a little more of Normandy, then into Belgium.

We drove the Autoroute (no charge) to Brugge, Belgium, arriving at dusk. As we got off the Autoroute, we immediately saw the campground we have stayed in a couple of times before, and saw a new motel just across the street. We drove to near downtown, and stopped at a grocery store. Then it dawned on us that we have no Belgium money! We went back to the motel and checked Hugo and Maria into a \$60 room that was quite nice. Two beds, a TV with cable, telephone and a nice bath.

At the motel desk, Jim changed some money, and asked if we could camp in the motel parking lot for the night. The lady said that would be fine, so we went back to the Brugge grocery store for food, then Emmy fixed dinner in the RV for the four of us. Hugo and Maria have insisted they are not interested in eating anywhere but in the RV. They brought food from home, and they buy more when we are in a market. And we think that is just the way to do it, most all the time.

B, Brugge, Oct 16, Wed, 52- 0 - 243 - 6354

This morning we drove and parked and walked around Brugge with Hugo and Maria.

We loved the place as usual, and we are sure they did also. We find it "puzzling" when we find that people in Europe haven't seen some of the best sights, but then there are a lot of sights to see. Again, the description of Brugge is difficult for this Journal. It's the purpose of this Journal to tell a little of what we do, and since there are libraries filled with information about the places we see, there isn't much use in trying to really describe them here. In our garage there are boxes and boxes of maps, books, and descriptive literature about all our trips, so if more than sketchy detail is needed, you must look elsewhere.

But! Brugge is very special. It's about the most charming city in this part of Europe, crossed and recrossed by canals, and with exceptional buildings lining both the canals and the streets. About the only change we can see from the past, McDonald's is out of business! Now that is unusual, and we do wonder why. Come to think of it though, in ancient cities like Brugge, McDonald's existed for such a few years that it just won't make the town history books.

We ate breakfast (Hugo and Maria eat more than we usually eat this time of the day) right in the center of the main parking lot, smack in the main city square surrounded by very impressive buildings. Hugo was impressed!

After a couple of hours of walking, we drove to the coast and visited a couple of places there, then drove the Autoroute to Gent. We found a parking place near downtown Gent, and soon a street car came by, within an inch of the camper's side mirror! The driver of the streetcar didn't seem to mind, but Jim immediately parked closer to the curb, so the next streetcar passed six inches away!

After lunch we walked and walked throughout downtown Gent, ate ice-cream sundaes at McDonald's, then decided to look for a hotel room a little closer to Brussels.

We had expected to find a motel at one of the rest stops, but found none so got off at Aalst to look for a room. The only nice hotel we found did not have a place to park the camper, and the room had only one bed. Hugo and Maria prefer two beds. The desk clerk called other hotels to find accommodations for us, then said there is a convention in Brussels, and hotels and motels in this part of the country are all filled.

Jim tried, with no luck, to call the motel where we stayed last night. In the rain we just took the chance and drove the 50 miles or so back to Brugge. We were happy to find they had a room for Hugo and Maria, and a place in the parking lot for us! Not what we wanted to do, but it worked just find.

B, Brugge, Oct 17, Thu, 53 - 0 - 155 - 6509

This morning we have to re-drive all those miles we drove to get back to Brugge last night. The map shows "Brussel" and "Bruxelles," but then most every city and every street in Belgium has two names, one in French and one in Flemish. Boy, this multiple language problem is a mess, everywhere.

When we arrived in Brussels this morning, we found the street we remember with the huge church right in the middle, then found the street disappeared into a tunnel we don't remember from other years. We think it's new, but it's possible we just didn't know it existed.

Traffic was just stop and go for a long time, and finally it got even worse as we merged with another tunnel filled with cars. Just as soon as we could get out of there, we drove the surface streets and found a parking place across the plaza from the Cathedral (Brussels). What a beautiful building now that it has been cleaned. Jim wanted to visit inside, but one thing and another, he forgot and didn't make it.

We walked around the city with Hugo and Maria for awhile. We visited the Grand Place, with the Brussels City Hall, and walked through the covered shopping mall that was built a hundred years ago, at least. It goes on for a couple of blocks, with some stores with very expensive goods, and some not so expensive. We shopped for food, walked some more, drove some more, and left on the Autoroute, headed toward Luxembourg. We stopped for lunch somewhere along the way, enjoyed the beautiful fields and woodlands, and arrived at Hugo's at about 4:00PM.

Proceeded across Belgium and Luxembourg, then returned Hugo and Maria to Mettlach. We returned the rented RV to the dealer, and on October 19, we flew back to the US.