

FRANCE June 6-20, 2002

We left Vero Beach for New York City on Thursday morning and arrived at JFK Airport without event. After transfer to our Holiday Inn suite, we changed clothes and took the bus and subway to Manhattan. We picked up tickets for "Oklahoma" at the Gershwin Theater but first we had dinner at our favorite French restaurant, Pergola Des Artistes, at 252 West 46th Street, right in the heart of the theater district. Judy had the Bouillabaisse that was not as good as she remembered at Café du Soir, at home. I had the fillet mignon with French onion soup that was very good.

The show was just as I had remembered. I knew all of the songs, the costumes were colorful and the dancing excellent. It was a fun evening, in spite of the rain.

Our hotel room was superb! The suite had a living room, bedroom and bathroom and was well appointed and clean. We slept very well and awoke refreshed the next morning.

Friday, June 7, 2002

The Concorde lounge in JFK airport is exquisite! Complementary telephone service at your seat and complementary brunch is available, whatever you want to eat. I took a few pictures of the plane. You will notice the curved wings and the pointed nose.



There were also seats designed for lounging or sleeping. The seats were arranged in groups so that families or business groups could be together and you could get away from anyone whose noise you didn't wish to endure. There was a television with a remote control so that you could select your own programming. Throughout the rest of the lounge, classical music was played at low volume on the sound system. Waitresses walked about the area, taking orders and delivering your food on TV trays

right to where you were sitting.

The Concorde pilot explained the various sounds that would be heard as we take off and reach supersonic speeds. After each description, he assured us that this was normal. No matter what would happen, it was normal. The jet runs much faster on the airstrip, than does a regular jet. We were well over the ocean before breaking the [sound barrier](#). As I recall, there is a sonic boom after the jet's speed exceeds the speed of sound, over the ocean it would make no difference.

After we reached our cruising altitude of 60,000 feet, we attained cruising speed of 1,350 or Mach 2, that is, twice the speed of sound. That's more than one mile each three seconds.

In flight service was superb. There were about four stewardesses assigned to our cabin, including the purser who was the cabin service supervisor. As we were being seated, they took drink orders. Champagne, wines as well as cocktails and soft drinks were available, all without charge. As soon as we attained cruising level, the drinks were delivered along with the appetizer, a lobster salad. Thereafter, the order for main course was received and we ate lamb with cheese potatoes and tiny green beans which were wrapped in a bundle by a

piece of bacon. A tin of chocolates was included. Following the main meal, dessert was served, either a pears in cream pudding or cheese and biscuits (crackers). More wine was served throughout the meal and port wine and coffee or tea was served afterwards.

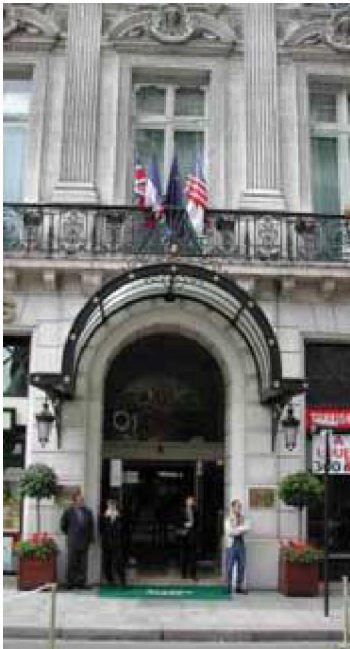
After the dinner dishes were collected orders were taken for very expensive Concorde merchandise. We perused the catalog and were amazed at the prices for a fountain pen, a scarf and a watch.

There is a five-hour time difference between New York and London so we set our watches ahead and arrived at about 9:30 p.m. Even though it was a short day, we were tired and fell asleep easily in our hotel room that night.

Saturday, June 8, 2002

Judy was quite well asleep so I donned my running clothes and set out for a jaunt. I found that the first road I took wound up on the motorway so I reversed and ran around the hotel instead. As this hotel is connected to the airport terminal by a tube walkway, I realized that the hotel, The Hilton, was built in the circle of a cloverleaf. I enjoyed the run as the weather was very nice, particularly for London, the temperature was about 68 and the sky was clear. Following our buffet breakfast, we boarded the plane for Paris. At the check-in, the clerk observed that our baggage was overweight by about 10 kilos. He then weighed our hand baggage and said that he could reduce the overage by 6 kilos because we did not carry much but that would cost us 40 Euros. We explained that had British Airways not cancelled our earlier flight, he would not have been weighing our baggage as it would have been checked directly to Paris. He thought that was a good excuse and offered to call the supervisor for a waiver. As we were waiting, I noticed that the scale showed 1.6 kilos when it was empty. As there were four weighings of the four bags, this meant we had seven kilos further reduction. At that he said, "no problem" and tried to zero the scale. There was no further talk of charges and he wished us a good trip.

Our flight to Paris was uneventful and we arrived to be met at the baggage claim by our driver, Patrick, who would take us to the Hotel Scribe. As we arrived we saw this beautiful hotel in downtown Paris:



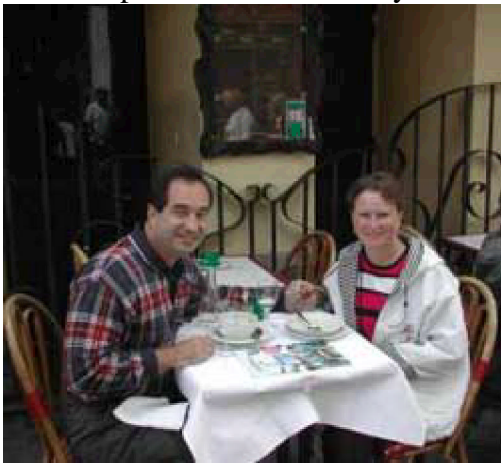
Our room was spacious and well appointed. We changed a few clothes and set out for the Metro to go to Montmartre. This hilltop community was the home to various street painters and craftsmen as well as the Basilique du Sacré-Coeur.



Shown to the left is a typical street with vendors and artists. Below is the grand view of the city taken from this hilltop promenade.



After seeing the area, we selected an outdoor seat at a café for our first real French meal. We selected French onion soup to see if it was really done like we do at home, besides it was a little cool and we needed a rest.



The food was good and a few portraiturees were trying to get us buy a caricature.

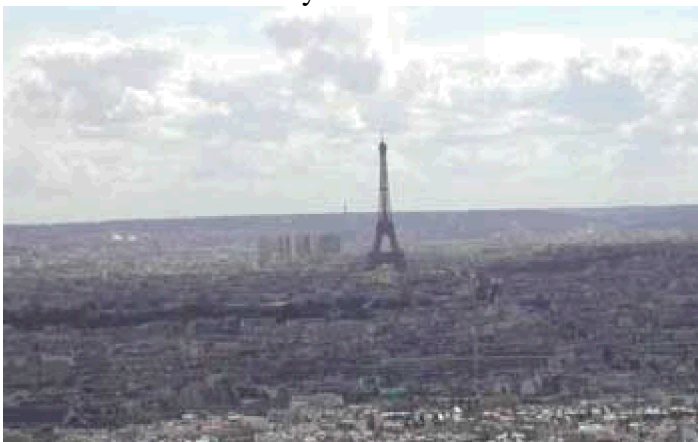
We said no but bought some postcards and stamps instead.

Nearby, a wedding was taking place in the chapel. The picture I took does not do justice to the stain-glass window that was inside.

We then entered the Basilique and walked up to the dome for a bird's eye view of the city:



From the dome, there is an expansive view of the city that we will see tomorrow on our city tour.



Following our visit, we were hungry and stopped for our dinner. We got the big meal with aperitif, appetizer, entrée and dessert. It came with a Kir Royal, and we both selected escargot. Judy got the river trout and I the filet of beef. For dessert, I selected the Crepe Suzette that was superb and Judy got the puff pastry with ice cream and chocolate sauce. All was very good and our American-style French was rather authentic. Here we are finishing the meal at the restaurant:



As we rode home in the subway, called the Metro, we packed into a car because we only had one stop. Unfortunately, on my first trip to France, on the first day, within the first seven hours, the man behind me was a pickpocket. Before I got off, he had my wallet and my cash. We immediately returned to the hotel and called in the credit cards and then went to the police station to make a report and get a substitute drivers license. From now on, Judy will handle the money in her around the neck purse.

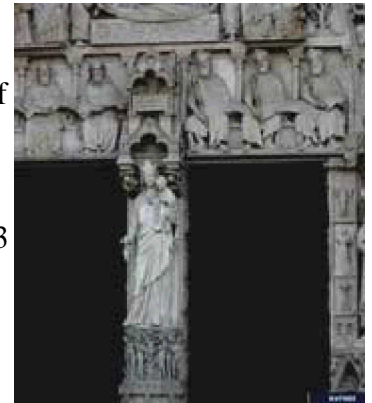


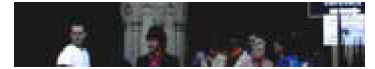
Sunday, June 9, 2002

Today we went on tour with our guide, Gabriel, and driver. Our first stop was close to home, The Lovre, the national art museum of France, and the largest museum in the world. Outside, the entrance is below the ground so this pyramid was designed to be a unique entry point.



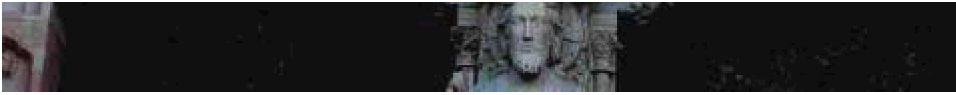
Next stop was the Île de la Cité, the island in the middle of the Seine River, little more than ½ mile long, the home of the famous Notre-Dame. Notre-Dame literally means, “Our Lady” and hence refers to the Virgin Mary. The famous church cathedral was built between 1163 and 1375 by armies of craftsmen. This façade depicts the Virgin Mary and the kings of the Bible, overhead.



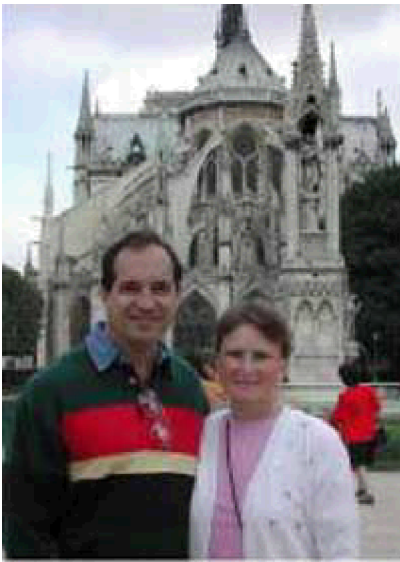
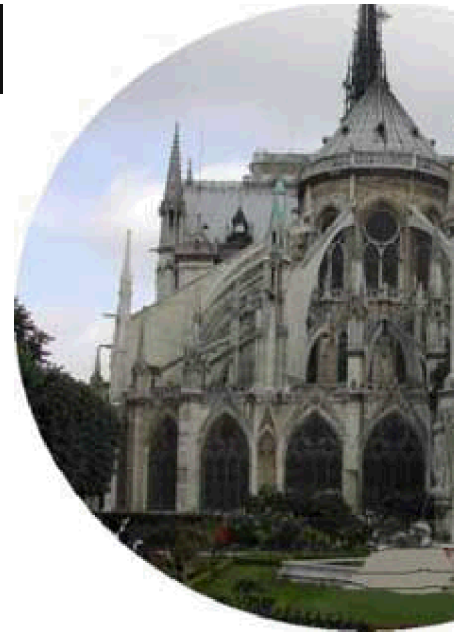


This rather unique entrance depicts the Final Judgment. You will note that Jesus sits on the throne below which an angel leads God's people on the left who look up to Him while Satan leads those on the right, in chains to Hades. Below, the dead are pushing the lids of their coffins to arise.

Inside the cathedral, beautiful stained glass windows adorn the sanctuary, many of them 1,000 years old. A photo will not do them justice.



Outside the cathedral the rather unique Flying Buttresses can be seen. These external supports surrounding the central tower brace the roof from outside, allowing an extended, unsupported interior. This engineering design was typical of a high Gothic cathedral built before the Middle Ages.



We just had to get our faces in front of this place.

Next we visit Versailles, the homes of Louis XIV through XVI. This is special because Louis XVI was the last king before the French Revolution. Following the Revolution, the contents of Versailles were sold at an auction that lasted one year, the Bastille was torn down and Napoleon Bonaparte crowned himself emperor of France.



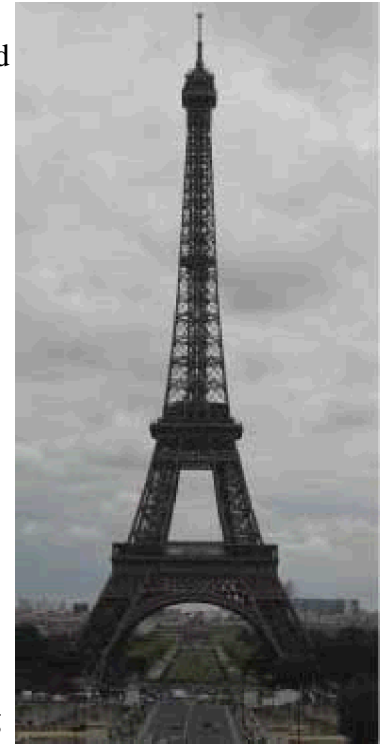
Outside the palace, Louis had fascinating gardens and fountains. When he was in residence the fountains were operated only upon his demand. The situation is not much different today, they are operated only for a few hours each Sunday. This fountain is of a goddess who asked for a drink of water. When her request was denied, she turned the townspeople into toads and other creatures. In this fountain the goddess is in the center sprayed by the fountain, the small creatures on the steps are the toads. We saw many fountains, statues, topiaries, manicured plants including citrus trees that are in large pots so that they may be taken in, in the winter.

This photo shows the palace at the end of the long grass pathway bordered by statues of the gods of mythology. Inside the palace, the king and queen slept, entertained guests and worshipped. Very little of the original furnishings is available as a result of the auction.





Returning to Paris from the southwest, we enter the city through the Eiffel Tower. Named after its architect, the tower was once the highest structure in the world and commemorated the World's Fair of 1889.



Napoleon Bonaparte was certainly one of France's most famous figures having led the people in the first Revolution, freeing them from the taxation tyranny of the king, only to be enslaved to the self-proclaimed emperor. His body lies in the crypt in this building. This dome and museum commemorates his leadership of the Revolution and behind it is the War Hospital for the many wounded in his battles. Today, the hospital is the home for the museum, with one wing still used for disabled veterans.

Monday, June 10 2002

Our last full day in Paris, we reserved for the Louvre. We arrived shortly after opening, there was no line to enter the ticket area and though there were lines to buy tickets, the ticket machines that used credit cards were available without wait. We rented a headset that gave descriptions and backgrounds of some of the works that were presented here. The headset was well worthwhile and we got one for each of us. As I expected there would be a mass of people at the Mona Lisa in line, we walked briskly through the various Italian masters and went right to the spot. We were surprised that the portrait was not of a larger size. She is mounted behind a glass frame box and though there is a low rope line, there were no obvious special protections. We spent another four hours seeing the paintings and listening to our introductions, learning what makes this art special: the arrangement of the objects or people in the picture, the direction and intensity of the lighting and the direction or twisting of the bodies within the painting direct the eye to the focal point and give life or depth to the work.



Later that day, we went on a walking tour of the Île de la Cité and Île St. Louis. We walked for hours and enjoyed seeing the various places we had heard about and had driven by on our city tour. On the way home, we stopped at the painter whose art Judy enjoyed the most and bought a small watercolor as a remembrance. Upon reaching the hotel, we could not wait to soak our tired feet in the big tub and take a nap before dinner.

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Our dinner that night was a special treat. We took a dinner cruise of the Siene on the Bateaux Mouches. This is one of the biggest boats that cruises the river and has the brightest lights for illuminating the buildings and monuments on the riverside. They started with Hors d'Oeuvres and champagne. Following was the appetizer and both bottles of red and white wine. Then came the entrée, cheese and dessert. I couldn't drink anymore but they offered port to boot. Judy helped me home and I slept *very* well. The cruise was very nice and the lights illuminated the various places. We sailed very close to the Eiffel Tower and the petit Statue of Liberty. This Statute was given to the French by the US on the 100th anniversary of their gift to us of the Statute in NY.



Tuesday, June 11, 2002

Today we left Paris early to pick up our car and drive westward to the Normandy District. Judy drove and I read the map. We stopped on the way at Rouen, the seaport near Paris. It is a big town and had a famous cathedral Notre Dame that Monét had painted on many occasions to catch the different lighting. This town was also famous for the death of [Joan of Arc](#) who was burned at the stake for supporting the French king instead of the English one who was then in power. We toured both the cathedral and the monument and church established to memorialize the heroine before continuing to Bayeux. We took the country route to better see the rest of France. Indeed we saw, cows, horses and sheep, farm houses and country side.

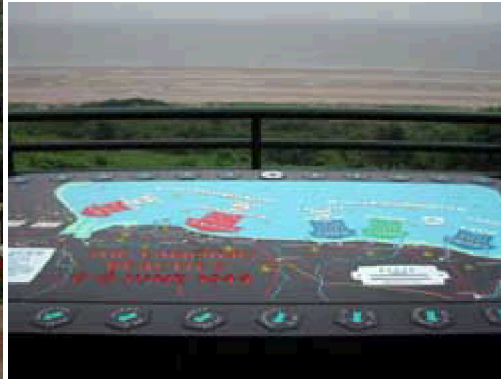


We went directly to the landing area in Normandy, Omaha Beach and saw the American cemetery where 12,000 soldiers are buried. There are also maps showing where the troops landed by sea, parachute and air. This famous battle, referred to as D-day turned the war around by returning France away from German occupation, leading to the surrender of the Germans and the end of the war. One often sees the rows of crosses depicted.

We saw that each cross had the soldier's name and unit engraved. We saw the beach where the ships landed.

This statue is to commemorate those who gave their lives for freedom.





That evening we had dinner at a local restaurant and Judy tried the local delicacies. Paté fau gra (goose liver) was the featured appetizer, tripe (we later found out was cow udder) is the local entrée, three spreadable cheeses (all of which appeared to be brie) and rice pudding was served for dessert. Jim had the more traditional vegetable pastry (which was similar to a salad), hunk of beef and chocolate mousse. There was a little discussion when the bill came because Jim did not have cheese and Judy did yet the bill was the same. The waiter and the supervisor conspired to declare that Jim did not specify, in advance that he was selecting the 14 euro meal and though we tried to explain in both English and French, there was no changing. Not wishing to make a scene over two bucks, I declared, “no problem.” Apparently it was difficult for them to change one of their computerized checks because I could see no reason why they could not make the

change one of their computerized checks because I could see no reason why they could not make the adjustment. They offered to give us coffee without charge to make up the difference.

This restaurant was unique in that we were seated with two other couples at a large oval table. We found that the others were from England on holiday here. They were very pleasant and we all talked together about what we had seen and done. Judy asked their occupations, one was a plumber, and his date was a factory worker. The second couple both worked at the Rolls Royce factory making airplane motors. She had a sister who lived in Normandy so they came annually and she spoke French well. The plumber had taken his car on a ferry from England and did not speak French at all although his date spoke French.

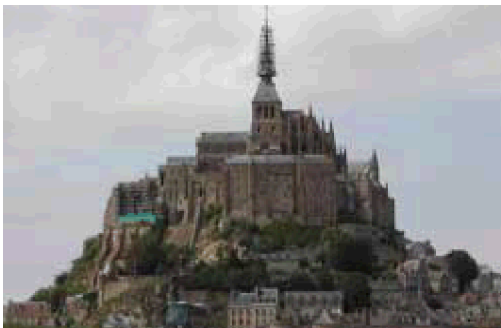
On language, we found that one can get by in Paris without any French however, even in a place like Bayeux, the closest town to the American cemetery where many American and British visitors go, it would be very helpful to know "shopping French." Menus are commonly found in French with English subtitles so thankfully, eating is not a problem but few people were able to give directions or even prices in English outside of the capitol. Nevertheless, contrary to common understanding, we found all of the French people with whom we came in contact to be cordial and friendly, regardless of whether we spoke French or English.

Wednesday, June 12, 2002

Our first stop today was to see the Bayeux Tapestry. This incredible work was made hundreds of years ago to portray the work of William the Conqueror, the French king who took over England in 1050. The tapestry is about 80 yards long and shows the struggle between the French and the English.

Thereafter, we went to a more modern war and saw the Circle 360 theatre presentation of the World War II assault. It was very well done, without words, so there was no translation problem. It compared life today in the town with the activities that took place in 1944. They also had shore scenes and maps. This one shows the air raids. The next shows the ground landing by sea.

I was amazed that the airplanes used were so crude. I have forgotten how things were when I was a boy.



Following the war memorial we drove cross-country to Mont St. Michel, a Benedictine Abbey perched on an island off the Normandy coast. The following photos show the chapel, which is simple in design as it was for the monks to worship. St. Michel, for whom the monastery was named is pictured here.





Thursday, June 13, 2002

We leave France today and drove like madmen from Bayeux to Paris to catch the Eurostar train. Judy did very well and drove through central Paris to the train station without injuring anyone seriously. We filled our gas tank and dropped off the car without a hitch.



The Eurostar is a fine train. Judging from the speed of the cars that we were passing, the train sped through northern France at about 90 miles per hour. The time under the English Channel is only 20 minutes. The balance of the three-hour journey was spent running through southern England on our way to Waterloo train station in London.

Upon arrival we were met by a fine, old, English gentleman who took us to our hotel. On the way, we stopped at the theatre where *Mama Mia* was playing to see if we could get tickets for tonight. While we were waiting in line, watching others get tickets we advanced in line until the lady before us was told that there was only one ticket left, a back row, partially obscured view seat. Just five minutes too late! Our chauffer was waiting with the car and upon our suggestion, called a ticket booking agent and got us tickets to the hit show, *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*. When we got to the hotel, our reservation had been canceled but they reinstated it without problem. Our room was one of the largest we have ever slept in. It was just beautiful. We dropped off our bags, changed our clothes and went off for dinner and theatre. Judy had traditional fish and chips, I had steak and mushroom pie. There was a pastry table as we went in and I selected the Cappuccino cake. It was very good.

A short walk and we were at the theatre. It was crowded but the show was very good. We thought that Abbie would have to be a little older before she would appreciate it as there was excessive use of the G word and violence.

Friday, June 14, 2002

Judy said that she really enjoyed the bed last night; it was big enough for her. I dreamed of working out in the Fitness Suite. There were some light dumbbells, a few machines and an exercise mat. Judy had been asking me for some triceps exercises so that she does not get flabby arms so we went through some together. After she was done, I continued to enjoy myself while listening to a German TV music station. After showers in a bathroom as large as one of the apartments we rent, we went down for breakfast and to join our group.



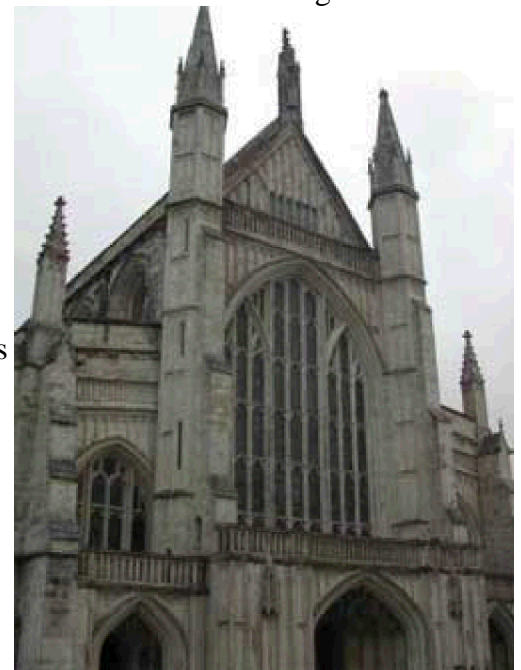
ever since.

Thus the English language contacts the words of the Anglos, the Saxons from Germany, the French from Normandy and the Scandinavians, represented by the Vikings and the Danes.



After our last traditional lunch at an English pub, we board the bus for the rest of our trip, the cruise on the Queen Elizabeth II, known as the QE2. The ship is a stately, old ship and those who greet us are generally of British heritage. We met our tablemates, at dinner on our first evening, Fred and Jan, who hail from Duluth, Minnesota. This retired couple has retired from the cerebral occupations of university professor and community librarian respectively. We enjoyed our conversations with them through our journey. There are no port stops on a trans-Atlantic voyage so the lectures and activities consume our time. Of course our first stop on board is to check out the Fitness Center. The young lad from Australia checked Judy's fat level and found it to be rather good, though she was holding a bit too much water. He encouraged her to continue her thrice-weekly interval running and to drink three liters of water daily. More frequent small meals would also be helpful in maintaining the blood sugar level and increasing the protein level of the additional meals would also help to detoxify her skin, resulting in additional fat and water loss. He had various potions to sell but we signed up for the morning treadmill sessions.

After settling the bill, we headed off to Winchester on our way to Southampton. Winchester was the national capital of England from its start in 975 until William the Conqueror, from Bayeux, France took over in 1075 and transferred the capital to London. Hence some very old structures are seen here. The foundation of the thousand-year-old castle was excavated from the ground showing the layout of the original castle. There was a great hall which had housed the knights of the round table. The knights were attributed to King Arthur, a mythical or legendary king, who probably never existed, at least not in the royal lineage. The first English king, King Alfred, is pictured here. Also shown is the famous Winchester Cathedral. This building reflects the Gothic architecture that King William, the Conqueror, developed instead of the Norman style that was previously common. Gothic architecture is distinguished by the narrow columns and pointed arches whereas Roman architecture had broad columns and rounded arches. Prior to the establishment of England, the area was a set of smaller kingdoms occupied by Saxons. When the Anglos took over, the term England was coined and has been the name



Saturday, June 15, 2002

Today we did our treadmill runs for 20 minutes as planned except that Judy used an elliptical bike and I used a Stairmaster. After breakfast, we planned to go to the bridge lecture to see how others did it and then while Judy napped, I checked out the slot machines. There was a staff member there to explain how they operated, demonstrate and show the inside of the machine. It seems that they are completely operated by a small computer today. The wheels are really just for show. When it is programmed to pay-off, it does though such events are established at random. The computer can be directed to show just what the last 50 spins were as all of this data is captured inside it. Rather interesting, but if I had ever had a mind to play them, it was dispelled.

Just before lunch was dance class. I now understand that besides baseball, football and basketball, dancing is just not one of those activities for which I was designed. My lack of balance and coordination is just too much for Judy to bear. She was frustrated. Oh well. I have other features.

Though Judy had originally planned to take the watercolor class and I was going to try shuffleboard, we agreed to play duplicate bridge that afternoon, to see how the games were run on this ship. With such an old crowd, it was easy to get six tables of duplicate and a few more of Rubber Bridge. Our minds must have been on something else and we finished last though we had fun. We can only improve from there so we will be back again to show them that we really do have some understanding of the game.

Tonight's show was splendid! They had a group of kids, probably about 30 years old, who played rock songs from the 60s. The theme of this cruise is rock music from the 60s. They played songs that we found familiar and our feet were tapping and heads bobbing to the Beatles, Simon & Garfunkel, the Rolling Stones, Monkees and the Who. They did a fine job even though the songs were all well before their time. I am confident that, were my parents there, they would have left early wagging their heads and saying, "we didn't like that music then and it hasn't gotten any better." There were a number of gray heads that did that as the show progressed and the music got louder. Before the program began, we wisely switched seats from the third row to the back recognizing that seeing was not important in this activity.

As we approach our last days of this Trans-Atlantic journey, we find that each day is pretty much the same as the one preceding it. The food is good, we enjoy our tablemates and our reading material. The lectures vary in their interest, we enjoy the daily duplicate bridge game but we have decided that we don't wish to direct the bridge games on this cruise because its too boring, particularly if you can't play because you're directing. I guess that's why the older population seems to be quite content, there is not too much to do.

Our tablemates took this photo on the last formal night.

