



GHS

Wreadin' Writin' 'n' Wreminiscin

The European Tour... Summer 1961

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It took most of the year to prepare the Senior Chorus for the European Tour in the summer of 1961. At the time of the tour, Gerry Mack had the Senior Chorus sounding more like the Robert Shaw Chorale, not a high school choir. The community pitched in, with the parents putting on the Vienna Follies to raise money.

We left New ark in a Flying Tigers Lockheed Super H Constellation. Yep, four propellers and too many hours. We took bunches of sleeping pills. They didn't work for me. The exhaust shoots out of the engines above the wings, and it w as quite a sight in the dark.

After our performance at the International Music Educators Conference, we had about tw o concerts for every three nights. We had a sing off w ith the Vienna Boys Choir at their place. We w ould sing a song, they w ould sing a song, we w ould sing a song; you get the idea. I thought it w as corny.

There w ere tw o highpoints on the tour for me. The first w as a performance of Cherubini's Mass in C Minor that we gave at the Dominican Church in Vienna. We arrived early at this musty-smelling stucco church on a narrow lane in the city. From the choir loft we could not see any of the pew s below . All the stops on the four manual organ w ere in German, so we had a panicked call to the church organist to come so he could set the stops. He made it in time. We could not hear a sound from below . At the appointed time we started singing, and we ended w ithout know ing how many might have show n up for the Mass. We packed up and w ent dow n the stairs. What an emotional experience. People w ere still sitting in their seats, I guess w aiting to see w ho actually had performed the music. Tears w ere in many of the eyes. The church w as packed w ith people flow ing out into the street to hear the Mass.



We had a stop in Innsbruck. Many of the guys bought Lederhosen, Tyrolean hats, and mountain picks. We went as a group to the top of the mountain and w andered around. The top is barren w ith little vegetation. On a ridge line, I think to the w est, we could see figures climbing. We didn't realize they w ere mostly Witchmen (the male chorus) until Happy Wanderer w as heard echoing around. Gerry Mack said he w as "no longer w orried about losing voices."

We w ere escorted through Europe on three beautiful Mercedes buses. At the Italian border, one of the gals in our bus discovered she had lost her passport. When the armed guards came through to check and

were half way down the bus, we sang Fauna-Conzone-Senza-Note-Nere ("sing a song without a note of sadness") in Italian (I'm not sure of the spelling). The guards' faces lit up and they were oblivious to a passport from the front of the bus being passed up under the seats to be received by the passport less gal. They didn't check carefully, and we passed. The next day we read that two persons had been killed at that particular border. Only then did we realize how serious the situation could have been.



Venice was great. We learned our way across the bridges over the canals, and I learned how great Italian white wines were (still my favorite). It was nice in Europe to be able to drink beer and wine (no smuggling into Greenwich from Port Chester). In Lugano, Switzerland, I heard my first alpenhorn at a stop for lunch along Lake Lugano. Some guy in full costume was playing it in the parking lot. Years later I was privileged to play a concert in Colorado Springs with Hermann Baumann, one of the greatest horn players. After much applause, the conductor announced that we would do the first movement of the Mozart again. I wondered why since we had just done the piece. And then Baumann played the piece on a natural horn with no valves. Unbelievable. To me, the quality was so similar to that of the alpenhorn I had heard years before that my imagination jumped back to 1961.



The trip to Lucerne around the hairpin turns on cobblestone roads was spectacular. I've been back there since and there are no more cobblestones on those mountain roads, so that is an image for our memories only. It rained in Lucerne and we never saw the mountains. The famous covered bridge with the pictures has since burned down, but has been reconstructed.

The second high point for me was the concert in Stuttgart. It was in an old building with wooden floors, and the space behind the stage was small. You might know, we got our lines screwed up so when we walked onto the risers we were all in different places. Mr. Mack had us singing in quartets or octets, not sections, so it was a bit of a shock to be around different people. Maybe this is why we became so electrified. A bit into the concert we sang Set Down Servant. After the piece, some of us wondered why the audience was booing. Mr. Mack's wife, at that time, came up to the stage and informed him that they were saying "More," because we sure couldn't tell. So right there in the middle of the concert, we sang Set Down Servant again. The place went wild. The feet stomping on the wooden floor sounded like the place would collapse. I think it was the best concert ever.

From Heidelberg we took a boat up the Rhone River to Cologne. From Cologne, it was the night train to Paris. Half way, we stopped in a train station, I think for a passport check, and there was a guy selling foot long hotdogs from his stand on the platform. We opened the windows and he was bought out in no time. He handed all the stuff up through the windows as fast as he could. A bunch of Americans craving for "real" American food. We had been eating heavy European lunches and dinners almost everyday.



Paris was anticlimactic. One concert and the acoustics were bad. Some of those that had some money left bought tickets to the Moulin Rouge. No, the recent Nicole Kidman movie does not accurately portray the costumes (or lack thereof). I was out of money so didn't go, but we learned that one of our gals, who was dismayed by such a display of female anatomy, sat behind a pillar most of the show. We realized that the United States was still pretty puritan. Earlier in the tour, at a Youth Hostel, where we had returned late after a concert, the guy who ran the place kicked some of our gals out of the shower because it was after hours. Indignant, one of the girls scratched him down the cheek with her fingernails, the results of which were obvious the next morning. Yes, we learned that there were cultural differences.

We flew back to LaGuardia and broke out of the clouds on final approach what looked like only a few feet above the water. Some girls started crying. I think it wasn't so much the fear of the closeness to the water, but the emotions at the end of a unique experience.

I'll never forget the performances at the Dominican Church and in Stuttgart. Gerry Mack had told us so many times before that our performances were not a time to show off, but rather to give something meaningful to the audience. Many will remember these comments each year at the Christmas Pageant performance; in fact, some got tired of them. We didn't charge anything for any of our performances in Europe. We were goodwill ambassadors erasing the ugly American image, as Mr. Mack had instilled in us. We were giving something. To this day, I still approach all of my concerts this way.



Chuck **HAYES** . Park City . UT
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Memories of Senior Chorus trip. I found an old letter I never sent to one Karen Bettum at UConn (No idea who she is/was) Some of this was in it:

-----Yes, the 4-prop Flying Tiger. 12 hours to Shannon airport. 4 or 5 more to Vienna . 8 in a youth hostel with people named Bill Vannamin, Harvey Black...Ordering dinner in a pub by saying in our very best ugly American "Moo-oo". Amazing Spanish Lipizzaners. The

Requiem Mass at St. Dominica Church. Honoring Hizzoner the Mayor of Vienna over two football fields of superb food and fabulous wine, many of us, getting our first real grown-up hangover.. Singing with the Vienna Boys Choir not knowing til 30 years later that they sang so well because most of the lads may have been part of the elite Castrati. (Gelded for those of you in Rio Linda. As in "THERE'S SHARKS down here...")



10 hour bus rides with most of the sopranos in curlers. Choraleers dropping like Lemmings off the rear bleachers and someone joking "faint- before the rush" on the bus back home. Innsbruck--Ah, Innsbruck!!! The fabulous Austrian Alps! Heidelberg, Salzburg, Stuttgart, words like "Banhoff".....Gerry Mack cueing (Winking at??) the alto section's Miss Perfect Pitch to get a perfect "A". 12 hours to Venice. Lunch at St Marco Cathedral. Ass grabbin' at Lido Beach on the Adriatic, but already missing and thinking about Innsbruck. Venetian glass blowers. Sleeping in, and missing my one and only chance at a gondola ride.



Another very long bus ride for an all to short stay in Lugano. On to.....Oh Mannn!!.. Andermatt!! Can each place get prettier than the last? Yankow itz and me busting tail to "go" (hike) w here no man... only to find Julie Andrews and the rest of the chorus doing their "Hills are alive" routine having arrived at this snowy venue via a very well marked road on the other side of the mountain. Foot-thick down feather-bed mattresses. Heart-stopping switch-backs that buses should never try to navigate. Brown trout you could reach out and touch in the clearest streams I have ever seen. Swiss Beer. Yum! I made a never-realized promise to myself, to

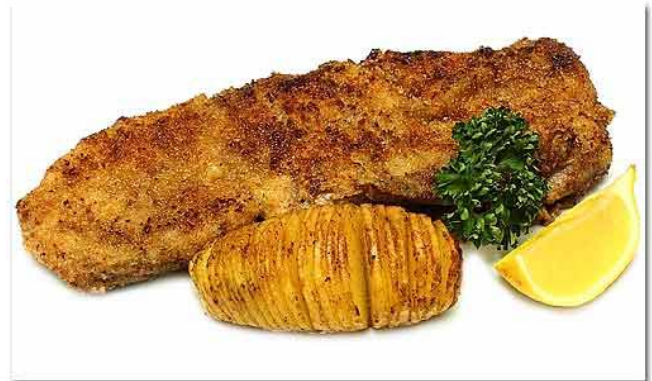
honey-moon here, an unbelievably gorgeous Alpine heaven-tow n. Boating the Rhine. Looking forward to 4 days in Paris, but can't help thinking about Andermatt et al. Pigalle ... Where some of us Juniors may have lost their virginity at a time and place where it will never again be a safe place to do so.

Somew here in there, V. Pantas was almost asked to leave Weiner schnitzel-land for reasons you're just going to have to ask him about. It should also be noted that it was fortunate that they let Juniors go on this trip, as I was thrown out of Senior Chorus moments before my senior year. The reasons are cloudy now, but I'm guessing that if they were giving out Ritalin back then, my parents would still be paying off their Pharmacy bill.

If I've got things out of order here or some facts wrong, don't bust my chops. It was a long, wonderful time ago.... Wouldn't really mind doing it all over again!!!

Yours Truly,

Chuck Hayes, (whose daughter, by the way of an update, turned four yesterday in the mountains of Park City, Utah, to the sounds of horse hooves and 12 other screeching kids, the likes of which I, and many of you, I'm thinking, never thought could be imagined).



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How can I keep pace in this New sletter... so far we have gotten a magnificent set of stories about the Trip to Europe. I can start by saying...I love Wiener schnitzel... and it's neither a wiener nor is it a schnitzel; but it's a Veal Cutlet and If I remember correctly, that stuff goes for 11 bucks a pound at the local supermarket. I do remember the trip when we

were in Germany and I was quite shocked to see woman in the shops wearing the traditional patterned dirndl with a frilly white insert... that barely covered their Bodacious Ta-Ta's. But that is probably my most "vivid" memory... I remember guys buying Italian Shoes. And most of all I remember the great roof on the St. Stephens Cathedral in Vienna. Especially now that I fully understand the costs of doing a slate roof. And the "Pitch" on that thing. Must be 12 in 4 if not steeper. And the stonework on the Steeples. Where can I get those Masons from. Have I got a project for them. The stone work on the St. Mark's Cathedral

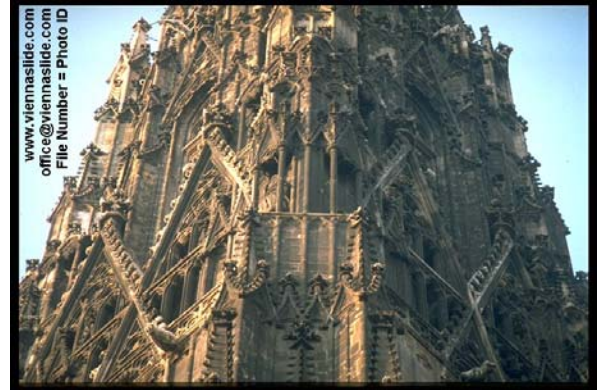




wasn't too shabby either.

I think the Pat **ROSE** Bishel writes about the dead pig floating in the canals of Venice, when we were going out to the Glass Blowing Factory. Of course it was a big difference from the Movie "Moonraker" when James Bond was looking for the Octagonal Glass Tubes that were sent to Brazil. I remember being on the Mountain in Switzerland with my hard soled shoes and cutting them to pieces on the Jagged Rocks. My parents were "PO'ed" about that stupid mistake. I was left out of the group that went to the Paris Brothel as well as not having enough money for the Moulin Rouge. But I do have my dirndls to make me happy. I remember those Mercedes buses being too long to drive around the mountain hairpin turns. They would start into the corner and then back out over the edge

and hang the rear end of the bus over a 300 foot drop. I think this was when I chickened and went to the middle of the bus. (Hey wait, I was never one of the cool kids so I never got to sit in the back of the bus). I can't remember which bus I was on, but since I didn't get invited to join the Reunion of Bus "C"; so it was one of the others.



I would like to think that was the Orient Express that we rode on. If it wasn't, then it makes a better story if it was. I enjoyed it never the less. Trains are "Phat". Paris, was a whole "nother thang". I left the room early one morning and walked all over the Left Bank (Rive Gauche) by myself. I have gone back on several occasions since then to do the walk. It is a completely serene experience. That will continue to be a favorite place for me.

I don't remember a lot of things about the performing and the food. But I do remember the bridge over the river in Lucerne. It was Long, very long.



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If you read this Mr. Mack, it was a privilege singing for you. I never met a more outstanding teacher with such leadership skills. You made it happen for us.

I'm astounded at the background you selected for the chorus. Not just musicians, but a future graphic artist, a bunch of lettermen jocks, some history major types, a few English scholars of note, and lots of other serious academic types. Well, maybe one or two goof off who could really hit those high notes and had nothing better to do 6th period.

The Trip: No ID required! All the hot beer you wanted!

The Food: I never want to see another wiener schnitzel again. Screw those nasty dumplings too. The morning coffee and hard rolls; now that was fantastic! Caffeine, Nicotine and Starch. The same 3 food groups each day, everyday! If it wasn't for the wine, there were no vitamins what so ever. Scurvy anyone?

Transportation and the WC: I haven't willfully ridden in a bus since. A cable car to the top of the Alps, Tramway to the top of Salzburg Castle, outstanding boat trip on the Rhine, the gondolas of Venice were all great. Paris subways? "Where's that men's room again?" "Up in the street behind that goofy curved tin screen?" You gotta be kidding.

On Perspective and Privilege: With every "Euro Special" of PBS, Discovery or NOVA, semi-vivid memories (more ginseng required) appear along with my fading inner monolog. "So, you old fart, we were the best High school chorus on the Planet back then". Perhaps we were. Frankly, I remain grateful to somebody (who was that masked man?) that had a ton of political juice setting up our itinerary and guest list.

Cool stuff: A Blue Danube Waltz by Strauss in a Vienna Palace. Singing for Dignitaries, Willie who? If you've forgotten the private concert with the Vienna Boys choir; then the sixties were really tough on you Sparky. Do you remember the sounds that reverberated from the choir loft in the Cologne Cathedral?

Saint Marks square! Hey, that could have been a movie. You'd sell at least 110 tickets. The story line would go. Scattered group of 100 plus, half or totally smashed, teenagers drift together on the strains of familiar voices from the far end of a huge square. Roll tape CB. The more we sang, the more of us showed up. The more of us that showed up, the more free wine we drank. On a hot summer's evening in that massive square you have to ask yourself. Was it the wine, or was it possibly the best sounding concert we gave?

Finally, what do you think when a news reporter does a piece on the Lipizzaner stallions of Vienna. How do those horses jump straight up anyway! Was it, an electric cattle prod, a Tazar or just two bricks (an old camel training technique)? I have to pinch my self and think, you lucky SOB. As Walter Cronkite or was it Peewee Herman that said, "you were there, live in person!"

I kept singing in college(s), GA TECH, perfected Travis picking on my guitar, shooting 8 ball, dating Delta airline stewardess and my grades; in that order. Transferred to URI a broken hearted "rambling wreck".

Things got brighter quicker; met and married the lead singer in our Trio. Still have the guitar and the Bride with two wonderful children Lee and Lisa along with a grandson Jamie and granddaughter Haley.

Marijean and I are trying to retire. So if, anyone out there want 4 acres on the Delaware River in Washington Crossing, PA? Give me a call, special GHS class of 62' discount.



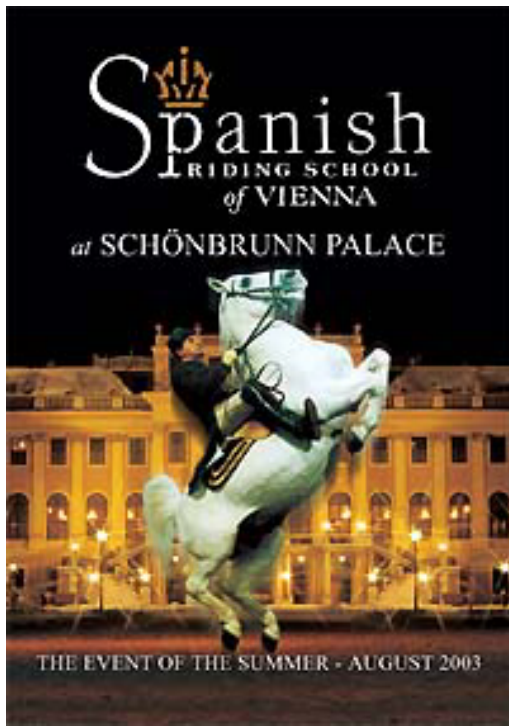
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What a great idea!!
Senior Chorus Trip to Europe
Summer 1961

It was about three and a half weeks long. There were 105 of us and 18 chaperones. We were divided into three bus groups, and I was in Bus C. We had Molly Mortimer on our bus. She was a year older than we who were going to be seniors the following September, and she had a Bus C Reunion at her house some time after the trip.

Mr. Mack was in his glory, and so were we. Our first stop was Vienna, Austria, where we represented the United States at the International Music Educators Convention. We stayed at a big, modern youth hostel:

boys on one floor, girls on the next. (Did they think we wouldn't use the stairways?!) Everywhere we went for a meal in Vienna, and probably elsewhere in Austria and other



Germanic places, we were served

Wiener schnitzel!

They wanted to give a taste of their typical meal, and did we ever get it - every day! I don't know if it

was that or just the excitement of being on that trip, but it got so that we were eating Ex-Lax like candy bars because we couldn't "go" for about a week!



us

We stayed with individual families for a few days in a little town called Wattens, near Innsbruck. I stayed with Lillian Mertz as my roommate. We also sat together on the bus. Some days as we rode and were so tired from our "hectic" schedule, we were napping on top of each other. One time we were crossing the border at Italy, and one of the boys couldn't find his passport. So Mr. Mack, who was on our bus, instructed us to pass one back under each seat, person to person, in case they came on board to check all our passports. However, we had another plan, a diversion: the second the border patrolman came on the bus, we

sang a song in Italian, "Fauna consone senza note nere," and the man smiled, laughed, loved it, and passed us on with no problems! It was fun!!

Austria, Italy, Germany, Switzerland, and France: that was the basic itinerary. We threw snow balls on top of the Alps, and it was July!

Flying Tigers Airlines: what a plane! We were sprawled out all over the plane. Even in the aisles. Someone stuffed a paper or something next to one of the seats in the plane to see if we would get the same one going home, and sure enough we did!! It took forever to get to Vienna. I think we stopped at Shannon Airport in Ireland for fuel. How beautiful it was from the air, so green, and the fields all cut out for each other.



The pastry shops in Vienna were something special! We got more treats from them! Nice gooey, fruit-laden goodies. The Schönbrunn Palace where we ate and sang was fantastic! Huge, beautiful, waltzes playing as we entered the large ballroom. It was almost like being in a Disney fairyland.

Venice, Italy: does anyone remember the dead pig floating in the water in the canals?! The visit to the glass factory, watching them make the glass objects, some of which we purchased... When we sang in a hall in Venice, the audience started clapping in unison, and they made lots of noise. Some

of us were confused about what that all meant. Well, they wanted encores!!! So we encored! They also loved the way we did our Italian song, too! "Dolcemente, dolcemente, fachendola finire....." We all heard our songs so many times, it was easy to remember some of the words, even if our own section didn't sing all of them.

Were we on the actual Orient Express??? I forgot about that, but I do remember sleeping on a train to somewhere, and we had those pull-down berths from the wall. A conductor came through in the middle of the night, and we had to show our passports. That was a pain! But we made it every step of the way!



Our photo was on the front page of maybe the NY times, walking in front of the Eiffel Tower in Paris. Köln (Cologne), Germany, seemed a dark and dreary place, but Switzerland was lively and fun, and we saw and walked on a bridge that had something to do with William Tell and the apple on someone's head being shot off by an arrow.

Speaking of Paris, we were told not to drink the water, so we bought Coke in bottles and kept them cool in a bidet in our hotel room. By golly, we weren't going to get Montezuma's Revenge!

In Italy we rode a public bus one day, hoping to be pinched by a genuine Italian on our way walking down the aisle!

Arriving back in Greenwich on a hot day in July, we met our families, and lots of us were dying for a hamburger and a chocolate malt up at the corner, Nielsen's. McDonald's wasn't all over the world as they are now, so we had been without our favorite usual stuff for almost a month!

That trip with the Senior Chorus was one of the best times in my life. I remember some of the details like it happened yesterday. The older I became, the more appreciative I have been about having had such an opportunity. I hope those of you who went on the trip have the same fond memories, or at least appreciation of what we accomplished and of course, of the man who made it possible for us to have all those experiences, Mr. Gerry Mack.

Several years ago I went to hear Mr. Mack conduct the Greater Hartford Youth Chorale. They even sang a couple of the songs that we sang in Senior Chorus. It was enchanting and so much fun to watch him with his group, but it was also quite nostalgic, making me feel even more appreciation for all our rehearsals with such an expressive and feeling man. It was always the rehearsals that meant so much to me. The actual performances were excellent, but I couldn't help thinking that the audience had not an iota of an idea what we went through with Mr. Mack to achieve the end result. We watched him suffer with sore shoulders sometimes, become exasperated with us sometimes, delight in our responses to his choral interpretations, and always, press on.....

We were a special group with a very special choral director, and I will never forget what we had as a chorus.

Once I went to New Canaan for a chorus reunion with Mr. Mack, but it was for any years, not just our class. That was fun, and I would love to do it again.

Is there any way that we could persuade Mr. Mack and Nancy to have a 1961-2 Senior Chorus Reunion?!



Postscripts



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As for Pantas, he doesn't know that anybody else knows, (or remembers) so he's just going to have to read and weep (or smile, actually). By the way, I'm not overly prolific with this eMail stuff, so it'd probably be good to get this one in your letter before all the smart people start sending you stuff that makes sense or is slightly more factual. By the way, get Griff involved. He's the funniest guy that never really attended GHS. Thanks for the notes.



Vincent **PANTAS** . Washington Crossing . PA
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No, nothing from Chuck yet. I remember Harvey Black wanting to jump out the Third Floor window in search of Beer in Vienna. I think Fran Mullen grabbed his ass and pulled him back in the room before he slipped off the window sill for real. At the time the guys in the Hostel room all thought it was real. We thought Harvey flipped out. Harvey just loved a practical joke. I wonder where he is now, what a character.

I thought we got tossed out of Vienna and Switzerland as well.

Reminiscent Compass Photos

Credits . **Magnus Mortensen** . RPI Class of 2006 . Scarsdale . New York