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Forks In the Road and My Travel Through Life

- Chapter 7 - Switzerland

Interview for the Job in Switzerland

The week before Thanksgiving 1976 I got a phone call from my manager, Tom Odle, in Renton, Washington.

Bobby Robertson, the Sales Vice President in Minneapolis, thought I was the perfect fit for the CDC account manager at the European Center for Nuclear Research (CERN) in Geneva, Switzerland.

I then received a call asking if I could come to the Western Region Office in San Jose as soon as possible to interview with Bob Hayden. It was worth a shot, and we decided to drive to California that weekend. We could also visit and stay with Loa and Max in Grass Valley. I would go to San Jose for the meeting on Monday.

Bob Hayden had just been promoted to Control Data Switzerland Country Manager based in Zurich. He and his new wife were in the process of moving to Zurich and he was in a hurry to get things done.

The meeting went well, and he asked if I could go to Geneva next week to interview and visit CERN. The company would pay all expenses for both of us. I said yes, and he took me to the travel office to make reservations. Wow, we didn't have passports and would have to expedite everything to make it.

I drove back that afternoon to Grass Valley in a daze. LaRue couldn't believe it when I said we were flying to Switzerland the end of next week. We got passport pictures taken the next day in Grass Valley and picked up passport applications. We could get a passport in one day by taking the applications to a regional passport office. We had Thanksgiving with Max and Loa and hurried back to Idaho Falls.

Late Monday I flew to Seattle with our passport applications in hand. I was in the Seattle Passport office when they opened Tuesday morning.

By 4pm I walked out with passports and flew back to Idaho Falls. We were ready to fly Friday morning. However, early Thursday morning I got a call to hold off. It was a big letdown as we were packed, had passports, and airline tickets. I figured the trip wouldn't happen. A few days later we got word to proceed to Switzerland and spend an entire week.

Mom and Dad came down from Salmon to stay with the kids. We departed Idaho Falls the next day and flew to Salt Lake then on to JFK in New York on Western Airlines. Bob Hayden instructed that we fly Swissair from JFK to Geneva because of the great service.

The Swissair Boeing 747 was a great experience with fine tableware, food, and service. It was as good or better than first class today. The flight was comfortable and enjoyable. It was amazing to fly by Paris at daybreak enjoying the view from my window seat.

We arrived in Geneva around 8am Thursday and Walt Chase met us. Walt was the account manager at CERN for three years and was moving on. If I got the job I would replace Walt. He would be the Branch Sales Manager in Lausanne, Switzerland and would oversee CERN, the Union Bank of Switzerland, and the Geneva Hospital.

Walt took us to a new Ramada hotel in downtown Geneva and we checked in. I was not happy when they took our passports and would not return them until the next morning.

Walt and I then went to CERN to meet the staff. The CDC staff was Nils Buss from Sweden and was the support analyst. Andreas Grimm from Austria and Victor Rejino from California were logistics support. There were five customer engineers providing computer maintenance. They were from Switzerland, India, England, France, and the USA.

CERN was funded and staffed by 13-member countries. The computer center management was from England, Scotland, and Switzerland. It was a diverse culture to interface with. It looked to be a huge challenge. At least the common language for doing business was English.

CERN had the only CDC 7600 in Europe and was the most prestigious customer CDC had in Europe. It got a lot of attention all the way to the top at headquarters in Minneapolis. What happened at CERN got everyone's attention. To even be considered for the job was an honor.

The job would be to manage the account and obtain an order for a 2nd CDC 7600.

After all day at CERN we went to the hotel to pick up LaRue and have dinner with the Chases. It was a long day. Friday was another full day meeting CERN management as they would have a say in the selection of the new account manager.

Late Friday afternoon I was told to take the company car and enjoy the weekend. The car was a Volkswagon station wagon with stick shift. The customer engineers and logistics people used it for hauling parts and stuff. I got a quick review of the quirks of the car and driving in Geneva. From what I had observed of the traffic and driving habits I was not looking forward to the experience.

I left the office about 6pm in the dark and it was raining. I saw the gas gauge was on empty. I would have to get fuel at the first opportunity. I pulled out of CERN which sits on the border between France and Switzerland and saw a service station and pulled in. The attendant didn't understand English, so I used my hands to indicate "fill it up". Luckily, I had acquired Swiss Francs from the bank at CERN that day.

Now it was back on the road skirting the airport and into the city traffic to find the hotel. Seeing and driving was difficult since I could not use headlights after dark in the city limits. The law at that time allowed only parking lights. It was hard to see with the rain coming down. I thought I knew the turns to the hotel but ended up lost for a while in downtown Geneva.

I found the hotel and the underground parking garage entrance. It was narrow and steep with sharp turns at each level of parking. I was a nervous wreck when I got to the room and LaRue was a nervous wreck also. We ate at the hotel that night and crashed.

We decided Saturday morning that we needed to see all we could in case I did not get the job. We would drive to Chamonix, France and look around.

It was scary driving up the narrow steep ramp of the parking garage. There was a toll gate near the top. Then get going again without rolling backwards. We found the right change, pulled it off, and headed out of town to Chamonix.

We came to the French border and were fortunate we had retrieved our passports from the front desk. That was the first thing they wanted to see.

We came to a toll booth requiring French Francs that we did not have. They settled for Swiss Francs at face value which was not in our favor.

We enjoyed Chamonix, drove around Lake Geneva that weekend, and enjoyed the country.

The Branch Sales Office was in Lausanne. Monday morning Walt and I drove up and spent a partial day meeting the staff. Then on Wednesday we flew to Zurich to the Country Sales Office. Bob Hayden had only been there a few days and the thing he was most proud of was the fully stocked bar. I thought that was strange as CDC did not condone a bar in the offices in the United States.

One evening Walt and his wife Kay took us to a very nice French restaurant in a small village across the border in France. It was a favorite of the Chases for fine dining and expensive. Since the company was buying Walt did not spare the expense. The richness of the French food was more than we wanted that evening, and it was a struggle to enjoy it. The main course came, and we did our best to get through it. Then the waiter brought a 2nd portion! Walt and Kay plowed through theirs, but we had to bow out. Rich French food was about the last thing we wanted that night. Jetlag wasn't our friend either.

It was a long tiring week. Friday evening was our last night. We were on our own as the Chase family departed for Christmas in the U.S. We dined in the hotel dining room. I had raclette as I wanted to try the national dish. I thought it was ok since it was melted cheese and potatoes.

We departed Saturday morning on Lufthansa to Frankfurt, Germany. We spent the night as we wanted to see all we could while we were in Europe.

We walked around Frankfurt that evening and had a big German dinner in a gasthaus. We departed Frankfurt the next day for Chicago then on to Idaho Falls through Salt Lake.

It was a long tiring trip, and we only had a week to get ready for Christmas. I had no indication if I would get the job, but felt it went well.

It was wait and wonder what it would be like to move to Switzerland. The kids were not excited about it.

Switzerland Job Offer

After the first of the year I received an offer from Control Data Switzerland for the job as account manager at CERN. The offer also stated that I was to sell CERN another 7600!

I would work on commission and have a draw the first year against future commissions. It looked risky and from what I had observed CERN didn't need another 7600. Walt had tried for three years and had not been successful. The lure of moving to Switzerland overrode my misgivings and I accepted.

Moving to Switzerland

We were to be in Geneva by early March. A lot had to be done to get ready for the move.

LaRue and I had to attend a three-day orientation seminar at CDC Headquarters in Minneapolis. We attended and had a great time meeting corporate people and learning about living in a foreign country as an "ex-patriot". The term sounded to me like we were deserters.

We decided to rent the house, sell the cars, travel trailer, and television that would not work in Switzerland. Bill Gray felt we should sell our airplane as he didn't think he could afford it. Chris was not interested in flying. Bill listed it on Trade-A-Plane, and it sold in two weeks for a \$1,000 profit.

Chris wanted the Oldsmobile and agreed we could keep it until we were ready to depart Idaho Falls. My brother, Garry, had a friend who wanted the travel trailer and that was finalized.

We had a cat, Mitsu, and a dog, Boots, that we needed to find homes for. We got Mitsu when LaRue's niece, Maxine, and Dick divorced while we were in Livermore. They subsequently remarried and lived in San Ramon, California. They wanted her so we shipped Mitsu to them. We delivered her to the airline baggage area and we could hear her meowing throughout the terminal. LaRue's brother Val lived in Challis. They agreed to take Boots until we came back.

We had to have physical exams, shots, dental exams, and the kids needed passports.

We had to decide on household furnishings that we wanted moved and what would go into storage. The advice was to take everything we would need to feel comfortable. A large refrigerator was recommended as the European ones were small. We bought a new washer and dryer to take along as well. We decided to take all our furniture and only put non-essential items in storage.

Shark Club Nomination and Award

In the middle of January, I received a phone call from my manager that I had been selected to be a member of the Bill Norris 1976 Shark Club. I would be inducted at the 100% Club in Athens, Greece the first of February. This is the most prestigious award in the company and is only awarded to a handful of people. To be going to Athens, Greece would normally be a trip of a lifetime. However, we were in the process of moving to Switzerland.

The nomination memo for the Shark Club follows:

MEMO

Date: 12/07/1976

To: San Jose Regional Sales Office

From: Stan Gardner, Seattle District Sales Office

Subject: Shark Club Nomination – Harry E. Hathhorn

When hungry or aroused, a shark will stray from previously bountiful and tranquil surroundings to satisfy his needs. Such a shark found his way up the Snake River where it runs through Idaho Falls, Idaho. There this shark's instincts sensed a challenge that he decided was just what he was looking for, and he called these waters home for two and one-half years.

Idaho Falls turned out to be a place where the Idaho National Engineering Laboratory (INEL) was located. The energy crisis had brought about increased research and expansion to INEL where they were rapidly outgrowing the capacity of their computer, an IBM 360/75. This shark, being of the Professional Services Division (PSD), was determined that his company offer the best total solution for INEL, so he teamed with a shark from the sales species who shared his position. Their naturally competitive instincts were intensified by the fact that the incumbent and prime competitor was the blue monster, IBM.

For the better part of the two and one-half years this shark spent his time in this isolated location becoming familiar with the INEL operations and personnel and establishing CDC products as the best way for the technical community to meet its computing requirements of the future. So thoroughly did he and his partner penetrate this account that the specification writers were able to put together a very clear, representative RFP and benchmark. This was by far the best job of account penetration and control I have seen in many years, particularly where CDC was not the incumbent.

As we entered the purchasing agent's office to pick up the RFP, the IBM representatives abruptly terminated their complaints about the technical requirements of the RFP. Our shark had done the first part of his technical job well. The first phase of the kill was complete.

He moved on to the waters of the land of 10,000 lakes to run the benchmark. Since his killer instincts told him to leave nothing to chance, he became so intimately involved in preparation of the benchmark that the tapes were released in CDC format as well as IBM format. With only ninety days before the kill, his strategy was well conceived. Hard work with a minimum of cost was the way this shark handled his task of making the Cyber 76 and Cyber 173 perform. After the sales representative left to pick up the customer who was to witness the benchmark, he found a way to knock an hour off the elapsed time. Even the sales representative was unaware of this last phase of the kill until after the demonstration. Many experienced, long-term CDC people said this was by far the smoothest demonstration they had seen. Our shark had completed the second phase of the kill.

On April 22, 1976, INEL awarded the contract for the Cyber 76 and Cyber 173 to CDC. Our shark brought the kill to its final stage by assisting with the installation and benchmark re-validation and having INEL hand over the check in the amount of \$8.4 million on time. The kill was complete.

Our shark's name is Harry E. Hathhorn. I hope you concur that his efforts on the technical side of this procurement are truly deserving of membership in the Shark Club.

The letter from Bill Norris follows:

Control Data Corporation

January 17, 1977

*Mr. H.E. Hathhorn
245 Ronglyn Avenue
Idaho Falls, ID 83401*

Dear Harry:

It gives me great pleasure to invite you to join the Bill Norris Shark Club for 1976.

I told the members of the original Shark Club in 1971 that dedication, creativity, aggressiveness and achievement in promoting total services were what counted most when the ground rules were established for membership. Those characteristics have not changed even though the competition for membership becomes much keener every year. Your performance in Professional Services in 1976 demonstrated that you possessed these qualities during the past year in your relentless pursuit and triumph over the competition.

This year our Shark Club activities will be held at the Hilton Hotel in Athens, Greece in conjunction with our 100% Club meeting there. Travel arrangements will be made for you and your fellow Sharks. Wednesday, March 2, has been set aside as Shark Day at the Athens Hilton. Our formal Shark Club award banquet will be held that evening and you will soon receive more information regarding all of the activities we are planning for you.

All of us at Control Data are very proud of you, Harry, and this honor is the highest we can bestow in recognition of your accomplishments in 1976. Very careful consideration was given to the achievement records of all the nominees before selections were made. You and your fellow Sharks were indeed superb performers.

Please accept my congratulations which I will repeat in person when we meet on March 2.

Sincerely Yours,

/s/ Bill Norris

William C. Norris, Chairman of the Board

The Shark Club was the highest honor bestowed by CDC. However, it put us in a dilemma as we were in the process of moving to Geneva and had a lot to get done. Any other time, LaRue would have gone to Athens with me, but we could not fit it in. I decided to fly to Geneva the week before the meeting in Athens. I would get some work accomplished at CERN and look for a place to live.

I arrived in Geneva and Nils Buss was at the airport to meet me. I had expected Walt Chase, but he delegated to Nils. Nils was on vacation with his wife and daughter at a chalet in the Alps and Walt called him to come back to show me around. I felt bad that I was the cause of the interruption of his family vacation. I thought it strange that Walt was not around.

The CERN people seemed glad to see me and knew that I had attained Shark status. They were impressed as they knew what it was all about.

Walt Chase was now working out of the Lausanne office, and I had a lot of one-on-one time with the CDC staff and the CERN computer center management.

It did not take long to see that it was not as rosy a picture as had been presented. I detected that people seemed to be happy with Walt out of there. He was the proverbial bull in a china closet. It did not go over well with the Europeans.

Nils Buss took me around looking at houses in the areas that we liked on our December trip.

LaRue and I liked the countryside around the little town of Coppet. It is about 20 miles up the lake from Geneva and CERN. The Chase family lived in that area and liked it. Their three kids attended the private international school, College du Lemman in Versoix, which was between Coppet and Geneva. LaRue and I had visited the school and decided it was the best option for us also. It was very expensive, but Control Data would pay for it. At least we had that much decided before the actual move.

Walt came around Friday afternoon and asked if I could go with him on Saturday. He had found a 1956 Ford Thunderbird for sale about 90 miles north of Geneva.

He wanted me to drive his car back if he bought it. The Thunderbird was in great condition. It was a steal at the price the guy was asking. Walt closed the deal, and I nervously followed him back to Coppet in his Pinto.

I had lunch with Walt Chase before I left for Athens on Monday, February 2, 1977 for the start of the 100% Club. He did not qualify for the 100% Club and was cynical about the Shark Club. I didn't like his sarcastic remarks. We discussed sales strategy for CERN and I could see that he and I did not see eye to eye on what had to be done. I caught my flight to Athens wondering how this was going to work out.

The 100% Club is an annual meeting to reward sales people that made their quota for the year, and is a huge annual event. Wednesday was a special day for introduction of the members of the Shark Club. It was in front of everyone in the Athens Hilton grand ball room. There were spotlights, strobe lights, loud music, and much fanfare. We felt like celebrities. There were 30 new Sharks and almost all were salesmen that had busted their sales quota. I was one of only two analysts that made it.

That evening was a special dinner with Bill Norris. He presented us with a large plaque, a gold Bulova Accutron wrist watch, a ceramic shark about a foot long, and a gold tie clasp with the Control Data logo and a shark.

Control Data shared no expense that week with tours, banquets, and elaborate sales meetings. A group picture was taken of us at the Parthenon.

I flew back to Idaho Falls on Saturday March 5 via Montreal, Chicago, and Salt Lake. It was a tough miserable flight from Athens on Olympic Airlines (Greek) to Montreal then on to Chicago. The single aisle Boeing 707 was loaded to the hilt, and they kept the cabin stifling hot. I was sitting beside a CDC Vice President who was of Greek heritage, and he took his shirt off! We complained about the heat to no avail. No more Olympic airlines for me!

I got home worn out. We had three weeks to wrap up things, get packed, and out of our house by March 1. We got the Mazda sold and had buyers for the Oldsmobile, and travel trailer. The realtor that sold us the house found a renter for us, who was a used car dealer, and we signed a one-year lease.

CDC arranged for the moving company to start packing, which for an international move is a lot more complicated. The owner of the local Allied Van Lines and his two sons took a full week to pack everything. Even the dresser drawers were emptied and repacked into boxes. Then another three days to pad and wrap the furniture. They loaded it into big wooden cargo boxes for international shipping.

We were out of the house the last day of February and the renters moved in on March 1.

On Our Way (we thought) to Switzerland

I turned over the Oldsmobile to Chris and rented a station wagon as we had a lot of luggage. We moved into the Stardust Motel for what we thought would be for two or three days. Then we were put on hold as someone failed to get my Swiss work permit.

The week went by and we were told to hold for at least two more weeks. At this point I was getting cold feet due to all the indecision, and from what I had learned while I was at CERN on my last trip. I talked to my manager in Seattle and told him I was thinking of backing out. He convinced me to hang in there. Also, keep him posted in case it did not work out.

Meanwhile the kids went to school. We made do in the Stardust, and enjoyed restaurant dining on the company.

I hung out in the CDC office on Memorial Drive.

After about three weeks I was told we were to go to Minneapolis for a couple of weeks. The CERN computer center management would be there several days for the annual CDC Worldwide User Group Meeting. I was to escort them around and wine and dine them in the evenings.

We boarded Western Airlines early one morning and flew to Salt Lake to change planes for Minneapolis. Kathleen, a junior in high school, and Brian, a sophomore, were not happy campers leaving their high school friends. Ten year old Julie was throwing up in a barf bag when we walked across the tarmac to our airplane in Salt Lake. The flight attendant just rolled her eyes and shrugged her shoulders as we boarded.

Killing Time in Minneapolis

We had two adjoining rooms at Howard Johnson's Hotel (Hojo's) in Bloomington near CDC Headquarters. At that time the Minnesota Twin's and Viking's Metropolitan Stadium was situated where the Mall of America is today.

Hojo's was at the far edge of the stadium parking lot just off France Avenue. There was a good restaurant, bar, huge indoor recreation area with a swimming pool, miniature golf, lots of artificial grass, fake palm trees, and lounge chairs. It was an indoor oasis that people in snowy Minnesota loved to visit for a winter weekend.

Hojo's went over well with the kids. We had time to decompress from the last hectic weeks at home. I enjoyed going to my favorite eating places in the Twin Cities and especially to my favorite, Lindy's Steak House, across town.

The CERN computer center managers arrived, and I escorted them around CDC Headquarters and meetings with top CDC management for a couple of days. In the evenings I wined and dined them at nice restaurants and took LaRue along. The kids got to do what they wanted at Hojo's. It was a grand time at CDC's expense.

I had one-on-one time with the CERN people and we developed a good relationship. They felt they should let me know what the future looked like at CERN. A 2nd 7600 was not in the plan, which did not surprise me. The 7600 was obsolete and CDC had bet the future on the STAR 100 vector computer that had proven to be a failure. If CERN was to acquire a new supercomputer it would be the Cray-1.

(Note-Seymour Cray, the designer of the 6600 and the 7600, was working on a new design known as the 8600, that wasn't working out. He became fed up with CDC bureaucracy and the channeling of funds to the STAR 100. He departed CDC in 1972, and formed Cray Research. He rectified his mistakes made with the 8600 and came up with the Cray-1. Serial #1 was very successful at the Lawrence Livermore Lab. Cray Research and the Cray-1 was now the darling of the supercomputer industry.

I knew all about Cray Research. Two good CDC friends, Chuck Breckinridge that I worked with in Livermore, and Evans Harrigan that I had worked with at Seymour's Lab and Minneapolis, had recently quit CDC and signed on with Cray)

The CERN people departed and we were finally given the go ahead to fly to Geneva even though I did not have a Swiss work permit.

We had been living out of suitcases for about five weeks and were ready to get going. We flew to JFK and then boarded the Swissair Boeing 747 in the evening.

With the seat arrangements of two side by side along the window we were lined up with Brian in the first row, Kathleen and Julie in the next row, followed by me and LaRue in the next row. The Swissair service and elegance made it an enjoyable flight. Again, I was mesmerized flying by Paris as the sun was coming up.

Arrival in Switzerland

We landed in Geneva around 8am Easter Sunday morning. As we entered the terminal we were greeted by two Swiss Army soldiers with UZI automatic rifles pointed at us. It was a big shock and rough welcome to the orderly world of Switzerland.

Nils Buss was there to meet us. He had Walt Chase's VW bus to accommodate us and our luggage for the trip to the Ramada Hotel in downtown Geneva. Before we got to the hotel we all saw a McDonalds. Nils said it was new and the only one in Geneva. We found out later that Americans living in Geneva referred to their arrival in Geneva as "pre McDonalds" or "post McDonalds".

We checked into two adjoining rooms. I advised everyone to try to stay awake the rest of the day. However, we were soon all zonked out.

We woke up about dinner time and I asked where everyone wanted to eat Easter dinner. The answer was McDonalds.

I wasn't about to cave in to McDonalds for Easter and we set out to find a nice restaurant. We soon found that Easter was a day that almost everyone closed. We found a Movenpick which is a Swiss hotel and restaurant chain. This restaurant was on the order of a very nice large diner. The food was excellent, but the kids did not care for the new taste and smell.

The weather was damp, cold, and it was a gray overcast day. It was not a good start for the first day in Switzerland.

The next morning Walt Chase swung by the hotel to pick me up and get me started at CERN. He was in a hurry and ended up rear ending a lady in a Citroen. Walt got out and berated the lady in English that she didn't comprehend. He jumped back in the car and said there was no damage that he could see, and took off for CERN.

I kept looking behind expecting to see gendarmes in pursuit. We would be easy to identify as his car was a powder blue American Ford Pinto. Bad start for the first day at work. I wondered to myself about Walt's lack of good judgement. We could have been kicked out of the country.

My Work at CERN

My office was in a great location on the 2nd floor with glass windows overlooking the computer center. There were four more CDC offices occupied by Andreas Grimm (Austria) and Victor Rejino (American) who handled logistics, Bob Rogallo (American) the customer engineer manager, and Nils Buss (Sweden) my support analyst. Five customer engineers from India, England, Switzerland, and one American shared a large office on the floor of the computer room. We were a mixed bag of nationalities.

The CERN computer center management welcomed me warmly, and we rehashed our time in Minneapolis. They enjoyed our time together in Minneapolis.

My secretary was Francois Schmidt (Swiss) who was fluent in English, French, and German, and an excellent secretary. Her husband was a real estate agent and could help us find a place to live.

I was told that I still did not have a work permit. We could not rent a house, get our furniture, or buy a car.

Temporary Living in Switzerland

After two or three days at the Ramada we decided we would rather be in a country setting. LaRue said she had to see and walk on grass. This was after her first walk outside the hotel and pigeon droppings landed on her shoulder.

Nils recommended the Motel de Founex about 20 miles up the lake from Geneva. The motel was in the area where we wanted to live and not far from the school the kids would be attending. It was like an American motel with a restaurant, and we liked the looks of it.

The company had made arrangements for the kids to attend College du LeMan and the bus would pick them up at the motel. The Easter break was over, and it was the start of the spring quarter. It would work nicely, so we moved.

We got a one bedroom unit with a small kitchenette and a room next door with two beds for Brian and Kathleen.

The company did not authorize a rental car, so we were dependent on Nils Buss and the company car when I could get it on weekends.

We got moved in and went for dinner in the restaurant. Julie was not keen on anything on the menu that she understood or wanted (it was in French).

She saw a tank along the wall with live trout and pointed to it. The waiter fished out a trout and took it to the kitchen. We could see someone dispatch it. It was served complete with the tail and head and Julie refused it. We then used sign language to indicate the tail and head should be whacked off. After that was done Julie was fine, and usually had trout for dinner.

The dessert menu came around and the kids saw “Coup Denmark“. It was a large bowl of vanilla ice cream swimming in warm chocolate syrup with whipped cream and marachino cherries on top. I believe they had it every night we were in the motel.

The next morning, April 18, the kids started school. We went to breakfast in the restaurant and there was a lot of bickering and kicking under the table.

The bus picked up the kids and the day and classes seemed to go well for them. They were enrolled in the English speaking curriculum and had to take French, which was good.

The total tuition for College Du Lemman for all three kids was 49,000 swiss francs per year. At the going exchange rate of 1.2 swiss francs per dollar this is nearly \$42,000 per year. Books and lab fees were extra. It was good that CDC was paying the bill.

The New Job and No Work Permit

After a week I was told I would have to go to Italy. It was illegal for me to be working in Switzerland without a work permit. A work permit for CERN, that was made up of workers from the 13 member countries, should have been a quick routine process. The blame had to lie with the CDC office in Zurich. I was not a happy camper. We could have been kicked out of the country.

A couple of days later I was directed to fly to Milan, Italy and work out of the Milan sales office. I would pair up with an Italian salesman, A. Biagetti. We would visit Italian nuclear power companies in Milan, Genoa, and Rome to determine their computer requirements. Italy had 4 nuclear reactors with a plan for 10 in 10 years, so there was potential for new computers.

The family would be on their own after less than two weeks in Switzerland. I got approval for a rental car so LaRue would have transportation. She had not driven in Switzerland. I gave her a quick lesson as she drove me to the airport. It was a European Ford with automatic transmission to make it a little easier.

I found out later that after dropping me at the airport they went to the Grand Passage shopping center and parked in the parking garage.

When they got back to the car to back out of the parking space she could not get the shift lever to move into reverse. Someone came along and found a button on the dashboard you had to push for the shift lever to move into reverse.

When they got to the coin operated gate to get out of the garage she didn't have the required change. It was quite a first day driving a strange car in Switzerland.

Working in Italy

The Italian salesman had sales calls lined up in Milan and on the coast in Genoa. His English was not too good, but we managed.

The people we called on were all educated scientists and engineers that were fluent in English. There was no problem communicating. We made the sales calls in Milan and later in the week got in his little Fiat and drove to Genoa.

On the way over we came to the summit of the coastal mountains and stopped at a roadside restaurant that was a favorite of his. He said we would have gone to Genoa by train, but he wanted me to experience this restaurant. That was my introduction to a great spaghetti 1st course with very little sauce on it. It was merely a light coating on the pasta. We then had some great ham that was a specialty of the region. We proceeded down the mountain to Genoa.

Our first sales call was on the electric utility company that operates the nuclear power plant. I noticed a notebook binder labeled RELAP in a bookcase and commented on it. (*RELAP is the reactor safety program developed in Idaho Falls*). They were impressed that I was from Idaho Falls, knew the developers, and had experience with the program. I promised to help them if they were to use the CDC computer at the University of Bologna that they had access to.

We took them to lunch at a nice place and ordered a huge sea bass for all of us. To my surprise I was offered the eyeballs since it was my birthday. In their culture I got this great delicacy. I respectfully declined.

After lunch we walked around the corner, and they showed me a plaque on a house which was the birthplace of Christopher Columbus. I couldn't believe it as the house was still in good condition.

Friday afternoon I flew back to Geneva for the weekend. I would meet up with my Italian counterpart in Rome the next week.

LaRue and the kids got along fine after their parking garage experience and pretty much knew the ropes and their way around.

They had ventured out for dinner in Coppet and found a great restaurant where they had a whole salmon that was costly. I was a little worried about the dinner expenses as they were eating good. There were no protests from the Zurich bean counters. We were saving the company money living at the rural Motel de Founex rather than an expensive hotel in downtown Geneva.

Monday morning I flew to Rome, caught a taxi for the long ride into the city, and found the small Hotel Nazioni, where the Milan office had made reservations.

The hotel was on a quiet street in central Rome and about three blocks from the famous fountain.

My Italian counterpart arrived and we made calls on the Italian Atomic Energy Commission, the electric utility company, and some engineering firms that design nuclear power plants.

We were near the University of Rome one day and my friend decided I needed to experience a typical Roman lunch. We sat down at a table and the waiter brought a 2-liter jug of red wine. I commented that was way too much wine, but my friend said we drink what we want. They measure what's left and charge accordingly.

It was a great lunch with many courses and lasted about three hours. We didn't make any more sales calls that afternoon.

We did some sightseeing, walked into the Coliseum, and wandered around on our own. *(We were there recently and the place was packed with people waiting to get in. They were waiting for their paid tour to begin)*

We had more sales calls to make in Rome the next week, so I spent the weekend in Rome on my own. After we finished in Rome we returned to Milan to wind up my work with that office.

Working in Italy was a great experience, but stressful for the family.

Back to Work at CERN

I got back to Geneva and still did not have a work permit. I was told to hang out at CERN and keep a low profile. We could have been ordered out of the country within 24 hours if the Swiss Government caught on. It was an uneasy situation to be in. Our furniture and belongings had arrived and were impounded in storage.

We looked at houses but could make no commitments. Nils took me around to car dealerships to look at cars, but again could not do anything. I saw a used Audi 80 sedan that I thought would work.

I got along well with the CERN computer center managers. John Ferguson (England), Eric McIntosh (Scotland), and Jean-Claude Juvet (Swiss). They invited me to sit in their weekly meeting with users and I accepted. That gave me a great opportunity to meet key users, listen to their problems, and computing requirements.

As I suspected CERN was moving towards an interactive computing environment. The 7600 was a number crunching computer with no interactive capability. There was no need for a 2nd 7600 that Walt Chase had been pursuing for three years!

This confirmed what I had been told in Minneapolis.

Digital Equipment Corporation (DEC) was having great success with their small engineering workstations called the VAX 11-780. They were priced in the hundred thousand to 200 thousand dollar range. CERN's maintenance bill for the 7600 was around \$1 million per year and they were very unhappy about it.

Computer procurement at CERN was not done by competitive bids. Decisions were made by the CERN Council that met twice a year. Their direction was to pursue DEC workstations and a midrange IBM computer for administrative computing.

Here I am at CERN with orders to sell another 7600. I knew this was not going to happen. It was time for creative thinking. I was aware of a project underway in Minneapolis to add interactive computing capability to the 7600. It would be called the Cyber176.

My only hope was to persuade CERN to consider a liberal trade in allowance on their old 7600 for a new Cyber 176. This solution would also allow them to get rid of the front end computer that fed the 7600. I called my idea Plan B. In my discussions with CERN management they showed interest. My Analyst, Nils Buss, liked Plan B and was wholeheartedly behind it.

I presented Plan B to Walt Chase and he went ballistic. We were in my office and Walt was yelling at me, "you are to sell and install a 2nd 7600 within a year". I was at the blackboard diagramming Plan B and could see down the hall. Andreas Grimm had stepped out of his office to see what was going on.

I went on to tell Walt that what he was promoting was wrong. A 2nd 7600 at CERN would never happen. Plan B was a strategy that had a chance.

Since Walt unloaded on me I unloaded on him about my lack of a work permit. I also added that since I didn't have a work permit I shouldn't even be in Switzerland. That caused him to yell even more.

Nils was in the meeting and looked terrified. Walt stormed out and we never got along after that.

I was mystified by Walt's refusal to listen and hear me out. I had just had winning strategies at Richland, and Idaho Falls. I couldn't see anything in his career to justify him calling the shots at CERN. My only hope was to go around him. I then met with Bob Hayden, who had just arrived in the Zurich office as the new Country Manager. Bob was more interested in his relocation and new job than hearing me out. He liked Walt's plan of a 2nd 7600 at CERN. I got nowhere.

(Note-The INEL in Idaho Falls found themselves in the same situation as CERN a couple of years later. I had left CDC and was employed by the INEL. I worked Plan B and negotiated a trade for a new Cyber 176 for \$300,000. We ended up with a new Cyber 176 supporting a large interactive computing environment. With this capability we were selected by DOE to be the computer center for the Three Mile Island nuclear disaster.

We ran many hours of Three Mile Island simulation and was the only DOE computer center with the capability to do so.

CERN dumped their 7600 after I departed and went to a distributed computer environment with many small computers. They implemented the world's first interactive browser (Mosaic), developed the first router, and hooked up hundreds of personal computers to interactively solve problems. The architect was my old friend at CERN, Eric McIntosh.

We visited Geneva in 2017 and had a great visit and lunch with Eric, Nils, and Andreas. Eric is still working at CERN as an advisor. He was going to take us on a tour of the Super Collider then found it was conducting an experiment and we couldn't go. We ended up going to the CERN visitor center and museum with him instead.)

Finding a Home and Getting Settled

My work permit eventually came through and we began looking in earnest for a place to live.

My secretary's husband had a place for us to look at that weekend in Coppet. They were going to be out of town, so I got the key, which in Switzerland was strictly against the rules.

I got home from CERN Friday night and we went and looked at it. It was a huge French type farmhouse on three levels. It had a huge yard of at least three acres. We liked it and decided it would do.

Saturday morning I went to look at it again by myself. I pulled in through the gate and down the right side of the house to where there was a garage door to enter the lower level. It was slightly open, and I knew we hadn't left it that way. I feared that we had not locked it when we left. Then I saw one of the small panes of glass was broken.

I went in and saw paint dumped on the floor. There were footprints where they walked through it.

There was a toilet in a small room and there was a big mess in it that could not be flushed since the water was turned off.

The evening before I had seen keys hanging on the wall and they were gone. The door to the main floor at the top of the stairs was locked and they couldn't get up to the main living area.

I went back to the motel and called Walt Chase to get some help, as he knew a little French. He didn't want to be involved. I checked with the neighbor to see if they saw or heard anything and they had not.

I decided I better go to the Coppet police station and report it. The constables didn't speak English, and we had a heck of a time. They followed me to the house, investigated, and took notes. That evening they came to the motel to check our shoes to see if any matched the footprints.

During the night we heard some noise outside our room. When we got up Sunday morning there were police on our patio looking around.

The motel was about two miles from a big casino in France and it had been held up in the early morning hours. The bandits were pursued to the motel where they ran up the stairs to the 2nd story.

Evidently the noise we heard was the casino robbers jumping over the patio railing above us and hitting the railing of our patio. They took off and got away. The police looked around our patio and interviewed us.

To make matters worse we were involved in the breakin of the house the night before. I guess we did not fit the description of the casino robbers and the police finally left. Switzerland is the land of law and order with very little crime and we were involved in two crimes in one day.

A Place to Live – At Last

I dreaded going to work Monday morning and telling Francois what had happened to the house Friday evening after we looked at it. I gave her the good news first that we would like to lease the place, and then the bad news.

No problems were encountered, and we had a place to live. We signed a three year lease starting June 1, 1977. It was another week or so before all the contract and signatures were done, insurance bought, and arrangements made with the moving company.

We had been living out of suitcases for three months and it was great to unpack. It was like Christmas as we unloaded things. It was good that we had such a big house as we had brought all our furniture.

We had a few surprises as the large charcoal BBQ grill and wheelbarrow that was supposed to go into storage was in the shipment. I was glad to see both, and they were used extensively. Our European friends were amazed at the big grill. We had some good BBQ's with them.

We also had a case of gallon size Skippys peanut butter the Chase kids requested, and a water pump for Walt's 1956 Thunderbird. We heard later the peanut butter was gone within a month.

We had a telephone installed and our number was 76.11.69. Our address was Route de Founex, CH-1296 Coppet, Switzerland.

I went to the post office to get mail delivery started and they already had us in their records for Route De Founex.

There was no house number on the house and none was required for delivery. The first mail we received was a large tax bill retroactive to the day we arrived in Switzerland. I sent it on to the Zurich office and they took care of it.

The house was known as the Brooks Villa. It was owned by an English guy, Alan Brooks, that was living in South Africa. The annual rent was 28,800 swiss francs which was about \$2,200 on a monthly basis. It doesn't sound like a lot today but in today's dollars it would be \$10,000 or more per month.

My monthly salary was \$1,500 augmented by a draw of \$600 per month against future sales commissions. It almost covered the rent. In addition, I received \$800 per month housing allowance and around \$800 per month cost of living allowance. That was around \$1,600 per month to live on.

We were poor American hired help in Switzerland where the cost of living was ranked the third highest in the world.

Our House

The Brooks Villa had three floors with three bedrooms and one bathroom on the third floor. The front entry was into the middle 2nd floor since the house was built on sloping ground. Off the entry hall was a small kitchen on the left, a large bedroom on the right, then a hall to the left with stairs going up to the bedrooms and stairs down to the basement. Off that hall was a large bathroom on the left and a maid's room on the right that we used for our breakfast nook.

Continuing in from the entry way were two big rooms side by side. We used the room on the left as our formal living room and the room on the right as a family room as it had a fireplace. These two rooms were connected by big French doors.

French doors also opened to a porch the width of the house. The porch had stained glass windows on each end. It was covered above by a porch off the master bedroom on the 3rd floor

Downstairs was a full walk out basement with a furnace room, small toilet room, a workbench, space for two cars, and a separate room. It was locked with the owner's stuff stored in it.

The only drawback was the small kitchen. Our big refrigerator had to go across the hall in the big bedroom that we used as our dining room. The kitchen was equipped with a small refrigerator and an old dishwasher that didn't work.

The heating system was a large oil burner in the basement. It heated water that circulated through radiators in each of the rooms. It took a long time to get the rooms up to the desired comfort level, but worked well.

Electricity was 50 cycle 220 volts. We needed transformers for our American electrical stuff. The lamps were no problem as we replaced the bulbs with European bulbs and bought adapters for the plugs.

There was a large turnover of people going home so used transformers were plentiful. We picked up large capacity models for the refrigerator and washer and several small ones for the vacuum cleaner, stereo, and whatever else needed one.

The record player played slow on 50 cycles but there was a wheel adjuster on it to adjust the turntable to the right revolution. For some reason unknown to me the 8 track tapes played at the right speed.

Nils had just gotten a color TV, so I bought his old black and white model. It was all we needed as there were only 3 stations over the air in black and white broadcasting in French. We didn't watch much TV until we picked up a little of the language.

I wanted to move the antenna cable to enter the house in a different place and went to drill a hole through the wall. I had a 1 ft drill bit, but the wall was thicker than that and I gave up.

The back porch was about 10 ft above ground level. The view was over the huge backyard, across fields, Lake Geneva, and the beginning of the Alps. It was a million dollar view that we never grew tired of. I would crank up Neil Diamond or John Denver on my stereo 8 track and float off across Lake Geneva, the clouds, and the snowy Alps beyond.

Our house and lot was secluded. There were 10 ft high shrubs between the front yard and the street. Across the street in front was a farmer's field. The shrubs continued about half way down the east side of the lot. There were 4 houses on that side, but we could only see the last two. Adjacent to the west side of the lot was a farmer's field.

The south end of the lot that faced Lake Geneva dropped on a steep slope to railway tracks. They were low enough that we could barely see the top of the trains. The trains were electric so there was hardly any noise.

Buying a Car

Now that we were moved into a house it was time to find a car. On a Saturday I picked up Nils. He was fairly fluent in French and could interpret. We shopped around and then went to the Audi dealership where I had seen a white Audi 80 sedan some time ago. It was still on the lot and we went for a test drive with a salesman. We stopped at a roadside auberge for an aperitif and to chat about the car. The salesman went to the rest room and I told Nils to offer 500 Swiss francs less than the asking price.

Nils was aghast and said, “you don’t negotiate in Switzerland”. I said do it anyway. An embarrassed Nils translated the offer. Nothing was said and we returned to the dealership. The salesman went inside, and I figured my car buying effort was a failure.

Then the salesman came out and agreed to my offer. Nils thought I was the greatest and told everyone at CERN what I had done. They had never dickered on the price of a car, but from now on they would.

Next was the hassle of getting the car insured and licensed. Since we lived in the Canton of Vaud we had to go to Lausanne to get the license. I elected to get a tax free license for one year, which was available for foreigners.

Everyone knew you were a foreigner as the last digit was Z and the license plate had a vertical red stripe. They were known as Zed plates.

I figured out that was why we were always stopped at the border when we were coming home from skiing in Italy or France. The other cars were being waved through and we would be stopped and questioned.

I also had to get a Swiss driver’s license. That took three trips to Lausanne to apply, take a written test, a driver’s test, then pick up the license. The fee for the license was huge, but it was good for a lifetime.

First Summer in Coppet, Switzerland

A big drawback of our new home was the size of the lot. There were many trees and shrubs that had been neglected for a long time. They all needed trimming and maintenance.

The entire lot was planted in grass that had to be mowed. There were a few gardening tools and a power mower, but it was not self-propelled. It also wouldn't start. I took it to a repair shop where they got it going.

I started mowing and it took a lot of effort to push. I had to pull it backwards in long grass in order to get through. I was soon worn out and was not even half done. You cannot mow on Sunday in Switzerland, so I decided to mow half on Saturday and the other half the next Saturday.

I soon decided I would have to find a larger self-propelled mower. There was a Migro's warehouse nearby that was sort of like a Costco, but no membership required.

I found an 18-inch self-propelled American mower and got it. It was a great improvement, but I still had to do half on successive Saturdays.

I was able to keep the place manicured well enough to keep the neighbors and the Swiss authorities happy. The alternate Saturday mowing schedule left time to trim shrubs and trees on Sunday since I was not making noise. I could burn the cuttings on weekdays and Saturday. I cut up the larger stuff for firewood and soon had about a half cord of wood stacked to dry out.

The slope down to the train tracks was too steep for the mower so I would let it grow to about a foot or more and use a scythe. Trains had to slow down for the station that was a few hundred yards away. Tourists would see me cutting grass with the scythe and start taking pictures. To them I was a Swiss farmer cutting hay the old fashioned way. Sometimes I would wave.

Summer in Switzerland was delightful. The weather was much like Idaho, but a hot day would probably top out around 85 degrees.

In the late afternoon thunderclouds would start building up due to the lake effect and mountains on both sides of the valley. About 4pm it was time to grab a drink, crank up the stereo, sit on the porch, and experience the rain, thunder, and lightning. It would last an hour or so, and was a nice break.

The kids summer vacation from school began shortly after we moved in. They had adapted well and enjoyed new friends. Kids from all over the world attended College du Lemman and it was an eye opener for them. There were extremely wealthy Saudi and Iranian kids that came to school in chauffeured limo's. The Shah of Iran's nephew was one of the Iranians.

We had lived in the Hotel de Founex nearly two months and Brian got to know the help and management. He was able to get a job for the summer as a maid and handyman working with the Italian maids.

He was an undocumented foreign worker doing a job that the Swiss would not do. The pay was not good, but it gave him something to do and extra spending money above his weekly allowance. Kathleen was in demand babysitting for American families and was paid well. We gave them a fairly good weekly allowance. They had money to ride the train to Geneva and do the things they wanted to do.

CDC would pay for LaRue and I to take French lessons and we found a lady tutor near us. Her name was Madam Perone and was from Paris. We would go for an hour a couple of times a week. We took the newspaper which was in French and we got so we could comprehend what was in the news.

Just after moving in we got a letter from our neighbor across the street in Idaho Falls. They were surprised that we were selling our house! I called our realtor and he said the renters had suddenly moved out. He thought he would see if he could find a buyer. I asked him about the one year lease. He didn't think we would get anywhere with this guy since he was a used car dealer. I told him the house is not for sale and to find another renter, which he eventually did.

Social Life

We lived very close to the train station. It was easy for Brian and Kathleen to catch the train to Geneva and back. They had to walk about 1/3 mile down Route de Founex, turn left, and it was a hundred yards or so to the small station. The last train back to Coppet was at midnight, and they had to be on it if not earlier.

There was a very active social life for Americans in the Geneva area because of the diplomats and the many international companies with European headquarter in Geneva. There was also the World Health Organization, and other world organizations. The social life centered around the American Women's Club, which LaRue joined right away.

We met a lot of people and attended several house parties. The Club's social function of the year was the annual Christmas party at the International Hotel. Charles Schultz (Peanuts comic strip) and his wife were members and he provided Peanuts posters for the 1977 Christmas party.

There was also a huge 4th of July celebration . We were told it was the largest 4th July celebration outside of the United States. We didn't get the 4th of July off in Switzerland, but we went to the celebration that evening. It was a spectacular event.

The diplomats assigned to the American Mission (could not be called an Embassy in neutral Switzerland) were good to know. Diplomats and family had access to the United States military post exchanges in Germany and would ask if they could bring anything back for us. Our first request was for Frito Lay Fritos and the kids wanted Hershey chocolate bars, of all things. Switzerland is known for the best chocolate in the world.

Another thing we missed greatly was iceberg lettuce since it is not grown in Europe. Once in a while the Grand Passage (a huge department store) would import iceberg lettuce and the word would spread like wildfire. We would acquire all we could. They also had tortillas in a can ,so we could have tacos.

One weekend we invited Nils and Lena, and daughter to our place for tacos. We decided we needed Margaritas. Nils and I took off to find Tequila. We visited several places in Geneva before we finally found a bottle for around \$50. We were glad to get it. They became hooked on tacos and introduced tacos to their European friends.

(We visited Nils and Lena when we were in Switzerland in 2016. They said they still enjoy tacos)

Skiing

Andreas Grimm was Austrian and an avid skier, but he didn't know anything about maintaining skis. I learned ski maintenance in Idaho Falls and had all the equipment.

Our house had a large basement with a workbench. Andreas would visit and I would show him how to do it. We had a great time flat filing, filling in gouges with P-tex, and hot waxing while enjoying a few beers. He loved it.

Kathleen, Brian, and I needed new skis. Andreas took me around the ski shops to shop for skis. He had a favorite shop in Ferney, France. I got new Atomics for me and Kathleen and a pair of Rossignol's for Brian. Skis were a lot cheaper in France and Ferney was just down the road from CERN.

The major ski areas in Switzerland were very expensive so we started in France in the Jura mountains. They were local areas with fairly easy terrain.

Kathleen's friend Jane's father was the head of security at the American Mission and had access to a condo at the Flan ski resort. They had a cozy arrangement at Flan and many of the Marines that provided security at the mission worked night security their off time. Flan was a newer resort in the Alps just before you get to Chamonix, and about 50 miles from our house. We went there a few times and would enjoy an after-ski aperitif at their condo. The runs were high in the Alps, steep, and icy. It was strange as there were no trees. It was snow and ice and big cliffs and narrow chutes.

Andreas joined us one time and got there late. He arrived as we were taking a break at the bottom. He said he would take the gondola up for a run and Brian decided to go with him. After a while we saw two figures very high on the mountain and streaking straight down. It was Andreas with Brian right behind and they were not making any turns. Later, I asked Andreas if he knew how to turn and he just smiled.

Brian and Kathleen just had two weeks expert ski instruction, so they were good skiers. Their school had offered two weeks extra-curricular ski instruction at Crans-Montana, Switzerland. It was optional at an extra cost that CDC would not cover, but we decided they should go. They were totally immersed in skiing.

Local Trips and Sightseeing

We enjoyed getting in the car and driving around when we could get away from the yard work. We would drive north past Lausanne and on up towards Bern passing through the Valais area. It was manicured farms well up on the mountains on each side of the valley. One time we were driving along on a nice wide two lane highway and soldiers stopped all traffic. Then we saw jet fighter planes taxiing out of the side of the mountain. They turned onto the highway in front of us and took off! We just discovered a runway for the Swiss Air Force! What a concept.

It didn't take long to get to another country. We drove north in one day to Lichenstein. We took the slow route over the pass that Hannibal took the elephants over. It was switchbacks, snow, and glaciers over the pass in the middle of summer.

Another trip we packed a lunch to go up the St Bernard Pass over the Alps between Switzerland and Italy. At the top we looked around and bought souvenirs then started looking for a place to have our lunch. Every turnout or wide spot had people with tables set up and having lunch. There was no place to stop. We continued on down the other side in Italy and was on the road to Milan before we found a road side rest. It was on the way to Courmayeur, Italy and the Mt Blanc tunnel. The tunnel was 7.2 miles through the Alps and the other end was near Chamonix, France. When you exited the tunnel you turned right into Chamonix and left to go to Geneva. We ended up making a big circle by going over the Alps and through the Mt Blanc tunnel to Geneva.

We made the trip to Courmayeur, Italy through the Mt Blanc tunnel several times just to have lunch and buy cheap booze. In Italy The round trip was around 80 miles and very enjoyable.

Trip to the U.K.

Control Data had a manufacturing plant in Wales that made computer magnetic tape. A Swiss salesman based in Zurich had sales responsibility for all magnetic tape prospects in Switzerland including CERN.

It didn't make me happy having another salesman calling on CERN, but that is the way it was. He had sold a carload of tapes to CERN a couple of years before and they were defective. It caused all kinds of problems and CERN returned the lot. They did not want any more CDC tapes. The plant then underwent a big upgrade and implemented a rigid quality control process. The salesman requested CERN to visit the plant and evaluate the product. CERN agreed as long as I was with them. They did not trust or like the Swiss salesman.

The meeting in Wales would be 2 days. CERN computer center managers. John Ferguson, Eric McIntosh, and Jean-Claude Juvet would be making the trip.

I decided to take vacation after the meetings and drive with the family. After the meetings we would go on up to my old stomping grounds in Edinburgh, Scotland.

We departed home 5am Saturday and drove over the Jura mountains for a more direct route to Paris. Our little Audi 80 was packed full.

It was a winding two lane road to Dijon, France and then flat country west to the main autoroute between Paris and the south of France. It was a nice scenic enjoyable drive until we hit the autoroute to Paris. Then it was heavy and fast traffic driving for daylight. We saw ambulances and wreckers cruising the autoroute looking for wrecks.

We approached Paris around noon and took the circle route around Paris to the coast and Calais, where we would catch the ferry to Dover in the south of England. We were early for the next crossing, so we drove around the Calais area sightseeing. Then drove onto the ferry.

We settled into the lounge area and Brian was watching people playing slot machines. He wanted to play and converted his Swiss Francs to English Schillings. LaRue told him he might as well take his Schillings and throw them overboard. It would be the same result. He played anyway and hit the jackpot. So much for that lesson. He now had lots of Schillings.

England

I had a reservation at a hotel in Dover, England. We were off the ferry around 5pm.

I wanted to get experience driving on the left side of the road and thought we should continue up the Motorway towards London. We would travel for an hour or so and find a place to stay. I cancelled the reservation and away we went. We started looking for a place to stay and they were few and far between. When we found one it was full, so we had to continue on. Every place we stopped was full.

The map showed a ring road around the south of London that would get us to Wales. What I thought would be a nice Motorway was ordinary streets connected every few blocks with a round-a-bout.

It was slow going and nerve-wracking driving on the left side of the road. It got later and later and still no vacancy. Each stop was taking up time.

It was after midnight when Kathleen woke up and said we went by this place hours ago. Indeed, we had. I had gone too far around a round-a-bout. I had been going back the way we came for a long time.

Around we went and finally saw signs to Heathrow airport. I figured there would be hotels around Heathrow, so there was hope. I finally saw a big Holiday Inn. In European Holiday Inns kids stay free in the same room as the parents. It was now 4am and one room was too small for the family. It would require two rooms at a very expensive rate compared to our Dover reservation.

No aproblem as we need sleep. We were now only about 80 miles from our destination in Usk, Wales. How about that for one day. Geneva to Paris, across the English Channel, around London to Heathrow, and not far from Wales. Not recommended and it was not planned that way.

We got going later that morning. Traveling along on the Motorway we saw a sign for the exit to Stonehenge. Everyone wanted to visit Stonehenge. I was not about to venture off on a detour and get lost. We were within sight of our destination. I just wanted to get there with no more drama.

Usk, Wales – Our Destination

We found Usk, Wales to be a small quaint village. The magnetic tape plant that I was to visit was about 30 miles away in an industrial area.

The Swiss salesman preferred staying in Usk at the Three Salmon Inn and had made reservations. It was a small place and very nice with an upscale and expensive restaurant and pub. The first thing we noticed in our room was a television with people speaking English. What a treat that was!

I was busy with two days at the tape manufacturing plant and evenings wining and dining the CERN people. The Swiss Salesman had a favorite Inn out in the country that we frequented the first night. He said they had a great wine cellar and he had found a 1936 red wine that he really liked . He had it every time he was in the area. That was the year I was born, so we ordered it. It took a long time to bring the bottles from the wine cellar, so they would not disturb the contents. When we finally got to taste it, it was fantastic. The strange thing is that it was not expensive.

The 2nd night we dined at the Three Salmon Inn and it was expensive. The Swiss salesman knew how to live, and take advantage of an expense account.

Meanwhile LaRue and the kids were on their own for dining. They wandered down the street and saw the Nags Head Inn and Pub but were not sure if kids were allowed. They ventured in and were made right at home. The old boys in the pub took Brian in tow, showed him their games ,and gave gambling advice. They had a great time and ate there both evenings.

On Our Way to Scotland

With the meetings over we packed up and headed out and stopped at an old castle. Then drove through Merthyr Tidfil where LaRue's great grandfather was from.

We then proceeded North to England and stopped to get some lunch. I got fish and chips wrapped in newspaper to take with us. Heading out of town we stopped by a farmer's field and had our lunch with cows peering through the fence.

We continued north and arrived in Liverpool. We stopped early to find a place to stay. We lucked out at a Holiday Inn that was in a rough industrial area. and were glad to get it. That evening we went to a pizza place in downtown Liverpool. We were told it was a place where the young Beatles hung out before they were famous..

Edinburgh, Scotland

The next day it was on up the west coast and across Scotland to Edinburgh on the east coast. It was a treat for me to be back in Edinburgh after almost exactly 20 years.

We looked for a place to stay around Princess Street but no availability. We finally found a hotel out towards the airport that had a room for two nights only.

I was anxious to visit where I was stationed at RAF Station Kirknewton and drove straight to it with no problem. The Royal Army was now occupying the upper base. I drove up to the gate thinking we would be turned way.

I told the guard that I had been stationed here 20 years ago and he came back with, "aye, you were one of the yanks?" in a friendly manner. I confirmed that I was, and I just wanted to show my family where I had been stationed. He opened the gate, told us to go ahead, and look around all we wanted.

It looked nearly the same. We then went down to the lower site near the old airfield where our operations building was located. The building was empty and the door was swinging in the breeze. We went in and I showed them where my old radio position was. It was quite an experience for me to relive it.

Over the course of two days we saw the sights of Edinburgh. I even got to frequent a couple of the pubs where I used to hang out. The only place I remember us having dinner was a new Kentucky Fried Chicken place. We all wanted KFC!

Next Stop London

After two days we hit the road south to London traveling down the east coast of Scotland. That road then connected to the Motorway through the center of England. We kept seeing signs near the exits that said, "No Football Coaches". We wondered what that was all about and asked when we stopped for gas.

Football coaches were not wanted because the occupants were always drunk and rowdy going to or from the game.

About halfway to London we started looking for a place to overnight. It was late afternoon but the hotels along the Motorway were all booked. I decided to exit and travel the rural highway going south. We finally lucked out at a small bed and breakfast.

The next day we headed to London where we planned to stay three days. I was worried about finding a hotel and about 60 miles from London decided to pull off and make phone calls.

We drove into Northampton and spotted a Holiday Inn. It was lunch time and we could inquire about rooms in London and get something to eat in the restaurant.

I talked to the front desk manager and he said there were several Holiday Inns in London. He would check availability while we were eating. The only vacancy was at the Holiday Inn Marble Arch in the center of the city. That was great news and we booked it.

London

We got into London in fine shape. I could see the Holiday Inn but could not find the street. We went around and around a three or four block area and got extremely frustrated. Finally stumbled onto the frontage street for the hotel by accident. I pulled into the parking garage and parked the car for the duration of our stay. The Marble Arch Underground Station was near the hotel, and we could get anywhere we wanted to go.

We saw the sights of London that evening and the next two days by riding the Underground. We had a rule that if any of us missed getting on the train the rest of us would get off at the next stop and wait. We never had any problems.

We even left the kids at the hotel and dinner on their own one evening while LaRue and I went out for dinner. She also had to shop at Harrods.

We departed London and found our way south to Dover and the ferry without any problems. I don't remember if Brian played the slot machines, but I suppose he did. The ferry ride to Calais was smooth and we drove to Lille, France where we got a hotel room. The next day we headed south around Paris. Then further south on the autoroute. We took the exit to Dijon and over the Jura Mountains to home. It was a great trip.

Easter Trip to Germany and Paris

Easter 1978 was March 26. The kids were out of school for a week. I decided to take a week of vacation and we would spend it in Paris.

The guys at CERN recommended a small hotel on the way into Paris that they liked and it was not expensive. A Metro station was directly in front of the hotel. The Metro made it easy to get around Paris and leave the car parked. I trusted their recommendation and made a reservation for several days.

We decided to make a big circle by driving north through Switzerland into Germany then head west across France to Paris. We would return by heading south from Paris and then through Dijon and the Jura Mountains to home.

We departed home early on Saturday morning and headed northeast on the autoroute through Lausanne, the Valais area, Bern, and to Basil on the German border.

I stopped to get gas and they gave us a bunch of colored Easter eggs which we put away for a roadside lunch. We crossed into Germany and the traffic changed drastically as there is no speed limit on the autobahn.

We were no longer in orderly Switzerland with a speed limit of 120 kilometers per hour. The traffic was as fast as they could go. However, the trucks were slower and to get around them I would wait for a break. Then go for it only to have a big Mercedes on our rear bumper flashing headlights to pass.

The autobahn traffic was just too much for our little Audi and us. After a couple of hours I spotted an exit to Strasbourg, France. I took it to get off the autobahn.

There was a decent route to Paris that would work nicely. We were in Strasbourg early in the afternoon and got a room at a Holiday Inn and went sightseeing around town. Strasbourg is in the Alsace region with a strong German influence. Dinner that evening was German cuisine that we enjoyed.

Verdun, France

The next morning we headed west on the autoroute to Paris. We saw a road sign to Verdun, France. It was just a few miles off the autoroute and decided to see what this famous WWI battlefield was all about.

We started seeing French, American, and German military burial grounds stretching over the rolling hills.

The battle ground was pockmarked with huge shell craters every square yard. It was a spectacular sight. We came upon a small hill that had a tunnel going through it and stopped to take a look. It was a good place to have a snack.

We got out our colored Easter eggs and ate them in the tunnel entrance. Proceeding on through the tunnel we exited at restored bunkers and tunnels. It was the area that became famous for launching carrier pigeons with messages.

The battle ground, visitor center, and burial grounds are something I will always remember.

Proceeding on to Paris we pulled off at a roadside restaurant for a late afternoon lunch. I wanted a beer only to find beer was not available in any restaurant in proximity to the autoroute. Hadn't heard of that before, and so much for that.

Paris

Our hotel was easy to get to since it was on the east side of Paris and on our route. We found it easily and was able to park in front of the hotel where we would leave the Audi during our stay in Paris.

The Metro station entrance was in front of the hotel, so it was very convenient. It was a small two-story hotel. The rooms were small, so we had two rooms. Breakfast was included and it was very good. It was an eclectic mix in the dining room in the mornings, with a Russian bunch in suits, some French, and us. I figured the Russians were spies.

The plan was to ride the Metro to get around Paris, so we purchased 5 day passes and took off to see the sights. We followed our rule that if anyone missed getting on the Metro before the doors closed we would all get off at the next stop and wait for them to catch up. It worked well.

After 2 days we were veterans of Metro travel and Brian and Kathleen were allowed to go their own way if they wanted, which they did. We toured hard all day and would end up back at the hotel about 5pm worn out. The Metro was a fantastic way to get around Paris.

Each evening we would find a different restaurant. Since we all knew a little French my rule was that all ordering would be in French. However, the waiter would usually not understand because of my accent even though I had the words right. One night our waiter insisted that I was a Texas ranch owner and switched to English, which is highly unusual for a French waiter. He kept insisting I was a Texas ranch owner, so I finally relented, and said I was, and we got back to ordering dinner.

After spending the week in Paris we left for home. The Versailles Palace was not far off our route, so we stopped and spent the morning touring the buildings and the grounds. Then it was on home via Dijon and the Jura mountains. It was a nice way to spend Easter week.

The Lunch of a Lifetime

The annual European Control Data User Group Conference convened in Lausanne, Switzerland in March 1978. Nils Buss and I attended as Control Data representatives. John Ferguson, Jean-Claude Juvet, and Eric McIntosh represented CERN. It was a three day event with European speakers and speakers from Control Data Headquarters in Minneapolis.

The first evening I hosted the CERN people at a nice dinner at our hotel. Nils Buss was there also, and Walt Chase showed up in time for dinner. Wild game was featured on the menu and the Europeans were big on the venison. It was a nice dinner with good wine and very expensive.

It was no problem for my expense report as Walt Chase was there and he was the manager that would sign off on it.

The next day Jean-Claude Juvet caught up with me and said he had talked to Freddy Girardet. He was the chef and owner of a Michelin 3-star restaurant located in the village of Crissier adjacent to Lausanne.

Freddy had been voted the best chef in the world and his restaurant considered the best in the world. Reservations had to be obtained a year in advance. Juvet was known as one of the best jazz pianists in Europe, a native of Lausanne, and a friend of Freddy, so he had the connections. Freddy would accommodate five of us that day for lunch, and did I want to do it.

My eyes kind of rolled knowing I couldn't justify a lunch tab like that after last night. He caught my hesitation and said we would all share the tab. Wow, what an opportunity that was.

Nils, me, Ferguson, and McIntosh piled into Juvet's old Deux Cheveau (2 horse) Citroen. Juvet wanted to show us a couple of his old hangouts on the hill above Lausanne, and we visited them for a starter. The old Citroen could hardly get us up the hill. We enjoyed the view, the wine, and proceeded down the hill.

Freddy's restaurant was in the City Hall building and was a plain stark white décor. The menu was outstanding. Juvet suggested that rather than each of us order we should order one each of nearly everything based on Freddy's recommendation. Then we would share and get to try it all. It was a great idea and he ordered everything Freddy recommended.

The wine menu was amazing and not expensive. Freddy came to the table two or three times as we were eating to chat. He applauded Juvet's wine selection and said it is not necessary to drink expensive wine at his place.

It was a totally amazing experience and we were there all afternoon. As I remember the tab came to around \$80 each for five people. Quite a lot of money in 1978 and worth every penny.

(Note-We were back in Idaho Falls and a couple of years later I was watching CBS "On the Road" with Charles Kuralt. A segment came on showing Charles Kuralt dining at Freddy's restaurant. He was sitting at the same table we were at. It was about a 10 minute segment showing the food and Charles visiting with Freddy just as we had done. I was on cloud 9. The best food experience I ever had or ever will have.)

My Trip to the U.S. and Idaho Falls

The Control Data Worldwide User Group was having their 1978 meeting in Minneapolis again in early May. I escorted the CERN people the year before. It worked out well and they requested that I be there again. I expected opposition from my management, but got the ok.

The CERN people liked to visit other sites while they were in the United States to see how they do things. Eric McIntosh and I put our heads together and agreed he should visit the Idaho Falls computer center. We had a great time in Minneapolis and when the meetings were over Eric and I proceeded to Idaho Falls. I had arranged to tour the computer center, visit with management, and key users.

We had two great days and he enjoyed wild west Idaho falls, and American beer that I kept apologizing for.

Being unsure of the future I also talked to a few friends at EG&G about a possible job if I ever needed one. George Schultz, a manager in the Loss of Fluid Test (LOFT) program, said if I ever wanted a job to give him a call.

I took a couple days vacation and stayed with Brother Garry and Bonnie in Rigby. They took me to Salmon to visit the folks.

I had a shopping list of things to buy for LaRue and got that done before departing Idaho Falls for New York and then to Geneva.

Before I left Geneva a letter from Max and Loa informed us they were coming to visit and travel Europe for 30 days. They would be flying to Geneva about the time I would be coming back from my trip. I had their flight numbers on TWA.

I preferred to fly Swiss Air but thought it would be neat to book the same TWA flight from New York and surprise them. I arranged my return to coincide with them. Were they ever surprised in New York. We had a nice flight together. However, Max was not feeling all that well. Looking back it was the start of his depression episode.

LaRue met us at the airport and I drove home. I noticed Max in the passenger seat was braking quite often. He said later my driving like the Europeans scared him to death.

We toured them around Switzerland and through the Mt Blanc Tunnel into Italy.

Monday morning we would put them on the train for a week of touring. They would return Friday evening to regroup and leave again Monday morning. It was fun having them.

After they left Gene and Wanda dropped in for a couple of days, as they had been touring Europe with friends.

The CERN Human Supercomputer

Nils was acquainted with a Dutch mathematician who was winding down his career at CERN. His name was Wim Klein. Before computers he solved complex math problems for CERN. When CERN got the 7600 Wim checked the results it produced in his head. He set a Guinness Book Record for finding the 73rd root of a 500 digit number in 2 minutes 43 seconds.

Nils brought him to my office and introduced us. I found him to be one of the most fascinating people I have ever met. He had been on television shows in the United States with the stage name of Willy Wortel. He wanted to pursue a career in television and eventually asked me to sponsor and promote him. I bowed out as I had no idea of how to do it.

He retired and moved back to Amsterdam. On August 1, 1986 he was found in his bedroom murdered with a knife. The case has never been solved.

Winding Down in Switzerland

The spring meeting of the CERN Council set the official direction for CERN to begin migration from the CDC 7600 to small engineering workstations and a distributed interactive computing environment.

I knew there was no way to turn it around. In reality it was the right direction for CERN. Walt Chase and Bob Hayden refused to believe it.

My pay structure was based on what they wanted to happen at CERN. What they wanted was not going to happen.

My work permit did not allow me to work anywhere but CERN. I saw that my only option was to end my assignment in Switzerland. I talked to Walt Chase and Bob Hayden about it. Neither would listen.

Kathleen was graduating from College du Lemman the first of June, 1978 and would be going to college at Boise State.

We had paid home leave coming in the fall. We decided that Kathleen and Brian would fly to Idaho Falls after her graduation. They could stay with friends and find jobs for the summer.

LaRue and I and Julie would come on home leave later, get Kathleen in college, and return to Switzerland. That was the plan.

The more I thought about it the more I came to realize that it made no sense to continue the charade in Switzerland. It was time to force the issue and get back to a productive career in the United States.

Kathleen's Graduation

Kathleen had an impressive graduation ceremony. The school had a big dinner afterwards for the graduates and families. They erected a huge tent and it was a sit-down affair for a nice dinner. The wine and music flowed freely. College du Lemman knew how to have a graduation.

We took Kathleen and Brian to the airport a couple of days later and saw them off to Idaho Falls. We worried they had to connect in Copenhagen and Seattle. They made it fine.

Before they departed we told them that we might not continue to live in Switzerland and to plan on that possibility.

Ending it in Switzerland

I knew that I had a job any time I wanted with Tom Odle, the sales manager in the Seattle office. I had called him and was assured I had a job. He told me to do whatever I needed to do to get back.

I approached Walt Chase about the economics of me being in Switzerland and he refused to listen. He passed it of to his boss, Bob Hayden, in Zurich..

I wanted to be leaving on a mutual parting of the ways and went to meet with Bob Hayden. According to Bob my only option was to resign from Control Data Switzerland. He wanted it in writing, which I did on the spot.

Two days later he called and said I had to revise the letter to resigning from Control Data Switzerland, and Control Data Corporation. With that I did not have the job with CDC in Seattle to go back to.

However, I sent the revised letter of resignation knowing I had options in Idaho Falls with my former customer.

I had previously called George Schultz at EG&G Idaho and asked if his offer was still valid. He came back with yes. I would be his computer expert in the LOFT program.

EG&G could not cover the expense for an international move but would cover living expenses for two weeks after our arrival in the United States.

I knew that a condition for a Swiss work permit required that the company that brought you to Switzerland was required to return you to where you came from. It was agreed to in writing by Control Data Switzerland.

Later I got a call from the head bean counter in Zurich and told that I would have to pay for the move back to Idaho Falls. It was on the order of \$35,000 coming over.

I told him to read the contract. Later that day he called the moving company and made arrangements for the move.

Working Out Going Back to Idaho Falls

I called George Schultz and accepted his job offer that was for a lot more money. I had a good job to go to, and the return move was covered by CDC.

Our friends through the LDS Church connection, had a couple of years left in Geneva and greed to take our cat named Tigger.

I planned to ship the Audi but discovered it didn't meet U.S. emissions standards. We would have to sell it. We asked our friends that were taking Tigger if they might be interested in the Audi. They decided a second car would be useful. They would buy it if they could pay over three payments. That worked for us, and we agreed they would get the Audi when we departed.

Our lease on the house had two years remaining and that was a problem.

A new engineering manager and his family had just arrived from Minneapolis and looking for a place to live. We showed them our place and they liked it.

Our realtor got the owner's approval, and the lease was transferred. We were off the hook in Switzerland.

We now needed a place to live in Idaho Falls. The lease on our house in Idaho Falls was up with an option to renew in writing by July 1. They didn't renew the lease, so we gave them notice to be out August 1. We were set for our return.

A team of four workers was at our place for a week packing and crating. My secretary alerted me that if we wanted a happy work crew and good move we needed to have beer, wine, and snacks available for their morning and afternoon break! We made sure we did.

We spent the last two or three days at the Motel de Founex while the packing was going on. Then we thoroughly inventoried and cleaned the house for the formal inspection. We were nervous and it passed.

It was hard leaving coworkers and friends at CERN. They understood why we were leaving. We had a nice going away party and they gave us a pewter wine decanter.

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Touring Europe by Train

Early one morning we handed over the keys to the Audi and got on the train for two weeks of touring. LaRue had her backpack and Julie a small backpack. I had two medium size suitcases, carrying one in each hand to balance the load. Suitcases didn't have wheels and collapsible tow handles in those days.

Our first stop was Munich where we stayed at a small hotel Andreas Grimm recommended.

We toured hard for a couple of days and then got on the train to Salzburg, Austria.

We got off the train and an elderly man approached us about staying at his bed and breakfast a few blocks away. The pictures looked good so away we went. The rooms were small, so we had to have two rooms. We were nervous about Julie being in a room by herself.

In the morning we would sit in his kitchen while he fixed breakfast. He was interesting as he told us about serving in the German army in WW2.

The scenery and food was excellent in Salzburg. My German 35mm camera that I bought while in the Air Force quit working and I took it to a camera shop. The old gent said, "Ah yes, I know this camera", and fixed it.

The next stop was through spectacular scenery to Vienna, Austria for a couple of days.

Vienna was great. It had a different feel to it being so close to communist countries.

After Vienna we backtracked through Germany to Hamburg. We got off the train in Hamburg and I left LaRue and Julie at the station while I took off looking for a place to stay. It took a while, but I found a place in a sketchy neighborhood. Then it was hurry back and collect them and our belongings. Touring by train and on foot is hard work.

We took the train and ferry from Hamburg to Copenhagen, Denmark which was a nice journey. Loa and Max recommended a small hotel where they had stayed. I made a call and confirmed they had a room available and got directions for riding the bus.

We were unwinding in the room when LaRue decided to check her suitcase for her wedding rings. Unbeknown to me she had put them in the suitcase in Switzerland when we were packing and cleaning the house for inspection. She went through everything and the rings were not there. My thoughts went back to the sketchy place in Hamburg and possibly the ferry ride to Denmark. We had left our compartment on the ferry for a while and two guys stayed behind.

We decided we should have a police report for documentation . Maybe our Swiss insurance might cover it. I caught a bus and went to the police station and got that done. Luckily, the police were conversant with English. It was not a good beginning for our stay in Copenhagen. However, we saw the sights, enjoyed free beer at the Carlsberg Brewery, and rode the rides in Tivoli Gardens.

(Note: In hindsight we think the theft probably happened while the movers were packing our stuff. It could also have happened during the two days we had our suitcases in the Motel de Founex.

After we got to Idaho Falls I had Andreas make the theft known at the Motel de Founex. It was to no avail and our insurance did not cover the loss. It was a lesson learned)

Our next Destination was Goteborg, Sweden via train, ferry, and train again. I found a hotel close to the train station, so it was fairly easy. The room was large with high ceilings and big windows.

The first thing that stood out was drunk people passed out by noon. We went to a MacDonalds for a hamburger and an old lady was passed out at a table.

Then we went into a small shopping mall and a young guy was laying in the stairwell passed out. It was not a pretty sight.

The Scandinavian countries charge exorbitant prices for alcohol, but it makes no difference. We observed more drunks than anywhere. One beer and that was all we felt we could afford.

These people pay about 80% of their earnings to the government. I wonder how they have anything left to get stoned every day.

There was not much to keep us in Goteborg. After two nights in the hotel we caught the train for a scenic ride to Oslo, Norway.

I hit the street running and found a hotel within a reasonable distance. Oslo had a lot of scenic attractions to keep us busy and we enjoyed it.

The hotel had a big buffet breakfast of fish, cheese, bread, and pastries. LaRue had fish for breakfast, but it was not for me. I think Oslo was my favorite, although Copenhagen was great also.

After a couple of weeks of hard touring it was time to head for the United States.

It was around the first of August, 1978. Our house had been vacated and our furniture was on its way. We flew from Oslo to Copenhagen on a small plane then boarded a SAS DC-10 to Seattle. I enjoyed the great view of Greenland as we flew over the polar route to Seattle.

Customs in Seattle put us through a thorough grilling and search. I was wondering if we would ever get through.

We made it and called LaRue's brother Ross to pick us up. It was great to be back in the United States.

End chapter 7

