

ROARSHOCK PAGE

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Again with excitement ROARSHOCK PAGE returns to Europe, this time from the great city of Amsterdam. Publisher D. A. Wilson will be drinking pints on this Saint Patrick's Day in memory and celebration of the life and 80th Birthday of his own father the late John O. Wilson. What fortuitous luck to have discovered a manuscript John O. Wilson wrote describing his first trip from the USA to Europe in 2002 when he was 64. Some excerpts happily now presented.

MARTINEZ TO MUNICH

Tuesday — Martinez to Munich — The plane was only half full and the experienced travelers quickly grabbed the vacant center seats so they could lie down to sleep. I watched them do it, figuring that since I couldn't sleep on planes, let someone else have the extra seat. After about the first six hours I began regretting that charity. Twelve hours of sitting at a 15* list can really sap your Christian charity. We took a taxi to the Munich Hilton Park Hotel, about a mile from the old city in a park right next to a river. The river Isar runs through the city. They split the river into three channels at the upstream end of the park and the hotel actually sits between the main river and one of the side channels. The restaurant and our room look down on this side channel, bordered by trees and lawns, and full to the brim with water. My first look at German weather: threatening, misting skies, and a full river. Tells you something. Helga and I unpack as far as the swim suits and go down to the pool. It's a posh space, constantly attended, full of gadgets: a pump that lets you swim upstream, a water fall, stepped ramp entry. Forget the gadgets, we just plunge and exercise. A few laps, why, we're right as rain! Or at least we're feeling the parts of our bodies again. We dress and go down for dinner at the hotel. Buffet (lousy), 3/4 empty restaurant, expensive! Still, it was easy and we were exhausted, so no hard feelings. And so to bed in Europe, my first night on the continent.

Thursday — Shakedown in Munich — Phone rings at 9:00 a.m., and it's Ingrid. How did she know? We were so careful to be vague about our schedule, "We will call you when we arrive." and we need this first day to get our heads straight before we meet with Julius and Ingrid. We are firm that tomorrow is the day we meet and Ingrid is magnanimous. What the hell, she found us out, she can afford to be generous... Breakfast was good, big improvement over last night, and we set out to pick up the car. Inside the rental car agency Helga undertakes to make them aware of what they agreed to in the reservation. This amounts to 30 minutes of negotiation, and no chance for me to ask my questions. Questions about road signing, traffic laws, etc. Oh, well, I'll learn from experience.

Finally we're on our way. I'm driving in Europe for the first time. I don't know the rules, I can't read the signs, I can't pronounce the streets, I've only had a few minutes to memorize the map (inadequate) and my Navigator, (Helga) tends to communicate in broad gestures. Sheer terror. Our first stop was to be the center of the old town. The concierge had given me a route and a parking garage, and miraculously it worked. I got to the main square, parked in the underground garage, and walked around. Checked out Dallmayr's, got the lay of the land. Came back to the car, thinking maybe this worked so well, let's go out to Nymphenburg as well. Now the roles start to be defined. "Helga, look at the map. What street are we supposed to be on? What street are we on? What was that cross street? Well, damn it, my job is to drive, yours is to navigate!" "Well, I can't read the map with my glasses on and I can't see the street signs with them off." "Well, where are we? Pull over, share the map, pick-up a location. Figure out a route to our desired destination." 3 minutes later, start over. This was to be the scenario of most of our trip: start out with optimism, get lost, miraculously discover where we were, redirect and get lost again. An interesting way to see Europe. Best strategy, later to be perfected, seemed to be to follow the signs to the Zentrum, go around the old town to the south and intersect the street we knew, Maximilianstraße, and follow it in. A long way about, but it should work. And it did work. 15 minutes later we were back at the center garage. In the square in front of the Rathaus-Glockenspiel, camera ready, with 10 minutes to spare. We had perfected our navigation system, at least for Munich.

Friday — Julius and Ingrid — Up at 7:30 a.m., swim and breakfast, back to room for finishing touches. Down to lobby to meet the Father/Father-in-law at the agreed on hour of 11:00 a.m. - Nobody's there. Got a paper, read the sports, then the international, still nobody. 11:30 a.m. and I'm starting to worry. I figured these people to be early, not way late. What's up? Sort of half read the business news, half watched the front door. An old woman in a plain blue coat, looking sort of lost comes in and stands, trying to get her bearings. Playing a hunch I get up and approach her saying, "Ingrid?" It is, and she lights up, looking quite beautiful. I give her a hug (unexpected, but delighted) and a relationship is born. Ingrid and I are bonded. Julius, it seems, is parking the car (or guarding the car, I didn't get which) and we should come out. Helga had been working out something with the desk, has finished and we three go out together to meet Julius. It's a strange, formal greeting. No hugs, like with Ingrid and I: more like handshakes and appraisals of both Helga and I. Greetings done we split up to go to Türkenfeld, Helga with Julius in his car and Ingrid with me in the rental. Ingrid is an older woman, mid 70s and looks it, stands about 5' 3" with a straight figure wearing a plain, blue dress. Her hair is gray and always disheveled. She has a strong face which is quite

handsome when she smiles, and she smiles often. Her manner is self-deprecating, but often her keen intelligence shows through. Her determination is often evident, and is inexorable, but when opposed and aware she is going to lose, she will back off with a laugh. She has a great deal of humor and applies much of it to herself. When she does back off from something, its only moments before she's back at it again. Ingrid speaks English, but not fluently. She understands more and better than she speaks, but frequently will caution you to speak more slowly, to use more simple words. She carries an English/German dictionary and when stuck will call time and open it to settle the issue. She thinks like a good translator and keeps Julius in the conversation as much as she can. Likewise she translates his comments to us, often to Helga's protest, "I got that." Ingrid smiles and keeps on doing it. Thanks, Ingrid, because I didn't get it. Julius is handsome and dignified, professorial in manner. He is quiet (speaks no English) much of the time, but always watching. Understands more than he lets on. No reaction, but recognition has occurred. Speaks in a reedy tenor typical of older German men, but with the authority of a professor. Pronounces rather than muses or questions. He is in good shape for 87, walks strongly and drives well. Humor is dry, but it's there. He has style, and lives it. As we left the hotel in Munich, Ingrid told me quite firmly, "Don't worry about them, I know the way." As I don't care for last minute way finding instructions, and wasn't yet completely sure of Ingrid's communication skills, I was uneasy with this arrangement and tried hard to get her to tell me our route. She held out a while, then conceded to enough to tell me, "Lindau." The Autobahn we were taking was headed towards Lindau, so I followed the signs which allowed me to already be in the correct lane and starting my turn when Ingrid's instruction came, usually after I was already on the off ramp. Traffic moves fast on the Autobahn and I was suddenly aware that the car that had just passed me was Julius'. I speeded up and locked on, and the navigation issue was solved, only Ingrid didn't know it. On we went, zooming toward Türkenfeld at 90mph, and Ingrid began to notice that I was driving with confidence and wasn't waiting for her instructions. Still hadn't picked up on Julius up ahead. Her conclusion was that I was some sort of magic driver, could drive a stick shift, find my way without a map, and God knows what else. Our relationship was growing. Unable to stand such prosperity, I pointed out to her that it was Julius in front of us, and a new Ingrid emerged. She said "Let's dust him!" or words to that effect. Now Julius drives fast, and I had my hands full just tailing him. I wasn't at all sure that our rental could even pass him, much less stay ahead of him if he was even half trying. Still, I had something going with Ingrid, and if she wanted to win this race I could at least try. I floored it and pulled into the center to pass. As we went by Ingrid waved both hands and made a series of rude faces. I glanced over briefly and saw Julius looking at Helga, gesturing with his right hand. Helga was gesturing with both hands. We flew by and I pulled in front of them, held that position to the Türkenfeld off ramp, pulled off, let them pass and resumed our following position. We won the race anyway, but not only that, after we told them Helga and Julius were working so hard to communicate that they hadn't even seen us.

— John O. Wilson

[To be continued in the next issue of ROARSHOCK PAGE.]

MARCH ALMANAC

- 03/01 2018 FULL WORM MOON
- 03/02 1956 Morocco gained its independence from France.
- 03/03 1820 The United States Congress passed the Missouri Compromise.
- 03/04 1837 The city of Chicago was incorporated.
- 03/08 1817 The New York Stock Exchange founded.
- 03/09 1958 Alan K. Lipton was born.
- 03/12 1894 Coca-Cola was bottled and sold for the first time in Vicksburg, MS by local soda fountain operator Joseph A. Biedenharn.
- 03/14 2018 Stephen Hawking died in Cambridge, UK.
- 03/14 2018 PI DAY π
- 03/15 2018 IDES OF MARCH
- 03/17 2018 SAINT PATRICK'S DAY NEW MOON
- 1938 John O. Wilson born in San Francisco.
- 1948 Dr. Bruce Henderson was born.
- 03/20 2018 SPRING EQUINOX NORTH EARTH
- 03/22 1638 Anne Hutchinson expelled from Massachusetts Bay Colony for religious dissent.
- 1962 Neal Atkinson was born.
- 1972 United States Congress sent Equal Rights Amendment to the states for ratification.
- 03/24 1919 Lawrence Ferlinghetti born in Yonkers.
- 1983 Brenna Rose Hills-Wilson was born.
- 03/25 1811 Percy Bysshe Shelley was expelled from the University of Oxford for publishing the pamphlet *The Necessity of Atheism*.
- 03/29 1999 The Dow Jones Industrial Average closed above the 10,000 mark for the first time.
- 03/30 1870 Texas readmitted to the United States following Reconstruction.
- 03/31 2018 FULL BLUE MOON

<http://roarshock.net/march.html>

Calling for Contributions! ROARSHOCK PAGE invites submissions of art, photographs, poetry, and micro-prose, to be considered for inclusion in future issues.

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