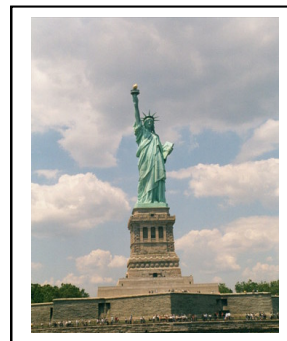




# Bushy Tales

Dedicated to all who attended London Central High School in Bushy Park, London England from 1952 to 1962



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Visit the Bushy Park Web Site at <http://www.bushypark.org/>

## Class Representatives

1953 - Jackie (Brown) Kenny

[JKYKNY@aol.com](mailto:JKYKNY@aol.com)

1954 - Betsy (Neff) Cote

[betsycote@atlanticbb.net](mailto:betsycote@atlanticbb.net)

1955 - Nancie (Anderson) Weber

[nancieT@verizon.net](mailto:nancieT@verizon.net)

1956 - Glenda F. Drake

[gfdrake@swbell.net](mailto:gfdrake@swbell.net)

1957 - Shirley (Huff) Dulski

[shuffy2@msn.com](mailto:shuffy2@msn.com)

1958 - Pat (Terpening) Owen

[nemoamasa@worldnet.att.net](mailto:nemoamasa@worldnet.att.net)

1959 - Jerry Sandham

[j\\_sandham@comcast.net](mailto:j_sandham@comcast.net)

1960 - Ren Briggs

[renpat1671@unneedspeed.net](mailto:renpat1671@unneedspeed.net)

1961 - Betsy (Schley) Slepetz

[bslepetz@comcast.net](mailto:bslepetz@comcast.net)

1962 - Dona (Hale) Ritchie

[DonaRitchi@aol.com](mailto:DonaRitchi@aol.com)

## Roster Changes

### New Email address:

Betsy (Campbell) Thomas (55)

[tomcon66@sbcglobal.net](mailto:tomcon66@sbcglobal.net)

Shem Miller (61)

[SMille1010@aol.com](mailto:SMille1010@aol.com)

### New Addresses:

Darby (Grimes) Wyatt (60)

1609 Brush College Rd NW,  
Salem, OR 97304.

## Classmates Who Have Transferred To The Eternal Duty Station

Our love and prayers go out to the family and friends of our classmates who have gone on before us. We will miss them, yet we can find comfort in knowing that one-day we will all join them for the greatest of all reunions.

**PAUL G. FRANCIS (Faculty)**

In Palm Springs, California, on January 6, 2007, former DODDS teacher Paul G. Francis expired from the effects of pneumonia and diabetes.

Anyone who wants to send the family condolences could send a card to Paul's home in Palm Springs because some family members will be around. They will have to clear the house so someone will be there, at least off and on, for some time to come to receive any mail.

The Family of Paul Francis

2224 Casitas Way, Palm Springs CA. 92264

**From Alan Phillips (55)**

[alan.phillips@escocorp.com](mailto:alan.phillips@escocorp.com)

On the 16th of January my wife and I attended a memorial service for Paul Francis at the All Saints Episcopal Church, Waterloo. The service was well attended by the Brussels DODDS and Anglican communities. Scores of emailed letters from those

who's life he touched during his long journey as a teacher were shared with the gathering.

His impact on my family was different than most - he was at Bushy in 1955 when I graduated and he was our youngest son's favorite teacher when Keith graduated from the Brussels American school in 1987. Paul was an occasional dinner guest of ours during my time as Defense Attache - always delightful and enlightening company; a renaissance man comfortable in any company. He was a faithful participant in the Memorial Day Ceremonies each year at the three United States Military Cemeteries here in Belgium and for many years served on the volunteer committee responsible for organizing the events.

We had dinner with Paul a couple of years ago when he was on a visit to his places in France and Belgium; in fact he was in the process of making the final move to California. I asked how he had taken up his teaching career. Like many careers - quite by chance. He was just out of Harvard and visiting friends in Europe before deciding what to do with his life. He was in London when he learned that the US Air Force was looking for dormitory supervisors for a new high school being set up for military dependants. Enjoying himself and wanting to extend his European vacation, he applied. The Air Force realized they had much more than a dorm master and he never looked back. I gave him many copies of the "Bushy Tales" which he genuinely appreciated.

### **Sick and Distressed**

**From Judy (Risler) Covington (60)**  
[LCBS1960@aol.com](mailto:LCBS1960@aol.com)

Just wanted to put a word in for one of our classmates: Dallas Webb, ('60) is critically ill with cancer.

Dallas was one of our cheerleaders in '60, a petite dynamo of energy, and even though she didn't attend Bushy Park but that one year, she made a lasting impression on everyone who knew her.

Please, offer your prayers up for her...and if you have time, drop her a line either by email or snail mail to let her know you are thinking of her. It

would mean so much to hear from any and all of her Bushy Park buds.

Her address is: Dallas Webb Grodman, 32070 Jay Bird Lane, Bulverde, TX 78163. Her email is: [hgro1000@gvtc.com](mailto:hgro1000@gvtc.com). Please let her hear from you.

**From Susan (Sue Miller) Dalberg, (62)**  
[Wolfpaw81@aol.com](mailto:Wolfpaw81@aol.com)

Just a quick request to keep one of our own in your prayers. Judy Stillson (now Surles), class of 62' is currently undergoing treatment for her fourth bout with cancer. Last year her home burned to the ground just about the time she learned the cancer was active again. Typical of military brats, however, she continues to show that she is of great fortitude and faith, slugging it out to the amazement of her doctors, never losing her sense of humor. Unfortunately, she lost her computer in the fire, so no e-mail address to send her your thoughts. Please keep Judy and her family in your prayers.

### **Memories of Bushy**

**From Ruth (Lund) Bethea (55)**  
[rbethea@verizon.net](mailto:rbethea@verizon.net)

I've noted in speaking with other alumni that often a picture sparks memories that we didn't realize were stored. I'm not sure if this photo has been in a newsletter before but it should bring back some memories (I hope the size is okay).



I had a terrific Christmas and even managed to be awake to toast in 2007 (after a 2-hour nap) with a hot cup of coffee (while Dan had champagne) and two slices of warm, home-baked bread. YUM.

May each of you have a healthy, happy, prosperous New Year. Is anyone having a reunion this year? I'm ready.

**From Gail Kelly (Faculty)**  
[martha.kelly@virgin.net](mailto:martha.kelly@virgin.net)

This site will show you what they have done with West Ruislip.

<http://www.classiccarsforsale.co.uk/classic-car-events.php/id/87>

**From Bev (Gehrett) Wagner (58)**  
[Packrats2@aol.com](mailto:Packrats2@aol.com)

Just spent the new years eve, dancing in 2007 with my son, Mike, at his home in El Paso, TX. As I read the Jan issue of the B. P. newsletter, today, Jan 1, 2007, I was thinking of how I love to dance, and where I learned.

I started as a freshman at CHS in Sept. 1954. At that time, much of the time after school was spent in the lounge at the girls dorm listening to records and watching other people dance. The school/ dorm often sponsored dances, and even though I didn't know how to dance, I went, hoping someone would ask me to dance, and then afraid that they would. And wouldn't you know, someone did ask me to dance. Stan Beverly! Probably the best dancer in the world at that time!! Why he asked me to dance I'll never know. Maybe my brother, Warren Gehrett asked him to, I don't know and don't care. I think I may have told him I didn't really know how to dance. The thing I DO remember is that at the end, he dipped (and oh, I had watched him do that so many times) and I did not dip with him, instead, I fell right on top of him!!! Oh, the embarrassment!!!! Even though he laughed it off, and tried to make me feel better, I just wanted to sink into the floor and disappear!! Sigh. The things one remembers. The next time I went home for the weekend, (My Dad was stationed at Manston AFB and we very seldom had a bus come for us as there were only a handful of students from there), I asked my Dad if he would teach me how to dance. That turned out to be a great time for my Dad and I. He was one of the best dancers I have since had the privilege of dancing with. He taught me how to slow dance, including dipping, jitterbug, cha cha, samba, tango, etc. etc. You name it and he could dance it. From that time on, I enjoyed dancing in

the dorm and at any of the dances for the students. I didn't turn into a top notch dancer overnight, but I certainly got my start at Bushy Park. I do believe Stan asked me to dance at least once, much later, and I was so happy that I could dip! Thanks, Stan, where ever you are.

I always said I would not marry a man who could not dance, but.....I did. Bob does slow dance, but isn't much for the fast ones. He will humor my love of fast dancing and occasionally stand and move his feet while I dance around him. We have seen the past few new years in at our sons, and they always have a live combo for the evening. I tell my friends what a great son I have, he has a band just so his mother can dance in the new year, and he is my lucky partner. We are usually the only ones dancing, no one else seems interested. This year I had both my son and grand-daughter carrying on the dancing tradition.

Thanks to all the "after school" dances, boys who had the courage to ask shy girls to dance, and a great dancing Dad, I have enjoyed many wonderful hours "dancing up a storm" - a great way to get in my aerobics today!

Wishing all of you many happy dancing hours in this new year!

**From Mike Murphy (58)**  
[Oldsalt1223@aol.com](mailto:Oldsalt1223@aol.com)

Hi Gary and happy new year. Also a Happy New Year to all of the Bushy Park gang. I hope all of your wishes come true. Judy and myself are doing just fine. We had a quiet Christmas. We managed to go to the big flea market in Canton Texas the first week in December. Haven't done much since but we are planning a trip to Atlanta as neither one of us have been there before. Then off to the Bahamas in April and then we are doing a long trip out west. Should be fun. One thing I remember from England. My family and I lived in Staines and I used to ride my bike on the back roads with my brother George to West Drayton Air Base. On one occasion we decided to hitch hike and an old English car stopped. The man rolled down his window and asked where we blokes were going. We told him, and he said " I'll knock you up a block". We never heard that before, but what it meant was I will give

you a ride. I never forgot that. English terminology did take some getting used to.

## Reunion News

**From J. Mercer (64)**

[jmercerc@londoncentral.org](mailto:jmercerc@londoncentral.org)

June 07 Reunion in San Diego, CA still a GO! For more information please got to:

<http://bobcatschat.com/phpBB2/viewtopic.php?t=145> or

<http://www.londoncentral.org/reunions/sandiego2007a.htm>

## Mini Reunions

**From Sherry (Cheryl Burritt) Konjura (57)**

[sherger@juno.com](mailto:sherger@juno.com)

On Monday, December 26th, Bill Cooper (class of '57) held his annual Boxing Day party complete with the choicest cuts of holiday meats, accompanied with yummy side dishes, mouth watering desserts (chock full of those forbidden calories - but who counts during the holidays?), and, of course, libations of all kinds. His large and wonderful family was well represented with little ones running excitedly to and fro, older siblings catching up with their cousins' doings and the parents just kicking back and enjoying the fun. Many of Bill's friends also made appearances, including some Bushy folks, and there was an attempt at a pre-planning meeting re: our classes' 50th reunion.

Due to family obligations, Shirley Dulski had to hand over the reunion planning responsibility. It seems that Bill and I have "volunteered" to take on the task. Celeste Brodigan said she would help us where and when she could...but will be away a good bit of the time, so really can't be part of the "committee". Anyway...the photo attached shows that the three of us were more interested in "partying" than getting any "business" done...so that will come later. Of course, there must be spoon-dangling contests...as demonstrated by Bill!

All you folks out there who were part of the Class of '57...we need your input on anything that would help us out. At this point we are looking seriously at

Kansas City due to a lot of extenuating circumstances which I won't go into here. We haven't set a date yet...but hope to soon. Time is getting short and we have much to do! Of course we are opening the event to any and all who attended Bushy and CHS, London. We enjoyed meeting so many of you at the DC reunion and hearing about all the changes that came about after our departure.



**From Barbara (Hamilton) Board (59)**

[painterbabs@comcast.net](mailto:painterbabs@comcast.net)

On December 27, 2006 in New Port Richey, Fl., the three of us, Jerry Ellis (58), Barbara (Hamilton) Board (59) and Linda (Fulton) Julian (59), met at the home of Nick & Linda. Linda and I have been friends since Jr. High. Our Dads were at McDill AFB in Tampa, Fl. before being transferred to Brize Norton RAF Base near Oxford. My Dad retired and lives in Tampa.

We had lost track of Jerry years ago. Then one day a phone call, and the rest is history.

Many e-mails and phone calls later we discover the Christmas Holidays will be a great time to get together. Jerry lives in Mississippi and I live in Georgia, but we have family in Florida.

We shared pictures of our children and grandchildren. Laughed a lot and tried to catch up on our lives since last we'd been together. We were so sorry we didn't get to the Las Vegas Reunion, just wait till the next one though. God willing we'll be there.



Babs, Jerry and  
Linda Fulton Julian



### This and That

**From Ruth (Davis) Zabel (53)**

[sharkpack40@yahoo.com](mailto:sharkpack40@yahoo.com)

I wanted to put forth a suggestion for December issues in the future. I belong to a club called "The Defender's of Bataan and Corrigedor". My stepfather was a member as was my mother and I also became a life member of the group. I went to several conventions years ago but have not gone to any since both my stepfather and mother are gone. But they put out a quarterly news bulletin (which we might also consider doing when articles start getting scarce) but their December issues include several pages of greetings that are sent in from their members. Example:  
Holiday Greetings from Ruth (Davis '53) Zabel. More can be said but that is the gist of it. I think it would be great if we did this every December. What do you think? Not everyone sends a greeting but I always check it out to see if anyone I know from the conventions I went to sent in a greeting. **(Editors Note: Let me know what all of you think about this. If enough want to do it, I will be happy to start it this coming December.)**

**From Pat (Terpening) Owen (58)**

[nemoamasa@worldnet.att.net](mailto:nemoamasa@worldnet.att.net)

Pat Terpening (58) Owen and her husband John spent Christmas in Colorado visiting their daughter and her family. We flew from Kansas City to Denver on December 19, and were concerned about getting into Cortez, Colorado (Four Corners area) as they were already canceling flights to Amarillo, TX

and had put a hold on flights to Telluride, Colorado. Fortunately, we made the flight, but as we settled into our seats and were given the flight information by the pilot, we were told that if we couldn't get into Cortez we'd be taken to Grand Junction and then driven down (a four hour drive). Luckily, they were able to land in Cortez and we missed the shut-down in Denver by 8 hours. We had a great Christmas, and Santa Claus even came to visit us on Christmas Eve. Our new grandson, Bobby Garrett, who was 6 weeks old, slept through everything. His sister, Lizabeth, who's two, wasn't at all interested in sitting on Santa's lap. Our return trip wasn't quite as iffy as the outbound flight, and we managed to miss that snowstorm by a day, and arrived back in Kansas City to sunshine and warm weather.

**From Jerry Kelly (58)**

[JKelly1597@aol.com](mailto:JKelly1597@aol.com)

We just got back to Albuquerque Friday a week ago and missed the first storm that dropped 8" and a lot of that was still left when the next storm started late Thursday and it didn't stop until late today (Saturday). At times the snow was very light and I was able to clear the driveway after 2-1/2 hours of shoveling also did some of the sidewalk. There was 11" in the driveway. We had been gone for three weeks to Australia where it is summer time. We were there for five days then boarded a ship to New Zealand where we spent the remainder of our cruise usually at a different port every day or so. Sandy always books several excursions when we are at the different ports so we keep fairly busy. The dining table was shared with three other couples besides ourselves, a Canadian couple, a UK couple, and a couple from South Africa. All nice people. The trip was a little long to be away from home and the flight was the longest in time since flying to England but in a few months we will be ready to go again.

**From Terry Dilley (58)**

[terrydilley@hotmail.com](mailto:terrydilley@hotmail.com)

I'm going to Cochise Community College taking an Aircraft Mechanic course. I've been flying in Alaska for more than 30 years, but never took the time to get certified as a mechanic, so thought it would be fun to do that in retirement. I'm the only

old guy in the class, but seem to be competing with the young guys pretty well (course they don't have Ph.D.'s) So far they aren't holding that against me!

**From Robert Harrold (59)**

[rhoarold@harrold.org](mailto:rhoarold@harrold.org)

I wonder if it might be worth while having a small page links to excerpts / extracts from Internet sources about the history of RAF Bushy Park. There must be documents scattered here'n there. I've got a few "RAF Bushy Park" history links at <http://www.harrold.org/rfhextra/brats.html#BPhistory> that could be expanded to a page of its own.

Here's some Interesting tidbits from 1942, Bushy Park became the site of a large U.S. base called Camp Griffiss, headquarters to a number of the Allied departments. General Dwight Eisenhower was averse to working in the centre of London during the Second World War. He decided instead to make Bushy Park the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF) centre for planning [Operation Overlord](#), the 1944 D-Day. ([Royal Parks History, Bushy Park](#) [U.K. Gov.]

"On 24 April 1942, Major General Carl Spaatz arrived in England. He established the Headquarters of the 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force at Bushy Park, 15 miles WSW of London center."

<http://members.tripod.com/gmhilliard/8th.htm>

"Any gum chum" was the way we greeted any unfortunate GI we encountered in the street, or wherever we could find them. As a 7 year old, in 1943, it seemed to me that sweets had been rationed for my entire lifetime. It appeared to us kids that the American soldiers stationed at General Eisenhower's headquarters in Bushy Park situated near Twickenham on the western suburbs of London, and close to Hampton Court, had a bottomless supply of this form of confectionery.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/ww2peopleswar/stories/43/a2324143.shtml>

**From Stuart Randall (60)**

[stuartrandall\\_1944@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:stuartrandall_1944@yahoo.co.uk)

First, Happy New Years. life is kind of funny - our school is closing next June - all that remains are we in our 60's. Hopefully - God willing, all are still trucking.

I have just finished a New Year gig with a band called *Poco* (not the real band). I am Dr. Rock Moon to my buddies - class of 1960. I came from Canada or North America like we all did to a new type of live and adventure. I was fortunate and played ice hockey at \$3.00 a game plus working at the Commissary at South Ruislip and playing bass in a "bloke Band" who became famous. As most of you know I live in Mallorca - a small island off Barcelona. I still play my music (Jack Fischer I hope remembers me, if not his brother, Jim). Last March I played backing tracks and vocals with Jackson brown, now I find America have requested I do the same. When I was a dependent at West Ruislip, these guys were 12. Now I am hopefully gonna be working with them.

Finally, in Port Portals, Mallorca, my buddies are so envious of what Gary does for us former students of LCH, they are all gonna write in next month.

**From George Lawson (59)**

[Lawsongm@aol.com](mailto:Lawsongm@aol.com)

**DaytonDailyNews.com**

**Local man enjoys baking**

**By Sandra Baer, Contributing Writer**

For George Lawson of Washington Twp., baking is a way to express himself, to use the math skills he honed as an accountant for General Motors and to serve as a role model for inmates while providing them with useful skills.

"If you can accept life and live life to its fullest, you'll find you come back to areas you re-visited," said Lawson, who learned to bake as a child while helping his grandmother, Evelyn P. Lawson, who baked for the Peerless Mill restaurant in Miamisburg. "She started me baking when I was 10 years old."

Born in 1941, Lawson lived outside of Miamisburg and attended the Emerson School before moving to England where his stepfather was stationed with the United States Air Force. Lawson lived at a boarding school in London while traveling extensively throughout Europe.

"While other kids were going to Washington D.C., for their senior trip, we went to Rome, Italy," said Lawson, who graduated from high school in 1959

and moved to Munich, Germany, where he studied for two years at the Munich branch of the University of Maryland. "I got a chance to walk down the same roads my father walked during the Second World War. He never talked about it, but he was in the Army Third Division, Third Infantry. He came in behind the paratroopers."

After his stepfather returned to the Dayton area, Lawson studied economics and accounting at Sinclair Community College and Wright State University before taking a job as an accountant for General Motors. After working for Frigidaire, Delco and the Inland Divisions in the Dayton area, he traveled throughout the United States, auditing GM suppliers until his retirement in 1993.

"I retired after 30 years and decided to attend the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, New York, on the Hudson River," said Lawson, whose wife, Marj, supported his career change. "I referred to it as the CIA to my students. Baking was always a release for me. Before I studied at the Culinary Institute, I did a lot of reading, absorbing what I could and I had a lot of practice and made a lot of mistakes."

Lawson recalls spending three days preparing a meal of rabbit cooked in coconut for a dinner party, only to have one of the guests put a damper on the meal by remarking that the dish looked like the monkey dish he'd seen in the movie version of Kon Tiki. Despite some setbacks, Lawson entered and won numerous awards for his baking.

After working as an executive chef, Lawson went back to school and became certified to teach. He currently trains prison inmates, providing them with a skill, while raising their self-esteem



**From Tony Taylor (58)**  
[usna1964@earthlink.net](mailto:usna1964@earthlink.net)

*A Continental Journey – Europe by Bicycle  
Summer 1957 (Age 17)*

## CHAPTER 4

We did not plan to stay in Marseille for long, especially since the next day was Sunday and most everything was closed. After a good night's sleep at the youth hostel and a leisurely breakfast of juice, tea, and some delicious croissants, we asked the young lady at the front desk for directions to help get us on the road to Cannes. She told us that we would first have to head down toward the docks, but she did not recommend this if we were hitch hiking since it could be dangerous there.

"Mes amis, I will drive you... I go by that way à la maison in my petit Fiat. If you squeeze I can get to, how do you say it?...highway to Cannes, non?"

And so we squeezed into her little gray Fiat, the one that looks like it was made of corrugated tin, and with a puff of black smoke and a backfire that sounded like a gunshot, we were on our way within the hour.

It was just 100 miles between Marseille and Cannes; the road runs east right along the Côte d'Azur. Our first ride took us all the way to Toulon, an historic port and a major French naval base. In fact it had been an Ottoman naval base under the Turkish admiral Barbarossa (meaning "Redbeard" in Italian) in the sixteenth century. You could tell that that it was Sunday; the town was full of French sailors wandering around on liberty. I decided to ask one young sailor if we were still on the right road toward Cannes; he spoke about as much English as I spoke French. He and his buddies must not have had much else to do since once they understood what we wanted to do, they offered to walk a good ways through the city with us to make sure we got on the right road. Before we parted, I told the young seaman that I collected foreign military hats, especially sailor hats, and could I buy his Bachi, or flat blue sailor hat with the red pompon on top. He asked if I had any cigarettes in exchange, but I did not, so he just gave it to me with a cheery au revoir. Later on as Ric and I were waiting for a ride along the road to Cannes, Ric took a picture of me with the Bachi tilted just so to the right....



It was a beautiful Mediterranean day with azure sea on one side of us and the Maritime Alps on the other. The main road along the coast was more like a wide tree-lined parkway with a low stonewall between us and the beach. The Sunday traffic was light, but in short time we hitched another ride, this time with two Norwegian students on the way to St. Tropez or “St. Trop.” As a couple of “sheltered” American kids, we listened with fascination as they described the scene at St. Trop. They told us that people-watching was a favorite sport there, especially along the beaches and from the sidewalk cafes.

It seems that St. Tropez was just at its height in the 1950s as show people, artists and writers were all falling under the spell of this charming little port town. These were the summers when one could bump into Picasso, Françoise Sagan, and many other international celebrities. When the guys told us that there were rumors that Brigitte Bardot might be there, we were all ears... we were not so sheltered that we did not know who they were talking about. Brigitte Bardot, the French sex kitten, had just made her first movie the year before, “*And God Created Woman*.” In the years that followed when there would be no doubt that she would be among the chic, the myth of St. Trop was installed for good. Since then St. Tropez has become the *in* vacation spot for chic Parisians and the international Jet Set.

We joined our new Norwegian friends for a late lunch in a little café that was rumored to be great for people-watching, but other than seeing some lovely young gals passing by in the latest swim fashion, the bikini, there was no one we could

recognize. The bikini, this marvel of design, had been invented just ten years before, but so far had been unseen by these 17-year old eyes. Once we had an eyeful, Ric and I bade farewell and set out to hitch our final ride into Cannes.

OK, so why Cannes? Who did we know there, and why? Remember when we were traveling through Germany and we stopped to spend a couple of nights with an old schoolmate from London and her parents? Well, once again we were armed with a name and an address of a gal we had known at Bushy Park the previous year. It just so happened that Ann Nelson had lived in London with her parents where her father, a naval officer and a submariner like my own dad, had been stationed. The Nelsons had known my parents for years, so when Mrs. Nelson told me that previous spring that the family was moving to Cannes, France, where Captain Nelson would be assigned to the Navy’s Sixth Fleet in the Med, she said that if I ever get down that way, look them up. Sure, those were nice words, Mrs. Nelson, but what high school kid ever expects to just run down to the Riviera on a whim, and much less show up unannounced? The conversation that early spring day had just about been forgotten until just eight days before when Ric and I were locking up our bikes in the dungeons of Luxembourg and had decided to hitchhike for awhile.

“Hey, Ric, remember Ann Nelson from school last year? She was a year behind us, but was always either at the American Teenage Club (TAC) in London, or having a party in her parent’s home. Her mom told me that they were moving to Cannes, and I just so happen have their address with me.”

Ric replied that he did not know Ann since he had been a dorm student at school, but he saw where I was going with this conversation.

“So, anyway, why don’t we see if we can hitch rides all the way down to the Riviera and maybe get an invite to stay with the Nelsons for a couple of nights?”

And so our Continental adventure had taken a new twist with the decision to broaden our horizons and head for Cannes and mooch off the parents of another girl. An idea was born!



It was late afternoon when we arrived in Cannes, and our first task was to find out exactly where the Nelsons lived. Since the post office was closed (the source of all information, including phone numbers), we headed for the first big hotel we saw, the Hotel Majestic Barrière. We walked in the grand lobby looking our typically grubby selves, and went to the front desk to ask for assistance. We told them who we were looking for and that we wished to call them before arriving at their home. A very accommodating concierge offered to help us and soon we were on the phone talking to a startled Mrs. Nelson. Fortunately I knew Mrs. Nelson well enough to know that she would be gracious and understanding once she heard our tale. As expected, she said, by all means, come up to their third-floor flat... it was easy to find... just a block from the boat harbor. Ten minutes later we were turning the bell handle and standing at the door with big grins on our faces.

After all of the hugs and offers for something to drink, we were shown around their flat... it was small, especially for a family of four (Ann has a younger sister). Of course Mrs. Nelson had the logistics all figured. No, we would not share a room with the girls, but we could sleep on the balcony just off the living room and overlooking the sea. Hey, that was fine with us. By now we could sleep most anywhere... this was great! We had our mattress sheets, and Mrs. Nelson gave us each a pillow and a blanket.

Ann, of course, was happy to see some American teenagers again. Living in Cannes was nice, but other American teenagers were few and far between. Before dinner the three of us went down to the beach for a swim... boy, did that feel good! The warm afternoon sun, the salt water, and the soft sand were just what we had dreamed of for the past week. Later, after dinner, Ann showed us around town, mostly around the harbor with both its huge yachts and colorful fishing boats, and along the famed Avenue La Croisette where the rich and famous stroll. The clear sky and the soft evening breeze coming off the water made us feel that we had arrived... all of those days pumping our bikes against the wind or up mountainsides, or trying to hitch a ride in the middle of the night in the Alps, were now just a memory.

We awakened Monday morning, the 8<sup>th</sup> of July, with the sound of "click, click." Ann was taking pictures of Ric and me sleeping on the balcony. She then told us breakfast was ready, so with the smell of bacon, we were up and moving about. I told Ann that I needed to change some dollars into francs; so where should I go to get the best exchange rate? She told us that there was a little man with a mustache who offered the best exchange rate in town; she had his phone number. With a call it was arranged to meet him in an hour back at the Hotel Majestic Barrière. As we sat there in the grand lobby with this little man with a dark complexion and a strange accent, the whole process had a sense of intrigue. Buying francs with dollars on the black market was really illegal, but in those days it seemed to be a standard of conduct... it was just a matter of finding someone who offered the best rate. The official bank rate was totally ignored by most everyone. Of course the franc was almost worthless; you had to have a handful of large denomination bills to have the equivalent of \$10 or \$20.

On the way back from the hotel we noticed crowds of people lining the road near the Nelson's flat. When we asked what was going on, we were told that the *Tour de France* was about to come through. In 1957 I knew very little about the Tour de France, but I knew enough to know that it was a famous bicycle race that went on for days all over France. Sure enough, here came the bikes... first a few, then the *peloton* (the main pack of riders) came peddling by. The roads were relatively flat here in Cannes, but we knew that soon they would most likely be heading up across the Maritime Alps and into mountainous terrain just north of Cannes. As a note of interest, the 1957 Tour was the first win for a young Frenchman, Jacques Anquetil, who went on to win the Tour five times over his career. Although his record was tied by others, it was Lance Armstrong who later won more than five races; his total was seven.

After we returned to the flat, Ann suggested that Ric and I take the coastal train and go visit Nice, about 20 miles to the east of Cannes, and then on to Monaco, about another 18 miles beyond. She offered to walk us to the train station where I took a photo of Ann and Ric drinking from a large stone water fountain.

Nice was not Cannes. It is a much larger than Cannes (Cannes had a population of about 50,000 at that time, whereas Nice was around 300,000). Whereas Cannes felt like a glamorous town, Nice felt like a resort city. For the travelers flying from Paris to most anywhere on the Côte d'Azur, they would first fly into Nice, and then travel by train, bus or car to the other resorts. Nice has parks, play grounds, and promenades, the most famous being Promenade des Anglais (English Promenade) which stretches about 7 km around the Baie des Anges. The beaches in Nice do not have sand, but are shingle (smooth stones... not too inviting, at least to me). However, some say that they prefer the stones over grainy, sticky sand.

As Ric and I were walking along the Promenade des Anglais, we noticed that one of the large luxury hotels had flags from at least a dozen nations flying in front of the hotel, but the American flag was faded and almost torn to shreds from buffeting winds. This really distressed me, so I decided to confront the hotel management on the issue. I walked into the opulent lobby and asked to see the manager. Shortly a manicured gentleman in a morning coat came out to greet me and asked how he could be of assistance. I told him about the flag and said that I was disturbed and insulted as an American to see our flag in such poor condition and asked that he replace it immediately. He apologized, but said that he did not have a replacement at the moment, but one was on order. I left somewhat mollified, but still disturbed that they had allowed the flag to become so damaged. With that, I had seen all of Nice I cared to see. Now we had a train to catch to the Principality of Monaco.



Monaco is one of five European microstates, and the world's most densely populated country and second-smallest independent nation. It has no army or air force, but has a small coast guard consisting of 3 small patrol boats armed with small cannons. Many Americans had never heard of Monaco until just the year before when Grace Kelly married Rainier III, Prince of Monaco. We were fascinated with Monaco because you can see almost the whole country from certain vantage points. Although we did not venture over to the far side of the harbor to see the famed Monte Carlo resort and casino, I did get a photo of it from the west side. We had a chance to walk right up to the front of the Royal Palace hoping that Princess Grace might appear. After a couple of hours playing tourist, we took the next train back to Cannes. That evening we all went out to a local family restaurant for dinner followed by another walk, this time along La rue d'Antibes, the main shopping street with all the glitz and high fashion stores.

Time to pack up and start heading north. Our destination: Paris! Paris is about 580 miles from Cannes. We thought that if we could get on the main roads heading north, we might hitch some good rides to the capital. No such luck... except for the road heading back to Marseille, there are no main roads in or around Cannes... and we had to head up through the Maritime Alps to be heading in the right direction. In fact, the nearest main road that even starts off heading north is out of St.-Laurent du var requiring us to first go east toward Nice.

After saying farewell to the Nelsons and thanking them profusely for their hospitality and for letting us camp out on their balcony, we started walking out of town with our thumbs out. At first we would catch a ride from one town to the next, but never very far. We spent more time that day trying to hitch a ride than we did actually on the move. By nightfall we had hardly made a dent in our travels. We found a newly cut farmer's field in the middle of nowhere and decide to spend the night there curled up inside our ponchos. This was not an ideal solution since the ponchos would sweat on the inside from our breaths, and in turn we would get hot and wet just from being closed in. But we had no choice since the mountain night air was too cold

to sleep uncovered. When the sun rose early the next morning, we were ready to get moving again; our destination for this day would be Avignon where we knew that at least we could find a youth hostel and be on a main road to Paris.

It took us the better part of the day to make it to Avignon; we had only traveled about 150 miles in two days. But Avignon was another jewel that we were delight to find. The history and the artifacts left by centuries of occupation were fascinating to absorb. The first thing we saw was the fabled Pont d'Avignon which we remembered from our nursery rhymes... "*Sur le pont d'Avignon* □ *L'on y danse, l'on y danse* □ *Sur le pont d'Avignon* □ *On y danse tout en rond.*" The bridge of the song is the Saint Bénézet, over the Rhône River, of which only four arches (out of the initial 22) starting from the Avignon side remain. The bridge was initially built between 1171 and 1185.

Avignon was founded by a Gallic tribe and became the center of an important colony from present-day Marseilles. Later the Romans, the Avignon was one of the most flourishing cities of the first Transalpine province of the Roman Empire. Between the 5<sup>th</sup> century and the early 14<sup>th</sup> century, the city passed from tribe to tribe, king to king, and empire to empire, including being ruled by Germans. In 1309 the city was chosen by Pope Clement V as his residence and remained the seat of the Papacy instead of Eternal Rome until 1377...seven popes resided there during these years.

We wanted to stay longer... there was so much to see and absorb, but we had made a decision that if we were ever to get to Paris and remain on schedule to be home in London within 30 days of our departure, we would need to take the train to get to the City of Light. Fortunately there was a direct train to Paris from Avignon, so we bought our tickets, boarded the train, closed our eyes, and slept for the better part of four hours. Later we could feel the train slowing down to a creep and a squeal as it passed through the dank and gray outskirts of the city for what seemed to be the better part of an hour. Why is it that when one arrives by train to some of the world's most beautiful cities, you have to view the squalor of the back sides of some of the ugliest

brick, stone, or stucco houses blackened by decades of soot, mold and rain? Just as one is thinking "will it ever end?", you hear the porter cry the name of your destination in a way only a porter or a bus driver can say: "Paaaaais!"

We are here...our first stop is the American Embassy.

From Diane Zumwalt  
[dhzumwalt@comcast.net](mailto:dhzumwalt@comcast.net)

### **Idle Thoughts of a Retiree**

I planted some bird seed. A bird came up. Now I don't know what to feed it.  
I had amnesia once -- or twice.  
Protons have mass? I didn't even know they were Catholic.  
All I ask is a chance to prove that money can't make me happy.  
If the world was a logical place, men would be the ones who ride horses sidesaddle.  
What is a "free" gift? Aren't all gifts free?  
Teach a child to be polite and courteous in the home and, when he grows up, he'll never be able to merge his car onto the freeway.  
Experience is the thing you have left when everything else is gone.  
My weight is perfect for my height -- which varies.  
I used to be indecisive. Now I'm not sure.  
The cost of living hasn't affected its popularity.  
How can there be self-help "groups"?  
If swimming is so good for your figure, how do you explain whales?  
Is it my imagination, or do buffalo wings taste like chicken

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