

POSSIBLY BECAUSE OF OUR VARIED LIFESTYLE AT THE TIME ,
A NUMBER OF UNUSUAL OR FUNNY EVENTS OCCURRED WHILE I WAS IN EUROPE
IN 1954-55. OR PERHAPS FATE WAS JUST GIVING ME A DIG NOW AND THEN!

" FEELINGS " :-

IT MAY SOUND ODD AT FIRST THOUGHT , BUT THE LONELIEST
I'VE EVER FELT WAS IN THE MIDDLE OF LONDON !

ABOUT SIX WEEKS AFTER ARRIVING IN ENGLAND , I CAME DOWN FROM
BIRMINGHAM TO LONDON TO MEET DON WILLIAMSON , WHO HAD JUST ARRIVED ON
THE 'ORONSAY'. BUT THE SHIP WAS HELD UP IN THE THAMES ESTUARY BY FOG FOR
24 HOURS , SO I SPENT A DAY AND NIGHT ON MY OWN IN LONDON . AT LEAST I
WAS ABLE TO HAVE A GOOD LOOK AROUND WHILE WAITING .

BUT , WHILE I WAS STANDING IN PICCADILLY CIRCUS , WATCHING THE PASSING
PARADE , I WAS SUDDENLY DEPRESSED AT HOW LONELY I FELT , WITH NOT ONE
ACQUAINTANCE AMONG MILLIONS OF PEOPLE TO SAY 'HELLO' TO .

IT WAS A PECULIAR FEELING , BUT DIDN'T LAST LONG . SINCE THEN , I'VE READ AND
HEARD OF THE SIMILAR EXPERIENCE OF OTHER PEOPLE . (NOT NECESSARILY IN LONDON) .

ANOTHER TIME , I WAS ALONE IN LONDON , BUT GLAD OF IT .

IN DECEMBER , 1954 , WHILE ON A WEEKEND VISIT , I DECIDED TO GO TO STOKE POGES ,
SCENE OF THOMAS GRAY'S FAMOUS 'ELEGY' . (WE HAD BEEN 'RAISED' ON 'GRAY'S ELEGY'
BY DAD , AMONG OTHER POETRY , SO I WAS INTERESTED IN SEEING THE PLACE) .

I CAUGHT A TRAIN TO UXBRIDGE AND A BUS TO SLOUGH , THEN WALKED ABOUT A MILE
ALONG A COUNTRY ROAD TO STOKE POGES CHURCH . (ON THE WAY , I PASSED A GROUP
OF ETON COLLEGE BOYS WHO WERE GOING BACK TO SCHOOL AFTER A GAME OF CRICKET . SOME
WERE IN 'WHITES' AND SOME WORE THE ETON COATS AND COLLARS , BUT ALL OF THEM WERE
THE SCRUFFIEST LOT OF SCHOOLBOYS I'VE SEEN !) .

WHEN I REACHED STOKE POGES CHURCH , THERE WASN'T A SOUL ABOUT .
THE FROST WAS THICK ON THE GROUND , AND IT WAS DEAD QUIET . (I SUPPOSE
THAT'S TO BE EXPECTED AMONG THE TOMBSTONES IN THE CHURCHYARD) .

I STAYED ABOUT AN HOUR , AND JUST ABSORBED THE ATMOSPHERE , RECALLING
WHAT I COULD OF THE 'ELEGY' , AND READING MORE FROM PLAQUES ON A MEMORIAL .

I TOOK SOME PHOTOS TO SEND HOME TO DAD , AND PICKED A HANDFUL OF
IVY FROM THE " IVY-MOUNTED TOWER " . (THAT'S BANNED THESE DAYS) .

THAT VISIT WAS ONE OF THE MOST MOVING OCCASIONS I'VE EVER EXPERIENCED.

I BELIEVE THAT, IN MORE RECENT YEARS, THE PLACE GETS CROWDED IN SUMMER, PARTICULARLY BY AMERICAN VISITORS, WHO ARE ATTRACTED TO IT.

YET, ODDLY ENOUGH, WHEN JEAN AND I WERE DRIVING OUT OF LONDON IN APRIL, 1990, WE DETOURED A BIT TO CALL IN AT STOKE PAGES, AND AGAIN, THERE WAS NOT ONE OTHER PERSON THERE!

ANY VISIT TO SCOTLAND IS AN EXPERIENCE TO REMEMBER, EVEN APART FROM THE GOLF, BUT A 'ONCE' THAT I'VE NEVER FORGOTTEN IS THE TIME I DID A SCOTSMAN OUT OF SIXPENCE IN ABERDEEN! (PARTLY UNINTENTIONALLY).

AMONG SCOTTISH JOKE, A MAN FROM ABERDEEN IS SAID TO BE THE MOST PARSIMONIOUS OF ALL SCOTS, (ALTHOUGH THEY REALLY ARE VERY GENEROUS PEOPLE).

ANYWAY, WHILE TRAVELLING AROUND, DON AND I ARRIVED IN ABERDEEN ONE WET SUNDAY. IT'S CALLED 'THE OLD GREY TOWN' BECAUSE MOST BUILDINGS ARE OF GREY GRANITE, WHICH LOOK EVEN MORE DISMAL ON A WET DAY, SO WE DIDN'T STAY LONG.

WE HAD SOME AFTERNOON TEA IN A CAFE. - SCONES AND TEA, WHICH AT 1/3d. (ONE SHILLING AND THREEPENCE) EACH, CAME TO 2/6d. (TWO SHILLINGS AND SIXPENCE). I GAVE THE MAN 3 SHILLINGS AND HE GAVE ME THE CHANGE.

JUST OUTSIDE THE DOOR, AS I WAS PUTTING THE CHANGE IN MY POCKET, I NOTICED THAT HE HAD GIVEN ME A SHILLING INSTEAD OF SIXPENCE. I SHOWED DON, AND WAS ABOUT TO GO BACK AND GIVE THE MAN SIXPENCE, WHEN DON'S SCOTTISH ANCESTRY SHOWED UP. "QUICK AS A FLASH, HE SAID "NO, KEEP IT - YOU'LL NEVER GET ANOTHER CHANCE TO DIDDLE A SCOTSMAN OUT OF SIXPENCE IN ABERDEEN!" SO I KEPT IT, ALTHOUGH I'VE HAD OCCASIONAL PANGS OF CONSCIENCE SINCE!

FOOTBALL, LONDON STYLE:

EARLY IN 1955, DON AND I (LIVING IN THE MIDLANDS), GOT WIND OF A GAME OF AUSTRALIAN FOOTBALL BEING ORGANIZED IN LONDON, BETWEEN A TEAM OF 'AUSTRALIANS IN LONDON' AND AUSTRALIANS AT OXFORD AND CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITIES. (IT WAS BEING ARRANGED BY TWO FELLOWS I KNEW, WHO HAD GONE OVER ON THE SAME SHIP).

DON AND I WENT TO LONDON IN FEBRUARY, FOR A PRACTICE MATCH OF THE 'LOCALS', (THE BIG GAME WAS ON IN MARCH). IT WAS VERY COLD, WITH PATCHES OF SNOW ON THE GROUND. THE ORGANIZERS WERE SHORT OF AN UMPIRE, SO I VOLUNTEERED!

THE FACT THAT I HAD NEVER UMPIRED BEFORE DIDN'T SEEM TO WORRY ME, AS I ASSUMED I KNEW ENOUGH ABOUT THE RULES TO GET BY AND, AS IT TURNED OUT, I MANAGED O.K. THE BIG GAME, (THE FIRST IN LONDON SINCE OUR FIRST A.I.F BLOKES HAD PLAYED IN 1919), WENT OFF QUITE WELL. IT WAS PLAYED ON 'CORTAULDS' CRICKET GROUND, NEXT TO THE WIMBLEDON TENNIS COURTS.

DON ONCE AGAIN CREATED A SORT OF RECORD - THE 'OXCAM' TEAM WAS ONE SHORT, SO DON PLAYED FOR THEM. HE BECAME THE ONLY BRUNSWICK TECH. OLD BOY TO PLAY FOOTBALL FOR THE UNIVERSITIES!

WHEN DAD HEARD THE GAME WAS ON, HE PERSUADED DENZIL DON, A BRUNSWICK SPORTS GOODS MANUFACTURER, TO DONATE A FOOTBALL, THEN GOT THE 'ARGUS' NEWSPAPER TO AIR-FREIGHT IT TO LONDON.

THE BOYS ROPED IN SIR THOMAS WHITE (OUR HIGH COMMISSIONER) TO BOUNCE THE BALL TO START THE GAME. HE MUST HAVE BEEN A RUGBY TYPE, AS I HAD TO SHOW HIM HOW TO HOLD THE BALL!

(I DIDN'T KNOW AT THE TIME, BUT HE WAS NO SLOUCH. HE WAS AN AIRMAN IN THE FIRST WAR, AND WON THE M.C. FOR LANDING AMONG AN ARMY OF ARABS IN PALESTINE, TO RESCUE ONE OF HIS MATES WHO HAD BEEN FORCED DOWN).

THE MATCH ITSELF WAS OF REASONABLE AMATEUR STANDARD, AND I THOUGHT THE UMPIRING WAS FIRST CLASS! IT WAS A COLD DAY, WITH A FLURRY OF SNOW IN THE LAST QUARTER. A CROWD OF A FEW HUNDRED JOINED IN THE FUN.

THERE WAS A REPORT OF THE GAME, WITH PHOTOS, IN THE MELBOURNE 'HERALD' LATER, AND THE BBC NEWS HAD A SHORT REPORT ON IT - THE FIRST FOOTBALL ON TV!

WE ALL ENJOYED THE DAY. THE UMPY RETURNED TO COVENTRY, BUT THERE IS NO TRUTH IN THE REPORT THAT HE WAS SENT THERE!

TRIVIA:- YEARS LATER, I FOUND FROM THE PHOTOS THAT ONE OF THE OXFORD PLAYERS WAS "R. HAWKE, PERTH". HE WAS A NON ENTITY THEN, AND I HAVE NO IDEA WHERE HE IS NOW.

ABOUT THE SAME TIME, IN EARLY 1955, I CAUSED AN UPHEAVAL AT WORK BY TIPPING THE SOCCER POOLS! AMONG ABOUT 30 PEOPLE IN THE MF ENGINEERING OFFICE - ENGINEERS, DRAFTSMEN AND CLERKS - 10 OF US HAD A SYNDICATE TO ENTER THE POOLS. WE ENTERED A COMPETITION CALLED '7 MATCH TREBLE CHANCE'.

THE AIM WAS TO TIP 7 'DRAWS' FROM ABOUT 40 MATCHES, AND WE TOOK IT IN TURN EACH WEEK. THE USUAL FIRST DIVIDEND IN THAT POOL WAS ABOUT TEN THOUSAND POUNDS (ABOUT 600 000 DOLLARS THESE DAYS - A TIDY SUM!).

IF THERE HAPPENED TO BE MORE THAN 7 'DRAWS', THE FIRST DIVIDEND DROPPED SHARPLY, AS THE ODDS CHANGED DRAMATICALLY.

THE MATCHES WERE ON SATURDAY, AND THE POOL DIVIDENDS DECLARED ON WEDNESDAY.

ONE WEEK, I MADE THE SELECTIONS, AND THOUGHT NO MORE ABOUT THEM.

ON THE SUNDAY MORNING, I ANSWERED A KNOCK ON THE DOOR AT IRIS WARREN'S, (I HAD MOVED TO KENILWORTH BY THIS TIME).

WHEN I OPENED THE DOOR, ONE OF THE DRAFTSMEN, BRYN JONES (A 'TAFFY' OF COURSE), WAS STANDING THERE, ALMOST SPEECHLESS, WITH HIS EYES POPPING OUT. ALL HE COULD SAY WAS "THE POOLS - THE BLOODY POOLS HAVE COOM OOP!"

WHEN HE CALMED DOWN, HE SAID HE HAD CHECKED THE RESULTS, AND I HAD TIPPED 7 'DRAWS'! OUR FIRST ASSUMPTION, OF COURSE, AND THAT OF OTHERS IN OUR SYNDICATE, WAS THAT THE USUAL DIVIDEND OF TEN THOUSAND POUNDS, MORE OR LESS, WAS OURS. (NO ONE SEEMED TO NOTICE THAT THERE HAD BEEN 8 'DRAWS').

THEN BEGAN 2½ DAYS OF MAYHEM. WITH SOME OF THE FELLOWS WHO CAME OVER TO KENILWORTH, WE CELEBRATED FOR MOST OF SUNDAY, WE HAD LONG LUNCHEONS ON MONDAY AND TUESDAY AT A PUB ACROSS THE ROAD FROM WORK, AND A PARTY IN COVENTRY ON THE MONDAY NIGHT. BENSON & HEDGES CIGARETTES WERE THROUGHOUT ALL AROUND THE OFFICE (WHEN MOST 'WORKERS' USUALLY SMOKED THE CHEAPER 'WOODBINES'); AND VERY FEW COULD CONCENTRATE ON THEIR WORK.

AT TIMES, EVERYONE WOULD HAVE HIS HEAD DOWN, TRYING TO WORK, THEN SOMEONE WOULD CALL OUT "TWENTY THOUSAND BLOODY NICKER", AND CHAIRS WOULD GO UP!

I DECIDED THAT I WOULD BE FLYING HOME AT THE END OF THE YEAR, AND BOOKED A PHONE CALL TO MUM. (YOU HAD TO BOOK OVERSEAS CALLS SOME HOURS, OR A DAY, AHEAD, AND A CALL TO AUSTRALIA COST ONE POUND A MINUTE. (THAT'S EQUAL TO ABOUT FIFTY DOLLARS THESE DAYS!). SO, I HAD A 'CHAT' TO MUM FOR SEVEN MINUTES, WHICH COST MORE THAN HALF MY WEEKLY WAGE.

WHEN WEDNESDAY FINALLY CAME, WE FOUND THAT THE FIRST DIVIDEND, BECAUSE OF AN EXTRA 'DRAW', WAS ONLY THREE HUNDRED POUNDS - THIRTY QUID EACH!

MOST OF US HAD SPENT A FAIR SHARE OF OUR WINNINGS BY THEN. THE CHIEF ENGINEER ANNOUNCED "THANK GOD FOR THAT - NOW PERHAPS WE CAN ALL GET SOME WORK DONE!" AND THEN ALL MY 'PARTNERS' ABUSED ME FOR PICKING THE POOLS ON A BAD WEEK! WE NEVER GOT CLOSE AGAIN.

I HAD ANOTHER 'SURPRISE' WHILE WORKING AT COVENTRY.

SOME MONTHS PRIOR TO LEAVING FOR ENGLAND, I HAD WRITTEN TO MASSEY-FERGUSON, FORD (AT DAGENHAM, LONDON), INTERNATIONAL HARVESTER, AND SOME SMALLER COMPANIES, ENQUIRING WHETHER THERE WAS WORK AVAILABLE FOR A DESIGN DRAFTSMAN ON AGRICULTURAL MACHINERY. [THERE WERE NO SUCH THINGS AS WORK PERMITS AND SO ON BACK THEN, AS WE WERE 'BRITISH SUBJECTS' AS WELL AS AUSTRALIAN CITIZENS.

WE COULD WALK STRAIGHT IN, GET A JOB, PAY TAXES AND NATIONAL HEALTH INSURANCE, AND VOTE, (I WAS IN THE PRIME MINISTER, ANTHONY EDEN'S, ELECTORATE, WHILE LYING AT KENILWORTH, BUT DIDN'T GET THE CHANCE TO VOTE FOR OR AGAINST HIM),

THERE WAS ONLY ONE SNAG - IF, AFTER LIVING IN ENGLAND FOR 12 MONTHS, AND STILL UNDER 25 YEARS OF AGE, YOU COULD BE ROPE INTO THE NATIONAL SERVICE, AND FINISH UP FIGHTING THE INSURGENTS IN BRITISH MALAYA OR CYPRUS! AS IT TURNED OUT, I WAS O.K. AT 26].

MOST OF THE COMPANIES REPLIED, WITH NO FIRM OFFER, BUT AN INVITATION TO SEE THEM AFTER I ARRIVED. AT IT TURNED OUT, I WENT FIRST TO MAF AT COVENTRY, AND GOT A JOB.

SOME MONTHS LATER (I CAN'T RECALL HOW IT CAME ABOUT), THE CHIEF ENGINEER SHOWED ME MY AEROGRAMME THAT I HAD SENT IN LATE 1953.

IT WAS WATER-STAINED, WITH BURN MARKS ON IT, BUT STILL READABLE.

HE TOLD ME IT HAD BEEN SALVAGED, WITH OTHER MAIL, FROM THE MEDITERRANEAN, AFTER ONE OF THE NEW DE HAVILLAND 'COMET' JETLINERS HAD CRASHED ON THE WAY FROM AUSTRALIA!

THE COMET, THE FIRST JET PASSENGER PLANE, HAD AN UNFORTUNATE INTRODUCTION. AFTER ONLY A YEAR OR TWO OF OPERATION, THREE COMETS CRASHED WITHIN A FEW MONTHS OF EACH OTHER. IT WAS LATER ESTABLISHED THAT THE CAUSE OF THE CRASHES WAS METAL FATIGUE IN THE WING SPARS. ALTHOUGH THIS WAS ELIMINATED IN EXISTING, AND FUTURE, COMETS, THEY NEVER FULLY RECOVERED, AND WERE LEFT BEHIND IN THE JET RACE.

I WAS REMINDED OF THIS IN 1969, WHEN I HAD TO VISIT OUR DEALER IN KUALA LUMPUR, ON THE WAY HOME FROM THE PHILIPPINES. THE PLANE ON THE SINGAPORE TO K.L. RUN WAS A COMET! IT WAS AN UNUSUAL PLANE, WITH A FUSELAGE ONLY THE SIZE OF A FORMER FRIENDSHIP, AND MY IMPRESSION WAS THAT IT TOOK OFF, AND LANDED, MUCH FASTER THAN OTHER PLANES.

BEING LOW TO THE GROUND PROBABLY ACCENTUATED THIS FEELING.

A PECULIARITY OF THE COMET WAS THAT, AS THE PLANE DESCENDED, A CLOUD OF VAPOUR CAME OUT OF SIDE VENTS IN THE FUSELAGE. A HOSTESS TOLD ME THIS WAS QUITE NORMAL, AS IT WAS CONDENSATION FROM THE PRESSURISATION SYSTEM.

ON THE RETURN FLIGHT TO SINGAPORE, I WAS IN THE AISLE SEAT, WITH A CHINESE BUSINESSMAN ALONGSIDE ME IN THE WINDOW SEAT.

AS THE PLANE DESCENDED, I COULD SEE HIM WAVING AT THE VAPOR COMING OUT BY HIS KNEE, THEN GETTING A BIT PANICKY, AS HE THOUGHT WE WERE ON FIRE!

BEING AN OLD COMET HAND (1 TRIP), I EXPLAINED IT WAS ONLY VAPOUR, AND HE CALMED DOWN AND WIPED THE PERSPIRATION FROM HIS BROW!

WHILE TOURING AROUND EUROPE IN 1955, WITH DON, THEN STEVE WALSH, WHOM WE PICKED UP IN COLOGNE, WE HAD A FEW 'ENCOUNTERS' WORTHY OF THE TERM.

ON THE WAY THROUGH NORTHERN GERMANY, ON THE WAY TO COLOGNE, I BOUGHT A ROAD MAP OF THE AREA AT A GARAGE. SOON AFTER, I NOTICED THAT WE WERE NOT FAR FROM THE MOHNE SEE (LAKE), WHERE THE 'DAMBUSTERS' HAD CAUSED HAVOC IN 1943. SO WE DETOURED AND, WHILE LOOKING AT A LARGE MAP ON THE EDGE OF THE LAKE, WERE 'ACOSTED' BY A RED-HAIRED BRITISH ARMY TYPE, WHO ASKED IF WE WERE "REALLY AUSTRALIANS". A GIVE-AWAY WAS A PICTURE OF A KANGAROO, ABOUT 18 INCHES HIGH, THAT I HAD PAINTED ON A BACK DOOR OF OUR 1938 FORD PANEL VAN. I HAD PAINTED IT IN WHITE, COPYING IT FROM AN AUSTRALIAN PENNY. BUT, AS I COULDN'T PLACE WHAT A 'ROO'S FRONT PAWS WERE LIKE, I HAD GIVEN HIM A PAIR OF BOXING GLOVES! (AND BONDY AND HIS MATE'S THOUGHT THEY 'INVENTED' THE BOXING KANGAROO LOGO IN 1983 - THEY WERE 30 YEARS BEHIND THE TIMES! I SHOULD HAVE SUED HIM).

ANYWAY, THIS ARMY BLOKE INVITED US TO MEET HIS LOT - A GROUP OF SERGEANTS OF THE BRITISH ARMY OCCUPATION OF THE RHINE (BAOR), FROM MUNSTER BARRACKS, WHO WERE CAMPED BY THE LAKE, WITH THEIR FAMILIES, FOR A 'CORPS WEEK', (SAILING AND RELAXATION).

SO WE MET THIS GROUP (ABOUT 15 PLUS THEIR WIVES AND CHILDREN), AND GOT A GREAT RECEPTION - PARTLY BECAUSE MOST OF THEM HAD BEEN WITH THE OCCUPATION FORCES IN GERMANY FOR YEARS, AND WERE BORED STIFF WITH LITTLE TO DO, AND PARTLY BECAUSE WE WERE AUSTRALIANS, AND PROVIDED A NOVEL DIVERSION FOR THEM. WE ENJOYED THEIR HOSPITALITY DURING THE AFTERNOON,

DOWNING A FEW DRAUGHTS OF MUNSTER BEER, BUT ALSO MADE TIME TO HAVE A LOOK AT, AND WALK ACROSS, THE MOHNE DAM, WHICH HAD ONLY RECENTLY BEEN FULLY RESTORED. A CLOSE-UP LOOK AT THE DAM ONLY SHOWED MORE CLEARLY WHAT AN ACHIEVEMENT IT WAS BY GIBSON AND HIS SQUADRON TO BREACH THAT DAM (AND THE EDER), CONSIDERING ITS BULK, AND THE NEARNESS OF THE SURROUNDING HILLS.

AT THE END OF THAT AFTERNOON, THE 'SERGEANT'S MESS' WAS PACKING UP TO RETURN TO MUNSTER, AND THEY INVITED US TO GO UP THERE (ABOUT 60 km NORTH) AND STAY WITH THEM. WHEN WE EXPLAINED THAT WE HAD TO MEET STEVE WALSH IN COLOGNE IN A FEW DAYS' TIME, THE REGIMENTAL SERGEANT-MAJOR (THEIR 'BOSS'), SAID "GO AND PICK UP THE KIWI, THEN ALL OF YOU COME AND STAY FOR A WEEK!"

EVENTUALLY, DON AND I AGREED TO GO UP FOR A COUPLE OF DAYS. AND, WHILE THEY WERE PACKING UP, THEY WERE GIVING US ALL SORTS OF "NAAFI" (CANTEN) SUPPLIES - CANS OF JAM, BUTTER, CHEESE, MEAT - PLUS BREAD AND POTATOES!

WE BOUGHT NOTHING BUT MILK AND BREAD FOR ABOUT 2 WEEKS AFTER THAT.

BUT THAT WAS ONLY THE START OF THEIR HOSPITALITY. WE NO SOONER ARRIVED AT THEIR BARRACKS NEXT DAY, THAN WE HAD A STEAMING BATH (THE FIRST FOR A MONTH), AND WERE INSTALLED IN THE QUARTERS OF TWO SERGEANTS ON LEAVE, COMPLETE WITH SHEETS ON THE BEDS.

THAT NIGHT, THEY PUT ON A DINNER DANCE IN OUR HONOR AND, AS THEY WERE KEEN ON CRICKET, THE RSM PRESENTED US WITH A JAR OF 'ASHES' TO TAKE HOME TO KEITH MILLER! WE LOST THE JAR LATER, SO MILLER NEVER GOT THOSE ASHES.

WHEN WE LEFT THE NEXT DAY, SOME OF THOSE HARD ARMY BLOKES WERE ALMOST IN TEARS, AS THEY HADN'T HAD SO MUCH FUN IN YEARS. NOR HAD WE!

THEY EVEN APOLOGISED FOR NOT BEING ABLE TO FILL OUR TANK, AS PETROL WAS STRICTLY CONTROLLED.

WHILE THERE, I HAD NOTICED A CALENDAR IN THE MESS, WITH A PAINTING OF "THE CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE" (IN THE CRIMEA, 1854) BY, (I THINK) THE 87TH LANCERS. AND OUR HOSTS WERE THE SAME REGIMENT, 100 YEARS LATER!

I'VE ALWAYS REGRETTED NOT ASKING FOR ONE OF THOSE CALENDARS AT THE TIME.

(THAT REGIMENT WAS CAVALRY, OF COURSE, BUT HAD CHANGED TO TANKS BEFORE WORLD WAR TWO),

HAVE YOU EVER BEEN TAKEN FOR A RUSSIAN POLICEMAN, OR KGB AGENT?

OR A FARMER FROM THE TYROL? WELL, WE WERE, BOTH TIMES IN VIENNA!

YOU WOULD NEED TO UNDERSTAND THE ATMOSPHERE IN PARTS OF EUROPE IN THE 1950'S, TO APPRECIATE THE FIRST OF THESE. FOR 10 YEARS AFTER THE WAR, GERMANY AND AUSTRIA WERE OCCUPIED IN 4 SECTORS BY THE BRITISH, AMERICAN, FRENCH AND RUSSIAN ARMIES.

THE CITIES OF BERLIN AND VIENNA WERE OCCUPIED, IN ROTATION FOR 3 MONTHS AT A TIME, BY EACH OF THOSE ARMIES.

BY THE TIME WE REACHED AUSTRIA, THE OCCUPYING ARMIES WERE IN THE PROCESS OF PULLING OUT, AND THE RUSSIANS, THE LAST TO OCCUPY VIENNA, WERE PULLING OUT OF THERE.

DON'S SISTER HAD MARRIED A VIENNESE CHAP IN AUSTRALIA, SO WE PLANNED TO VISIT HIS MOTHER. DON HAD HER ADDRESS (IN AN APARTMENT BLOCK), BUT THERE WAS NO ANSWER AT HER PLACE.

SO, WE KNOCKED ON NEIGHBOR'S DOORS TO ENQUIRE ABOUT HER. BUT PEOPLE EITHER LOOKED THROUGH A PEEPHOLE AND DIDN'T ANSWER, OR OPENED THEIR DOOR A LITTLE, MUMBLED SOMETHING, THEN SLAMMED IT SHUT. DON, WITH HIS POOR GERMAN, COULD NOT SAY MORE THAN "EXCUSE ME, IS MRS BERGMAN ---" BEFORE THE DOORS SLAMMED.

EVENTUALLY, WE FOUND SOMEONE WHO SPOKE ENOUGH ENGLISH, AND LISTENED LONG ENOUGH, WHO TOLD US THAT MRS. BERGMAN WAS AT WORK AND WOULD BE HOME LATER.

WHEN WE FOUND HER HOME LATER, WITH HER BROTHER WHO SPOKE ENGLISH, THEY TOLD US THAT, ON HER WAY HOME, HER NEIGHBORS WARNED HER THAT THE RUSSIAN POLICE, OR MAYBE KGB, HAD BEEN ASKING FOR HER! THEY WERE ALL APPREHENSIVE THAT THE RUSSIANS WERE MAKING A LAST MINUTE CHECK ON PEOPLE BEFORE PULLING OUT!

DESPITE OUR SMALLISH SIZE, IT'S NOT SURPRISING THAT THEY WERE SUSPICIOUS OF US. AS IT WAS RAINING, WE HAD PLASTIC RAINCOATS, WE HAD BEARDS THAT NO DOUBT MADE US LOOK ODD, AND DON HAD HIS SNAP-BRIM HAT ON. AND THE RUSSIANS OFTEN TRAVELLED IN THREES! HOWEVER, WE LAUGHED AT THIS OVER SCHNAPPS AND

COFFEE, AND MRS. BERGMAN SAID SHE WOULD TELL HER NEIGHBORS THAT THEIR FEARS WERE UNFOUNDED! BUT, AT THAT TIME, WE COULD APPRECIATE THE NEIGHBORS' WORRIES.

THE NEXT NIGHT, WE WENT TO A RESTAURANT WITH 2 LOCAL 'FERAUSON' DEALERS, WHOM STEVE HAD KNOWN IN COVENTRY. AS WE WENT TO OUR TABLE, WE HEARD MURMURING FROM DINERS WHO WERE LOOKING AT US WITH MORE THAN PASSING INTEREST. THE ONLY WORD WE CAUGHT WAS 'TYROL'. LATER, OUR HOSTS TOLD US THAT EVERYONE HAD CONCLUDED THAT WE THREE WERE FARMERS FROM THE TYROL, DOWN IN VIENNA FOR A VISIT TO THE 'BIG SMOKE'!

SO, THE VIENNESE WEREN'T AS SOPHISTICATED AS THEY THOUGHT!