

Tom Marshall's Weekly News, November 23, 2009

Planning a Big Tour 50 Years Ago: Reference was made in the *Weekly News* editions of 7/27/09 and 11/2/09 to my time as a travel agent in Wilmington. In 1959 I was approached by Ed Pamphilon, then secretary and treasurer of the Antique Automobile Club of America, to explore the possibility of a reasonably priced trip to several countries in Western Europe to celebrate the 25th anniversary of AACA. It appeared we could charter a plane to and from and provide an 18-day trip in Europe with almost all meals included for something just over \$500 per person. It had to be "off-season," so the dates chosen were October 19–November 7, 1960. George Norton was president of AACA, and Mahlon Patton was the tour chairman for the club.

Response to our initial mailing was very strong, and we knew we would have no trouble in filling an airplane, necessary for obtaining a rate far below the published tariffs. Passenger jets were just starting to cross the Atlantic, but none of the popular airlines would charter a jet, as they had no trouble filling them at regular fares. Sabena, the Belgian National Airline, less popular than several others, agreed, however, to charter a Boeing 707 which seated 160 passengers as opposed to about 85 on the largest piston-engine airplanes. This was the first-ever trans-Atlantic jet charter. With the European destination at Brussels, we started the tour there, ending in London the day after the annual London-to-Brighton run. By sightseeing motorcoach, we visited Paris, Geneva, Lucerne, Wiesbaden, Cologne, and Amsterdam, before crossing the North Sea from Hook-of-Holland to Harwich to finish in London.

The 160 seats on Sabena sold out quickly, and a waiting list developed. KLM Royal Dutch Airlines chartered to us a Douglas DC-7, and 83 passengers went to Brussels via Amsterdam. Charter regulations were very strict in that an agent who booked a charter could not be a member of the chartering organization, nor could he travel with the group. I resigned from AACA, to be reinstated after the European tour was over. I flew on SAS and British Airways.

Frames' Tours of London was one of the largest travel companies in Britain, and I had gotten to know them well during the Friends World Conference of 1952, so we chose Frames' to take care of the European arrangements. They were delighted with such a large group off-season, and in many places, including Lausanne, Lucerne, and Wiesbaden, we stayed in the best deluxe hotels. Being in London before the tour to make final arrangements, I soon met Leonard Trott with his Cockney accent, the top Frames' man to accompany us through Europe. Most of the seven couriers (tour guides) were also assembled there before we crossed the Channel from Dover to Ostend and took the boat train into Brussels. Roger Traen and his father of Bruges, Belgium, owned a fleet of motor coaches, and Frames' had chartered seven of them to accommodate our large group. The drivers were employed by Traen and the couriers on each bus by Frames'. Roger Traen accompanied the tour in his '51 DeSoto seven-passenger sedan with jump seats. Some of the couriers were excellent: one was Rosheen Napier, an aristocratic English woman in her 30s, one was an outstanding courier named John Wailes, and one was a jolly Scotsman who occupied the upper bunk above me on the rough North Sea crossing from Holland to England near the end of the Tour. Landing at Harwich on a rainy morning, and waiting for the London boat train, steam locomotives were everywhere. What a sight!

In England, we were treated well by the Royal Automobile Club of Great Britain, sponsors of the Brighton Run. To my knowledge, prior to 1960 no American cars were accepted on the commemorative run held annually on the first Sunday in November. With few exceptions, those on our AACA tour were transported to and from Brighton in motor coaches that could stop at points along the way to observe the pre-1905 cars on the run pass by. A young Jay Milligan of Hamburg, New York, completed the run with American Dr. Sam Scher's curved-dash Olds, however, and Morris Kunkle and I, both steam car owners from the U.S., were invited to ride with a Mr. Milligan (no relative of Jay) in his 1904 Gardiner-Serpellet steamer, one of three steam cars that completed the 52-mile run (six started). At Brighton, our entire group was invited to join our British hosts in the final banquet held at the Royal Hall built by King George IV in the early 19th century. The entire trip, New York to

New York, cost \$514 per person, and 243 Americans had a good time. JFK was elected president the day after we returned home.