

## Tom Marshall's Weekly News, March 21, 2016

**Ruth Marshall's "Stuttgart" Group:** From 1963 through 1966, Ruth Pierson taught in the U.S. Army program in France and Germany. She and her compatriots were teaching the children of American occupation forces in Western Europe. She made many friends, especially in Stuttgart from 1964 through 1966, and they made many trips all over Europe on their vacations and days off. Ruth bought a new Volkswagen "Beetle" in 1963. Most in the program were young, and within a few years they came back to the United States to round out their teaching careers. A few kept in touch and visited back and forth.

In 1985 Ralph Zarlino, who had settled in Cleveland and was married to Patricia Brandt, decided it was time for the Stuttgart group to have a reunion. He invited several to come to Parma Heights, a suburb of Cleveland, and spend four or five days together, seeing the sights and reminiscing about old times. Archie and Pat Patton, both in the army program who had married at Stuttgart in 1966, came from California with two of their three children, Naomi Nechtel and her sister Ruth (who did not teach in Germany) came from Minneapolis, and Ruth and I, engaged but not yet married, went from Delaware. On our way out, we stopped at Mercersburg Academy and Bedford Springs, and we returned via the Chautauqua Institute. With the Zarlino children, David (10) and Elizabeth (8), we had a grand week.

Two years later (1987), the Zarlino's had rented a time-share condo at Traverse City, Michigan, and all of us were invited to join them there. All who were at the 1985 reunion were there with the exception of the Patton children, and we were joined by Albert Svec, a walking textbook who never married and stayed in the U.S. Army teaching program, spending his last years in London. Al Svec was a native of the Traverse City area, and we visited the Sand Dunes along Lake Michigan, the summer theater at Interlocken, and Mackinac Island.

The year 1989 marked our first visit to Minneapolis, where the Nechtel sisters hosted our bi-annual gathering. There is much to see around the Twin Cities, and we visited the State Capitol in St. Paul and went to a musical matinee there. All 1987 attendees were there in 1989. Ruth and I came home via Lindbergh's boyhood home at Little Falls, Duluth, the Apostle Islands, and Petoskey, Michigan.

We hosted the group on a very hot week in 1991. Only one bedroom at Auburn Heights and our kitchen were air conditioned. Nevertheless, the group had a ride on the Mountain Wagon, went to Longwood Gardens and some of the other museums, and seemed to have a good time. The Nechtel sisters did not attend, but they had visited us in 1988.

In 1993, most of us went to Novato, California, at the invitation of the Pattons, who were both teaching school in that district. They showed us the famous Napa Valley, San Francisco, and Monterey. Their three children were grown, and one was married, but all lived in California, so we had a chance to meet and visit with them. Ruth and I had flown to Salt Lake City and rented a car, and we made a great circuit trip that included Crater Lake, the Oregon Coast, the Redwood Empire, Sacramento, and Lake Tahoe.

The year 1995 found us back in Minneapolis, as it was getting harder for the Nechtels to travel (Naomi was the oldest in the group). This time we visited the Mall of America, and enjoyed a cruise on Lake Minnetonka. Ruth and I had traveled around the north side of Lake Superior on our westbound trip, and took a six-day river boat cruise on the American Queen from St. Paul to St. Louis before returning home via Lake Oconomowoc, Wisconsin.

In 1997, we were invited by Al Svec to enjoy his new home along Grand Traverse Bay north of Traverse City. We visited vineyards, went to the Sand Dunes again, and heard Rosemary Clooney perform at Interlocken. Ruth and I enjoyed staying overnight at Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario, on several of our trips. Ruth Nechtel died, and since Naomi could no longer travel, we went to Minneapolis again in 1999. It was a sadder time, but Naomi enjoyed the attention and help from several of her old Stuttgart friends.

In 2001, Ralph Zarlino thought it was time for another reunion in Cleveland, and it was to last for seven days! This time we were joined by two women from the Chicago area, who had either taught at Stuttgart or had connections therewith. We visited some of the estates around Akron and attended a summer music event on the lawn of a large estate in that area. Some of us visited Garfield's Tomb in a huge cemetery, where I also spotted the graves of John D. Rockefeller and Alexander Winton.

The Pattons invited us to visit in California again, but we declined, and official reunions of the Stuttgart group are no more. However, we visited Naomi Nechtel one last time in 2004, and Ralph and Patter Zarlino usually have lunch with us in this area almost every year when they visit her mother in Bucks County. We had lunch with Al Svec in the Traverse City area when we attended Mike and Kathryn May's progressive steam car tour in 2011.