

Memories of the Bells!



C. Hartley
Papa Jones



We had been in Pocking, Germany in southern Bavaria only one night and day. Still suffering jet lag, we had taken a rather long hike into the “black forest” close by with our eldest son, Mark, his wife and their two small daughters. Mark was there for a year working toward an interview with a German theologian, Karl Rahner, to complete his work on his doctoral thesis. His wife and children were enjoying learning German customs and sightseeing. Rachel was finishing her kindergarten year and Rebekah was also learning in a German pre-school.

This was our first excursion out of the U. S. to Europe. Of course, we were prompted by the desire to spend time with our first two

granddaughters and the opportunity to travel with family members as tour guides. Upon returning from our walk, the phone rang and Mark looked anxious—they rarely received phone calls there. When he answered the phone, it was obvious his concern was mounting as he heard his grandmother’s voice.

“Papa passed away early this morning,” she said. As I was handed the phone, Mother told the sad news to me and then repeated the agreement the two of us had made before our departure from Kansas City. We would not attempt to return for his

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funeral if he should pass while we were gone. The Dr. had assured us before we left that Dad would no doubt live for several more months even though he had a terminal illness. His advice was that we need not cancel our trip.

Needless to say, we spent a day in quiet sorrow, remembering our very special loved one. As the evening crept down over the little German village, Lloyd lovingly took my hand and asked me to come outside with him. As we stood in the dusky light in those beautiful surroundings, church bells were pealing across the Bavarian hills and valleys announcing the Angelus, a time for evening prayers. God spoke his peace to the two of us that evening as the beautiful bells echoed over the hills. What a lasting memory we have of the passing of a very dearly loved father!

No, we didn’t have time (or money) to return home for the funeral. We greatly missed much sharing of loving sympathy from other members of our family and friends. However, we spent three unforgettable weeks experiencing places in Germany, Austria and Switzerland during a gorgeous season of the year.

Our first sight-seeing trip was a train ride to the north. Emerging from an underground train station to a bright Munich morning was like stepping back in time into the pages of a Grimm’s fairy tale book. Our first glimpse of a very old yet also modern European city. We marveled at the massive cathedrals with beautiful organ music filling their sanctuaries; watched the Glockenspiel at noon in the Marian Platz; and experienced ordering our lunch from a German menu without really knowing what we had ordered until it was there in front of us.

Later there was Vienna with visits to castles and graveyards of favorite composers, Salzburg and the backdrops for “Sound of Music”, and the humble upstairs rooms where some of Mozart’s music was born, Innsbruck with its Olympic ski jumps, and finally a visit to European Nazarene Bible College (in its early days) spending a week end on the campus by the Rhine River.

After three weeks, it was time for the flight back home. We spent the last weekend in Frankfurt, Germany where our plane was leaving early on Monday morning. The night before our departure we were shocked to see the headlines in the *Stars and Stripes* newspaper about the tragic fall of the walkways at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Kansas City and the many deaths of our fellow Kansas Citians! So we returned home to many sorrowing families, including our own. Even though the loss of a wonderful Christian father was deep, I felt closer than ever to my Heavenly Father and my earthly Father who had arrived in Heaven to the ringing of the Angelus! ♡



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