

October 2008: Working Trip to Germany

So far, my other trips to Europe have been made in support of a software fix to the HeliTOW launcher system to allow missiles with digital electronics to work properly. The trip to Italy was made to prove in this fix for the Italian Army. The trip to Sweden was made to review the change for the Belgian Ministry of Defense. This month, I went to Germany to support the test firings for the Belgian Ministry of Defense.

Belgium is too small or too densely populated to have their own firing range. However, as a member of NATO, they have access to the big NATO training base at [Grafenwohr](#), Bavaria. Furthermore, units of the Belgian Army are doing a training exercise at Grafenwohr, with their helicopters, so it will be pretty easy to do the recertification firings.

I travel with our International Business manager, Mike Conrad, and my mentor, Hans Tees. Our travel plan has us flying from Tucson to Dallas, then to Frankfurt, then to Munich. L_O_N_G nine hours from Dallas to Frankfurt. Frankfurt is, of course, one of the primary waypoints for U.S. servicement coming and going to Germany and the Middle East, so there's lots of English. In fact, a big water tank next to the runway says "Welcome to Frankfurt Airport" in English!

The airport is big and well-organized... well, sort of - we have to get transfer tickets for the Lufthansa flight to Munich, and it's an adventure to find that transfer desk, which turns out to be buried amidst all the other check-in counters in the main part of the terminal! But we manage to get through all that, and board the flight for Munich.

Up to now, everything has been cloudy. Nothing visible. On the way south, the clouds finally break up, revealing a green farmland dotted with little villages. Some of these villages have hills with castles on the crests. There are big wind generators here and there (nothing as dense as the wind farms around Indio, California). There are little rivers everywhere, and across one is an ancient-looking hydro plant.





We land at Munich, and find out Hans' luggage didn't make it on our flight! So we wait in the baggage claim for about two hours, watching the BMW ads on the flat-screen monitors. There's no display for incoming flights, so there's no way to tell when the expected flight with the bags is expected. Finally it arrives; we leave the terminal,

take the bags to the rental car, and find Mike Mareschal from DRS (St. Louis) waiting! We are expecting the Swedes from SAAB to show up soon, so we wait in the "Airbrau" biergarten right there at the airport.

When Thomas and Kenneth from SAAB arrive, we get in our cars and prepare to leave. After going round and round and round the car rental parking garage and finally escaping, we stop by the side of the road to fight with the GPS navigator, first to change the language to English, then to learn how to ask for a destination, and then to find out that "Eschenbach", then "Grafenwohr", and finally "Regensburg" are not recognized! We have to default to a paper map (how low tech...), and learn that the way really is not difficult.. Now, since Mike and Hans have had a few glasses of beer, they recommend that I drive!

This is a diesel Audi, standard transmission, with two overdrive gears. Hmm... Leaving the airport, the traffic is fairly heavy, so therefore fairly slow. Getting off the highway to the airport and onto the main northbound highway to Regensburg, the traffic is getting lighter, and soon we are cruising at 140km/hr (about 80 MPH), and other cars are just blasting by in the left lane! Now, I also drive on the way back from Eschenbach, and having gotten used to the vehicle, I try to keep up with the locals. On some occasions, I get up to 200km/hr (about 120 MPH), and I'm still being crowded from behind! The speed "limit" is posted at 120km/hr, but I learn that, in most cases, that is a "suggestion" rather than a "limit".

German roads are well-marked (at least in the daytime; we find that directions are harder to see at night) (which it becomes toward the end of our three-hour drive). Highway 9 has frequent signs for local historical attractions, including an intriguing "Labyrinth" one, and the artwork on the sign has stairs going underground. There are many fields with what looks like trellises, but they are high above the ground, 12-20 feet up. Maybe sunscreens? The forests are thick with pine and oak, but mostly it is farmland. Here and there, a Lutheran church lifts a funny squat dome on its belltower over the trees. There are frequent rest stops (marked "P" - parking?), but the facilities (which I have to stop for once) is just a porta-potty.

We arrive in the early evening, find our way to Eschenbach, and after a brief detour into the town itself, find [Hotel am See](#) on the eastern edge and settle in. The next three days are spent in beer (not me!), schnitzel, and listening to Swedes and Belgians speak Swedish, Flemish, French, and German. Poor Americans. Two mornings, a big Greyhound-style Belgian Army bus picks up our little team and drives into



Grafenwohr and finally to the test range. Two days we sit in a little four-story tower at the firing range. The Belgians fire sixteen (!!!) missiles in one day, including the ten recert missiles, we look at the data, it's all good - we're done! In one day!



A little corner of Eschenbach. Lidl is a grocery store - lots of liquor, lots of sausages, some vegetables and some other stuff. Lots and lots of mineral water, but no regular water which is what we went in for. Up the street to the town center.



Four of the Belgians' Agusta 109s.



L-R: Mike Mareschal, Mike Conrad, Johann, me, Kenneth. Behind us is the chow hall where we had lunch with the Belgian army people. Great food, for the army! Note the helmet: the American safety people insisted that anyone who works around munitions wear the helmet. Silly; if a TOW goes off accidentally, a helmet isn't going to help.



Agusta 109 landing near the control tower after firing its missile. The 109 is actually a cargo helicopter; HeliTOW is an add-on system to allow any helicopter to launch TOW missiles. The big pillbox above the canopy is the add-on sight unit.



After landing, Chris runs up and exchanges memory cards for the data acquisition system.



After taking off again, the pilots had an interesting habit of buzzing by right in front of the tower, close enough that we can see him waving!



Chris brings the recently-filled card into the tower and hands it to Kenneth back there, who reduces the data and prints plots. Here are Chris, Evie, and me looking over Kenneth's shoulders. It's really more of a formality; if the missile hits the target, clearly things are working.

On the other side of the room, the Belgians record video.



The team examines the data as part of compiling the test report, sitting in the dining room at the hotel. The hotel was very patient with us!



The firing campaign test personnel: L-R: Belgian Army officer (didn't catch his name, didn't speak much English), Kenneth (Swede, Saab, data reduction), Chris (Belgian Army officer), Thomas (Swede, Saab, test director), Mike Conrad (Raytheon, International Business Manager), Hans Tees (Raytheon, weapon systems), Johann (Swede, Saab, technical business director), Evie Coulier (Belgian Army, logistics manager), another Belgian Army officer (didn't catch his name, he was fluent in English and German in addition to his native French and Flemish; funny guy), Francois (Belgian Army, test pilot), me (Raytheon, weapon systems), Mike Mareschal (DRS, HeliTOW engineering), Jean-Pierre (Belgian Army, Quality Assurance).

After saying goodbye to our Belgian and Swedish friends, the three Raytheon people get in their little black Audi and blast back south to Munich, and check into the Kempinski Hotel at the airport - at \$350 per night! I hope this is within my foreign travel per-diem. Since it is early afternoon, we ask the hotel concierge how to get downtown, and where a restaurant is. Minutes later, we are on the municipal train system, with the farmlands around Munich (Germans tend to put their airports outside their cities quite a ways) sliding by. About 45 minutes later, we debark at Marienplatz.

The first sight that greets us as we emerge from the subway station is the Rathaus, or Town Hall.



The monument in front bears a statue of Mary, which is why this is called "Marienplatz". That's the Frauenkirche behind it. Note the clock face on the near tower.



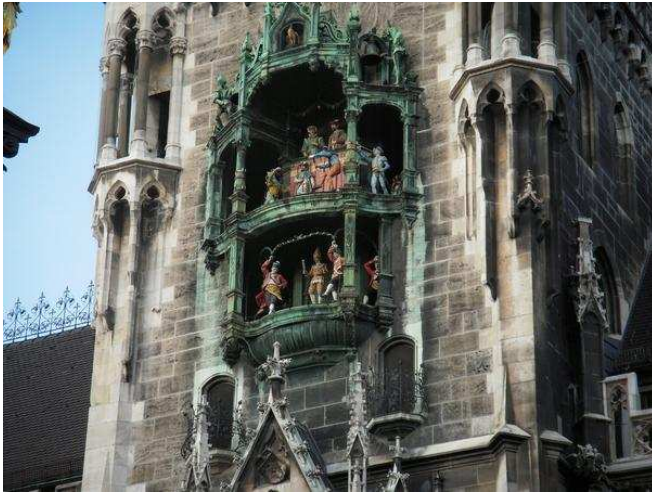
Beautiful gothic architecture, with big ole flower boxes.



Detail of some windows, with the exquisite carving.

The tower. Oh, look a clock. And what's that stuff on the "balcony"?





The sign on the gate says it's a "carillon". It looks like when the clock strikes, the figures in traditional Bavarian dress will move about, as if they were the inspiration for the big clock on the Small World attraction at Disneyland. It's very old, and they only run it three times a day, and unfortunately, we can't hang around for it.



However, Hans has to stay in Munich after Mike and I leave, and he visits downtown at greater length. He gets to see the carillon in action. Here the figures are marching around, apparently an inner and outer course moving in different directions. Note the figure beating on the bells with hammers. Also, note the netting to keep the birds out!

Behind us on Marienplatz is another big building. With a bell tower. With a... clock. My friend Hans takes a picture of it. Hopefully I will get that picture and put it up here, too. By the map below, I think this is the Old Town Hall.



Incidentally, it seems that, while the Reformation was raging in northern Germany, a "counter-reformation" was under way in southern Germany. All these big church buildings housed Catholic churches, and they still do.



By the map, I think this is St. Peter, which is supposedly the oldest church in town, and (as near as I can tell) how the city got its name - "Munchen", or Monks, after the Benedictine friars of St. Peter. Look! Two clocks...



Then we stroll up Dienerstrasse, past the Marienhof park, and past these street musicians - a guitar, a clarinet, and a base fiddle - who are playing pieces from "Fiddler on the Roof". In honor of Charity, and the upcoming Desert Christian FOTR production.



Across the Marienhof, the two towers of the Frauenkirche are visible. Especially the north tower. With its... clock.



I guess mechanically-minded Bavarians like their clocks. The thing is, Germany (unlike Arizona) observes Daylight Savings Time. So twice a year, all these ancient clocks have to be moved forward or backward.

Mike and Hans are men with a mission. We turn down Schrammer Hof headed east, and eventually emerge on a plaza which includes the famous biergarten, The Hofbrauhaus.



Here it is. Hans takes a pic.

Munich is the focal point of the Oktoberfest celebration, which actually occurs mid-to-late September. And the Hofbrauhaus is the most famous site of Oktoberfest celebrating. Fortunately (for me, sadly for my two friends), Oktoberfest and the hordes of tourists are past now, and we can enjoy the sights of this amazing old building in peace and quiet.



Except of course that Mike and Hans came here to drink beer in the Hofbrauhaus, so we sit at a table under an oak tree in the patio and call a waiter over. A moment of destiny: the proprietor of the Eschenbach hotel had told me that it is impossible to visit the Hofbrauhaus and not drink a beer. And here we are. And I guess I agree; you can't go to the most famous biergarten in all the world and get a *Coke*. So... I get a half-liter

of the same brew my comrades have ordered. I've never tasted beer in my life. I can get along with a glass of wine over dinner, and a shot of schnapps afterwards, for society (which, actually, I did yesterday, celebrating the day's victory with the Belgians), but drinking alcohol for the sake of drinking alcohol is foreign, and invokes my religious conscience. But drink it I did. My friends were gushing about how good it was. Me - bleagh. And I got all buzzy-headed before I had even finished. It is clear this is an acquired taste, and a built-up immunity to alcohol poisoning, but I have zero interest in either. I had my beer in the Hofbrauhaus in Munich - and never again.



Hans takes a picture of Mike and I. I guess the girl back there is watching the silly tourists.

Anxious to make the most of daylight, we leave the Hofbrauhaus and proceed south. We cross a major street (the Im Tal) and pass in front of a church, which per the map I take to be the Heiliggeistkirche ("Holy Ghost Church"). This is a view up where we have come from, and a corner of the church. The street (or the area, not sure) is signed as "Viktualienmarkt", and truly, many shops line the street we are walking down. But... all these shops have sausages, wursts, hams, smoked meats... shop after shop after shop. Mike treats us to a link of spicy sausage.





One of those shops. Yum!

Some shops in a side street. I wish I had gone into some of these, particularly the "souvenir shirt shop" with the Bavarian colors.

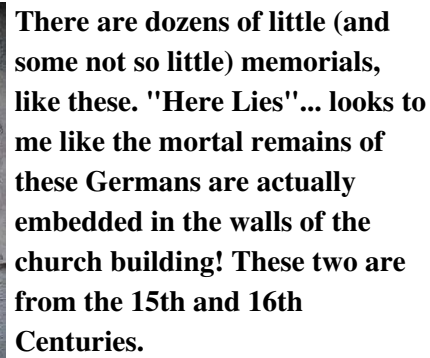


Church bells are pealing. We follow the sound down a narrow street and come upon the backside of what appears to be St. Peter Church. At least, per the map, and the spire looks the same as the one we saw from Marienplatz. Look at all those clocks. And there are people up there at the rail! What a view they must have! And the full effect of the bells ringing right behind them!



Below the tower is the church building and its tall windows. A few people are emerging, as if from a service. At the far end is a booth where tickets can be purchased for the stairs to the tower platform. I would love to have done that, or gone inside to look, but there's no time. Note the little monuments embedded in the exterior wall of the church building.







The inside may look like this. When he was on his own, Hans went into a couple of these churches. Wow. Don't know if this was St. Peter, but it could be. See the huge crucifix in this one:





We continue to walk past St. Peter and back to Marienplatz, then down the Kaufingerstrasse. This is Munich's analog to downtown Fort Collins, where the "street" is off-limits to vehicles and is lined with shops. However, the shops are mostly clothing for young women, so the effect is like being in an outside shopping mall. We pass the Jagd und Fischereimuseum (Museum for Hunting and Fishing), with

bronze boars outside that the children are playing on. And a big church (Michaelskirche?) whose facade is under a scaffold for repair.

This little guy is not scared of that bronze boar. He is also helping to polish the already-shiny nose.



We continue along Neuhauserstrasse and pass under the Karl Gate, one of the few remaining parts of the medieval city wall. That's number 18 on the map above, and beyond the fountain in the picture here. Note all the young people sitting around the fountain. This is what young people do in thousand-year-old cities. I was amazed at how many young people were sitting around fountains and cafes in Marienplatz. In Tucson, they're all indoors (no surprise, really - a pattern for 100-degree days).



Hans gets a daytime shot of Karl Gate later.





He also finds another of the ancient city gates.

Before getting to the other side of the fountain, we passed by a group setting up for a public address. They had out some speakers and an amp - and these yellow banners.





"Jesus Loves You", "Jesus Saves", in German and English. Professionally-done banners and sign. Looks like the Germans here have taken a page out of the American Evangelical playbook. With apparently similar results - nobody really seems curious or asks any of these people what they are doing, and the people don't engage anybody, they just stand and hold their banners. For the young people sitting at

the fountain, they might as well not exist.

We turn away and continue on our quest for the restaurant on Arnulf street. We cross the major boulevard here at the Justizpalast, or city courthouse. Just a little different from our own Pima County Courthouse.





Mike is complaining that I am making him earn his dinner! We continue toward the Hauptbahnhof, the main railroad station for Munich, which doesn't look at all historic, just very 60s, with lots of glass and odd angles. Then around it, we find ourselves on Arnulf Street, and begin looking in earnest for Augustiner Keller. As early evening descends on the city, we find it, walk through the

gates (it's an old, historic biergarten and restaurant), go inside, past the cloakroom, and have to chase down a waitress - it's apparently before the dinner hour, and they haven't quite got their act together. But we are seated and given menus. I ask for duck, "suckling pig", pig knuckles, and sauerkraut. Delicious! "Suckling Pig" makes you think of a whole baby pig, but its really more of a meat roll. I was thinking "Pig Knuckles" includes the foot, but it isn't, just a tender, tasty pork cut. Very good. And while my friends were expressing satisfaction with their beer (this time, I'll take their word for it), I had my "spezi", which is Coke mixed with lemonade.

This might have been a fun place to explore. The "keller" part refers to the fact that this was a monastic operation in its day, and there is an ancient, vaulted cellar in which people can dine by candlelight. Plus the outside is very nice, the "beer garden" proper. As we leave, we notice they now have a host installed by the door wearing traditional Bavarian clothes, and as we leave, another group of young people enter



wearing their happy clothes. I'm guessing they were employees, or a musical group; while I saw some older fellows in lederhosen (particularly at the Hofbrauhaus, where they *might* have been features), nearly everybody in Munich was in standard American-style modern western clothing. I also noted that ALL the girls in the restaurants and shops were in colorful Bavarian-style dresses.



Later, Hans takes this picture in a Biergarten. Not an "oompah" band, but the girl is wearing that typical outfit.

But that's pretty much the end of Munich. There's far more to the city than we could see in four hours. North of where we were is the old-town royal palace and Theatre. Northwest is the Nymphenburg, the tremendous palace of King Ludwig I of Bavaria. It's quite late now (about 10:00), so we walk over to the metro train station at Hacker Brücke nearby, and are back at the Kempinski in another 45 minutes. We have to get up fairly early to catch the flight back to Frankfurt, so Mike and I leave Hans (who is going to London next week, and isn't bothering to return to the States over the weekend) and walk over to the terminal and get our Lufthansa tickets. There's a bit of a mix-up, and Mike ends up taking a later flight than I do. Eventually we get to Frankfurt, board the American Airlines for Dallas, and nine hours later we are back in the U.S.A.! Another two hours, and I'm back in Tucson, at about 10:30pm... and I've got to get up in the morning to drive with the family to Phoenix for Faith's swim competition!



After Mike and I left, Hans looked around Munich and saw some things we didn't see. What a beautiful city.

Looks like the Arboretum.



A shop has a Formula 1 racecar as a gimmick. Europeans are as nutty about Formula 1 racing as Americans are about NASCAR.

Made by BMW - Bavarian Motor Works!





After Hans leaves Munich, he goes to London on a different job. He still has more time, so he tours London a bit. Since I wasn't there, I don't know what all these are, but this was among several pictures of Wellington monuments, commemorating the Napoleonic Wars.

An evangelist draws a crowd in a park. Obviously, Hans was one of the drawn. Bet he isn't very "successful".



More evidence of "evangelism". Does this make you creepy inside? What kind of impression is this making on young Britons?

A street in London. An Opel passes a parked BMW.



A monument to Florence Nightingale, the first female nurse, during the Crimean War (hence the Russian shakos on the soldier statues).

A lovely park in London.





Buckingham Palace. Not even Hans can visit London without seeing it.

One of those famous imperturbable Buckingham guards, with traditional uniform. And modern weapon.



The royal arms of the United Kingdom. From an age of excellence and glory that is passing quickly away.