

B51 AFTER TWO BEERS TRY TO SAY BROGGINGEN

PROJECT: EUROPE 2011

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DATE: 19 AUGUST 2011

We pulled into Broggingen just in time for dinner. All in all, I think this is a good time to arrive at an unfamiliar destination. Sure, these are Louise's relatives but we didn't know them from Adam and Eva. Arriving at dinnertime focuses everyone's attention on the basics and you can begin scouting them out at the table between bites of wienerschnitzel. If you have any misgivings you can start making your early departure excuses right there. We found out, right away, we wouldn't have to make such plans.



As the MG steamed its way into their driveway, Anita and Wolfgang Schnaiter came out to greet us. Don't know why we were surprised but they are roughly the same age as our daughters. Not to be discourteous but, after the initial hugs, I asked for a piece of old cardboard...especially since their driveway was pristine. I always have some little joke about English cars leaking oil but, in the case of the MG, it's no joke. That's the way they were made. It's an awkward way to begin a relationship but better than coaching them later how to remove oil spots from their squeakingly clean driveway.



They appeared to be really happy to see us and said they'd been cleaning our apartment all day and hoped we'd like it. I had some misgivings as we passed the 2nd floor landing and headed up to the 3rd floor. Fortunately, right behind us was Wolfgang muscling our overweight suitcases up the stairway. What a surprise. The "apartment" was like a small house and contained just about everything we'd need to stay for weeks. Off the living area was a perfectly designed kitchen with every amenity including a refrigerator stocked with wine and beer. I wondered if our reputation had preceded us.

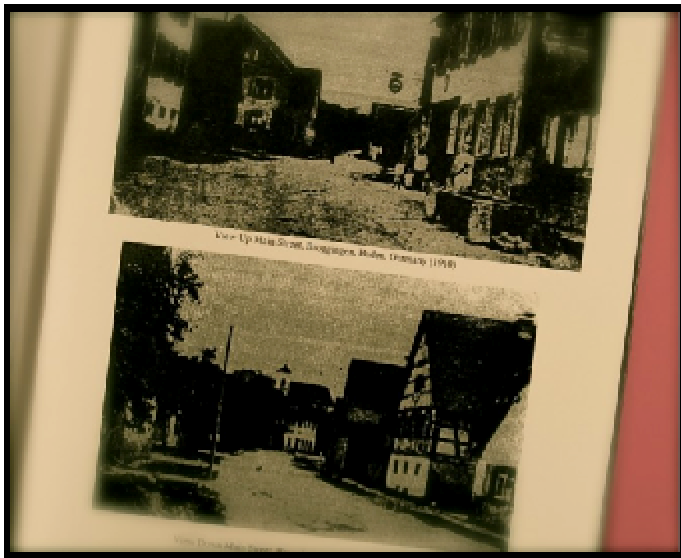
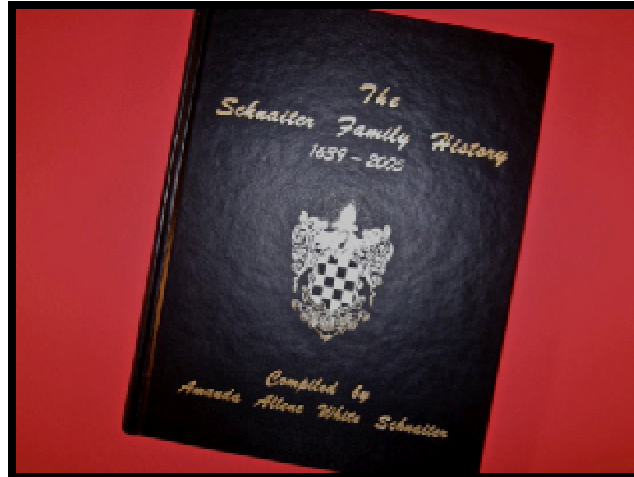


The bathroom was larger, by far, than some rooms we have stayed in, once again, containing everything we would need during our stay.

By the time we'd finished hanging up a few things, Wolfgang had recovered his breath and popped open a couple of wheat beers (his favorite) and pointed us to the balcony where he'd hung an American flag alongside the German flag. "I do that as a courtesy to the neighbors," he said. "That way they have an idea of who's visiting." Yes, we certainly are back in a small town.



We first learned about the German Schnaiter family from Allene Schnaiter's decade-long effort to trace the family all the way back to its origins in Switzerland. She and husband Tom (Louise's first cousin) culled information from family members and produced a hard cover history for our family. (\$35, not available at bookstores).



Inheritance partitioning made it difficult for members of a large family to make a living on their land in Switzerland. In the 1660's Joseph Schnaiter chose to move to Broggingen in southern Germany to restart his life.

When the same situation developed in the 1850's, Michael Schnaiter picked up his family and relocated to the United States where land was plentiful and cheap. Louise is a direct descendant of that family branch and we were visiting with descendants of those who stayed. Louise's father, Frederick, is in the last row, right.





What concern we had for communicating with our German family disappeared the moment Anita opened her mouth. She speaks English in a fluid manner, picks up on idiom and even laughed at some of my more clever jokes. Her husband, Wolfgang, also speaks English without pause and tells his own clever jokes.



Their 19 year-old daughter, Julia, spent her Junior high school year in Texas living with Schnaiter relatives and makes the “Hook ‘em horns” sign reflexively. Their oldest daughter, Miriam, is at university studying to be an English teacher. The whole family has traveled extensively and can hold their own in French and Spanish. So much for the language barrier.



Those barriers all belonged to us. Even though we speak French adequately and can carefully manage our way through Spain, we've always been a little short on German. Oh, we know the basics. "Hello, Goodbye, How are you, Please, Thank you, How much" and "Where is the toilet" can pretty much get you through the country. I used to include "Bratwurst und kraut" but have been unsuccessful, so far, in finding it on any menu. Fifty years ago it was ubiquitous and we loved it. Hopefully it can be found here on the fringes of the Black Forest.



But first things first. Ever since we started this blog, Anita has been thirsting for a ride in the MG. I dropped it in first gear and said, "Where to?" she peeled off a list of directions that included just about any place in the village where people would be gathered. The MG was The Show and it was time to go on tour. Tomorrow...the first day of the festival. Louise and Ray on the edge of the Black Forest.