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GRETHE KNUDSEN REPORTS ON EUROPE

Grethe Knudsen and Dinah ... Miss Knudsen was a member of the 21st General Hospital Unit of World War II. She now makes her home in Chicago, Illinois.

Now, I am back in good old U.S.A. again—and while I love to make tracks to other places, the U.S.A. looks better and better each time I come back home! As I passed the Statue of Liberty, I inadvertently thought of the countries and the peoples of other countries that I have recently visited; and realized how those people would give their souls to see that Statue, knowing they were to live in our wonderful land—away from ruination, starvation, uncertainty, political upheaval, economic distress and many other smaller miseries.

I want to thank Major Spalding and others for the friendly telegram which awaited me in my cabin on the Gripsholm when I sailed in May. I only hope our group received my cable sent from Copenhagen, to all of you at the reunion. I was there—in spirit! But I’ll be there the next time.

I had a perfectly marvelous time in Denmark—parties, good gab-fests with old friends and reunions with relatives—staying at country homes—at the seashore—in the city—at lovely homes—dinners at restaurants, and balls—just a glorious mad round of pleasure—and I loved it.

The 12th of June I left Denmark by air and flew to Prague, it only took three hours. It was a beautiful plane, good service but a rough ride. I sat and ate lunch while four gentlemen were sitting around me, giving their all in nice little paper bags. You know me, never miss a meal, especially a free meal! After two days in Prague with friends and four days in Klatovy near Pilsen with a doctor’s family I knew, I went back to Prague. Next day I went sight-seeing on a bus in true tourist fashion. But it was so hot! After five hours of seeing castles, churches, statues and views I was one tired puppy. I rebelled on Count Wallenstein’s castle and sat me down in the court yard, refusing to move. The guide was much perturbed and kept waving to me thru each successive window as the other poor tourists kept climbing—up and up—to see some elegant view. I shook my head “no” and I know from the looks I got that people thought I was being rather sacrilegious not following them further.

One sight very commonplace in Czechoslovakia is the daily communistic parades and gatherings. They, the workers, adore going thru the streets in work clothes, with the Soviet salute on high (clenched fist held high) singing their raucous and unmelodious songs. President Benes, whom the majority had such faith in, has been a big disappointment. He has been to Moscow, received his orders and has communists in high offices of the government. However, folks were hopeful because they made so many mistakes in governing that they hoped the communists would soon blunder themselves out of office. That day is yet to come. Meanwhile, communism is raising it’s ugly head—and getting away with it.

The stores are full of very poor merchandise, at fantastic prices, for example, $35.00 for a little cheaply made suit. Shoes, ordinary novelty shoes, for vacationing, crudely
made, $25.00 and $30.00. These prices are in American dollars, therefore, almost impossible for the ordinary Czech to buy. So much for Czechoslovakia. I did have a grand time while there because I knew such fine people.

The next hop was to Rome. I might say in passing that the Czech planes needed renovating and so did the stewardess. Things weren't as super neat and in ship-shape as they were on Danish, Swedish, Dutch and American planes. In Rome I stayed with the Danish government representative at the Danish Legation. I lived like a queen—being waited on hand and foot. And I loved it. Elegant little “intime” dinners on the terrazzo at 9:30 in the evening, in their lovely modernized 15th century home, overlooking the Tiber and the Coliseum, with swallows whizzing all around us. Very different and very Capesetic. Believe me, I ate it up. I adore being waited on. Who doesn’t? After two days there I went shopping with Mrs. Bull, my hostess. We wandered thru the well-stocked shops and saw gorgeous lingerie, clothes, shoes—everything elegant, exquisite—and, for Americans, with prices in normal limits. The lira was quoted at 550 lira to the dollar but 730 lira to the dollar on the street, if you had American dollar bills not larger than ten dollar denominations. I bought fresh fruit and luscious chocolates to take back to Denmark with me. I also bought lingerie, shoes and a cute beach bag, together with other novelties.

Next day I took the electric train to Naples where I visited the Contessa Bal­samo, a lady of Danish birth, whom I met during our stay in Naples when the old 21st was in the fairgrounds. The trip by rail was very smooth and comfortable—three hours from Roma to Napoli. Talked and shared lunch with a very interesting Italian professor who had attended Cambridge and Oxford, who had just returned from the U.S.A. He had worked on the atom bomb development with Professor Ferme of Italy. The “road to Rome” looked just as we left it—Formia - Velletri - Itri - Nettuna - Anzio - Cassino - Aversa - Capua—all just as I remembered them—ruined—wreckage strewn about—not a sign of a brick having been picked up or any repairs done. People are living in the shells of bombed-out houses with paltry rags at the windows. Naples is slowly being reconstructed, with public buildings first, then larger apartment buildings and much later the private homes will be repaired—perhaps? Their transportation is pretty well under control and that is a great job done.

In the afternoon I took a taxi to Terme Agnano, our old home. The place is going great guns, with all the sulphur holes unplugged and the lovely odor of rotten eggs again mixes with the wistaria bloom perfume. The first person to greet me was Enzia Alfiero the nice looking little waitress we had in our mess hall. She rushed towards me in her effusive Italian fashion and called me by name, much to my amusement. She asked about everyone, Colonel Cady, Colonel Drake, Major Spalding and Sergeant Willis. I took pictures inside and outside and will send you copies for the Rouen Post. (Miss Knudsen, we have not yet received them.) Enzia sent fond greetings to every one and assured me she missed us all. She would like to have some one write to her at Terme.

An attendant there informed me that now they had all new tubs and had the place clean—after the way we left it. I certainly told him that the 21st were not the final occupants and that we cleaned the place to a sparkling brilliance before leaving. If it was left dirty some one else was responsible. Good thing I got there to keep our good name shining. It looked sort of sad though to see the lame and the halt wandering about sniffing the horrible fumes of sulphur in the hopes of gaining health and straight, strong bodies. At least, we looked better than that, even after the grind we had in Italy.

I then drove past the fairgrounds—I could not get in as it is completely encircled with barbed wire and impenetrable—to keep homeless people from squatting in the empty buildings while the government makes up it’s mind what to do about it. Rumor has it that a permanent exposition will be placed there to attract tourists. All of the buildings and walls are now painted crudely with Viva Umberto and Viva la Republica instead of Viva il Duce—as when we were there.

Back to Rome, on to Geneva, Switzerland for a day and then from that little story-book country to Amsterdam, Holland. One day in Amsterdam and then “home” to Copenhagen.
where I stayed until August 8. After traveling all over Denmark, talking and eating my head off. My mother met me in New York City and we had three days sight-seeing, etc. I returned to Chicago the best-looking lil' ole city in the World. I am now dieting and resting at our summer place, getting acquainted all over again with my super deluxe niece, Pookie, and nephew, R. J. The dachshund pooch, Dinah 11 of Lindely, has also come in for much attention. Well, my 21sters there’s your “Report on Europe” that you asked for. Hope you like it. Best regards to all.

* * * *

PAUL E. CORRUBIA

Paul was a member of Base Hospital Unit 21 of World War I. After the war he elected to study architecture following in the footsteps of his brother, now deceased, who was very successful in that field. He finally settled at Tulsa, Oklahoma and put out his shingle as ARCHITECTURAL DELINEATOR where he too has been very successful.

Since it was not possible for Paul to attend our reunion he felt he should make some sort of a contribution. That he did in the form of a large sketch of ROUEN CATHEDRAL copies of which were distributed to all those present. Others who have learned of it's existence have asked for copies. Such a request came from Geneva Book of Topeka, Kansas for a friend and it was complied with. We quote from a letter Geneva received shortly thereafter. ‘By golly, every time I look at my new sketch I can hardly believe it. I really was so surprised last night and so pleased that I almost choked and didn't even feel like talking about it. I know that I'll always like it very much. It seems so alive to me. I can sit and look at it and imagine all kinds of scenes associated with it. If you have an opportunity you can tell whoever did it that I shall enjoy it and most of all it's you I appreciate for your thoughtfulness.”

The writer has one of the copies framed and it is adorning the walls of his office. Visitors have noticed it and have asked questions. One of the nation’s leading architects, and quite a delineator himself, Harry Ihmsen Hellmuth, studied it for several minutes, and pronounced it “a fine work”. Belatedly, we send thanks to Paul—and our compliments.

We might add that the Corrubia's of Tulsa are a couple of busy people. Mrs. Corrubia is physical education director in the public school system. On Tuesday evenings both she and her husband attend meetings at the Sketch Club at Philbrook Art Museum. Tuesday and Thursday afternoons Paul has classes at Tulsa University and on Thursday evening a class in “Arts and Crafts” in the Downtown College. Other activities in which both engage are the Little Theatre plays, university plays and lectures. Paul sends best wishes to all.

* * * *

ANOTHER MARRIAGE

Colonel Cady ever on the alert for “news” of former members of his command has made another contribution which we quote:

Dear Bill:

Announcing the marriage of
JOAN SCHWOCHERT

Mr. ROLAND R. De MUNBRUN

Saturday, 11th October, 1947
Las Vegas, New Mexico

At Home
Plaza Hotel
Las Vegas, New Mexico.

Address: Box 600, Las Vegas, New Mexico

Sergeant De Munbrun was the “long-suffering” and patient confidential secretary to Colonel Cady during the Italian and French campaigns.

Decorations: Good Conduct Medal and the Bronze Star Medal.

Avocation: Poetry (American, his own) and study of French history, and the language.

Although De Munbrun is engaged in writing a book, a pretty nice book could be written about him and his service with the 21st General Hospital. He joined the unit in Africa on 30 November 1943 after being through the Tunisian Campaign mill.

After De Munbrun left the unit in France following V-E day, he spent several months in Germany before returning to the USA.

Sincerely, Lee D. Cady
THE ROUEN POST

THE GREAT AUK

Recently, Charles "rabb...