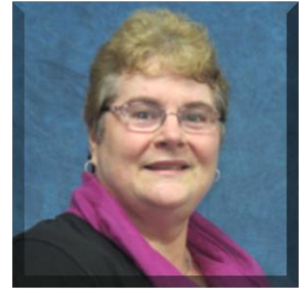


## Going to Germany as a Missionary by Kelly Strobe

I was asked to write about my time in Germany as a Missionary with Cadence International (formerly OCSC - Overseas Christian Servicemen Centers). I guess a good place to start would be when I was asked to be on the Missions Conference Committee in 1990. We began and ended each planning meeting with prayer that the Lord would use this conference and reach someone for missions. I was thinking in my mind that it would be one of the teens or college and career aged young people. I certainly wasn't thinking of myself as the one that would go out from that Missions Conference. God surely has a SENSE OF HUMOR and WORKS IN VERY MYSTERIOUS WAYS!!



One of the speakers for the conference that year was Grover DeVault, who was the Northeast Area Representative for OCSC, as it was known at that time. He came and presented a ministry that works with our military, providing a home away from home here in the states and many countries overseas. The ministry consists of Hospitality Houses where service men and women can come to a home when they are off duty to relax, have a home cooked meal, fun and fellowship with others, like a family. The other component of the ministry (at least overseas) was Malachi - the Youth Programs for the teens of our service men and women.

He presented a need they had for an Administrative Assistant for the Europe Field. As he listed the duties or job requirements, I sat in the pew and said "I could do that ... I could do that ... I could do that" to just about everything he said. But that's all I did at the time. God kept bringing this ministry opportunity to my mind and He just wouldn't let go. So I ended up calling Grover DeVault and asking a little bit more about what it would entail. He and I talked for a while and he said one of the founding couples of the ministry, Tom and Dotty Hash, would be in the area and would like to come to my home and talk to me about it some more. They came and talked with me and my folks about OCSC and what my duties would entail. I filled out my application and sent it to Colorado. I was accepted and the adventure began. OCSC was looking to change its name and after many contributions it was decided to go with Cadence. The Military marches to a cadence, cadence reflects our walk with God and others, and it fit many aspects of the ministry. Cadence had a three week orientation before deputation could begin to raise funds to go to the field. It was held at Colorado Springs College and we stayed in the dorms and used some of the classrooms for our training.

Getting ready to go to orientation was exciting, scary and sad at the same time. I knew this was what God wanted me to do but ... I had never flown in a jet before, I was going on my own and Grandma Strobe was slowly dying. I knew I wouldn't ever see my Gram alive after I left. I didn't want to go! The night before I left we went to Gram's to say good bye. I sat on her bed and told her I didn't want to go, I didn't want to leave her. She took my hand, looked me in the eye and said "you have to go, this is what God wants you to do. We will see each other again someday, but this you have to do now." It was one of the hardest things I ever did to leave her and fly the next morning to Colorado. There were about 15 of us in my orientation group. Some couples were

going to be working in the Hospitality House ministry, there was a couple that would be working with the Malachi ministry and me on the administrative side working to help both ministries as needed. We had classes morning and afternoon learning the many things we needed to know to go on deputation, and to prepare to work in the ministries God had called us each to. We worked hard every day and one day we had some downtime and they took us to Vail to see the beautiful scenery. We were just getting to the foothills and I opened my mouth and commented on how big the Rockies were. Everyone laughed and said "Kelly, these are just the foothills, wait until we really get in the mountains." I replied "Compared to the rolling hills of New York - these 'foothills' are HUGE!!" We had an enjoyable afternoon in Vail, riding the gondola to the top of the mountain and back - and the view - wherever you looked - was gorgeous!

We even got to go to a wedding. The youngest son of the one of the founders of Cadence was getting married and our whole class was invited to the wedding. We felt a bit strange going to a wedding for people we didn't know, but Josh and Kristie wanted us to come and everyone made us feel welcome. Josh and Kristie were going to be a part of the Malachi Ministry in Germany where some of us were also headed. Their wedding was beautiful and it was the first time I had seen the bride and groom come to usher their guests out instead of the groomsmen. I really liked that personal touch as they greeted each person and thanked them for coming to their wedding - not that different from the receiving line, except it was them, not the whole wedding party and guests got to stay seated until it was their row's turn. It just impressed me and I still like it when couples do that at their weddings even now.

The Wednesday of the final week of orientation went extra-long. When we got back to the dorm I was given the message to call home. I called Gram's because someone was always with her by this time. I got no answer at her house and there was no answer at our house - I knew she was gone. I called my brother's house and my sister-in-law said "I don't want to be the one to tell you" ... I told her I knew Gram was gone and asked if she knew anything about arrangements. She didn't. I was pretty upset and didn't want to go to dinner that night. My roommates were so wise in not letting me be by myself. They told me if I wasn't going to dinner, then they weren't either, they would stay with me. I couldn't let them miss dinner, so I went. My roommates told our instructors and the rest of our class what had happened and we all squished around one table as they all wanted to support me and be there for me.

Dinner wasn't just our orientation group that night. Cadence has a summer conference for all their staff and supporters and many of the missionaries and staff came into town a day or so early for that. So instead of about 20 for supper, we had about 120. Someone told Dave Meshke, the Director of Cadence, what had happened. He came up to me and gave me a big bear hug and asked what I needed. I told him, I didn't know yet as I hadn't been able to reach my folks. He said whatever I needed, decided to do, just let him know and arrangements would be made.

He kept his arm around my shoulders, got everyone's attention and told them what happened. Then he prayed for me and my family and asked the blessing for the meal. He kept me at his side and as everyone came up to the buffet table, they offered hugs and words of encouragement and

most of them had never met me before that evening! My classmates were wonderful, during the course of the meal they even got me to laugh. Even though I was sad about Gram, I was enveloped in the warmth, love and support of my new friends, my brothers and sisters in Christ. God is so good!

And then began the work of deputation and preparing to go. Pastor Walter was a great help in providing lists of pastors and churches in the area to contact and Cadence provided a slide presentation. I was able to borrow a projector and screen from family members to take with me in case a church didn't have one available. I was so nervous, especially at my first church - here at SABC! Everyone said "why, you know everyone" EXACTLY "was my thought - or rather "THEY KNOW ME!" But as usual SABC was very supportive of my endeavors and was behind me with love, encouragement, prayers and financial support.

I was on deputation for about two years going to different churches in the area, working full time and still trying to serve here at SABC. I stopped working on my degree as it would have been just too much. But God was providing all along the way. With my working full time, I didn't feel it was right to take monies given to me by churches for support during this time. Whatever came in, I sent directly to Cadence to my account, which began to add up along with my monthly support. God allowed me to meet many individuals at churches who were willing to support me in prayer and financially on a monthly basis. I also met people at the yearly conference Cadence holds in July in Colorado. Missionaries and people blessed by the ministry of Cadence would meet for four days of great music, biblical encouragement and fun times. I made many new friends, prayer warriors and financial supporters during these times as well as being reunited with many from my orientation class and veteran missionaries with Cadence during these visits. It was fun to fly to Colorado and as it was always near the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, I was able to view fireworks - from the air above them - what a beautiful sight!

Grover DeVault's home church in Lancaster, PA holds a missions conference each year for missionaries. They would invite 100 missionaries to come to have a time of refreshment, encouragement and relaxation. A few of them are asked to speak at the meetings, but most are there to relax and fellowship with the church family and each other. They have a "store" where missionaries can get things they needed - clothing, toiletries, stationery supplies, etc. It was at one of these sessions in 1992 that I had gone down Friday after work and stayed with my cousin, Marilyn and her family. The plan was to be with them Friday and Saturday and then drive to the church on Sunday to begin the conference. That was the blizzard of 1992. I was able to get to my cousins' Friday in the snow and then woke up Saturday to a LOT of snow on the ground. 10 FEET. My cousin, Peter and his friend had to try out their 4-wheel-drive trucks in all that snow - they BOTH got stuck! The lady down the road was sick and needed to go to the hospital - no roads were cleared. They tried to bring an ambulance in - only got as far as the one main road that was opened. They tried to come in by snow mobile, but that didn't work either. They finally hitched a draft horse to a row boat filled with hay and blankets and pulled her out to the one cleared road and the waiting ambulance. It took until Tuesday to get ploughed out and they had to bring out the "V" plough to make any headway.

It was at that conference the next year that Grover DeVault, Brad, the Europe Field director at the time, and I had an international phone call. It was decided that with what I had already raised in support and had in my account, I could go for a year and there was another young lady raising support and by the end of my year, she should have enough to come for the second year. So that's what we did. I asked and received a year's leave of absence from Lourdes (my immediate supervisor wasn't happy with me as I had been in her department less than a year and was leaving -- but I had no idea when I accepted the position I would be leaving so soon - I only had about half of my monthly support at the time I left.) I had to get my passport and an international driver's license. I boxed up bedding and other supplies for a year and was able to send them to a PO Box with the Mission, so it went on a military flight and I didn't have to pay as much in postage. I went to Colorado one last time for the conference, met the new Europe Field Director - Bill Ladd and his wife Kathy - and they told me I would be met at the airport by Eric Thimell and taken to their home, where I would stay until we found an apartment for me.

I bought my ticket from JFK to Frankfurt Germany and we went to spend a couple of days in Long Island with my Mom's family and then they took me to the airport. I had a 10:00<sup>pm</sup> flight out of JFK to arrive in Frankfurt at 11:00<sup>am</sup>. After many hugs and tearful goodbyes, I boarded the plane and was mostly ready for the year God had ahead of me. I couldn't sleep on the plane and my seatmate was a young man from Germany who was returning home. He and I talked about Germany a little bit and he told me that he had just gotten his license. He was in his early twenties and he explained that they all went to the same school to learn to drive, it cost over \$2000.00 to get a license, but it was for life, they don't have to renew like we do. They all learned to drive the exact same way, which is a good thing because, except for around cities, there is no speed limit on the Auto ban. You don't stay in the left hand lane - if you need to pass someone, you pass and pulled right back in. You don't know how fast someone could be coming behind you - they don't have many accidents, but those they have are usually fatal due to the excessive speed.

I arrived in Frankfurt and was met by Eric Thimell. He had a sign with my name on it - just like on TV and in the movies! He helped me get my luggage and we got in the van to head to St. Leon-Rott. This is where I would live and serve the next year - about 20 kilometers south of Heidelberg. I met his wife, Janet, their daughter, Elizabeth (6) and son, Caleb (3). I became "Auntie Kelly" to the two of them and had many wonderful times with their family. There was a 'fest' going on that afternoon and evening on the base in Heidelberg and they took me and showed me around and I had my first gyro and my first time on an Army base. I did many "firsts" with this family or with Janet - my first shopping trip to a German store, my first trip to Aldi's (I knew there was something familiar about the place when they came to Johnson City!), and my first trip to the PEx - Post Exchange. They helped me not miss my family so much.

After attending the fest, they took me back to the Ladd's home. Eric showed me the bedroom I was to use and explained things about the house - like the rouladens - their version of blinds - they go back to the War and close so tightly that at Noon your room looks like it is Midnight! They used these during the war so no light would show where people were. I really appreciated this feature

my first couple of days! Eric told me to sleep until I woke up and then walk down to the office and he would show me around there. The first day I woke up around 1:00pm and then next day around 10:00am and then I was on German time and over any jet lag I had - it was amazing! But it was kind of scary being in a three story house all by myself, across the ocean from all I knew and loved, in a foreign land. But God is faithful and provided the Thimell's to help me adjust. The office was a four story building. The main floor was my area, a kitchen and bathroom, upstairs were the offices of Bill Ladd, the Europe Field Director; Dick Reynolds, Director of the Hospitality Houses, Eric Thimell, the Logistics Coordinator, and a room for missionaries to come and use a computer and graphics as needed; on the top floor was Malachi Ministries and offices for Dave Schroeder, Director of Malachi; Jerri, secretary and a room where any of the Malachi staff could come and work. The bottom floor was open and used for some storage and whatever needed to be done. There was a two car garage just full of things that the missionaries coming to the field could go through and use that had been left by others leaving the field - many 220V appliances that you couldn't use back in the states. I found a hair dryer and a waffle iron to name a few things. My duties were answering the phone, taking messages if the guys weren't in to take the call, typing letters, reports, whatever was needed. I was given the big project of going through six 5-drawer file cabinets, sorting and keeping what was good, tossing what was bad, putting in a pile what I wasn't sure about and going over that with Bill (that took about a month). I helped with special events, planning, organizing, coordinating and logistics (a little more on that later).

I stayed with the Ladds for a couple of weeks while Eric looked for an apartment for me to rent. It was nice - they were almost like having parents, but not quite old enough. We would get up, have breakfast and while I helped Kathy clean up, Bill would leave for the office. I either walked or rode my bike - I REALLY liked the bike I was able to buy. It was a ladies five speed, dark green, with baskets over the back fender and a basket on the front, a light and bell. It was perfect and I rode it all over St. Leon-Rott. I would have shipped it home, but Jerri needed a new bike when I was leaving and so I gave it to her. The apartment Eric found for me was a mother-in-law apartment in a German home. He went with me to meet them (he spoke way better German than I did!) and made the financial arrangement with my landlord. I shared a common entrance with the family, but they had another entrance straight ahead from that, while I went to the right and up a flight of stairs to my apartment. It was mostly furnished, but I did need to "raid" the garage for some things as mentioned before. I had a small table stand just outside my door to put things on while I unlocked the door. You entered a longish hallway that had hooks for coats or whatever and a shrunk (or closet/cabinet). Half way up the hall the bathroom was on the left. I loved the bath tub! It was slanted at the back and you could just lay back and really relax. There were hook ups for a washer and dryer in the bathroom, but instead of making that huge purchase, the Ladd's allowed me to use theirs. Kathy would invite me to have supper and as soon as I got there I put in a load - I would do three loads a week and if I started at 5, I would be done at midnight - it took a l-o-o-n-n-g time for the machines to run their cycles. They had a TV and watched the channel broadcast from the base as it was the only English speaking channel there was, so we would visit and/or watch the shows that were on. They had a little Shih Tzu named Mitsy - she was so cute and loved to play with her throw toys - of course I had to throw them again and again and again ...

Back to the apartment ... at the end of that entry hallway was a window and I had my kitchen/dining room table in front of it. To the left was my kitchen. It was so small, I could stand in the middle and touch the walls on all sides! I had a convection oven, with a small cupboard above that, my sink had a window to look out and there were cupboards to the left of the sink, both upper and lower. There was a "dorm" refrigerator with a small cup-board above and 3 drawers below. I had never used a convection oven before and hadn't realized I had one, until I made cookies the first time and they burned! I had never had that happen before - I have made many, many cookies and never had them burn but that was how I found out about the oven! I would make cookies for the different meetings and trips, just like I do here. I sent chocolate chip cookies to the Ladd's the Christmas after I came home. They host all the Malachi staff at their home and Kathy told me she had put the cookies on a plate but didn't say anything. One of the guys took a cookie, took a bite and found Kathy. He said "Kelly made this cookies, didn't she?" I can honestly say my chocolate chip cookies are "Internationally Known"! If you turned to the right, you were in my living room. I had a coffee table, love seat and chair along with another shrunk but this one had shelves for books, etc. There was a beautiful big window that looked out on the street and the fields beyond. At the end of the long and narrow living room was a door way to the right and you entered my bedroom. I had a twin bed at the far end that just fit in the space sideways. I had a desk and chair, a dresser and another shrunk for my clothes. The apartment was just the right size for one person.

I remember the night of the Missions Conference here that year. You all planned to call me and talk that evening. I was so excited about that! With the time difference you would call at 8:00*pm* and it would be 2:00*am* for me. I laid down, but set my alarm to go off at 1:00*am* so I wouldn't miss the call. I didn't need that alarm - I was so excited I couldn't sleep! I finally got up, set the phone near my chair on the table and wrapped myself up in the quilt that you all had made and presented to me before I left. I was going to talk to home and I was wrapped up in the love and care that went into that quilt - it didn't get much better than that! I had always been involved in ministry here at SABC with the young people and choir and saw no reason not to continue when I was in Germany. Malachi, is the Youth Component of Cadence. These young men and women came from all over to minister to the young teens of our military personnel. They were youth leaders reaching out to young people for the Lord. I will never forget my first night at Search - the Youth Program on base in Heidelberg. I went to the Center where it was held, opened the door and almost left! There were so many people - there were a 120 young people milling around before the meeting started. I almost did a 180 and got back in my car! How would I ever get to know these people in one year - there were so many of them? But again God was good, Josh and Kristy had seen me and came to the door to welcome me - my escape route taken away. We would play games, sing songs and have a Bible study, just like we do here in Youth Group, but with 10 times the number of young people - it was amazing to listen to their voices raised in praise and worship to God. I did get to know and love the young people. They were wonderful. They would come up and give me hugs before our meetings to say hello and again after to say goodbye. They were so thankful to have someone constant in their lives week after week. Their parents were members of our military and when they went to work, these kids didn't always know if they would come home - some of them had both parents in the military and it was hard for them. They would move

every three years or so and have to adjust to new locations, new friends, school, church, etc. so they really appreciated the leaders that were faithful to be there every week - not just the Malachi couple in charge - there were many volunteers from the Chapel community that volunteered their time and help like I did.

Chapel was held on Base every Sunday morning and was used for many different religious services not just the Protestants, hence it being called the Protestant Chapel when we had services, the Catholic Chapel when they had services, etc. Our Chaplain was a man small in stature, but one who loved God and used his big talents to serve the Lord. He was very good at role playing and would don a costume and "become" Peter or Paul or Daniel, as he talked about these men and the lessons they learned from God, although that wasn't his main way of teaching, it was always intriguing to see "who" he was next. There was a choir in the Protestant Chapel as well. I loved to sing and remember being so excited when I was old enough to sing in the choir here at SABC. I asked about singing in the choir and was told anyone could join. Jay and Jerry liked to sing too and they said they would give me a ride to choir practice. I remember that first practice - the choir director was a woman named Cheryl, she was from Alabama and her husband was in the Army. She was so shocked that I came my first week "in country" to join the choir, I guess it usually took people awhile to warm up and become involved. That choir grew from six members my first Sunday to about 20 before I left, we had some really talented people and it was a blessing to sing and minister to the congregation each week. It had been decided that I should have a car and I went car shopping with Bill Ladd. I got a little silver hatchback but with gas costing \$4/gallon I didn't drive it much. I was able to get a ride with the Ladds, Thimells or Jay & Jerry to Chapel, Search and Choir Practice.

I only had one time that I just wanted to come home. It was a Wednesday and I had a tough day for some reason in the office - I don't remember why at this point. It was choir practice night, but no one was going, everyone was going to be out of the area and I had no way to get to Heidelberg. I had a phone, but I couldn't use it; as it wasn't hooked up yet, so I couldn't talk to anyone. I had a car, but I couldn't drive it yet as it wasn't registered and I couldn't leave the country even if I wanted to because the German government had my passport to register my car! I was frustrated, upset, alone, lonely ... feeling sorry for myself and I had no one to talk to. So I sat and wrote my Mom a 10 page letter just getting my frustrations of that day out and I remember ending it with "for two farthing I would get on a plane and come home - and two farthing isn't even worth two cents!" She called me later in the week and I told her she could just throw away the letter she would be getting as I had vented but was fine now, of course she kept it.

Dick and MaryEtta Reynolds were in charge of the Hospitality House Ministry. They came to the office each week and helped the House Directors as needed. They're such a warm, loving couple. They included me in a lot of the House's activities that were planned for different weekends. I got to go to a Birkenstock factory to see where they were made and then to the store - I really wanted to buy a pair of sandals, but the colors were green and orange and purple - no black or brown, like I was used to and wanted, so I didn't get anything. The German people love bright colors and flowers. Every home has window boxes full of flowers and beautiful gardens. But you better not

let any petals fall on the sidewalk that you didn't get out and sweep up - right away! They took pride in having a clean town. People did a lot of walking or bike riding - with gas so high, most didn't drive cars around. I remember watching the older fraus (house-wives) riding their bikes all over town and noticing the size of their calf muscles - they were huge!

I had some special visitors while in Germany. Nancy, Michelle and Pamela Crane flew into Frankfurt and I picked them up at the airport. They stayed with me in my apartment for a week and we went sightseeing and saw many things. Now you remember about my apartment and how it was right for one person - now it had four! I gave Nancy my bed, was able to borrow a blow up mattress for the girls to sleep on in the bedroom and I slept on the living room floor in a sleeping bag. It was just so awesome to see faces from home I would have slept standing up if I had to! Then I took a week and we drove to Mark and Joy Simms in France. We stayed with them and the four of us slept on their living room floor. It was so good to be able to be with friends from home and see where Mark and Joy lived, worked and what God was doing in their ministry. Joy took us out and about. We went to the Chateau - where Pam eventually grew up and went to cook! The world really isn't as big as we think it is and our God is just so much bigger! I left the Cranes with Mark and Joy for another week and drove back to Germany by myself. Then Joy drove them back and we had a night with five of us in the apartment - GIRL TIME BIG TIME!! Joy left the next day and I drove Nancy and the girls back to Frankfurt to catch their flight home, and was already missing them before they got on the plane!

Early in December Dave Schroeder, the director of Malachi (and now the director of Cadence), came up to my desk and said he needed me to go to Heidelberg with him, but he wouldn't tell me why - it was a surprise! Jerry was the Malachi secretary and she had been ill so much that I had been asked to cover her duties as well as mine. Dave took me to Army headquarters on base and worked me through the process of getting a Military ID. Because we worked with our military, Cadence staff was granted military ID's to help with the cost of living, as long as at least 50% of our work time involved working with Military personnel. With my helping out, I had 20 hours a week so I qualified. This meant I could go on base and use the laundry mat - three washers, three dryers and one hour to do laundry instead of seven! I could get gas coupons which put the cost of gas to what it was in the States, at that time about \$1.25/gallon instead of \$4.00! I was able to go to the PEx (Post Exchange) - yes, Janet took me for another first of shopping. Janet laughed at me, I was so excited, she said I was like a kid in a candy store and I said I felt like a kid in a candy store at Christmas!! It had been six months since I saw items written in English (I had thought I was buying chicken in the local German store and I ended up with fish!!) and brand names that I knew in America! Dave gave me a Christmas present a couple of weeks early and it was the best thing I got that year!

The Malachi Leaders would get together every other Friday for a day of planning, encouragement and fellowship. They would start around nine and would go right through to supper. They would sometimes end up at the PEx for supper at the food court and doing something together in the evening. Each meeting someone different was responsible for bringing lunch for everyone. My turn came in February and I decided to do spiedies, potato salad and cookies. I asked Bill if he



would mind grilling in the snow before I proceeded to shop. None of them had ever had spiedies before - no surprise there and I gave out the recipe to all. I helped plan some special events for both the Europe field as a whole and some for Malachi. One for Malachi we planned was a winter retreat for the teens from Heidelberg. We went for a long weekend of skiing and rodobonning in the Swiss Alps. I'm not a skier so I had a lot of fun with some of the kids rodobonning. What is rodobonning you ask - it is sled riding - sometimes on prepared paths but sometimes on the road! It is so much fun - think about sled riding here but picture your starting point about four or five times higher the elevation and imagine the speed you get!! Totally awesome!

Another winter event I helped plan/coordinate was the Winter Retreat at the Bibelheim in the Swiss Alps. We hosted people from all the house ministries all across Europe - Germany, England, Spain, Italy - and I was responsible for room assignments. I was responsible for room assignments. I had the number of beds per room from the Bibelheim and as we got responses I matched up the rooms to the number of people in the party. No big deal you say - well with the Bibelheim under renovation while we were planning this, the rooms availability changed from week to week and sometimes day to day so I was constantly moving people around! But finally the dust settled - literally - and I was able to make final assignments.

Those of us who worked in the office went down on Monday to get set up and make sure there were no glitches in room assignments, equipment working, etc. Everyone else was coming on Tuesday - when it started to snow and snow and snow and snow - it snowed until Thursday! We were praying that everyone would arrive safely on Tuesday and God answered those prayers. We got everyone settled into their rooms - no complaints from anyone :). We had men, women and children come for the conference and once everyone was settled in their rooms, I helped out with the kiddos - what fun that was!! The excitement of two, three and four year olds is amazing. We planned a special surprise for the parents and older siblings for the end of the week. One of the men from England played the bag pipes and he had brought them with him. He graciously agreed to play for the kids as we marched over to the auditorium where everyone was meeting and was like the pied piper with all the kids behind him! It was beautiful, but when he first started to play the pipes - fortunately in another building - we had some screaming kids competing to see who was loudest. They were scared at first, but once they realized where the noise was coming from they settled down. After it stopped snowing, a trip was arranged for most of us to go Rodobonning!! Just think, three to four feet of fresh white snow - it was gorgeous looking out over the valley from the upper floors of the Bibelheim and watching a train wend its way through - especially at night when the train was light up and all the homes in the valley as well - postcard perfect, but pictures didn't do it justice.

Back to Rodobonning - we took two touring buses and drove up the mountain to where we would pick up our sleds. The snow was to the windows on the buses - it was high! We had 80-100 people from our group and we unloaded and grabbed sleds and started down the hill in shifts. Four of us were asked to stay back and come last to make sure everyone made it down the mountain ahead of us. We had a great time, even when we met a bus coming up the mountain - you had to climb the snow drifts to the side and get out of the buses way! But it was amazing scenery and the

camaraderie down the mountain was the best. The four of us got down to the bottom and found everyone looking for a young girl. She hadn't made it down. She was 10-12 years old and had Down's Syndrome. She'd wandered off on her parents at other events, but this was in the middle of winter in the Swiss Alps, night was falling and so were the temperatures. We were getting ready to send the young moms back with the younger children on one bus to the Bibelheim while the rest of us prepared to walk up the mountain to try to find her. One last call to the Politzi (police) Station and we were headed out. Thankfully when the call was made, she was there! A man found her at the top of the mountain and brought her down to the police station. Once again God was good and we all went back to the Bibelheim praising Him for his faithfulness and watch care.

The young people in Search had a school dance and they asked all the Search leaders to come and chaperone. Looking back, I again see God's leading and watch care. We were all at the place where the dance was being held, greeting each other and the kids were looking forward to a wonderful evening. Everyone started to wonder where Billy, David, Robin, Jeff and Jesse were. They were going to dinner together and then coming. Just then Josh's phone rang. The five young people were involved in an accident and were at the hospital. We all stopped right where we were and prayed for them, not knowing how seriously any on them were injured. They were at the back gate leaving the post when the light turned. In Germany they sometimes have multiple lights at the same intersection and this was one of them. Jeff was driving and the light turned for the right hand turn, but not the left which he was making. He pulled out and they were broadsided by a truck. Jeff and Robin were in the front and escaped injury other than being shook up. In the back were David, Billy and David's brother, Jesse. At first they thought David was just unconscious, he wouldn't wake up. He had died instantly from a broken neck but there wasn't a mark on him. Billy was in the middle and was in serious condition - they didn't know if he would make it, praise the Lord he did, but he was in the hospital for about two weeks. Jesse was hurt but not bad. It really shook the kids up and my mind went back to my youth group and Rick Miles dying. God had prepared me through that situation to know what the kids were going through and to be able to talk and listen to them and just be there for them. God used the accident and David's death to touch the heart of this kids just as He used Rick's death to reach our youth group!

One of Malachi's yearly events is a trip to the island of Ibiza, Spain for spring break. We considered canceling due to David's death, but his parents wanted us to continue with the trip and they came as chaperones as David was so excited to have been old enough to go that year. We had six buses filled with young people and leaders and chaperones, 300 people. We were to meet at the dock and go over to the island on the morning ferry together. Only one bus made the morning ferry ride. That left five buses - 250 people - at the dock. Thankfully, there was a beach nearby and we had Frisbees, footballs, volleyballs and variations of many games broke out on the beach. There was also a fest going on in the town. We allowed the teens to go in, but they had to be in groups of at least five. We were able to keep over 200 teenagers busy for the eight hour wait for the ferry. About two hours before the ferry was due, a couple of the guys from different youth groups got out their guitars and started playing music, working on ways they played things differently. This slowly grew until all 250 of us were circled many deep on the dock singing praises to God with the many songs we sang at youth group each week. One of those boys was Casey from our group at

Search and I was so proud of him stepping into that leadership position that day. I also watched the crowd of other people waiting for the ferry. I read on their faces a little fear at first as to what all these teenagers were going to do getting in a big circle like that. I watched them relax as they listened to the songs and realized we were not up to any trouble. That was a glorious start to a week that was full of activities of fun and fellowship with young people from all over Germany whose parents served in our military. God used that week to bring dozens of young people to a saving knowledge of Jesus!!

We had a Europe Cadence Staff Retreat in Poland that spring. One of the former Malachi workers (three couples had left Cadence and formed Josiah Venture working to help train youth leaders and create youth groups in countries that had been behind the Iron Curtain and hadn't had Christian youth programming for over 50 years) asked to have us come there. He made the arrangements for us with the hotel and set up a trip to Auschwitz among other things. We had vans with Military licenses as house directors also had Military ID. We also had one rented van to carry sound equipment with us. When we crossed the border into Poland, the guards asked each van different questions about where we were going. We all thought it was nice of them to take an interest. They took an interest all right - the next morning when we woke up, the rented van had been stolen - their interest was where we were going so they could take the van!! Fortunately everything had been taken out of it the night before and they didn't touch anything that had been left in the other vehicles - some cameras, computers, etc. - they were after that rented van only and God had led Bill Ladd to purchase renters insurance, not something he usually did. We contacted the police, but they said there wasn't much promise of getting the van back. It was probably already sold for parts before we even found it missing.

As mentioned we went to Auschwitz. They won't allow anyone under 13 in, so the younger kids stayed back at the hotel. When we got there, we signed in and went into a big auditorium where we watched a 20-30 minute video of Auschwitz and the history. Then we got a walking tour of the facility. It was hard. The very air was oppressive - it felt like a huge weight pressing down on you from above. You could just feel the evil in the air from all the monstrosities that had taken place there. As we walked, the side of one of the buildings was pointed out - it was stained brown - it was against this wall that they would line the Jews up to face a firing squad. We went into a building that had huge rooms behind glass - these rooms were filled with the luggage, shoes, teeth, dishes, even the hair of the people that had been tortured and killed there, each room full of a different item. We were shown a bed that the people were forced to sleep on. They were bunk beds, but unlike any I had ever seen before - there were 4 bunks in one bed, with about 18 inches between each bunk and each bunk was about four feet wide. Ten people were required to sleep on each level - 40 people to one bunk bed. Even now 20 years later, I still get the chills when I think about what happened there. If anyone ever tries to say it could have never happened, they just need to go to Auschwitz and walk around.

When it was time to come home, I spent my last night at the Thimell's as Eric was taking the Ladd's and myself to the airport to catch an early flight back to the States. I was packing my carry on when the zipper broke. Janet grabbed one of hers and told me to take it. I packed my stuff in the

bag and we got up at 4:00am to get to the airport early the next day. While we were waiting to be checked in, we noticed soldiers walking through the airport with machine guns and this was way before 9/11! While we were being checked in, they asked me about my carry on - it had Janet's monogrammed initials on it and they didn't match mine! I was pulled aside and asked many questions - "Who gave me the bag? Did I know them? Did I pack the bag myself or did someone do it for me?" I realized they thought it might be a bomb. I assured them that I knew who gave me the bag and I had packed it myself. I had to empty it completely and repack it before they would let me get on the plane. Better safe than sorry, but it sure was a scary experience!

We had a good tail wind all the way back to the States and arrived in Chicago an hour ahead of schedule. Unfortunately we couldn't land due to thunderstorms on the ground. We circled O'Hare for about three hours and then was sent to Minneapolis to refuel. We touched down, refueled, but had to sit on the plane until the weather cleared and we could go back O'Hare to land. There were no customs at the Minneapolis airport and we were an international flight. Fortunately for me, I was traveling with the Ladds and they had the travel agent that worked with the mission to book our flights and he was able to get us an upgrade to Business Class, so we had a bit more leg room for the added time on the plane. Unfortunately, when we landed, the whole plane had missed our connecting flights. We were put on stand-by to travel to our destinations. The Ladds and I were headed to Colorado for the Cadence Conference they hold each year around the 4<sup>th</sup> of July and we asked to be kept together as they would have someone meet us at the airport. We were placed on the same flight and were waiting for take-off when the pilot called the Ladd's name over the intercom. They got up and were replaced by a woman and a child - they were the original ticket holders and Bill and Kathy were to come on a later flight. They were from the Chicago area and their children came to spend some time with them. We were supposed to get to Colorado at 4:00pm, I got in at 9:00pm and the Ladds arrived at 1:00am. It was a long day of travel, but God allowed us to arrive safely, but the poor man in charge of logistics had to make an extra trip to the airport - about one hour each way!

After the conference I got on a plane and came home. It was a wonderful year with many experiences, blessings and hard times, but God was good to bring us through them all safely, learning much through each and every one of them. There were many, many things that God did during that year in Germany. I have only touched on some of the highlights. God was so good and so faithful. The year gave me a greater appreciation of what our missionaries go through being away from family and friends - I was gone one year, knowing I would be coming home after that time, but many missionaries go planning to stay forever, or until God leads them to something else. The sacrifices are great, but when God is leading, the blessings are great as well.