

Where Do You Want to Go?

09-12-2015 by Harry Zirkelbach

Barbara and I had not been to Europe (only England in 1986) when we decided on a vacation 1991 there. It would be without itinerary. Just fly to that Continent from Dover Delaware on USAF Military Space Available. Begin mid April, driving to Dover visiting relatives, there and back, return early June.

It was planned to begin in Frankfurt Germany, then wander around to whatever seemed attractive at that moment.

Space Available is just that. When U.S. Air Force transport has seats available after accommodating the Active Duty personnel and cargo, empty seats are made available to Retirees on that destination waiting list longest.

Oops, On arrival Dover had a long waiting list. Next two days, only a few seats available on scheduled flights. The next day, the terminal is quiet. Nothing scheduled. Barbara and I drive south, visit those Delaware beach resorts. Return after 2:00 pm, check in with Passenger Service. There is an unscheduled C-5 announced for immediate departure, seventy seats, few takers. It's a direct flight to Sigonella Italy. Neither Barbara nor I knew where Sigonella was, decide to go. As we were packed to depart, remove carry-ons from our car, take the Olds to Long Term Parking, are departing Dover early afternoon, with a handful of fellow travelers. We learn the purpose of the scheduled trip, deliver a Senior Navy Officer to a Naples meeting the next morning.

The C-5 has been furnished with comfortable seating for this passage. We few passengers get acquainted. Four hours into the flight there is an emergency in the hydraulic system, we will land in Torreón Air Force Base, Madrid, Spain have that machinery replaced, must take off before 06:00 local time, for the airfield will close for repave the runway that day.

This is in the latter stage of the Gulf War. Torreón Air Base cluttered with material and personnel.

In crisis, our Air Force can be efficient. It was that day in, Dover, Torreón, Sigonella.

We had been fed in Torreón and Sigonella. Then set adrift.

While airborne on departure from Dover, we learn that evening Sigonella is an Air Force Base in Sicily, the Island just west of Italy's toe. And that our fellow

passengers included a woman whose husband, stationed near Naples, was returning from an Emergency Leave at the death of her Mother in Ohio. And another traveller, a Retiree visiting his daughter's family in Rome. Someone suggests; we rent a car. drive that day to Naples, stay at the villa the lady shares with her husband, then the next day the other three drive to Rome, turn in the car. Barbara and I had begin a unscheduled vacation in Italy.

That we did. First, while driving to Naples, we discover Barbara has lost her Military I.D. somewhere in Sigonella. We still have our Passports, so not a biggie.

The military couple living near Naples have a sumptuous home, marble everything. Our hostess, a great Italian cook, begins our life in Europe with a feast.

The next morning we discuss the road to Rome, and I am designated driver. The Autobahn type A-1 had few hitches between Naples and Rome. Our one-day friend, fluent in Italian, is a great help in piloting us to the Leonardo de Vinci Airport where he meets his relatives, we leave the Rental, and sre

Dumped to begin a months' vacation,
Where would you begin?
It was many adventures before we reach Germany.