

Nida Trip To Germany - 1998

History

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Jack and Jean Nida went on a three week trip overseas on May 14, 1998. Included in their schedule was researching the von Nida family in Germany. Upon their return home to Georgia, Jack sent the following email letter to friends and relatives It is shared here with Jack's consent :

Since many of you have asked for a report on our recent trip to Germany, I will pass on info that may be of interest. First, let me say that I was very pleased with the friendly and kind reception that I found there as I attempted to probe into the lives of these relatives and their ancestors. Since many of the older ones do not speak English and I speak no German, they often found a younger person who could interpret for us so this was not a huge problem. However, before I return, and I do plan to do so in 2000 or before, I will know a little of the German language so I can better understand and communicate with them.

Jean and I left on May 14 to do "The Journeys of Paul" with our church group which took us to Greece and Turkey through May 25. On the 26th, we flew from Athens to Frankfurt with another couple that was on the trip and had lived in Frankfurt for several years while in the military, Dora Lee and Frank Nagles. They were very helpful in introducing us to the local customs and assisted in finding our way around which, unfortunately, included shopping.

On our first day we went to Altdorf where we met the widow of Albert von Nida. Albert is the brother of Alex who was not at home that day but they lived one block apart in this little village. Alex was the person that gave Forester Puffe a lot of family info (all in German of course) when Forester was there in 1988. This is the data that Darienne Hall and Mary Arnold are trying so hard to have translated in the hope that I can use some of it in the upcoming book. Albert's widow thru a neighbor who acted as interpreter told us that she had two children at the University, one studying Chemistry while the other was studying Biology. The Lutheran Church a block away from their home was not open but appeared to be well kept and in use. Like all of the little villages around Landau where our family came to from Aachen (Aix-la-Chapelle), the streets were extremely clean and the houses appeared immaculate. Not unusual to see several people with their broom and dustpan out on the sidewalk in front of their house sweeping the street and area around their house. Almost every window has a window box full of flowers and their gardens are gorgeous. We in the US could learn much from these people in pride of ownership and cleanliness of their countryside. From Altdorf we continued on a few miles to Edesheim, another small village where Kurt von Nida owns the Franciskus Apothecary. Unfortunately, Kurt was on holiday in France until 01 June. From there we went another few miles to Kleinfischlingen, a very small village much like Altdorf, and found the home of Bertha von Nida, mother of Kurt. She spoke no English at 86 years old but went across the street to the old Lutheran Church and came back with a teen age girl who could interpret for us. Bertha's husband was Werner, deceased since 1988. You will find Werner listed in Jack E. Nida's book as (307), the son of Eugen von Nida. The young girl went a few doors away and brought back a young friend who was also a von Nida named Irmtrand, as best I can read her writing. They volunteered (with some

gentle persuasion) to give us a foot tour around the village which consisted of about three blocks. Four von Nida houses were identified by them, the most prominent being the "Weissen Lamm" owned by Hans Georg, b. 1688, d. 1751. A gated fence protects the entrance to the old inn which is now the home of a Kammermann family. The owner invited us inside the fence where we took pics of the outside of the house and adjoining buildings but we did not go inside. The owner brought out a von Nida coat of arms, framed in an 18 x 24 in. frame and different from the one on the cover of Jack's book. (Darienue has identified from the old German manuscripts that there have been three different Coats of Arms of the von Nida family.) This house was probably the place where Johann Michael von Nida was born who, at the age of 21 and with a pregnant wife, left the Fatherland for America in 1748.

The next stop was Irmstrand's grandfather's home which was Erich von Nida. He was not at home but his wife, Simone, was a very pleasant host who showed us around the garden inside the fence and the entrance to the old winery with "DVN LBN 1749" over the huge arched wooden door. They said that they stopped making wine there in 1990 after some 250 years. Another gateway which had been blocked by stone had the date of 1731 carved into the stone over the door. Erich is (303) in Jack's book and a brother of Werner. Simone's daughter in law, Margaret, spoke fairly good English and went about the gardens talking with us. She lives in Edenkoben, another nearby village. She gave me her address and I plan to write to her and send a copy of the pics that I took there. We were invited into the old Lutheran Church which had been recently renovated. The old wooden pews which had been previously painted white had been changed to a natural wood finish. It was small, neat, and clean with modest furnishings. A block away was the cemetery where some 20 family members with marked headstones were buried, the oldest being born in 1830, (266) in Jack's book. They usually give the "born" name (maiden) on the headstone which is very helpful for the genealogist. There were others here with unidentified markings that were probably our ancestors including Hans Georg but we cannot be certain from what I observed.

I could not believe the huge amount of grape vines that we saw around this area of Germany. Rows as far as the eye could see up the hills and to the foothills of the mountains to the west. The food was unlike any German style food that I had eaten in the states including the Amana colonies of Iowa. IT WAS DELICIOUS. We always stopped in a small village and looked for a little pub style restaurant where the locals ate. There is one or more bakeries in every village where the locals come each morning to get their bread and pastries for the day. Don't look for donuts but you can find most any other kind of baked goods that you want.

We stayed in Landau at a Zimmer (Bed & Breakfast), a private home which was immaculate with a beautiful garden. The next morning we went in search of the church and castle of the Baron Nicholas von Nida which was written up in Jack's book. Near the town of Karlsruhe is the small town of Durlach. I met Dr. Gimber, head of the museum in Durlach, who showed me a book titled Durlach that contained a page of information about the Baron. It seems that while he lived in the adjacent town of Grotzingen, Baron Johann Nicholas von Nida gave to Roman Imperial Army one hundred and twenty fully outfitted men to assist in the defense of the city of Durlach. This was during the time when they were being attacked by the Spaniards in the war 1701 - 1714. Dr. Gimber directed us to the old Lutheran Church in Grotzingen where the Baron was buried which was across the street from his castle which was named after his wife, Augusten. Jack's book contains a copy of a manuscript dated 1932 by Dr. Hans Rudolph von Nida titled The Von Nida Family of Germany which gives much information about the Baron. We located the old church and his tomb at its' entrance and were busy taking pics when a little white haired lady who appeared to be about 80 years old came riding up on a bicycle. She stopped and we told her who we were and our mission. I'm not sure how much she

understood of our English but she told us to stay while she rode off. I wasn't sure whether she was going for the cops or what she had in mind but curiosity got the best of me so we hung around. In a few minutes she came back with the key to the church and a little cleaning bucket with rags and took us inside. What a beautiful church this was with its' stained glass windows and a large life size replica of Jesus on the Cross. Upstairs in the balcony was a very large pipe organ. She gave me a couple of pamphlets about the history of the church (get ready Darienne and Mary) and let us take pics inside. Across the street stands a hotel which was once the castle of the Baron. Upon leaving, we walked around the block from the church to see more of the hotel/castle when suddenly the bell in the old Lutheran Church with its' twisted spire began to ring. I noticed the time was about 20 minutes past the hour and thought it to be a strange time for the bell to be ringing. It continued for at least five to ten minutes. We'll never know the reason for the bell and there is much left to the imagination.

We headed south on the autobahn up the Rhein River (which flows northward) toward the little town of Neustadt in the Black Forest. I found this to be the home of the cuckoo clocks with hundreds of different sizes, shapes, and carvings to choose from. On to Zurich in Switzerland and the tiny country of Liechtenstein. From here we traveled into Austria and back into Germany and then north to the medieval town of Rothenburg. The first castle here was built in 970 and the old wall still surrounds the town which was occupied several times during the Thirty Years War. In 1945, about 40% of the town was destroyed but was restored after the war to one of the most visited medieval towns in Germany.

We left Rothenburg and traveled north to the town of Nidda some 25 or 30 miles northeast of Frankfurt. This is a fairly large town located on a river of the same name which flows into the Main River just before it joins the Rhein in Frankfurt. The museum was closed for some unknown reason so I never learned much about the town except that there are no von Nida's living there now.

We traveled west around Frankfurt to the town of Bacharach where we took a boat ride on the Rhein to St. Goar, a trip which lasts about an hour and a half each way. This was a beautiful scenic ride past the famous Loreley and many castles on the side of the mountain along the river. After walking around the town of St. Goar for about an hour, we returned to Bacharach where we got back into the car and drove to Koblenz. After crossing the Rhein, we headed back toward Frankfurt and stayed in a little town where we toured the Castle of Marksburg the next morning. This is said to be one of the best restored castles on the Rhein River and it was a very enjoyable tour which took about two hours. Driving back to Frankfurt, we visited the places where Dora Lee and Frank Nagles had lived and worked many years ago. We stayed at the Rhein-Main Air Base that night and flew back to Athens, Greece the next morning where we claimed some of our luggage that had been left at the hotel during our week in Germany. Since our flight back to Atlanta did not leave until 7:00 a.m. the next morning, the day in Athens was spent in shopping and relaxing. The temperature there had become very hot since we had left the week before, climbing to over 90 deg. this day. The reason for flying back to Greece from Germany was necessary to connect with Swiss Air for the group fare that our tour was rated on. Then it was back to Zurich and then to Atlanta.

It was a long three weeks and we were happy to finally get home. We enjoyed the history of "The Journeys of Paul" and we liked Greece a lot but my favorite country in Europe of those that I have seen has to be Germany. Time did not permit us to go to Aachen so there are still places that I want to visit. Our family history has now become a bit more vivid with a better understanding of our heritage.

Jack Nida

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