



The 11th Mennonite World Conference was held in historic Strasbourg, France. Two of the 6,200 participants from 51 countries were Lorne Grove and daughter Rachael of R.R. 2, Markham.

Enjoy pilgrimage

By Lorne Grove
Once in a lifetime, one ought to pay at least cursory homage to the holy places of religion and ancestry.

Although our initial destination was the Eleventh Mennonite World Conference, the 1000-year-old ghost of medieval Europe briefly lured us into the vulgar pursuit of its vast art treasure and its maze of architecture. The riot of roses, the flowered parks and gardens could almost seduce an unwary pilgrim into a delightful form of idolatry.

In 1964, I sailed the Atlantic on my memorable voyage, for three years with the Mennonite Church in India.

Now, 20 years later, accompanied by my wife and two children, on our first international venture together, the British Airways 747 screamed into the sky over Lake Ontario and headed for England.

While Hazel and I reflectively scanned the darkening shores of Newfoundland and recalled the years of teaching high school at Flower's Cove, Rachael, 12, and Kinu, seven, soon prided themselves as masters of the jet age. They excitedly showed us where to plug in the earphones, how to change channels, turn up the lights and all other possible observations about the craft.

What fun we had—the shortest night of the year, only dusk long enough south of Greenland to get in a movie. Then we enjoyed breakfast before a serene descent through fluffy clouds and over a patchwork pattern of fields.

Ancient masonry and spires spread out below the tip of our modern metal wing as we hovered over Heathrow. There it was—the London Bridge of our childhood play at Dickson's Hill School.

The walled gardens, loaded with roses, draped our 727 bus route to Epsom in Surrey, south of London. We were soon told about this year's famous Epsom Derby and about the technicians getting in a fluster when the Queen's TV suddenly quit. Her majesty, we were told, ran up the stairs to the grandstand in a panic lest she miss so much as a stride of her beloved horse race.

Nine days in an old walled garden estate at the home of Tony and Mary Seaton allowed us to experience England from the inside. Our 12-year-old Rachael and Jessica Seaton, also 12, enjoyed reading "Maklory Towers", all about the escapades in an English girls' boarding school!

Kinu was not anxious to leave the two Seaton boys. They had become close friends. However, he made many more friends at the conference in Strasbourg. He didn't want to leave them, even for an afternoon, when we had signed up to go on a tour bus to see Koenigsburg Castle. This castle was on a summit of a 3,000 foot peak in the Vosges Mountains, surrounded by some of the most picturesque villages and vineyards of all Alsace. Other highlights included the dazzle of the crown jewels in the vault far beneath the tower of London; the ships on the English Channel; the beautiful trains of Europe, (especially the one little red engine working at the station yard in Basel, Switzerland), and finally, his endless fantasy about a dark cave that we saw far up on the cliffs above the upper pastures in Switzerland, where we walked one day, listening to the cow bells and gazing at glistening snow on the Jungfrau.

Six years of studying French made Rachael more than a little apprehensive about her first encounter with the natives of that country. However, the people were hospitable and loads of fun. We discovered that "you never meet a stranger."

Strasbourg was almost like a family reunion for Hazel. She met many relatives, including an aunt and uncle from Pennsylvania, the parents of 17 children.

My time spent with a dozen men and women from the Mennonite Church in India was very precious. Yes, our family wishes to praise God for the opportunity we had to worship and share with Christian people from so many lands.

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