

## OBSERVATIONS FROM HERE AND THERE

## John Bradley Green

*Editors Note: Brad Green took early retirement so that Marion and he could travel a lot more than most. And travel they have! Twenty trips to Europe; a circle of the Pacific rim; trips to China, Egypt, Morocco; a photographic safari in East Africa; stays on many Caribbean islands and several in Hawaii; visits to all fifty states and all ten Canadian provinces. In addition, Brad estimates that they have spent the equivalent of two years in Mexico. Along the way Brad has written some forty short commentaries about their worldwide travels, and we give you a good sampling of them, including for starters an early trip from Princeton to East Orange.*

**Hitchhiking on Route 1.**

An anti-hitchhiking law went into effect in New Jersey sometime in the late twenties but wasn't very rigidly enforced. As an

undergraduate I would occasionally hitch rides home to East Orange which wasn't very difficult. One of my close friends, Dick Brown (more often called "Swat"), was a classmate and we sometimes went home together. One day we were thumbing rides at the traffic circle just outside of Princeton and finally a car stopped. It was a state trooper.

He asked us where we were going and said he could take us as far as the New Brunswick turnoff and to hop in. At the turnoff he stopped and, as we were getting out of the car, he asked our names. He looked at Swat who said, "Brown". "What's your first name?" "Dick".

He looked at me and said, "What's yours?" I said, "Green". With a very skeptical look, he answered, "Yeah? And I suppose your first name is John."

Although it is, I quickly said, "Oh, no sir. It's Bradley." "That sounds better," he said, and drove off. We heaved a sigh of relief.

**Random thoughts on our first trip to Italy.** Much in Italy seems to work backward. The doors to public buildings open inward instead of out. Nuts go on counterclockwise rather than clockwise, and light bulbs likewise. Frequently the cold water is on the left and the hot water on the right. This can be traumatic as it is sometimes very hot.

The smaller canals in Venice smell



*Leaving Zermatt on the Glacier Express in September 1982.*

in October. They must be frightful in summer.

It is always smart to have the concierge on your team.

For one with only a few words of Italian, communication becomes a combination of Italian, English, Spanish, German, French and sign language.

It is my considered opinion that the Italians talk half their lives away. They are the greatest yakkers we have ever encountered.

In our bathroom in Perugia there was hot water in the john. This must be the height of luxury.

**The language barrier.** This little sketch will probably not mean much to anyone who has not had the opportunity to talk and bargain with limited Spanish with a Mexican taxi driver. One Sunday we hailed a taxi to take us to church in downtown Mazatlan. As customary, we wanted to make our deal before committing

ourselves so I asked the driver, "How much to the cathedral?"

Tentatively he responded, "Twelve mil pesos, señor." I said, "No, that's too much. Ten mil pesos is the right price." To which he surprisingly replied, "O.K. señor, eight mil pesos." When we arrived at our destination, I paid the driver with a ten mil peso note and told him to give me one mil peso in change. He gave me two and was surprised that the crazy American insisted on giving him a tip.

The bullfights were scheduled for that afternoon so I asked the driver if they would be good today and he replied, "No, señor, very bad, very bad." This was an unusual reaction from a Mexican taxi driver, so I pursued the matter by asking him if the matadors were bad and he answered, "No, señor, very good, very good," So I asked him if the bulls were poor specimens and got the same answer, "No, señor, very good, very good."

At that point I gave up.



**The Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Bruges.** We spent a few delightful days in Bruges, perhaps the most interesting medieval town in Belgium, when

we visited the Low Countries in 1971. There the Church of the Holy Sepulchre is named after the one in Jerusalem, and we spent a pleasant time there.

Upon leaving, one of the elderly nuns, whom I supposed to be somewhat unworldly, asked if we could take some of the foreign coins from their collections, in exchange for Belgian francs, which they could use. Since we were eventually going to London, I told her we would be happy to take any sterling she had but that I didn't know the proper exchange rate. Unfazed she immediately whipped out a card from her pocket which showed the current exchange rates for all major currencies.

Unworldly?

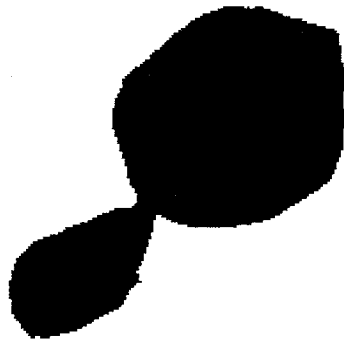


**A mishap in Chester.** One of England's most charming towns is medieval Chester. It is a completely walled city, has its inevitable cathedral and has many Tudor buildings along its largely arcaded main street. We arrived there in late September, 1966, without hotel reservations, and, as there was a convention in town we found the best and the next to best hotels full. We

succeeded with what was probably at that time the third best, a Trust House Forte establishment. Its physical condition left much to be desired.

We had a large room, one of the few with a private bath, and Marion took advantage of the facilities to care for our wash-and-wear traveling things. These were hanging on a line from the back of the door to a bedpost. In our car to go to dinner, I had forgot something and had to return to the room. The bedroom door, a very substantial member, was a bit sticky so I used my shoulder on it. The hinges came out of the frame and I found myself dancing around the hall with a heavy door as a partner clothed in flapping laundry. I reported the situation to the young desk clerk, who called the manager, who sent an octogenarian bellboy to see if he could correct the situation. Of course, I knew that was hopeless. He shortly hobbled down the stairs and said to the manager, "Madam, we need a joiner."

*(Ed. - watch your language, Brad, with that octogenarian stuff.)*



**Chez Pepe.** We enjoyed a delightful though unusual lunch during our stay in Tahiti in 1965. We had a rental car and drove the leisurely 75 miles around the island, stopping for lunch at Pepe's establishment in the village of Tautira. The town is really Endsville where the road just about stops.

Pepe is a fine, barefoot character, probably a mixture of Polynesian and French. He is also a real thief, but a pleasant one, and his food is exceptionally good. We had read about him in some travel magazine.

To get lunch I first had to wake him up in his thatched cottage, and then he woke up someone else, who was completely blind and who cooked us a delicious mess of freshly caught shrimp and some fish. French bread, a bottle of wine, and bananas Pepe hacked off a banana palm with his machete completed the meal. The martinis were fine. I mixed them myself in the kitchen and the old thief, so that he could charge twice as much, insisted they were doubles.

Maybe they were.

**Random thoughts on the French.** I always thought the Italians were the greatest yakkers in the world. The French are their equal.

France is a country of villages, towns and cities with open farm land and occasional woods between. The villagers