

## Back to School

By Robert L. Kilgo, Jr.  
DARLINGTON

About six years ago, I was speaking with two sisters my age. They told me they had gone back to college. They decided they needed to know more about South Carolina history. That lit a bulb in my brain.

My youngest son had majored in history. I always enjoyed talking with him about his classes. Also, I had always been a history nerd. After exploring my options, I enrolled in Francis Marion University as a second-degree student majoring in history. This was the fall of 2017.

I was required to take 10 history courses. There was no time limit on how long it took. I began with two courses that fall. One was the South Carolina History course my friends had taken. With it, I took the History of Mass Media. It covered the period of United States history from 1890s to 1950s. Magazines, newspapers, movies and lastly television were media studied. Both courses were taught by professors with a real interest in the areas.

In the spring, I signed up for Modern Chinese History. When there were not enough students enrolled, I took Medieval European History. This was taught by a new professor at Francis Marion. She had spent a year in France while working on her doctorate. She had a lot of rules. After two classes, I approached her about audio taping her class. This was because she spoke so fast, I could not keep up taking notes. She agreed. Maybe because I was the most senior in the class. She used PowerPoint slides each day, but she did not post them to the class website. I asked if she would, and she agreed it would help everyone. No one had ever confronted her with this request in her five years of teaching.

Next, I took a three-week

class online. In 12 days, I had seven papers to write and send electronically. I survived. The professor liked my work, and I later had him for two additional classes including my senior thesis.

In the fall of 2018, I made a very bad mistake. I decided to take four courses. On Tuesday and Thursday, I had classes from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. It became a blur. On October 25, in a Latin American history course, I had an attack of atrial fibrillation. I had never had this in my 69 years. The fellow students and the professors were all supportive of me. I was out three weeks. I was able to finish three of the courses on time, and the other was continued into the spring semester.

That semester, I took Atlantic World history. This was a study of the interactions between Europe, Africa and the Americas from 1450-1850. The topic is a relatively new one. It had usually been covered in history classes of the individual continents. The merger of them provided a broader perspective on the trade, including slaves, between them. It did open my eyes.

One reason I went back to college was to experience things I had missed as student in the 1960s. The late Spring semester of 2019 was one these new challenges. I took a three-hour class in Contemporary European History. We had one week on campus and then two weeks in Europe. There were 19 students and two professors. It was equally divided between my history class and a political science class on the European Union. We stayed at the European Academy of Otzenhausen. We visited Luxembourg City, Brussels and Strasbourg. Our professors taught some classes and others were taught by professors from across the European Union. This is an experience I will never forget.

In the fall 2019, I took on an-



is much to learn, but I continue to be amazed by the organization, skills and ingenuity of bees. My newly installed bees are currently collecting pollen, storing honey and making more bees! My bee mentor tells me that next June I should be able to reap a sweet reward for caring for my hive—honey! Can't wait to taste some "Sweet Justice Honey."

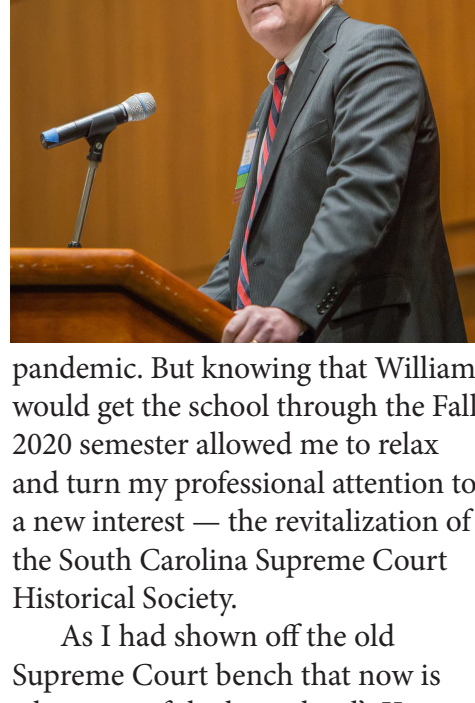
For more information about beekeeping and how to join a local association, fly on over to: scstate-beekeepers.com.

## Sweet Justice Honey

By Pam D. Robinson  
COLUMBIA

When COVID-19 hit and we were trapped at home, many people turned to baking as a new hobby. I already knew how to make a loaf of bread, so I chose to engage in something that I had long wanted to embrace: beekeeping. I was looking for a new hobby that had intellectual stimulation and got me outside. I had read all about the dire circumstances that our bees faced and as a gardener I was fully aware of their pollination skills, but I was not prepared for learning a new language. No, I do not speak "bee," but it turns out that beekeepers have their own vocabulary—brood, nectar flow, Nucs, Varroa mites,....

Monthly virtual meetings of the Mid-state Beekeepers Association and several books later, I am much more conversant in "bee talk." There



is much to learn, but I continue to be amazed by the organization, skills and ingenuity of bees. My newly installed bees are currently collecting pollen, storing honey and making more bees! My bee mentor tells me that next June I should be able to reap a sweet reward for caring for my hive—honey! Can't wait to taste some "Sweet Justice Honey."

For more information about beekeeping and how to join a local association, fly on over to: scstate-beekeepers.com.

## Where are They Now?

By Robert M. Wilcox  
COLUMBIA

When I announced my decision in October 2019 to step aside as dean of the University of South Carolina School of Law, I envisioned a year away from the office, but not an absence enforced by pandemic related closures. As Lisa and I enjoyed some isolated time at our weekend house in the woods during that absence, I was quite glad — although I admit with some sense of guilt — that I had left the law school in the capable hands of my successor William Hubbard.

I had overseen the first five months of the faculty and staff's Herculean effort to offer both a learning community and health safety in a

pandemic. But knowing that William would get the school through the Fall 2020 semester allowed me to relax and turn my professional attention to a new interest — the revitalization of the South Carolina Supreme Court Historical Society.

As I had shown off the old Supreme Court bench that now is a key part of the law school's Karen Williams Courtroom, I realized that, even as a nearly 40-year member of the South Carolina Bar, I knew far too little about the history of our

Court and its predecessors, beyond what has happened during my lifetime. I suspect that I am not alone in that deficiency.

I am convinced the Historical Society is the right instrument to bring greater public understanding of the important role of our court and profession in the history of South Carolina. Working with the Bar Foundation, in which the Society had become housed, I spent a part of Fall 2020 with a small, diverse group of lawyers from around the state, developing a proposed five-year plan to reinvigorate the Society. Today I find myself about to lead the re-emergence of the Society with a great new board of 12 other lawyers, committed to actively preserving and sharing the history of the legal profession and courts in South Carolina.

Also, my absence at the law school has now ended, and I will return for at least a year to full-time teaching in August.

## SLD Pro Bono Award

The recognition focuses on the improvement of the civil legal system and the legal profession through pro bono publico service to those unable to afford the services of an attorney. Nominations are accepted electronically with a deadline of Oct. 1.

## GET INVOLVED

For additional information on the Senior Lawyers Division and to find out how you can become involved, please visit [www.sclbar.org/seniorlawyers](http://www.sclbar.org/seniorlawyers).

## We Want To Hear From You

If you are interested in submitting an article, book recommendation or other materials for the next issue of The Boomer Times, please forward your submission to Mills Gallivan at [mgallivan@gvblawfirm.com](mailto:mgallivan@gvblawfirm.com) or Tara Caine at [tcaine@scbar.org](mailto:tcaine@scbar.org).

## Senior Lawyers Division Executive Council FY2021-2022

**President/Section Delegate**  
A. Sandy Cruickshanks, IV  
A. Cruickshanks Law Office  
Post Office Box 786  
Clinton, SC 29325  
(864) 833-5011  
[lawaciv@att.net](mailto:lawaciv@att.net)

**President-Elect/CLE Chair**  
Greg Ohanesian  
Ohanesian & Ohanesian  
Post Office Box 1373  
Bennettsville, SC 29512  
(843) 479-7193  
[ohanesianfirm@att.net](mailto:ohanesianfirm@att.net)

**Secretary/Membership Chair**  
David D. Cantrell, Jr.  
David D. Cantrell, Jr., LLC  
Post Office Box 955  
Easley, SC 29641  
(864) 859-3317  
[dcantrellatty@aol.com](mailto:dcantrellatty@aol.com)

**Immediate Past President/Section Delegate**  
Hon. Carolyn C. Matthews  
Carolyn Cason Matthews, LLC  
420 Aiken Hunt Circle  
Columbia, SC 29223  
(803) 238-5665  
[carolyncasonmatthews@gmail.com](mailto:carolyncasonmatthews@gmail.com)

**Executive Committee**  
Michael D. Glenn, expires 2023  
Glenn Haigler & Stathakis, LLP  
121 West Benson Street  
Anderson, SC 29624  
(864) 226-1885  
[mglenn@gmhsllaw.com](mailto:mglenn@gmhsllaw.com)

H. Mills Gallivan, Jr., expires 2023  
Gallivan White & Boyd, PAs  
Post Office Box 10589  
Greenville, SC 29603  
(864) 271-9580  
[mgallivan@gvblawfirm.com](mailto:mgallivan@gvblawfirm.com)

**Region II**  
Clarence Davis, expires 2022  
Griffin/Davis  
Post Office Box 999  
Columbia, SC  
(803) 744-0800  
[cdavis@griffinadvailaw.com](mailto:cdavis@griffinadvailaw.com)

T.F. "Biff" Sowell, III, expires 2022  
Sowell & DuRant, LLC  
1325 Park Street, Suite 100  
Columbia, SC 29201  
(803) 722-1100  
[bsowell@sowelldurant.com](mailto:bsowell@sowelldurant.com)

**Region III**  
Robert L. Kilgo, Jr., expires 2023  
Post Office Box 583  
Darlington, SC 29540  
(843) 250-7123  
[robertkilgo@att.net](mailto:robertkilgo@att.net)

Barbara P. Ohanesian, expires 2023  
Ohanesian & Ohanesian  
Post Office Box 1373  
Bennettsville, SC 29512  
(843) 479-7193  
[ohanesianfirm@att.net](mailto:ohanesianfirm@att.net)

**Region IV**  
Ralp E. "Ned" Tupper, expires 2022  
Tupper, Grimsley, Dean & Canaday, PA  
Post Office Box 2055  
Beaufort, SC 29901  
(843) 524-1116  
[nedtupper@tdcpa.com](mailto:nedtupper@tdcpa.com)

Dan M. David, expires 2022  
Dan M. David Attorney at Law,  
147 Wappoo Creek Drive, Ste. 101  
Charleston, SC 29412  
(843) 571-1893  
[dan@charlestonlegal.com](mailto:dan@charlestonlegal.com)

**At-Large**  
Hon. Catherine H. Kennedy, expires 2022  
Turner Padgett & Laney, PA  
1901 Main Street, 17th Floor  
Columbia, SC 29202  
(803) 254-2200, Ext. 4367  
[ckennedy@turnerpadgett.com](mailto:ckennedy@turnerpadgett.com)

**OUT-OF-STATE REPRESENTATIVE**  
Hon. Neal W. Dickert, expires 2022  
Dickert Mediation, LLC  
Post Office Box 3070  
Augusta, GA 30914  
(706) 384-2557  
[neal@dickertmediation.com](mailto:neal@dickertmediation.com)

**LAW SCHOOL REPRESENTATIVE**  
Gerald M. Finkel, expires 2023  
Finkel Law Firm LLC  
4000 Faber Place Drive, Suite 450  
N. Charleston, SC 29405  
(843) 577-5460  
[jfinkel@finkelaw.com](mailto:jfinkel@finkelaw.com)

**LAW SCHOOL REPRESENTATIVE/PRO BONO CMT. CHAIR**  
Pamela D. Robinson, expires 2023  
USC School of Law  
1525 Senate Street  
Columbia, SC 29208  
(803) 777-3405  
[pamrinspd@law.sc.edu](mailto:pamrinspd@law.sc.edu)

**Board of Governors Rep.**  
John O. McDougall, expires 2023  
McDougall Self Currence & McLeod, LLP  
Post Office Box 90860  
Columbia, SC 29290  
(803) 776-3130  
[jom@mscmlaw.com](mailto:jom@mscmlaw.com)

**COMMITTEES**  
Lawyer Assistance Program  
M. Malissa Burnette  
Burnette Shutt & McDaniel, PA  
Post Office Box 1929  
Columbia, SC 29202  
(803) 850-0912  
[mburnette@burnetteshutt.law](mailto:mburnette@burnetteshutt.law)

**Publications**  
Donald B. Wildman  
Johnson Smith Hibbard & Wildman, LLP  
Post Office Drawer 5587  
Spartanburg, SC 29304  
(864) 582-8121  
[dwildman@jshwlaw.com](mailto:dwildman@jshwlaw.com)

**Special Projects**  
Nancy S. Layman  
6519 Olde Knight Pkwy.  
Columbia, SC 29209  
(803) 776-6999  
[nancy.layman@att.net](mailto:nancy.layman@att.net)

**SENIOR WELLNESS**  
John H. "Jack" Muench  
2126 Damon Drive  
Florence, SC 29505  
(843) 610-0500  
[jhm6952@gmail.com](mailto:jhm6952@gmail.com)

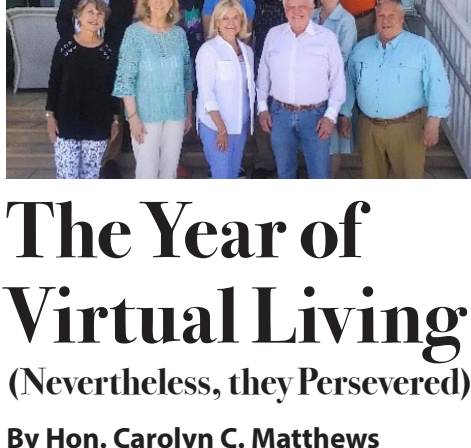


other challenge. Through Francis Marion, I interned for the Gullah-Geechee National Historical Corridor Commission and the National Park Service. They needed someone to research the enslaved population at the Charles Pinckney Historical Site near Mount Pleasant. The Park Service was updating and renovating the materials presented at the site. From September 2019-March 2020, I visited museums, archives, other Park Service sites and spent many hours on the computer. I finished my work just as the pandemic arrived. Both groups have appreciated the work. I used talents I learned at Francis Marion to do the project.

In March 2019, I was inducted into Phi Alpha Theta, the national history honor society. In December 2019, the school sent seven students to the national conference in San Antonio. We read our history research papers to the groups in attendance from all over the United States. Every day, my wife and I were able to walk from our hotel past The Alamo and the Riverwalk.

My last class was my senior thesis. I researched and wrote on the development of Mexican property rights from the indigenous peoples to 2000s. The emphasis within it was subsoil rights. It required research of English, Mexican and American resources. This paper was written during the first months of the pandemic when we could not go on campus except the library. Its staff was so supportive of me. I would check out about 12 books at a time. Operating the microfilm took some help as well. They were always there to help. The experience helps me in my research on other topics.

On May 9, 2020, I received my diploma, Bachelor of Arts in History. In September 2020, I walked across the stage at graduation with my fellow history students. My two closest friends are now in graduate school. One is at Florida State and the other Nebraska. They are much younger than I am, but we have the bond created at Francis Marion University.



## The Year of Virtual Living (Nevertheless, they Persevered)

By Hon. Carolyn C. Matthews  
COLUMBIA

On March 14, 2020, the SC Bar Senior Lawyers Division held its Annual Retreat in Charleston. (The Senior Lawyers Division of the SC Bar is comprised of close to 5,500 lawyers who have reached the magical age of 60.) We were beginning to hear of increasing cases of "Coronavirus," and everything we did at that Retreat: meetings, a reception, a dinner in a restaurant, was coupled with anxiety about the news reports regarding this unknown predator.

That next day, on March 15, 2020, our world shifted as the governor declared a State of Emergency, and we began to absorb the reality that the days of face-to-face meetings, dining out and visiting family and friends were gone.

The "new reality" required cosmic shifts in our individual and collective behaviors: we held our quarterly meetings via Zoom, cancelled the 2020 "Nifty Fifty" luncheon, cancelled the Fall Symposium, and focused on preserving our lives, our families, and our law practices while trying to maintain our mental health. What had seemed ordinary—visiting our children, hugging our friends, going into a grocery store, worship services—became forbidden and fraught with danger. Real people suffered and many died from COVID-19. Restrictions increased as we dealt with the reality of masks and social distancing.

The SC Bar staff, particularly Tara Caine, kept us grounded and focused as we persevered in fulfilling our goals, including presenting a CLE Seminar for the first ever SC Bar Virtual Convention in January 2021. As chair of the Conventions Committee, I am so proud of President Roy Laney, Marley Douglas and Terry Burnett for their leadership in making the 2021 Convention a tremendous success in completely uncharted territory! SC Senior Lawyers President-elect Sandy Cruickshanks created and conducted an outstanding Senior Lawyers Seminar.

And then came the vaccine! Our competitive natures made seniors spend hours obtaining early appointments for ourselves, family and friends and rejoice at the new freedom the vaccine provided.

We continued our mission. Pam Robinson conducted virtual "Friday Blitz" and inspired us to become more involved in pro bono activities. Judge Mark Hayes proceeded with the annual Law Day essay contest.

We moved the Division Annual Retreat to April 29-May 2, 2021, and returned to Charleston, all fully vaccinated!

The "Nifty Fifty" luncheon honoring SC Bar members who were admitted to the Bar in 1970 and 1971 will be held at Senate's End in Columbia on September 17, 2021.

For the Senior Lawyers Division of the SC Bar, the year came full circle. We hugged, laughed, we dined and drank together, and we celebrated life together! Some of us have reduced our hours at the office; some are partly retired; some are exploring new practice areas and opportunities (Bobby Kilgo just got a new degree in history!) but all are contributing to the legal profession, to their communities, and their families and friends.

Thank you all for the opportunity to serve as your president during this tumultuous year. To quote Dickens: "It was the best of times; it was the worst of times." Cheers to all of you! 🍷

# Rhine River Tour

By Charles E. Hill  
COLUMBIA

Perhaps no river in Europe is as fabled and historic as the Rhine. Flowing north from its source in the Swiss Alps, it borders Austria, Germany and France before dividing in the Netherlands and emptying into the North Sea. It has been an important trade route since the days of the Roman Empire. Because of its scenery and its significance, it is a favorite of tourists.

In July 2019, Frances and I, along with friends Don and Susan from Greenville, enjoyed Tauck's "Rhine Enchantment" tour. The trip began with three days in and around Milan and Lake Como. Then a several hour train ride, with tunnels through the Alps, brought us to Basel, at the intersection of Switzerland, France and Germany. There we boarded the MS Inspire for six days on the Rhine. Excursions included Zurich, Colmar, Riquevihar, Heidelberg, Rudesheim, and Dusseldorf, ending in Amsterdam.

Just a few months later, we were in the throes of the COVID-19 pandemic. It was eerie to see televised scenes from the places we had just visited, then jammed with tourists, and now virtually abandoned. It also brought home the importance of tourism to the European economy, which was devastated from shutdowns caused by the virus.

Thankfully we had a great time on our trip. Here are some highlights:

## The Duomo

This massive cathedral, the third largest in Europe, is the centerpiece of Milan. Built to replace a previous church on the site, which dated to the time of the Romans, construction began in 1386 and continued until 1810, with final touches added in 1965. It has housed a continuous line of local archbishops since A.D. 51. Stain glass windows date from 1470 to the 1980s.

The nave is over 500 feet long. Near the apse is a grotesque 16th century statue of St. Bartholomew, an apostle and first-century martyr reportedly skinned alive by the Romans. The flayed man wears his skin like a robe. Carved by a student of Leonardo da Vinci, the artist learned human anatomy by dissection, though forbidden by the church at the time. The muscles and blood vessels of the legs are evident. In the back, the saint holds his own head in his hands.

In another area near the front, there is a shrine featuring portraits of two members of the Medici family. In the 15th and 16th centuries, the Medici vied with other families, the Visconti, Sforza and Borgia, for power and influence. One way to achieve this was to have family members elected as the pope. The House of Medici produced several popes, including Leo X and Clement VII, a fact recognized by the Vatican.

As our guide said, the only thing better than having a pope in the family was to have a saint! A skeptic might conclude that money, power and prestige may hold more sway over such appointments than piety.

The exterior of this Gothic structure is constructed entirely of marble. There are more than 3,000 statues, most on the interior. A "fast track" elevator ride to the roof (at a cost of 25 Euros) allows a closer look at the statuary and gargoyles, as well as spectacular views of the city.

Women visitors to the cathedral are required to cover their shoulders and knees. To comply, some brought tee shirts which they slipped over their tops. Others had cheap plastic cover-ups that looked like rain-day ponchos. These were obviously aimed at minimal compliance with the rule, and not out of reverence. This is a church, a holy place, and should be respected as such.

## "The Last Supper"

Leonardo da Vinci's iconic fresco occupies an entire wall in a room of the Church of Santa Maria delle Grazie in Milan. In an effort to preserve this painting, completed in 1498, access is strictly controlled, and time in the room is limited to 15 minutes.

The scene captures the moment when Jesus told his disciples that one of them would betray him. The body language and faces of the men show their response to the news—shock, grief, and in Judas' case, guilt. The guide explained that da Vinci's intent was to portray them as real people, with authentic expressions, and not as glorified icons. Thus, for example, there is no halo over Jesus' head, as in some religious art.

The painting is precisely proportioned on the wall, so that viewing it from the opposite end of the room gives a three-dimensional perspective. This fragile work has been restored so many times that it is doubtful how much of the original remains. In one iteration, Jesus' mouth was closed; the most recent restoration, completed in 1999, has his mouth open.

## Foed

The Italians like to eat, and they have ideas about how this should be done. For example, the evening meal should be consumed late, preferably around 9 p.m. On our first day in Milan, after a long and uncomfortable airplane ride, we were hungry and ready to eat at 6 p.m. local time, though midnight, our body time. So, we asked the liveried concierge at our elegant hotel, the Principe di Savoia, for a recommendation for dinner. Incredulously, he inquired, "At this hour?"

Another seeming tradition is a multi-course meal, consumed at a leisurely place over several hours.

handout listed 17 castles along this stretch. One dated back to the year 1000; others to the 1200 and 1300's. Some had been restored; some were converted to hotels or museums; others were in ruin. While these fortifications had obvious defensive purposes, a principal reason for their existence was to collect taxes from boats passing by on the river. "It's the economy, stupid." How these enormous structures, built on steep slopes, could have been constructed without modern mechanized equipment is just mind boggling.

We experienced this at a lunch (?) on Comacina Island in Lake Como, the picturesque and trendy home of such celebrities as George Clooney. There were six courses, to wit: (1) half tomato topped with lemon slice; (2) bowls of vegetables: beets, cauliflower, baked onion, zucchini, sautéed celery, sweet peppers, fava beans and carrots; (3) ham and smoked beef; (4) salmon trout; (5) fried chicken garnished with lemon slice and with side of lettuce smeared with olive oil; (5a) chunk of parmesan carved at the table from a cheese wheel; (6) home-made ice cream with banana liqueur and garnish of orange slices. All accompanied by endless servings of wine. Then, the finale: a dramatic fire ritual presented by the restaurant owner, climaxed by the service of brandy-infused coffee, said to be required to break the curse cast upon the island by the Bishop of Como in 1169.

**War**  
As we learned from previous trips through the Netherlands, Belgium, Austria, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia, the topic of World War II is never far from the surface in Europe. Some of our guides, though now generations removed, were possibly descendants of Italians and Germans who were America's enemies in that conflict. They referred to those times as "troublesome." Indeed.

As a main economic and industrial center, Milan was subjected to heavy bombing, first by the Royal Air Force and later by the U.S. Army Air Force. Whether by design or not, the damage to the Duomo was not extensive. Atop the tallest spire stands a gleaming, gold-plated statue of Mary, referred to as the Gold Madonna. It would have been an easy target; our guide said someone climbed to the top to drape the statue with black cloth. Bombers could use cathedrals as a point of reference when attacking a city, but the buildings themselves were of little strategic value.

Other historic buildings, just steps away from the Duomo, were not spared. The vast, glass-covered Vittorio Emanuele Galleria shopping center (1877), and the famed la Scala opera house (1778), were heavily damaged, though now completely restored. The building housing The Last Supper was also hit, but miraculously the wall on which the fresco is painted remained standing.

Milan's massive Centrale Railway Station, where we boarded the train to Basel, stands as a reminder of the influence of the dictator Mussolini. Il Duce wanted the building, completed in 1931, to illustrate the power of the Fascist regime.

The famed German university city of Heidelberg also escaped Allied bombing. Our guide attributed this good fortune, strangely enough, to Mark Twain. Twain spent several months in Heidelberg in 1878 and recounted his adventures in A Tramp Abroad. The guide claimed that an American general had a fondness for Heidelberg based on Twain's book and ordered that the city be spared. While there are some connections between the city and Twain—you can take a "In the footsteps of Mark Twain" tour—I find nothing in brief research to support this story. Instead, according to Wikipedia, Heidelberg was neither an industrial center nor a transportation hub, and thus was not a target of opportunity. Regardless, we can rejoice that this beautiful city retains its old-world charm, and we enjoyed our visit to the castle and the town.

Alsace is an agriculturally rich, wine-producing region in the Rhine Valley west of the river. Here the Rhine forms the boundary between France and Germany, and two countries were a pawn between the two countries during a century of war: to Germany after its victory in the Franco-Prussian war in 1871; to France at the end of World War I by virtue of French occupation and the subsequent Treaty of Versailles in 1919; annexed by Germany in 1940 and occupied throughout World War II; and back to France after the war, where it remains.

Alsace also lacked military significance and apparently was not the scene of extensive fighting in World War II. Thus, villages from medieval times along the historic Alsace Wine Road retain their charm. We visited the picturesque towns of Colmar and Riquevihar. Though they escaped damage in the war, they are now susceptible to destruction by the hordes of tourists who invade their narrow streets each year.

As we passed through cities and towns in this area, the guides made it a point to announce a specific date in history significant to each: the day of their liberation from German occupation.

**Castles**  
A highlight of this trip was to lounge on the ship's sun deck and observe the amazing collection of castles along the Middle Rhine gorge, from approximately Rudesheim to Lenz. Our tour

handout listed 17 castles along this stretch. One dated back to the year 1000; others to the 1200 and 1300's. Some had been restored; some were converted to hotels or museums; others were in ruin. While these fortifications had obvious defensive purposes, a principal reason for their existence was to collect taxes from boats passing by on the river. "It's the economy, stupid." How these enormous structures, built on steep slopes, could have been constructed without modern mechanized equipment is just mind boggling.

**Dusseldorf**  
Toward the end of the tour, we were getting a little weary. Another day, another town, another tour. Who ever heard of this place? And it's raining. Maybe we should stay on the boat and chill. But Dusseldorf turned out to be a pleasant surprise! The bustling city features "the world's longest bar," 260 venues spread around a half-mile square of the Old City. It was jammed with people enjoying the food and spirits, and these seemed to be mostly locals, not other tour groups.

We took the "City and Culinary Tour" with our affable guide, James. There were several stops along the way for pastries and goodies, culminating at a beer hall where James demonstrated how to prepare a solier—a hard-boiled egg pre-soaked in brine. You peel the egg, cut it in half, and remove the yolk. Into the white, you drop a dollop of mustard (Dusseldorfer Lowensenfer), some malt vinegar, salt and pepper, and then reinvert the yolk. Voila—an instant deviled egg!

**Amsterdam**  
When our boat came to a halt in the harbor, it was the seventh similar cruise ship docked there, and we had to walk through the lobby of two others to get ashore. Also nearby was the mega cruise ship, the Holland American New Standam, with a capacity of 2650. All of them seemed to be in town.

We stayed an extra day in Amsterdam and used the time to visit the Van Gogh museum. Several things I learned: (1) Van Gogh is famous for his self-portraits, some 43 of them. This is not so much because he was obsessed by his own image, but because he couldn't afford to hire models. (2) He produced an amazing amount of work, including 860 oil paintings, most in the last two years of his life. (3) Although he was clearly mentally disturbed—everyone knows he cut off his own ear and ultimately committed suicide—the museum guide was adamant that his artistic brilliance was in spite of, and not related to, his illness. (4) I don't understand anything about art, but I liked the pictures.

A few other notes:

- Our boat passed through 11 locks to accommodate the difference in altitude between Basel (856 feet above sea level) and Amsterdam (sea level 0). The narrow locks dictate the design of these river boats, which are long and skinny.

- Arriving in Basel via Switzerland, our cellphones beeped, "Welcome to France!" A short bus ride from the train station to the ship, and "Welcome to Germany!"

- Stephon, our genial guide through Alsace, assured us that the Rhine