

Colby graduate travels to 14 countries as part of academic studies

By BRIAN BARNETT

Kansas State University

Editor's note: Brian Barnett is a senior at Kansas State University, majoring in French/Spanish/International Studies. He recently returned from a 10-month stay in Europe, spending an academic school year at the Université de Franche Comté in Besançon France. During this time, he visited fourteen countries. Brian's parents are Charles and Rylinda Barnett of Colby. In the second of a continuing series that started in the Wednesday, Aug. 29 edition, Barnett will review highlights in Hungary, Romania and Austria. In the next part of the series, Italy and the Vatican will be showcased.

Hungary

In October, I took a week and a half trip to Hungary, Romania, and Austria. I was traveling with three American females (which I would never do again). We took the Orient Express (made famous from the Agatha Christie novel) to Budapest, the capital of Hungary. This marvelous city is divided by the Danube River into Buda (old city) and Pest (modern/industrial). Most of what remains of medieval Budapest is in Castle Hill which contains a labyrinth full of eerie music and lighting. The Chain Bridge (1849) is the historical bridge that connects Buda and Pest. There, automobiles as well as pedestrians can cross.

The entrance to the cross walk is guarded by the famous tongueless lions. Another famous Budapest activity is to go to the thermal baths. Some bathhouses require bathing suits and others do not. The one I went to did.

You go to relax, soak in heated water, swim, have a mud bath or a massage.

Romania

We took a night train to Brasov, Ro-



Dracula's castle in Romania.

mania. Brasov is the starting point to visit Dracula's Castle on Halloween, but it was a disappointment. There were no bats, fog, and the castle had a sun deck. There actually was a real Dracula, Vlad Tepes, but he never sucked blood. The legend evolved over time and then Bram Stoker made it a part of literary history. We went to the ski resort town of Sinai and took a bumpy cable car ride to one of the highest peaks in Romania.

Austria

After Romania, we went to Vienna, Austria or Wien as they say there in German. Austria is known where Western Europe meets Eastern Europe. Vienna is a town known for its musi-

cal history. I went to Schonbrunn Castle. This 1,440 room castle is where Mozart played his first royal concert at the age of six. Beethoven, Schubert, Brahms, and Schonberg are buried in Vienna. The famous Lipizzaner stallions put on a show at the famous Spanish Riding School, but I was not able to buy a ticket because performances are sold out months in advance.

Final Rank Out of 10: Hungary: 9 — Budapest was one of my favorite cities in Europe. The monuments, cheap food and lodging, and the people all made it great. Go visit!

Romania: 6 — Romania is a poor country (\$1=24,000 lei) with a lot of tourist potential. The Carpathian Mountains in fall are breathtaking. Did not enjoy the constant stares of people as I was using my camcorder.

Austria: 7.5 — Very clean country. Lots of mountain tourism. Vienna enjoyable place to visit but not as cheap as Budapest and Romania. Apple strudel definitely a plus.

Slovenia and Croatia

Two European countries that no one talks about but should be Slovenia and Croatia. These two countries as well as Bosnia-Herzegovina, Yugoslavia, and Macedonia made up the former Yugoslavia.

Many people asked me, "Why do you want to go there? It is too dangerous." But that is not true. While I was there, I did not see any signs of war or felt any danger. In fact, Croatia along with France, were my favorite countries. Slovenia is a little country nestled between Italy and Austria. I visited Ljubljana, (Lube-e-ya-na) the capital. It has only 270,000 people making it one of the smallest capital cities in Europe.

The Ljubljana castle is perched above the town and from the tower, one

has a view of the old town and the snow capped peaks of the Julian Alps. I also took a day trip to Bled, which might be the most picturesque town that I saw in Europe. Imagine a crystal clear lake with a little island with a church on it, and to get to the island, one can take a gondola (like Venice). On the cliffs above the lake is a castle and all this is surrounded by the Alps.

Croatia or Hrvatska as they say there is a magnificent place.

I visited Split home to NBA player Tony Kukoc and Wimbledon champion Goran Ivanisevic. This beach town is on the Adriatic Sea. In Split, there is a spot where people can swim year-round because the water is shallow and is heated by the sun.

Split was also the retirement palace of the roman emperor Diocletian (245-313 AD) and today the palace walls are still standing and surround the old town. From Split, I took a ferry to one of Croatia's many islands.

Once I got to the island of Brac, I took the most scenic bus ride to Bol. This island has salt and pepper colored mountains, olive trees, big wooly sheep, etc. (very Mediterranean). Bol is a resort town but there was no one there at this time of year.

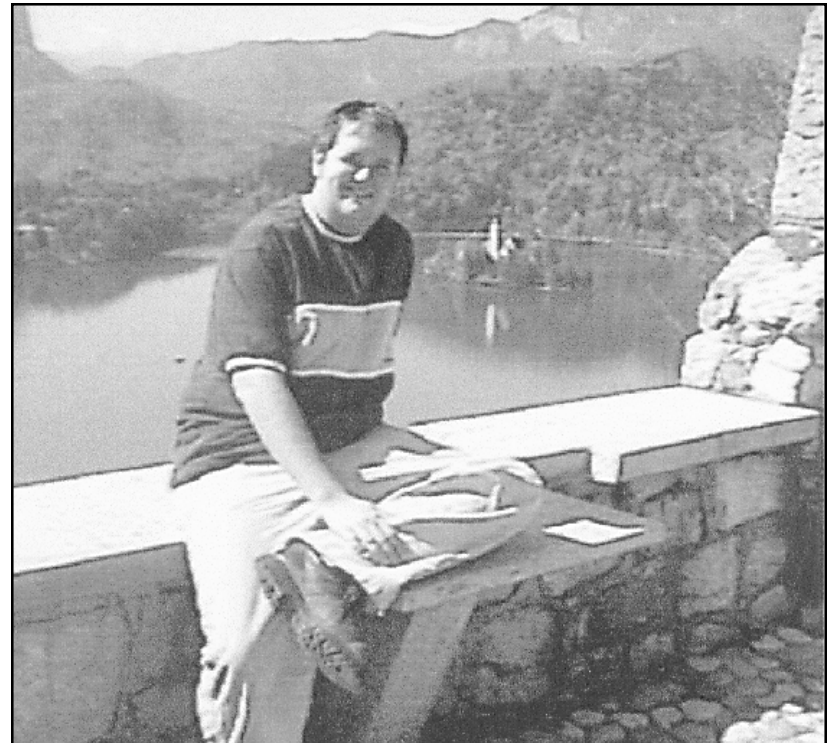
The water was a little cold, but it was April and it was the cleanest and clearest water I saw in Europe. Too bad I was only there for one day.

Final Rank Out of 10 — Slovenia: 9 Clean and comfortable place to visit. Bled is a must! Not many tourists but a lot to see.

Croatia: 9.5 — Terrific place! Could have spent a whole vacation in this area. People told me Dubrovnik is even better, but I did not have time to go. Zagreb, the capital is worth a couple days. No problems with the war. It is safe.



ABOVE: Thermal bathhouse in Hungary offers relaxation for tourists and locals alike. BELOW: Brian Barnett looked out over the lake in the town of Bled. The lake is surrounded by a castle and the Alps.



Attorney general warns consumers to be wary of foreign lottery scams

Dear Attorney General Stovall:

My grandmother told me about a phone call she received last week where a man called and identified himself as a representative with the United States Customs Service. He said my grandmother had won a Canadian sweepstakes and was, therefore, entitled to a huge sum of money. He told her that in order to receive the winnings she needed to wire him a \$1,500 "duty-fee." Fortunately, my grandmother refused, and she began to ask him all sorts of questions regarding his position with the service and the payment amount. The caller became irritated and told her she would be denied her money if she did not comply with his rules, so she hung up on him. Attorney



Carla J. Stovall

• From the Attorney General

General Stovall, was this call a scam?

Dear Kansas Consumer:

This call was indeed part of a scam, and my office has received information from other states that their consumers have been called by similar groups. If your grandmother had agreed to send the "representative" the money he requested, she would probably never hear from him again, and most likely would never see her "winnings."

There is a slight chance he may have

called again saying he needed more money to secure the "winnings," but since the initial amount he asked for was so large he probably would have just moved on to his next potential victim.

Fraudulent telemarketers can get a consumer's phone number from a phone directory, mailing list, or

"sucker list" which is a directory of consumers who have already lost money to illegal prize promotions and merchandise sales.

Telemarketers such as these employ high-pressure tactics and are not afraid of using them on older people or anyone who seems susceptible to falling for their scheme.

Consumers must remember they do not need to pay for something they have won.

The person who called your grandmother violated the Kansas Consumer Protection Act by requesting payment without giving her written notice of the

amount she must pay to receive the prize. Further, if your grandmother is 60 years of age or older, the caller could be subject to an enhanced civil penalty of an additional \$10,000. Your grandmother was smart to ask this man questions.

When telemarketers call, consumers have a right to ask questions about the product or service involved.

They should ask for information to be mailed to them, and a telemarketer's insistence on immediate payment should raise a red-flag in the consumer's mind — this is a good sign that a fraud might very well be in-

olved. Remember the well-known saying: if something sounds too good to be true, it probably is.

Editor's note: Attorney General Carla J. Stovall offers this public service to help people avoid becoming victims of consumer fraud. Although some of the details have been changed, the cases appearing in this column are based on actual complaints. For information or to file a complaint, write Attorney General Carla J. Stovall, Consumer Protection Division, 120 S.W. 10th, 2nd Floor, Topeka, Kansas 66612, or call the toll-free Consumer Hotline, 1-800-432-2310.

Only \$300,000 needed to finish 'Ad Astra' statue

SALINA (AP) — The Kansas state motto, "Ad Astra Per Aspera," means: "To the stars through difficulties."

Sculptor Richard Bergen has been through the difficulties. But soon, he said, the Kansa Indian in his "Ad Astra" sculpture will take aim at the sky over the Capitol.

Bergen needs to raise \$1 million to pay for installing the sculpture atop the Capitol dome. He has raised \$700,000, he said, and is traveling the state trying to raise interest in the project.

He will spend 10 days at the Kansas State Fair in Hutchinson in a booth with a 9-foot replica of "Ad Astra," signing autographed posters of the sculpture. He will also answer questions and take donations.

From there, he will go to Phillipsburg and then to Wichita.

"This is a state project that's not being paid for with tax money," Bergen said. "The money comes from interested citizens."

It has been 12 years since Bergen won a contest to place his statue, depicting a Kansa warrior with drawn

bow and arrow pointing toward the North Star, atop the dome.

The goal was to have it in place by 1991. Then it was pushed back to July 4, 2000 — but that date passed, too.

When finished, the bronze sculpture will be 20 feet tall from the tip of its moccasined toes to the top of its arrow.

Bergen said the wax sculpture has been completed and is waiting to be cast in bronze. He said it would take about three months to finish, once he gets the money.

"When the law was first written for this sculpture, it was written so that there would be a capital campaign to raise the funds," Bergen said. "That meant money would come from private sources. The legislators didn't have the money in hand.

"Never in my wildest dreams did I think I'd have to raise that money."

But, Bergen said, he has never thought of quitting.

"When I start something, I usually finish by hook or by crook," he said. "I got started, and I am not going to walk away."

New plant species found in area where plans are to build

LAWRENCE (AP) — Two plant species recently discovered at the Baker Wetlands might be new to science.

But unless they're considered threatened or endangered, the Missouri caric-sedge and the Shinners caric-sedge could have little impact on the state's plan to build a highway through the area southeast of Lawrence.

"Certainly any information like that we would incorporate and see what it means in terms of the analysis of the wetlands," said Virgil Brack, whose environmental firm is working with the Kansas Department of Transportation on the South Lawrence Trafficway project.

"If it was neither listed by federal or the state as being threatened or endan-

gered, it wouldn't have any more impact than any other plant," said Brack, principal scientist with Cincinnati-based Environmental Solutions and Innovations.

The new sedges, closely related to cattails, were previously thought to belong to established species. They were identified this summer by researchers Paul Rothrock of Taylor University in Upland, Ind., and Tony Reznicek of the University of Michigan.

Caleb Morse, collection manager at the R.L. McGregor Herbarium of the University of Kansas, said the discovery is another sign of what the wetlands has to offer researchers — and another reason why the eastern third of the South Lawrence Trafficway shouldn't be built there.

Alltell

0412

100% GDN

4 x 10