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Light Scholars Return

The same day that the upperclassman yawned his way back to classes and the butterfly-stomached freshman faced his first day of college, Light scholars from Germany and France were just arriving in Kalamazoo. The four who studied in Colombia returned two weeks earlier.

For all three groups, greetings of "Mom" and "Dad" may have brought back memories of their foster parents in Europe and South America. The students in Germany and Colombia stayed with families the entire time, while those in France lived one month in a dorm and one month with a family. All commented on what a wonderful experience it had been sharing family life and wine.

At the University of Bonn, intensive language training as well as German culture and history were taught, and at the University of Caen the same type of instruction was given. However, the University of the Andes in Bogota, Colombia gave a somewhat different course. The four Kalamazoo College students were "guinea pigs" for an experimental summer school (though it would be winter school in Bogota.) They were taught Spanish, literature, anthropology, and economics. The only class given in English was economics with a Harvard-educated instructor.

However, history and language weren't the only subjects taught to the Light scholars. For instance, several became well versed on the art of changing the tire on a 1949 Mercedes-Benz, or clinging to a mule-minded horse, or bargaining for the return money on pop bottles to get enough money for the next meal.

The infamous Mercedes-Benz belonged to five adventurers, Tom Warke, Jon Lindberg, Wendel Peterson, Ron Gates, and Lynn Verhay, from the group who studied in Germany. They traveled four thousand miles with an average of one flat tire per eight hundred miles—in other words, five flats, almost always located in the countryside—verdant, beautiful, and kilometers from the nearest Mercedes-Benz tire. Between tire changings, the group arrived at the Communist Youth Festival in Vienna, Austria. Since they were not part of the official United States delegation, they were not allowed to attend the political discussions. However, Lynn Verhay of the group noted that just the parade and the fact that communist peoples had put on such an enthusiastic display must have been effective as subtle propaganda to the crowds of Viennese people who watched. He also stressed the fact that the Youth Festival is potentially dangerous in that thousands of peasants who are exposed to no other belief are further molded by communism at these mass meetings.

Two other students, Carol Dennis and John Howell had the unique experience of visiting Istanbul, Turkey. They met a man who was traveling to a job in Turkey and offered to take them on the trip, the itinerary of which included Yugoslavia and Greece. Especially interesting was Yugoslavia where communist youth groups were building roads much as the Autobahns of Germany were built under Hitler.

Luck was once again with them when they reached Istanbul for they met a university student majoring in English literature who offered to be their guide. They stayed there three days seeing such things as the University of Istanbul and the beautiful Mosque of the Blue Mosais.

On the return train trip, Carol and John met two men who, having learned that *The New Class* by Djilas was widely read in the United States, tried to refute the fact that the author was in prison because he had written the book. The men claimed the reason was that Djilas had tried to undermine the government. Their point was that freedom of speech is denied no one in Yugoslavia.

In the three weeks after classes were complete, Ann Wagner, Joan Robinson, and Lynne Emmons, University of Caen students, motorbiked to Southern France and Germany, staying in youth hostels on the way. Having nearly lost the motor from one of the bikes, they decided to hitch-hike through part of Germany and then take a train to Paris. Especially if one wears an American flag attached to his knapsack, getting rides is relatively simple in Europe.

In a casserole, in soup, fried, baked—any way you can imagine, the scholars at the University of the Andes became indoctrinated to BANANAS. But banana-eating was almost the only thing totally expectable in Bogota living. Contrary to American thought, says Judy Dekema, Columbians do not wear skins (It's too cold) and swing from tree house to tree hut. They are civilized in almost every way. Large, modern buildings, outstanding entertainment such as the Robert Wagner chorale and the Ballet Russe are only a few signs of Columbian prosperity.

While the Bogota group was enjoying such things as a trip to an emerald mine, the European travelers were seeing an exciting climax to their trip. As a symbol of allied friendship and unity, President Eisenhower was visiting Europe where the students saw him overwhelmed with welcome both in Paris and Bonn. Ike's "Je vous aime, tous" must have expressed the feelings of all the Light travelers toward the Europeans and South Americans.