



CURVE BALLS on a CURVED ROAD

By Ruth (Vahsholtz) Richter



Sometimes life throws us an unexpected curve. Sometimes it turns out the better choice! That's what happened in July when we were making final commitments for our **2016 Vahsholtz Family Reunion in Idaho!**

It turned out we couldn't get Camp Perkins guaranteed for *any* weekend during the summer of 2016! After a wee bit of panic, my level-headed husband suggested we take a look at the brand new **River Canyon Retreat Center** (pictured above) that just opened in Garden Valley!

We were amazed at how the owners had turned old, unused buildings into very modern, beautiful accommodations with a great variety of dorm-type sleep-

ing facilities, a beautiful kitchen/dining area, a full-size gym for all kinds of sports which includes a rock climbing wall and a stage (for family talent to be shared?). There are also RV hookups, it's handicap accessible, the facility is fully air conditioned, there's an above-ground pool, a pond stocked with fish, a mini-zip line and a lovely expanse of lawn for just sitting and enjoying the view of the nearby mountains in this beautiful valley. There's also a game room with pool table and foosball.

So, a down payment to hold the facility for our group has been made. We have the whole facility for three nights, **Thursday, July 14th, Friday and Saturday, leaving Sunday Morning, July**

17th. You can have a look at the facility and read all the details at: **www.rcretreat.com** Please remember most rooms, like Camp Perkins, are dormitory style, so we'll probably work out some sort of "Men's" and "Women's" accommodations. It'll be like going back to summer camp, university days, or visiting relatives in the "good ol' days." See Geri's article on page five. This is a family gathering!

Assuming the lowest likely number of 30 attendees at the reunion, we've estimated the facility cost per person at **\$160 per adult and \$80 per child for all three days!** We're asking you to send a non-refundable deposit of *half* your family's cost, **\$80 per adult; \$40**



Another view of the River Canyon Retreat Center located in beautiful Garden Valley, in the Boise National Forest on the banks of the Payette River. Below, a map showing the new location—closer to Boise.



per child, by January 30th, 2016. That will hold your place (and help get your most suitable accommodations—let us know if you're a large group or have special needs). Everybody pays the same rate, including RVs, and that includes one dinner and light breakfasts each morning. We hope far more than 30 will be attending, and if so, the cost to each of us will go down. If you miss the January 30th deadline, the price for a later decision will require an increase deposit of **\$100 per adult and \$50 per child**, reducing everyone else's cost! Send check and room preference to:

Ruth Richter
PO Box 677
Garden Valley, ID 83622

What are the benefits of this move to Garden Valley as opposed to Stanley, Idaho? One is closer proximity to the airport in Boise for anybody who might be flying, and that same closeness to an interesting city might be of interest to

some. In Garden Valley, outdoor activities such as hiking, white water rafting and kayaking, biking, fishing, soaking in hot springs, tubing on one of the rivers, as well as fun and interesting shopping opportunities are literally on the doorstep of the retreat center. We also have a marvelous outdoor theater with nightly plays of really outstanding quality. A variety of restaurants, bars, food stands, outdoor market are also readily available within a short drive. We will surely also include some live interviews on the local all-volunteer radio station giving you the opportunity to share with locals what you think of the offerings in the Valley. We plan to include an evening **Family Talent Show**, so hone your musical skills, poetry, comedy skit,

pantomime, or other routine!

This may be the only **Vahsholtz Family Reunion** held in Idaho, even though there are a sizable number of us who live in the Northwest. We hope you will seriously consider making this a real family vacation to a part of the U.S. that many of you have probably never visited.

In the next newsletter, we'll include lots more information about things you can do for your *whole* vacation here and going, and coming as well. Meanwhile, email ruthrichter2@gmail.com at any time with your questions and concerns.

It does get hot in Idaho in July, but those of you coming from the Midwest are going to be amazed about the daily variance of temperature here. From 50s overnight to 95 during the day ... and what a difference that can make.

Looking forward to seeing lots of you in beautiful Garden Valley! ■

*Look deep into nature,
and then you will
understand everything
better.*

Albert Einstein

Meet Your Cousin **ZACH**

By Zachary Domach



*That's me with my mom, Jane Domach (daughter of Gertrude Vasholtz). Right, the view over Liechtenstein from atop the Alps.
For relationship information, see The Road from Zwilipp, Chapters Four and Twelve, on the Wisconsin branch.*

I grew up vacationing in the woods of Wisconsin. Several times a year my parents packed me and my sister into a car stuffed with camping equipment and drove us to a state park. We hiked, biked, roasted marshmallows and ate s'mores, and spent time together as a family. I'd pick out a fallen branch and with some twine my dad would turn it into a bow for me to shoot "arrows" i.e. whatever sticks were lying around. My mom taught us "fire writing" – waving a smoldering stick through the night sky to spell out words. Of course, us kids were sometimes less than content in these vacations; why couldn't the shower water be warmer? Why were the bike paths paved with gravel and not smooth asphalt like those in suburbia? Why did we have to go on such long hikes? In hindsight, though, these experiences left me with a love of the outdoors, a love that continues to manifest itself in my adult life.



That's me hiking at Leirhnjúkur, Iceland in August 2014.

This past summer I spent a long weekend hiking in the Alps of Liechtenstein, a little nation sandwiched between Switzerland and Austria.

Liechtenstein is essentially one large Alpine valley; it is so small that you can easily walk across the entire country in a single day as I did, a feat that I accomplished quite by accident! I was traveling with a friend and one morning we decided to walk over the Rhine River into Switzerland because, well, why not?

That afternoon we had a 12.5 km hike planned so after crossing back over the Rhine and grabbing a quick lunch we headed up to the trail head. The path took us to the top of the mountains (a little over 2 km in elevation) and we could see out over all of Liechtenstein: the views were absolutely beautiful! But somewhere we missed the descent point (we still don't know how) and the trail we continued to follow remained marked by the same colored symbols. It took us along the spine of the mountains so the drop to our left was Liechtenstein and to our right Austria. We hiked until it finally descended. At this point we were thoroughly confused as to what had happened, but followed the trail signs to Feldkirch: somehow we had hiked over the Alps and into Austria!

Our 12.5 km hike had become a 30 km journey that took nine hours. Fortunately the stop for the bus back to Liechtenstein was thoughtfully situated right in front of a Chinese restaurant. We went inside to refuel while waiting and over dinner realized how sunburned we were! We had not planned on being at such an elevation for so long. We were exhausted and hungry, but the experience (and photographs) were entirely worth it.

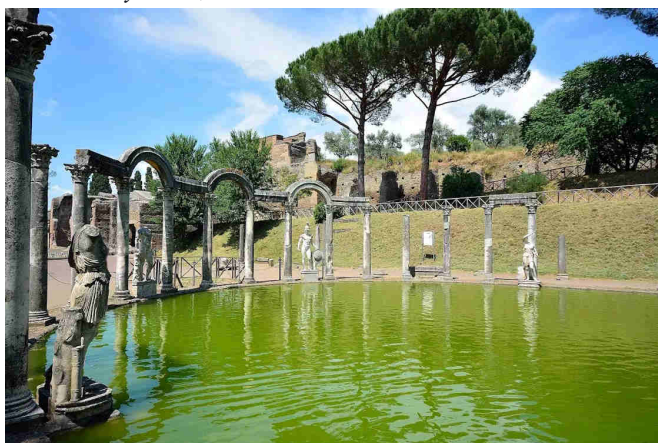
Despite my Alpine escapades, I was in Europe for academic reasons: I am a PhD student studying late Roman and early Christian history at Columbia University in New York. Eventually I'd like to be a professor, but that's a ways off. A PhD takes five to seven years to finish and I am only in my second. It is not unusual to find myself overseas during summer since the Roman Empire never managed to annex America.

Thus for the latter half of May I participated in a Columbia trip to Greece. While I had been to Greece several times (including spending summer 2013 as an archaeologist on the island of Samothrace), I had never visited the sites of this trip, such as Olympia, Delphi, and Corinth. It was eye-opening to walk through the original site of the Olympic Games, to tour the Sanctuary at Delphi where the famed oracle once resided, and to see the ancient town of Corinth where Paul founded one of the first churches. Buildings bring home the reality of daily life in the ancient world; time distances ancient people, but walking the streets of Corinth underscores that two thousand years ago people *lived* here.



Photographing the Treasury of Atreus at Mycenae, Greece.

My two weeks in Greece also allowed me to have fun in some other ways. For the seven months or so before the trip I had grown out my beard, but it was time for it to go. That decided, I couldn't resist keeping just the mustache for a few days. I looked like someone out of the 19th century! It was amusing to observe how my mustache became a talking point for those around me, especially strangers who missed the absurdity of it and seemed to think it was a permanent look.



The so-called "Canopus" at Hadrian's Villa.

I spent the month of June working as an archaeologist at the villa of the Roman emperor Hadrian, just outside of Rome. We excavated two areas in Hadrian's Villa: the Lararium and the Macchiozzo. The former is a side chamber off the Villa's vestibule while the latter is a previously unknown structure in the middle of the Villa. I was assigned to the Lararium, a space that, although known since the Renaissance and partially (and poorly) excavated in the 1930s, remains in many ways a question mark. Our excavations reached the floor level (which had been stripped away in the Medieval period) and uncovered much rubble. Clearly this area was used as a dumping ground for material from the rest of the Villa. Because the Macchiozzo has lain undisturbed since antiquity, the group there discovered walls with pigmented fresco still intact, several monochrome mosaics with geometric patterns, and the remains of a water piping system. As none of this has been published yet, I cannot include pictures of the actual excavations, but it will certainly be exciting to see what further seasons reveal!

Archaeology is a discipline which has been romanticized by Indiana Jones. That's great – I'm all for popularizing things having to do with antiquity – but it does mean that little actual Nazi fighting takes place. Instead, archaeology involves digging in the dirt hour after hour under a hot Mediterranean sun. This takes place with pickaxes and shovels or with hand trowels and brushes, all depending on how delicate the task at hand is. Some people really like this sort of thing; I am not one of them. While I do archaeology from time to time because it is a good skillset to have and I learn a ton in the process, I don't plan on making a career out of it. I'm primarily a textual-based historian, not an archaeologist.

After my time at Hadrian's Villa I hopped over to England to present some of my research at a conference hosted by the University of Oxford, an institution which also happens to be an alma mater of mine. This was my first time back and it was wonderful to reconnect with old friends.

After a week in England I spent the remaining two months of summer enrolled in two successive German language courses at the University of Vienna. German, along with Greek, Latin, and French, is required for my PhD program. I need Greek and Latin to read old stuff and French and German to read modern stuff written about that old stuff.

While in Vienna most weekends I took advantage of the European bus and rail network to travel to places like Liechtenstein. In a sense, those trips were a vacation from vacation – it doesn't get better than that! My class schedule, however, meant that trips could only be a few days at most so the only trip of length without any archaeological or academic responsibilities had to wait until my Vienna courses concluded.

A long-held dream of mine has been to scuba dive so I headed to Malta for a week before returning to America. Malta is an archipelago of three islands between Sicily and Tunisia. The northernmost island, Gozo, is one of the finest



The famous Xwejini salt flats, near where I learned to scuba dive on the island of Gozo, Malta.

places to scuba dive in the world. I earned my scuba certification and had time to go on some guided dives as well. On the very first one I got lucky and saw an octopus swimming near a rock wall; if you see an octopus at all, they usually are hiding in a hole. If you have never gone scuba diving, I enthusiastically recommend it. While underwater you achieve a state called neutral buoyancy (neither floating nor sinking) which is effectively weightlessness; unless you are an astronaut, this is pretty much the only way to experience it. And, of course, the aquatic world is well worth seeing first hand!

As of September I'm back in the States and the Columbia semester has kicked off. I'm Teacher Assisting and finishing up my coursework this year; the next few years will involve more teaching, studying for exams, researching, and writing my dissertation. I like my life to consist of more than just academia so I try and stay involved in a few other things. I play the string bass in the Columbia University Orchestra and the bass guitar at church. I am also on the men's club volleyball team and I recently signed up for the ski team so we'll see how that goes.

If you are passing through New York City at any point, let me know; it's always exciting to meet a new cousin! ■

COUSINS NOW & 73 YEARS AGO

By Geri (Vahsholtz) Tate

Recently Allan and Martha Brockmeier were visiting at our home and we were looking at old photos. I thought it would be nice to take a picture of Allan and myself in the same pose as when we were five years old. We got Martha to take the picture of us that day and they took it from there.

When I look at this younger picture of Allan and me, it reminds me of all the family reunions we attended at Grandma Lena and Grandpa Henry Vahsholtz place. And when Allan, his brother Darrell and myself get together now we always seem to end up talking about those reunions at our grandparents home in the 1940s.

Grandma and Grandpa had four sons in WWII (*The Road From Zwilipp*—Page 97). When one would come home on furlough, all the family would come to see them. Sometimes, we all would stay overnight as there were no motels in those days. Allan and I would sleep on the floor in the bedroom where our mothers had a bed. Now, Darrell tells us that he slept in the barn in the hay with

Be sure and check out our “new” cousins website at www.vahsholtz.com when you can:

- Learn more about our upcoming 2016 reunion
- View and download all of the family newsletters
- Download a copy of *The Road from Zwilipp*
- Learn how to purchase your copy of *Memories: Growing Up in Kansas-1880s* for a Christmas gift?
- Read recent posts on the Vahsholtz Cousins Facebook page

... and more!



the men. *How times have changed!*

The next day when the son on furlough would have to leave, we would go down to the train station to say one more good bye to him. ■

Roger Vahsholtz is a grandson of Herman and Lena (Weerts) Vahsholtz. More information in *The Road from Zwilipp, Chapter Eight*.

Meet your Cousin Roger

Restoring Cars in Geneseo

By Lauren Seabrook, reporter for KWCH, Wichita, Kansas, reprinted by permission

Nestled down a dirt road, outside rural Geneseo, Kansas, you'll find the unthinkable. A Ford guy working on a Chevy.

Lynne Vahsholtz said her dad liked Chevy cars. But she married Roger, a Ford man.

"There was a little conflict at times," she said.

Lynne buckled up with her husband, Roger, many years ago. She vowed to be his partner in life, his passenger in just about any old car you can think of.

"He's always saying to me, 'okay now which wheels do you think look better, these or these?'" she said. "I'm saying, 'uh they're wheels. I don't know.'"

"Then I come out and I say 'which shoes do you like better, these or these?'"

She's committed to a man dedicated to his cars.

"I like to touch them," Roger said. "I like to feel them. I like to drive them. I like the performance of them. I like the look of them. I like everything about them and then I like to get my hands dirty on them."

You can't tell from the street, but behind the Vahsholtz's house sits about 150 cars.

"There isn't a car here that I couldn't restore," Roger said. He feels a great responsibility to the classics. "There's a lot of stuff sitting out in fields and in alleyways



and stuff from rural America that are just rotting into the ground and that's the ones I hate."

So he takes in the shattered, busted, and broken-down. He restores what he can and recycles parts from the rest.

"We do ship worldwide all the time," he said. "We're helping people out in Germany, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Australia, Denmark, France, Turkey."

It's work Roger learned at just eight years old that has supported him for more than half a century.

"I don't have a savings account because cash in the bank is my worst investment, in my opinion," Roger said. "Even junk vehicles are going up approximately five to ten-percent a year."

You might say the neglected autos have done as much for Roger as he's done for them. The most special car on the lot sits inside a covered garage.

"I bought my 1969 Shelby GT 500

for \$1,500. It's a \$100,000 car now," Roger said.

The only car they own that comes close to comparing in value is priceless in Lynne's eyes.

"When I was four, my dad bought his first brand new car. It was a 1952 Chevy," she said.

Even though Roger's a Ford guy, he restored that Chevrolet for his wife.

"The sounds and the smell and everything are from my childhood," she said. "We took family vacations in that car."

It's those universal memories shared by so many that keeps Roger hammering away on the cars.

"I'm 61 years old," he said. "I think I can work until I'm 70. Then that knowledge is going to be gone."

Roger said he worries the younger generation doesn't see the clunkers the way he does. Once they're gone, they're gone, he said. "It's kind of like we had to put our old dog down last year that we had for 14 years," Roger said. "If somebody isn't there to preserve them and stuff, they will be gone."

As long as his hands, shoulders, and back will let him, Roger will keep working away down that dirt road at his auto sanctuary on the plains. ■



Edward Rathke is a grandson of Henry and Lena (Young) Vahsholtz. See The Road from Zwilipp, Chapter Eight.

Meet your Cousin Edward

The NAVY WELDER

By Edward Rathke

I was born in 1952, in Strong City, Kansas, at the Stubenhofer Mid-Wife House. In my early childhood I was loved and passed around among family members due to my Mother, Irma Al-ruma Sophia (Vahsholtz) Rathke, dying when I was about 11 months old.

My three older sisters and my Dad took care of me very well, but he and my sisters had their hands full. When I was almost five, my dad (Edward William) re-married to a widow from Chase County by the name of Velma I. (Eason) Neinstedt.

She was a good step-mother, who impressed me immediately with her great home cooking—mostly missing up until that point of my life. I remember many family gatherings with her side of the family, but I really didn't get to know a lot about my natural Mother's family until I had returned from the Navy.

My Dad, step-mother and sister (Eileen), gave us younger kids enough rope that we could have hung ourselves, but fortunately we both picked good childhood friends and stayed out of trouble. I remember early lessons on working hard. As a grade school student I worked in the garden, pulling weeds, plucking chickens, feeding the pigs and cows and keeping my mouth shut, (for the most part) and not complaining. My step-mother influenced me to "stay away from college and find yourself a good trade such as welding."

So I enrolled in the high school welding program with many of my close friends, and enjoyed it. At graduation my step-mother pulled me aside and made it clear that I would be out of the house for good within a few months of graduation. I'd dreamed of being in



the Navy many times growing up. Often John Fitzpatrick and I imagined we were sailors doing Navy stuff.

Later in High School I started working for another of my best friends' dad; Arthur L. Hopkins, who helped influence our U.S. Navy enlistment. Art spent twenty years in the Marine Corp and while he didn't tell us a lot of stories about it, he didn't have to. We had nothing but respect for the man. When his son Stephen, another friend of ours by the name of Dennis Coen and I joined the Navy you could see he was proud of us.

At the young age of 18, we three became the "property" of Uncle Sam. We were guaranteed to go through Boot Camp together and a few months later we were in San Diego, California, learning all about the big world that

surrounded us.

After we three graduated "Boot Camp," we went to training. I was sent to Treasure Island in San Francisco for Firefighting/Damage Control School. We learned a lot, such as fighting an oil fire in an enclosed space without any protective clothing or a breathing apparatus. The point being to let you know how much black stuff you could breathe and still survive. Once to sea you can't run outside and let it burn.

Next I was sent back to San Diego for welding, sheet metal and carpentry school for nine more weeks training. I thought I would be going to the fleet, but since I'd scored well on my tests, I was selected for another six weeks of specialized welding instruction. Then I finally received orders to the fleet aboard the *USS Durham*, just out of dry dock. When the ship was ready we had a shakedown cruise to Acapulco, Mexico. Three weeks later we were underway for my first 10 month deployment.

It was an exciting time for me, on a great ship with a great crew. We won "Best Ship in the Pacific Fleet" one year. I gained confidence and promotions as well.

We did a tremendous amount of sailing but there was time for several ports-of-call as well. Even when we had to anchor out we always had several boats to use for a liberty launch. The full complement of ships-crew was 260, and we could also carry 350 Marines or Soldiers, but we rarely worked with Army. We often carried a large portion of the Battalion's equipment, including tanks, trucks, jeeps, fuel and their food and supplies.

During my years of "Regular Navy" service I learned many things about life, ranging from skills I would use throughout my civilian career to life lessons about people and humanity. During the four years of my first enlistment I ended up making two 10 month deployments. It's lucky I was not married at the time. There was no R&R, you couldn't fly home, no phones were on the ship, and you were normally out to sea 15 to 30 days at a time. In a few major ports such as Hong Kong, there



were call centers with 20 to 30 pay-type phones so you could call home if you had the money.

My most significant memories came from our Humanitarian Operations during the end of the Vietnam conflict. We were at Pohang, South Korea, working with their ROK Marines making beach landings on very rocky shoals and beaches in the middle of the winter. We had to shovel snow off the weather decks during operations. Orders came to proceed to the Da Nang, and/or Cam Ranh Bay area of Vietnam.

After two long days and nights of sailing, nearing our destination the snow and bitter cold disappeared. On the way we were getting our MK-Boats back in shape for runs into the rivers or beaches around Cam Ranh Bay. The Rocky beaches of Korea had been rough on those boats.

I was busy welding on the boats and heard what seemed to be thunder in the distance. As I raised my welding hood, I saw a very large fire going on along the coast. Turning to my Chief I asked, "should I stop welding?" He looked to me and said, "The Captain wants these boats ready to go and he'll tell us when to stop. They aren't shooting at us yet."

I went back to work, but it was that "yet" that stuck in my mind!

Over the next few weeks we witnessed more firefights and other interesting things. We landed and refueled many helicopters during this time in-

cluding Marine, Navy and Air America (CIA). We even pushed a perfectly good South Vietnamese Huey Helicopter over the side.

The single biggest item that will always be with me was the evacuation. It brought boats full of frightened and desperate people and families. As these South Vietnamese nationals were allowed to come on board, we took away their guns, hand grenades, and knives—even lighters. This put them totally at our mercy; frightening for them, and put upon us the huge responsibility of protecting, feeding, and rendering medical assistance and caring for them over the next several days.

Our ship alone saved over 5,000 people from death and the hands of the North—or at minimum, many years in what were called "Retraining Camps."

My time in the Regular Navy ended that September, and I returned to Emporia. I worked for Art Hopkins for a while, and then on to HASTCO Construction. I taught welding in the evening at the Tech College for a while and Then went to the City of Emporia for employment.

In the fall of 1981 I joined the Navy Reserves and spent almost seven years with the Topeka unit before resigning to give all my work effort to my job at the City. During my time in the Reserves we often flew out once a month to military bases for training, and our two weeks of active duty each year.

Throughout this time I was primarily assigned to the *USS Bagley* FF-1069,

(Reserve Force). During the 1980's while on one of our two week active duty sessions aboard the *Bagley*, we were assigned to supplement the regular crew and sail with the ship as far as Hawaii. The Sailors in our unit were part of the first Battle Ship Group deployment since their decommissioning in the late 1960's. We sailed with the Battle Group from San Diego to Pearl Harbor. We watched a battle ship shoot its 16" guns. Impressive

The most interesting part of that trip was the float group catching a Russian sub on our sonar. The Battle Group gave the Russian sub no indication that we knew their location or that they were there, until the morning of the third day. That morning all the ships turned on the sonar pinging devices to full strength and pinged the subs exact location at the same instant.

It was extremely loud on our ship, but being in the sub and with eight US Navy ships pinging your exact location must have been overwhelmingly loud and uncomfortable for them—and very much fun for us.

I also spent time aboard the *USS Hepburn* FF-1055 and the *USS Lang* FF-1060, where I earned the designation of Enlisted Warfare Specialist.

Thank you to the City of Emporia, and Emporia Main Street for Honoring the Military Veterans in such a public format. Edward J. Rathke, HT-1 (SW) U.S. Navy ■

One Final Note

The main purpose of our Cousin Reunions is to meet and renew family acquaintances ... and have some fun. But we do have a short meeting to conduct business. A topic that will arise in Idaho next summer is the location of the next Vahsholtz Cousin Reunion in 2018. A chance to show off your home town area! Give the matter some thought. ■

Vahsholtz Cousins is published twice yearly, spring and fall. Copies go out to some 260 Vahsholtz families. It is supported entirely by donations. Those who supply email addresses get full color copies attached to an email, as a PDF file, which they can read on screen or print as they wish. Those having no email address get a black and white edition mailed to their last known address. "Snail mail" is the biggest cost item of the whole Vahsholtz publication enterprise, due to costs of printing and stamps. Your donations are appreciated. **What will help most is any additions or corrections you can make to our email list. Each mailing we send out, we get half-dozen email bounces or returned mail from those who have moved, passed on, or changed their address. Please let Marge know! mvahsholtz@gmail.com**

And if you want to make a donation, contact Treasurer Tony Vahsholtz avahsholtz@gmail.com or his new address: 12419 S. Downing Way, Nampa, Idaho 83686. ■