

Middle school teacher visits Germany

Barbara Spillane, a social studies teacher, at Belleville Middle School, was one of 129 educators selected to travel to Germany on a two-week, all expense-paid study/travel seminar sponsored by the Transatlantic Outreach Program of Atlanta. Spillane traveled with a group of 16 social studies teachers from various states. The group assembled in Atlanta and left for the two-week tour on July 9.

Tourist's sites, businesses, cultural events, and seminars were sampled in Berlin, Munich, Mainz, Heidelberg, and Frankfurt. Highlights of the summer study/travel seminar included: question and answer sessions with executives of the Federal Foreign Office, the European Central Bank, Deutsche Bank, and German educators and curriculum developers. A personal tour of the Reichstag and the Bundestag were conducted as well as visits to many museums and historical sites. No trip to Berlin would be complete without visiting the Berlin Wall. Very little of the wall is still standing, but small segments have been preserved in the city. Red bricks outline a path through Berlin where the wall once stood.

Visits to places that are considered part of the Holocaust were also visited. These included the newly constructed Holocaust Memorial in Berlin, the Wannsee Villa located in Berlin (which was the site where the final solution was decided in 1942), and the Dachau Concentration Camp in Munich.

"This was my second visit to a concentration camp, and it does not get any easier to tour or comprehend the atrocities that took place there," stated Spillane. "However, it was comforting to see that the Allied Powers have constructed chapels on the campgrounds for meditation."

An interesting visit was to

Munich and other parts of Bavaria. This is southern Germany and it is surrounded by the Alps, which provide winter sport and summer tourism. The village of Mittenwald was visited on a Sunday. An informative visit was to an elite violin school. Also, the Lord Mayor hosted a luncheon for the group in an open-air restaurant, which faced the Alps for a lovely view. Another interesting site in Bavaria was the castle of Ludwig II, which was molded after Versailles. The gardens and grotto are very picturesque with cascading waterfalls and lush gardens.

The third leg of the journey took Spillane to Frankfurt. The area called Rotterdam is where tourists like to take photographs because it is typically German looking. The American pastor, Dr. Jeffrey Meyers, conducted a private tour of the Church of St. Nicholas. He explored with the group the unique relationship between the Church and State in Germany.

Mainz, hometown of Johannes Gutenberg, the inventor of moveable type, was also toured. Visits were taken to the museum and buildings that were important to Gutenberg. A rare copy of an illuminated Gutenberg Bible was viewed as well as demonstrations on the printing press that he used.

The old university town of Heidelberg was another city that was visited. This is a very picturesque city along the River Neckar. An exuberant atmosphere abounds with its students, pubs, and cultural sites. High above the city are the remains of the Schloss (castle), the creation of Friedrich V built between 1616 and 1619. This was the final city on the tour. In the evening, the German representative hosted a farewell dinner at a famous biergarten.

On July 23, Spillane and the group of TOP teachers departed from Frankfurt for the trip home to



PHOTO COURTESY OF BARBARA SPILLANE

Belleville teacher Barbara Spillane is seen here in the lobby of the EURO bank in Frankfurt, Germany, surrounded by flags of the bank's member countries.

America. "This was truly an educational and cultural experience that was top-notch. I am enthusiastic about sharing the country of Germany with my students and colleagues," stated Spillane. Educators who are interested in finding more about the TOP program can log onto <http://www.Goethe.de/top>.

As the chairwoman of the International Department of the Woman's Club of Belleville, Spillane will present a program on her study/tour of Germany at the Woman's Clubhouse, Rossmore Place, on Nov. 14 at 8:30 p.m. The public is welcomed to attend.