

## Paris Journal 2010

February 25 – visit with Chevalleys in Bex

We left the Joseph's after visiting the Learning Center. We walked down from their home to the Gare in Lausanne and took the train to Bex.

Michel Chevalley met us in his station wagon and drove us the few blocks to their home.

Michel loves food and drink and all the rituals surrounding them. Michel was a graduate student in chemistry at the University of Lausanne when Ernie was doing his post doctoral work.

When we arrived, it was gloomy and there were low-lying clouds with occasional drizzle. Their home has beautiful views of the mountains surrounding the valley where Bex is located. However, when we arrived, here is the view of their back yard. They have a swimming pool that is covered in winter.



It was time for an aperitif. We had local white wine, probably from Aigle, with bread sticks and other delightful munchies. We are seated in their comfortable living room. It is evening so their drapes are closed. The focus is on the interior. On the wall behind Ernie are two small art pieces. They are original watercolors painted by Therese. After she retired from working in an insurance office, Therese took up watercolor and is very prolific and quite good. She gave us a new piece of hers, which we will take back to the States with us.



This is Thérèse Chevalley who had taken a bad fall just before our visit and was hobbling around with a cane. Thérèse is from a little town high in the mountains of the Valais. She grew up in a family that owns a hotel in Les Haudères, a tiny village high in the Alps. Her brother Leon runs the hotel. In previous trips, but not on this one, they have taken us there for a traditional meal of raclette.



Bex is in the Rhone valley leading to the Valais and the Alps. When they were married, Thérèse dressed in the traditional costume of the Valais. The photo of their marriage is very sweet.

Here is the view from the window of our bedroom on Thursday.



The next day, after breakfast, Michel drove us to Morgins, a little town, a ski resort, in Switzerland near the border with France (Département de Haute Savoie). On the windy way up into the mountains as we neared the town of Morgins, I noticed large banners saying “Bravo Didier!” hung on the front of buildings. Finally one of them showed the image of a downhill skier and I realized that Didier had just won the downhill skiing gold medal at the Olympics. Some of the signs said, “We are Proud of You Didier!” In the following few days, he was due back home for a hometown celebration welcoming their Olympic medallist. I can imagine that celebration.

Here are some images of Morgins.





You can see one of the signs congratulating Didier on the front of that café.

In the parking lot I saw a family preparing to get on the slopes. These little children must be what Didier looked like when he was their age. Didier probably started skiing before he could run. It's no wonder he won the gold medal!



Michel took us on a walk up a cross country ski trail. The snow was firm enough for us to proceed in our regular walking shoes.



On the way, we came across a scale model of the solar system with signs along the trail. It is called Les portes du soleil. It was a sunny day and we passed others walking and some people on cross country skis. This is also used as a hiking trail during the warm season.

Here is the stop at Jupiter.





There were so many beautiful sights on this walk. I couldn't resist a photo of a stream we crossed on that trail.



Then back to their home in Bex for a traditional dinner of raclette using an iron griddle with little trays for the cheese and viande séché, very thin slivers of dried beef and steamed potatoes. Yum! There was an aperitif and a cheese course and a salad and a dessert.

Ernie told Michel that he was the one who taught Ernie about the Swiss rituals of serving wine. Some of the rules are to make a toast by looking each person in the eye and clinking each glass before taking the first sip, never to let anyone's glass be empty, to fill everyone else's glass before you fill your own, to buy a bottle for the table if you have to leave before everyone else, that the last bit in the wine bottle is called "les amours de la bouteille," which means it is special, even if there is sediment. I think it pleased Michel that he has passed on this culture to America through Ernie.

The next day, the sky cleared and this is what I saw outside the window of the guest room. The high mountain is "Les dents du midi." *From Wikipedia: The Dents du Midi (French: "The Teeth of the South") is a mountain chain situated in the [Chablais Alps](#) in the [Canton of Valais, Switzerland](#). It is composed of seven distinct summits and reaches a height of 3257 metres (10,686 feet).*



It turns out that today is Thérèse's birthday and there are 15 people expected to dinner. Wowiee zowiee! We are going to be treated to a fabulous dinner: Beef Bourguignon, potatoes gratin, the entrée is a mousse of salmon that we saw Thérèse prepare yesterday. Michel is quite the gourmet so the food here is always good, but he has had health issues and is being conservative. However, tonight, with the family coming, he is pulling out the stops.

Despite all the people coming to the special dinner, Michel insisted on taking us on an outing. He said all the food had been prepared and there was plenty of time. So he drove us to Martigny, which is the gateway to Mont Blanc and the Mont-Blanc Express, an electric train that goes to Chamonix.

He took us to a fabulous museum that was established by the Pierre Gianadda Foundation. The foundation was established by a man whose brother died very young. It must have a lot of money because the museum is wonderful and full of incredible art pieces and a lot of famous sculptures in its extensive garden.





One of its specialties is an incredible collection of antique cars from all over Europe and the US going back to cars that were a step up from a buggy.



We bought a poster for our apartment in Paris in their gift shop. There was an exhibition of Russian Icons and long, impressive gilded paintings of various saints. St. Gregory was one that was repeated in different paintings. There was also a special show on the St. Bernard pass and images of Napoleon



crossing it. The museum is built around Roman ruins. It has a spectacular small concert hall. It would be great to hear a concert there.

When we returned, the table was set for dinner. On the back of the dining room is a stained glass window. Ernie and I brought back flowers for Thérèse but soon, there was no more space to put flowers. Everyone brought flowers including a friend who dropped by in the afternoon with a potted orchid.

The celebration began with the aperitif. A family dropped by for only the aperitif. In Switzerland, the custom is to kiss 3 times. As the father and his 3 children came in, they greeted each of us and kissed us on the cheek three times. It is a sweet custom. Then they sat and started nibbling. Soon their daughter Anne came with her step daughter who is about 17 years old. Soon after, Vincent, Anne's husband came in, then Thierry and his wife Marie and their son Louis and older son. There was another boy, dark haired, perhaps Anne's son. Louis and that boy were each about 8 years old and ran around the house through the hall, into the living room and around the hall over and over again. They had a wonderful time.

Late, after dinner, the older boy read aloud to Louis and the other boy. We felt privileged to be at a family celebration of the birthday of their maman.



We will leave tomorrow to return to Paris and will arrive after midnight by TGV. It was pouring rain when we arrived and we stood in line for a taxi and were soon home. It isn't far from the Gare de Lyon to our apartment on rue Berthollet