Local travelers recount European visit

(Editor's note: The following article is the third in a series to appear in the Gazette-Times concerning a recent trip to Europe made by several Heppner High School Spanish students, their teacher, one student's mother and a school counselor.)

Much of the countryside enroute to Madrid reminded us of Morrow County, with the exception of the acres of sunflowers. During our lunch stop, we were served a meal of miniature plums, apples, pears, citi-noodles in red sauce, potato salad and fish very much like our own trout. Our traveling companions from the east coast had to be shown how to remove tail and fins to reach the white meat - some refused to try - they had never eaten anything like it!

Continuing on, we were soon into high mountains where Man from La Mancha was filmed and then on into Cervantes (Don Quixote) country -- two thirds vineyards. Some of us slept more than we had planned on the bus, as thus far we had never gone to bed the same day we got up!

"Nine months of winter and three months of hell" is the description given to Castilla La Nueva, the province in which Madrid is located. Our guides often joked that if rain didn't come soon, they would have to fill the swimming pools with Coca cola!

Madrid - five million people. Can you imagine 5,000,000? This city is Spain's capital, geographical center, city of wide avenues, spacious parks and fountains. Surprisingly, Madrid, despite its size, was not difficult to become acquainted with thanks to the Metro, Europe's underground transportation system. Lines are easily marked and this means of transportation is inexpensive (30 pesetas - approximately 24 cents), safe and convenient for reaching the Puerta del Sol.

Beauty of the city is found in its fountains, statues, architecture, museums and its people. The Prado, one of the most famous art museums in the world, was one of our first stops. Due to the immense size, we were only able to view the works of El Greco, Velazquez and Goya. It's easy to recognize works of El Greco as his subjects always were painted with middle and ring fingers together and others apart. There were 10 rooms of Goya, but unfortuantely we had time for only four. It was fascinating to see his early works of calm family portraits of Charles IV with serene expressions as compared to later works during the revolutionary period, when it is said Goya went a little mad. The subjects had a wild look with buldging eyeballs; bloody scenes prevailed; and the use of gray and black was predominant. Velazquez did many paintings of Christ. Beautiful!

Our hotel in Madrid, The Charmartin, was a huge complex which included a disco, skating rink, bowling alley, small shops, restaurants, a post office, the train station underneath and the metro below that. Evening relaxation takes different forms. Many of us decided dancing was the best way to release travel tensions. The Disco Macumba provided a glimpse of how Spanish youth entertain themselves; they dance alone and dance continuously to loud music and active lights. Also in the disco was a mechanical bull, very popular with the group from the USA. One member of the group received a black eye and another gave a Spaniard one as he tried to assist her up on the bull. Our memories of this trip are varied to say the least.

A highlight of Madrid was our visit to The Royal Palace, built by Philip V on the site of the alcazar, the fortress-residence of the Kings of Castile. All of the ceilings in the rooms were painted by famous artists; we instantly recognized Goya. Rooms were royally furnished with walls of velvet, leather, tapestries and magnificient chandeliers. The all-gold dining room, with tables set in silver, could seat all of Heppner High School - and this was in one room! Some of the rooms in the palace are still used when the royal family comes to visit. On those days, the palace is closed to the public.

Siesta time finds much of Spain quiet and the stores all closed from 1 to 4 p.m. We enjoyed strolling about the city and visiting Retiro Park with one of the largest artificial lakes in existance, and the hub of the city, Puerta del Sol (gate of the sun.) A side trip from Madrid brought some closer to the historical aspects of Central Spain. Our first stop was Avela, a walled city that was the home of St. Theresa. The Cathedral built in her honor doesn't reflect the animosity her peers felt for her because of her efforts to reform the church.

As we approached Segovia, we were amazed by a huge Roman Aquaduct which ran through the center of this small community. This structure is over 2,000 years old. Throughout our trip we have been amazed at the architecture that has survived weather, war and time. The country also maintains their old buildings and restores them to their original beauty. Nothing is old unless it's passed the 200 year mark!

The main castle in Segovia is of great interest. After climbing to the top of the prison tower, we felt like we too had been punished! However, once atop this tower, one could view the town and countryside. One had the feeling that at any moment Prince Charming would come galloping through the fields, over the moat and into the gates on his trusty steed.

We could see we were approaching the Valley of the Fallen for miles in advance. This war memorial is marked by a cross on top of a hill which measures 150' x 450'. It is the burial place of Francisco Franco and Jose' Antonio, opponents during the Civil War.

Our final stop was El Escorial, a huge manse notable for two reasons. First, it is one of few ancient buildings which is currently used; immense with 30 miles of corridors and thus used as a summer home for royalty, a monastry, and a school. Secondly, this building is memorable because of its shape. It is built in the shape of a gridiron to commemorate the town's patron saint, St. Lawrence, who was burned to death in a grill. It was built by King Philip over a period of 21 years by 4,000 workers, and it is the largest granite structure next to the pyramids. It was very impressive. Our return to Madrid brought us quickly back from past to present to the bustle of a large city.

Next week we will take you with us to Toledo, the oldest city in Spain, and then on to France.

Pre-registration date set at EOSC

New students planning to attend Eastern Oregon State College at La Grande this fall may pre-register for classes on campus Saturday, Aug. 6. The session begins at 9 a.m. in the main lounge of Hoke College Center.

Any student wishing to pre-register who has not been formally admitted to EOSC should contact the admissions office as soon as possible, according to Terral Schut, director of admissions and records.

Besides pre-registering, students will have an opportunity to meet with a faculty advisor. A session for parents is also scheduled.

For more information, students may call 963-1393. Those living outside the La Grande area may dial toll free 1-800-452-8639, ext. 1393.

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Why your phone bill is going up.

As you probably know, the Bell System is being split apart. Each of the nation's 22 Bell telephone companies, including Pacific Northwest Bell, is becoming a separate business. What difference will that make?

For one thing, the rates we charge will have to change.

Goodbye regulated monopoly.

You see, for years PNB provided local phone service at rates far below actual cost. We were able to keep local rates low by using money from the Bell System's long distance rates—which were intentionally inflated, to cover this loss.

In other words, long distance revenues subsidized local service. This worked fine because we were one nationwide company. A regulated monopoly.

However, because of the major events which have occurred over the last 20 years, the entire telecommunications industry is changing.

The federal courts, the Federal Communications Commission, and Congress are purposely reshaping the industry because they believe that increasing competition (and reducing regulation) is in the country's best interest.

This is being done to provide more choices for you, the consumer.

Therefore, as of January 1, 1984, The Bell System will be split apart, and Pacific Northwest Bell will become a separate entity.

The bad news.

At that point, local rates must begin to reflect the actual cost of the labor, materials, equipment and technology necessary to provide you with reliable phone service.

And we must do it without the subsidies formerly provided by long distance.

Therefore, we will have to raise the rates on local service.

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