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Brockport European Study Tours

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Brockport European Study Tours: a brief historical sketch

These tours were conducted annually each summer from 1952 to the late 1960s by Dr. Eric Steel, professor of foreign languages at Brockport. Dr. Steel was a native of Scotland who taught at Brockport from the 1940s to his retirement in the 1970s. He was a popular and colorful figure on campus, often seen walking or driving with his poodle, Pouf. Originally the tours were given graduate course credit, on the basis of the experience gained, that a paper was written and so on, but then the SUNY Central administration decided that the tours, as they did not include actual attendance at a foreign school, could not be credit bearing experiences.

Following are two Stylus articles on the tour, the first from 12/11/53, the next from 11/19/54. After those is a book produced for the 1980 annual dinner reunion of tour members, produced as a memorial to Dr. Steel who had been killed just prior to the reunion in an automobile accident. The booklet has a history of the tours. Dr. Steel’s sense of humor was well known, and is reflected in the book presented here with its accompanying limericks and illustrations! As befits the leader of the tour, he is frequently depicted in the illustrations in the book, the man wearing glasses.
Dr. Steel Gathers Additional Group For European Trip

Last summer twenty-four Brockportians raised the green and gold standard in London, Edinburgh, Paris, Rome, Venice, Florence, Naples, Nice, Capri and a host of other famed and fabulous places in Western Europe.

This summer another group will set out to find if it is still flying.

The tour, which will last from June 30 to September 1, will go all the way from the bonny banks of Loch Lomond to the Blue Grotto in Capri, taking in Scotland, England, France, Germany, Switzerland, Austria and Italy.

The cost will probably be $950, as it was last year. This sum will cover all transportation, room, board, tips, and admissions to monuments and museums at all major stops.

Transportation will be by boat to and from Europe, across the English Channel, and through the streets of Venice. All other places will be reached by luxury motor coach.

In Europe, the students will find out all they can on the way Europeans live, their traditions, etc. Also they will visit renowned art galleries, cathedrals, castles, palaces, mountains and sea vistas. A Shakespeare play in Stratford, a ballet in Paris and an open air opera in Rome will be included along with swimming on the French and Italian Rivieras and the coast of the English Channel.

Those who want to, will return home laden with woolens from Scotland, perfume, from Paris, cuckoo clocks from Zurich, glass from Venice, leather from Florence and paintings from everywhere.

Along with the trips' educational values and the good time it offers, credits will be given to both graduates and undergraduates. Last year's trip was quite successful and Dr. Steel promises this one to be even more so.

He suggests that if you plan to go, you should sign up as soon as possible. Last year several applicants had to be refused because they made up their minds too late.
State Cancels Credit for European Tours

Brockport has just been notified that Dr. Carlson, President of the State University, has ruled that no academic credit will henceforth be granted to participants in the college-sponsored European study tours. Dr. Carlson apparently feels that the present tours are academically unacceptable and insists on residence at some European university in order to warrant the six graduate credits formerly given. We understand that Dr. Carlson based his conclusion on his encounters with two of these college-sponsored tours.

Dr. Steel Expresses Opinion

As many of us know, Dr. Steel is the Brockport faculty member who has conducted the Brockport college tours. When asked for his reaction to this ruling, Dr. Steel said he knew it all along. He said that the college has been aware that the teachers taking the tour in the future would not get credit. He added the opinion that even if no work whatsoever was required, the tour, with its numberless learning experiences, might well be more valuable in the classroom than two graduate courses an elementary teacher might take. Despite the absence of State University sponsorship, Dr. Steel will run the European tour next summer as usual, offering the same cultural facilities, orientation lectures on the host and the hostess, various places along the way as before. As no credit will be given, no papers will, of course, be required and no college fee will have to be paid.

Viewpoint

This writer feels that teaching is enriched by any experience that can be used vividly and dramatically in the classroom. As prospective elementary school teachers we find the information about Europe and Europeans can be profitably used in every grade. Anyone fortunate enough to have the opportunity to visit Europe should crowd into the few weeks there as many experiences as possible. It would not be the hours spent in some European Library, but the wealth of impressions acquired by observations of the people, their occupations and their cultures which would be what the children in the classroom like to hear about. For these reasons, I think it's unfortunate that credit cannot be given.
Eric's LIMERicks*

Icelandic

From the moment you soar in the air
To produce some light verse you must swear
Please don't say, "I'm no good."
At that high altitude,
All your verse, like the air, will be rare!

E.M.S., '57

I don't care if all modern men
Succumb to the space travel yen
To the moon let them roam
I'm an old stay-at-home
I'll just settle for Earth once again.

E.M.S., '62

other light verse!
DEDICATION

A better director we'll never see
We viewed all that was and some that will be.
Ever generous with all of his time
Equally generous with every thin dime.
Tho' we search the world over, sincerely we feel,
There's no one better than our Dr. Steel.

Tourists, '62

* * *

Now, dear Dr. Steel, we love you, you know,
We're sorry we caused you such grief and such woe,
We slept in the daytime, then stayed up all night,
We talked when we shouldn't though we know it's not right.
We wouldn't go walking—were late for the bus,
When things didn't suit us, we made a big fuss.
Now all of these things please forgive and forget
For you gave us the best trip we've ever had yet!

Tourists, '59
HISTORY

In 1973, a survey team from the University of California was sponsored to conduct an archaeological survey in the area. The survey was conducted by the University of California at Los Angeles. The team worked closely with local communities and preservation organizations to document and report on the results of the survey. The team's findings were presented in a report titled "Archaeological Survey of Los Angeles County," which was published in 1975.

Acknowledgments

To the tourists whose verses we share
To Jane Miller for sketches so fair
And to Mona DeMay
For the layout, we say
HEARTY THANKS for this booklet so rare!
The Brockport European Study Tour, which was the first to be offered in SUNY, was initiated and conducted in 1953 by Dr. Eric M. Steel, then Professor of English and French at Brockport. To preserve highlights of each tour, tourists were asked to write limericks. As Dr. Steel explained in one of his tour bulletins:

"Chaucer's pilgrims entertained one another by telling tales. We entertain one another by writing limericks and light verse - mainly about our comical companions and the hilarious occurrences that invariably crop up in the course of the tour. We save them carefully for the Banquet at the Reine Pedaque (listed among the twelve best restaurants in Paris) where they add zest to a meal already made quite restful by saucy food and choice wines."

Understandably, some tourists had concerns about their ability to produce even one limerick!

As he led us from city to city,
Eric said, "You must all write a ditty."
We worked and we cussed
As we sat on the bus
But nothing would come - what a pity!

Tourist, '56

There once was a young limerick lover
Who over us always did hover
Most ardent was he
In advancing his plea
Till, when seeing him, we all took cover!

Tourist, '67

Ever encouraging, however, and ever setting an example, Dr. Steel wrote:

From the day you board the HOMERIC
Swear to daily produce a LIIMERick!
Though you may not be bright,
You can easily write
A much better LIIMERick than Eric!

E.M.S., '56

He provided new inspiration for limerick writing when he formed the Brockport Gastronomical Society in 1961 so that BET could qualify as a charter group for lover fares. BET tourists automatically became members and were known as "Gastronomers" or, later, in keeping with the then current space program, as "Gastronauts!"
In a May 5, 1962 bulletin to "Fellow-Gastronomers," Dr. Steel explained how the Brockport Gastronomical Society was established:

"A word first of all about the Society of which you are now a member! Only the fact that you were presumably not around at the time prevented you from membership as early as 1664, the year when the Society was founded. At its inception, of course, it was called La Société Gastronomique du Pont-du-Port, the latter being the name of a small town on the Oise-et-Sambre Canal. During his campaign in Flanders, Louis XIV spent a night in the château there which his troops had just taken by storm. His favorite chef, Enrique, on whom he had conferred the title of Marquis d’Acier, undertook to prepare for him, in spite of the unfavorable conditions, a meal of the excellence to which the Sun King was accustomed. Unfortunately, as the lobster marquéry was being removed from the fire, half a bushel of soot from the damaged chimney fell into it. Unable to survive the disgrace, the chef stabbed himself to the heart with his own skewer. Hissed by the loss of the lobster, Louis ordered the chef decapitated, then, remembering that he was already dead, he showed belated remorse by founding in his honor the first gastronomical society in the history of the western world. As you no doubt realized, Monsieur le Marquis d’Acier was my distinguished ancestor...Well, to make a long story short, the d’Aciers allowed the Société to fall into abeyance, in which sad state it remained until I resurrected it in the American namesake of Pont-du-Port (Brock is a corruption of the Flemish brugge meaning 'bridge' - in French, pont) and since then it has flourished!"

Now that you know how it got started, you no doubt will be interested to read the Constitution (written, of course, by LE GRAND GOURMET) of this amazing society!

THE CONSTITUTION OF THE BROCKPORT GASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

ARTICLE I

Section 1. The name of this organization shall be "The Brockport Gastronomical Society."

Section 2. The Motto of the Society shall be APRES LE REPAS LE REPOS - APRES LE REPOS LE REPAS.

Section 3. The mission of the Society being to promote interest in the Good Life throughout the Globe, Membership is open to persons of all Races, Creeds and Colors.

Section 4. Parents may enroll their children at birth provided that they assume the obligation to rear the aforesaid children in the principles of the Society.

ARTICLE II

Section 1. The Founder of the Society shall hold the office of President for life.
Section 2. On his demise, the oldest Member of the Society shall succeed him.

Section 3. He shall in turn be succeeded by other members of the Society in the order of seniority - until such time as all the Members shall have deceased - in which circumstances the Society shall be considered de iure as well as de facto defunct.

ARTICLE III

Section 1. The title of the President shall be LE GRAND GOURMET.

Section 2. The President shall also act as Treasurer of the Society.

Section 3. The funds over which the President and Treasurer will exercise control will consist of the Life Membership Fee of ONE DOLLAR payable by each Member upon his initiation, plus whatever voluntary contributions he may see fit to make throughout the period of his Membership.

ARTICLE IV

Section 1. The official functions of the Society shall be two annual Banquets - one in Spring and the other in Fall - which every Member is morally obligated to attend.

Section 2. On these occasions - and at all unofficial meetings of limited groups of Members - the Motto of the Society shall be decorously repeated both at the beginning and at the end of the Meal.

Section 3. Members are morally obliged to invite - either individually or in groups - LE GRAND GOURMET to dinner at least once in each calendar year. On these occasions they shall gratefully accept his criticism of the quality and presentation of the Viands and Beverages served.

ARTICLE V

Section 1. The Tenth of December - The Anniversary of the Founding of the Society - shall be observed as a Special Day by the Members.

Section 2. On that Day they shall (unless self-employed) request their employers to relieve them of all duties and responsibilities in order that they may dedicate themselves throughout the 24-hour period to the trinity of the Pursuits implicit in the Motto of the Society, viz., Eating, Drinking and Resting.

ARTICLE VI

Section 1. The Book which shall be consulted by Members to settle all disputes on controversial matters shall be A. Escoffier's monograph, MA CUISINE.
Section 1. Members should encourage Gastronomy in the Community in which they live by inviting one another to dinner as often as circumstances permit. On these occasions a copy of the menu should be sent to the Editor of the local Newspaper, and another to LE GRAND GOURMET.

Section 2. The following political action is recommended to Members in the Community in which they live:

A. They should patronize and encourage others to patronize such groceries as carry snails, whale’s eye steak, fried grasshopper tails, sautéed butterfly antennae and similar gastronomical items.

B. They should seek out and expose all flagrant violations of the principles of Gastronomy in their Community by:

1. refusing to accept luncheon or dinner invitations from persons the soundness of whose Gastronomical principles they have reason to doubt;

2. attending all local functions at which food is served and the public is invited (for example, Church Suppers) and protesting against such abuses as restricting the amount of butter, cream, cheese and wine used in the preparation of the meal - and failure to serve appropriate wines with each course.

C. They should demand for themselves and their Fellow-Members the privileges to which their Beliefs entitle them. For example, in the event of a reversion to Food-Rationing, they should strenuously appeal to local, state and federal Authorities for double or triple Rations of butter, cream and cheese and such other commodities which, though luxuries for the Layman, are nonetheless Necessities for Members of the Society.

ARTICLE VIII

Section 1. Members must in all phases of their daily Lives demonstrate their unswerving Allegiance to the Ethic of the Society.

Section 2. Alone excused from this obligation are those suffering from acute Gastritis or Cirrhosis of the Liver, and able to produce a Medical Certificate in proof of same.
Needless to say, Society members did their utmost to uphold the Constitution.

* * *

Dr. Steel conducted tours for fourteen summers until a heart attack in 1968 forced him to stop. Tour limericks and conviviality continued to be shared, however, via annual banquets wherein the tourists and LE GRAND GOURMET got together to enjoy good company, good food and drink, slides, limericks and songs.

Sadly, in April of 1980, Dr. Steel and his beloved French poodle, Pouf, (who also attended the banquets) were killed in a car-train accident. As a final tribute, the tourists decided to have the September 1980 banquet as he had planned.

This booklet commemorates that event.

Gloria Mattera, Assistant Tour Leader
On Tuesday we board the Homeric
In LeHavre. We'll take along Eric.
It has been some tour
His discipline's sure
The clerics have nothing on Eric!

All joking aside, it is seldom
You'll find,
A cleric more zealous than Eric.
He gave of his time,
His strength and his mind.
Three cheers and four roses for Eric!

Tourist, '56

Now back to the Homeric we will go
With our hearts and spirits aglow.
We will sit on deck where it is sunny
And never groan that we have spent our money.

Tourist, '56

There once was a man named Eric
Who sailed on the gay Homeric
With teachers and preachers
And all kinds of creatures
Of people he never gets sick.

Tourist, '56

Today we sail the ocean blue
Though it's not fourteen ninety-two
On the good ship Homeric
With our leader named Eric
We're off to see the old and the new!

Tourist, '57
The Tour Leader's Song

They all bounced out of bed at five-thirty,
And at breakfast their smile was real hearty.
There's a spring in their step and they swing right along
And everyone's singin' that grand Brockport song.

Oh, what a beautiful mornin' - oh, what a beautiful day!
I've got a wonderful feelin' - everyone's comin' my way.

Not a soul of a rest stop is thinkin'!
No one wants to be eatin' or drinkin'.
No one plagues me by askin' me where, when and why,
And that wild shoppin' gleam ain't in anyone's eye.

Oh, what a beautiful mornin' - oh, what a beautiful day!
I've got a wonderful feelin' - Eleanor, this is MY day!

E.M.S., '58
Sadist Eric sure made the gang hop -
Just ten minutes at every rest stop!
What a frightful dilemma.
For Jo, Kay and Emma
Forced to choose between restroom and shop!

Tourist, '57

As the B.T. is traveling once more
They're lapping up culture and lore
We admit, ne'er the less
That we ruffle E.S.
With "When can we get to a store?"

Tourist, '61

The doctor says this you must
Or uncultured people you'll be
But while buttresses fly
Old post cards we buy
And search for the W.C.

Tourist, '56
The travel in Spain was just great
But frequently buses were late
Our leader would pace
And have a sad face
He just couldn't bear it to wait.

Tourist, '67

Truly patient a guy all can see
His motto, "What's to be, is to be"
But Dr. Steel is just great
For he hurries to wait
For his group, when on land, air or sea.

Tourist, '64

The factory was quite a nice place
To buy veils, hankies, tablecloths, lace
While the ladies were shopping
Dr. Steel's nerves were popping
Like a lion he started to pace!

Tourist, '57

Look! Dr. Steel's in a tizzy.
Some of the girls are still busy.
Now he's walking the floor,
As they keep buying more.
He's not really angry, or is he?

Tourist, '59
Dr. Steel is so agile and quick,  
He has many a spectacular trick.  
He can climb, leap and run,  
He has all kinds of fun.  
The rest of us look kind of sick.

Tourist, '63

Eric, to us, Dr. Steel,  
And rightly named,  
Mountain climber, world traveler,  
Expounder of the famed,  
Has been our good friend and guide  
As we've toured the countryside.  
Endeavoring to enlighten  
And broaden our horizons  
For all this, we say, "Thank you."

Tourist, '57
Scotland is sacred, so we were told,
It was here we discovered that steel is oft gold.
Folksongs rang out, loud and clear,
As Eric extolled homeland, ever so dear.
Love of freedom, strong in Scotchman's breast,
As castles, cathedrals and cities were wrest.
Picturesque scenery, mountains and lakes,
Made interesting photographs easy to take.

Tourist, '56

Our leader is a man apart
He proved it from the very start
From rounded arch to vaulted nave
From classic to baroque we gave, Due attention
Through crooked streets and massive ruins
O'er cobbled walks and smelly lagoons
We raced....Oh, that we could live again
These past two months!

Tourist, '54
There are those who like wine
with their dinner,
While some think it makes you
a sinner.
But the ones I detest
Are the ones who protest
And then come and be a
join-inner!

Tourist, '63

When Eric extols the virtues of wine,
We hasten to partake of the fruit of
the vine.
We know it's a vice
But we ask his advice
Which suits our Eric just fine.

Tourist, '61
When Rita had drunk a Martini
She bet she would wear a Bikini
When we saw her appear
We broke into a cheer
Were we glad a Bikini's so teeny!

Tourist, '55

When Marilyn wore her bikini,
She felt that it was rather teeny.
Her shape was revealed,
And the girls they all squealed,
"If you breathe, you're a nude signorini!"

Tourist, '59

Here's a fact about Mary McDade
All admired the cute way she was made
She was built like a woman
And we yearned - being human
To behold her more freely displayed.

Tourist, '55
All thru the countries, as we pass
The Dr. drinks wine--glass after glass.
It's his chief delight
To down red or white
It's in the extra-curricular class.

Tourist, '57

Now, cathedrals and castles were swell,
And tales of each I can tell.
But the beer and the ale
And the wines there on sale,
Will always ring my little bell!

Tourist, '60
This small item is Constantine's toe
It took quite a long time to grow.
You may laugh me to scorn,
But there's room for more corn
Right here than in all Idaho!

E.M.S., '60

Long, oh so long was our ten minute walk.
Interesting, educational, our ten minute talk
Tho' heads grew light
And shoe leather slight
Without European knowledge we'll never be caught!

Tourist, '62
Remember that wonderful Scheveningen?
But don't make me say that darn word again!
Each time you eat fish
I know you will wish
That you could go back there and Schwimagin!

Tourist, '59

It seems that every day we ate fish
Oh, how tempting it was as a dish -
With a head and a tail
We all let out a wail
But we finally ate with relish.

Tourist, '57

A gourmet is our tour leader too
Whether eating or savoring the view
His most favorite dish
Is a raw or cooked fish
Thought I'd try it - say, how about you?

Tourist, '67
Now off to Hawaii is Steel.
Off to suntan and to peel.
From golf on the turf
To boards on the surf,
Around Hawaii they'll wheel.

Tourist, '65

Said Eric, "Now, please, when you choose,
Pick a size that is larger in shoes.
Your feet will get hot,
From walking a lot.
So do give your piggies their dues."

Tourist, '57
When Sally got back from the hop,
It was clear that her date was a flop.
"Yes," she sobbed, "I got pinched
And the man should be lynched!"
Well, what else d'you expect from a cop!

Tourist, '57

These Italian men just love to pinch,
The girls soon found that out, it's a cinch!
On the streets and in busses
And in tunnels these cusses
Would get our poor dears in a clinch!

Tourist, '57

No pinching in Rome, 'tis the law.
However, there's one little flaw.
In crowds I do fear,
They attack from the rear
Speaks a voice of experience - Hurrah!

Tourist, '62
When you are in doubt on this tour
As to whether or not it's amour
To Eric M. Steel
You can surely appeal
For he's a renowned connoisseur.

Tourist, '59
WHAT'S NEW?  (Tune: Frere Jacques)

Dr. Steel, Dr. Steel
How's by you? How's by you?
How's by you the tour?
What is new? What is new?

U.S.A., U.S.A.
Problems there, problems there,
Heard you lost your car -
Couldn't go too far,
Such despair, such despair!

Flew to Ireland, Flew to Ireland
Rough golf game, rough golf game -
Had to use Ben Gay,
On that fatal day,
Mighty lame, just the same.

Bonnie Scotland, Bonnie Scotland,
Weather fair, weather fair.
Friends and parents greeted -
With "Haggis" we were feted,
Over there, over there.

Tourist, '64
Finally as if turning night into day
In France, thru the streets we could roam.
But the sights we did see are something
That we didn't dare to repeat at home!

Tourist, '58

Barebreasted women, wine and song
These I'll remember when Notre Dame's gone.
Moulin Rouge, the Folies and Lido
These three pep up a man's libido!

Tourist, '60
Come all ye people and you shall hear,
of major advances in naming beer
The Swedes have done it
In their wisdom and wit
St. Erik’s they call it
the beer of good cheer.

Tourist, '63

Would you laugh yourself in hysterics?
Then just listen to Eric’s LIMERicks
If you want to drink beer
That won’t make you feel queer
Then the beer that you want is St. Erik’s!

Tourist, '63
Over Every Mountain

(Tune: Onward, Christian Soldiers)

Over every mountain, climbing every stair,
Upward on a chairlift, everything we dare.
We sail down each river and up every stream.
Lying in a rowboat, we see the grotto's gleam.

Onward, Brockport tourists, onward on your toes!
At this breakneck pace, still our leader goes!

Tourist, '59

Kay hated one thing in particular
It was to ride on any old funicular
While the view was stupendous
Kay's screams were tremendous
It's a wonder she stayed perpendicular!

Tourist, '59
On my list there is one more to mention.
He demands all our feminine attention.
It's our cuddly Erique
Who is so fantastique
And since Adam, the greatest invention!

Tourist, '58
Hooray, we are off to Hawaii!
And I sure won't mind saying goodbye
To my home town and state,
But I know I will hate
To whisper farewell to Kauai.

Tourist, '65

If you're looking for something terrific
Try an isle in the ole South Pacific
The girls will be gyrating
While Eric goes on debating
About things complex and specific!

Tourist, '65

Our Hawaiian tour was the best,
The luau last month a success.
We thank Dr. Steel
For these, and his zeal
We are now more than twice-blest.

Tourist, '65
A charmer in Nice said Hello,
And suggested some wild oats I sow
When I asked, "Combien?"
She replied, "Deux cent vingt,"
So I sadly said, "Madame, c'est trop!"

E.M.S., '57

In Paris it was a man's duty
To talk to a girl of ill repute
But he had not enough
And it really was tough
'Cuz for nothing he'd not get this cutie!

Tourist, '59
A number of wives and some teachers
And one of those 'piscopal preachers
On adventure were bent
So to Paris they went
Now they're poorer but much wiser creatures.

Tourist, '56

Encore to France at Nice
Then Versailles and Fountainbleau
But Paris has that certain charm
That will not let you go.

We've crossed them all together
The parting of ways is nigh
Some may return in the future,
I hope, for one, may I.

Tourist, '60
The Grand Brockport Song

Heidelberg, Sorrento, Paris, St. Anton -  
We have either been there or else we're goin'!  
Every place we come upon is wunderbar -  
So there's no place we would rather be than where we are!

Arriverderci, au revoir, auf wiedersehen!  
Can hardly wait until we start all over again.  
We'll buy a one-way ticket and we'll end our days  
In one of those enchanting sidewalk cafes!

We never dreamed we'd see and do so much -  
We've all been touched by that personal touch!  
There's many a tour, but there is - none - such!  
So here's - to - Brockport!

E.M.S., '58
Lastly, from Eric...

You have traveled through Europe afar
In your gallant old East Kent car
And your tour I will bet
You will never forget
Where'er and as long as you are!

E.M.S., 1957