

Here we are, Cologne!

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Here we are, landed in Frankfurt, taking the train to Cologne, Paul, Raymonda his wife, and I. It was after midnight when we arrived to our rooms. A relaxing pipe with Paul after we settled down, talking about plans for the next days, and how we would be going to spend them.

At 6:00 o'clock on November 10, 2014, I woke up, got ready and quickly went to the restaurant, took a cup of coffee and then to the terrace of the Barceló hotel to watch the sunrise in Cologne with a pipe full of Dunhill 965. This was to become my routine for the remaining days there.

After breakfast on the first day, we went in search of Peter Heinrich's shop, the "House of the 10,000 Pipes" as it is called, and here it was, just like paradise, a briar paradise full of tobacco. Frankly I was shocked, for I had never seen so many pipes in one place. Peter, the owner, is one of the persons you will never forget. He's a very remarkable man, full of energy, charisma, and hospitality. Then Salim and Christine, his fiancée, arrived; we met at Peter's and then went for lunch along with Paul and Raymonda.

Late afternoon, a little coincidence happened, and I keep telling it to my friends, and every time I do, it makes happy. It was almost 18:00 and I was checking my Facebook in the hotel, when I saw that Mike Garr, a friend on Facebook I had never met before, just checked in at the Barceló. I sent him a message hoping to meet him the next day at the gala dinner, and I went to the terrace waiting for Salim and Christine. When I arrived there, a bunch of men were sitting, so I say hi, fill my pipe, and am just about to light it, when one of the gentlemen, about 4 meters in front of me, looked just like Mike Garr. So I approached him and introduced myself to him, and so he was, indeed, Mike Garr, a person I thought I would never meet!

The next day, Salim, Christine, and I went to the zoo and flora garden (Paul was at the presidents' annual general meeting); both places were very beautiful, and later on we went to the Wolkenburg for the competition registration, and then to the pipes exhibition. It was a very nice ambience: all were smoking pipes and cigars, meeting each other, the pipes in the exhibition were so pretty; perfect weather. I light up a pipe and sit waiting with Raymonda and Christine for Paul and Salim to come; it was a very calm moment. And then we went to the Cologne Cathedral, and returned to the hotel to get ready for the gala dinner. At 19:30 we gathered in the hotel lobby, and went again to the Wolkenburg where the dinner was held. Everybody was there, all the participants, great atmosphere, great food, lovely night. And we went to the hotel after the dinner, walking in the calm streets of Cologne, smoking the famous Dunhill 965 in the middle of the night.

It's Sunday morning. Patrick and Nadine are here, we meet for breakfast, and we decide to meet again at the Wolkenburg around 13:30 before the competition, and so we did. I took another tour in the pipes exhibition with Patrick, and we entered the main hall of the competition. The ambience was very interesting, some fellows were very nervous, some were laughing. We fill the pipes, we light them, and

time begins. Luckily, Paul and I were sitting on the same table, and time passed very quickly. After about 50 minutes, I raise my hand to signal that my pipe had gone off, and go to meet my friends. We sit a little bit in the main hall and we go back to the hotel to meet up for dinner. At 20:00 we meet in the lobby and go to the Brauhaus restaurant. Paul, Raymonda, Salim, Christine, Patrick, Nadine, and I, it was an extremely lovely evening spent together; the company was great, the restaurant and the food were nice, the weather was perfect, light rain with cool air. When we finished the dinner we took a slow walk back to the Barceló, talking with each other, laughing, and observing the streets of Cologne.

And finally Monday came, the last day, the final day. As usual, breakfast, and a last shopping day, and I went to Peter Heinrich where Paul and Salim were waiting for me, and here it is, a beautiful Gigi Unika pipe in front of me, a gift from Paul and Salim, offered to me as a present for doing the best score for the Pipe Club of Lebanon. We meet at the hotel at 16:00 to go to the airport. This was the end of our journey to Cologne, it is a memory that I will carry all my life, a great memory.

And I want to thank the Pipe Club of Lebanon; without it, it wouldn't have been possible to go, and I also want to thank all the PCoLeb members for their motivation and support.

Fellow pipe smokers, I hope to see you next year in Italy for another quiet and relaxing adventure!