

# Visa USA

## *Paul C. Semenchuk*

Our second child, Dan, was born in Augsburg in an American military hospital, September 12, 1956. He weighed in at 10 pounds, one ounce!

Seven weeks later we prepared to return to the States. We had pretty much worked ourselves out of a job with the refugees and DPs. A Russian church back in New Jersey had asked us to be their pastor and we accepted.

However, as the day of our departure drew nearer, we were getting concerned that indispensable information was still not in our hands. In order for me (a Canadian citizen at that time) to receive an American visa, I had to submit a police report from every location where I had lived as an adult. The only report missing was from Marseille. Enough in advance, we had made the French officials aware of our schedule and our deadline at the American Embassy in Munich.

When I took the morning train from Augsburg to Munich (one hour away) I still did not have the report. My appointment at the embassy was at 10am. But if the document would arrive at our address in the morning mail, Betty could still bring it in good time before the embassy closed at 4 pm. (Our train from Augsburg to Bremerhaven left that same evening. Our ship sailed to America the next morning.) Well, the letter from Marseille was not in the morning mail.

We were confused. One thing was clear: the Americans would not give me a visa without the police report. At about 3:00pm Betty heard a motorcycle. It was a mailman with a registered letter for us from the Marseille police. She called me as fast as she could. But even if she brought it, it would be too late.

I was told again that they closed at four. I explained to them that Betty, alone, with a two year-old and a 7-month-old, would have a hard time managing an overnighter on the train and a long trip by ship. Somehow, they believed us that the report had arrived and was in our hands. If we would promise them that we would mail it to them as soon as possible, they would give me the visa right there and then. We promised them we'd have an American chaplain friend mail it to them the next day. Later that evening it was a very good feeling to be on the train together as a family, on our way north to the port city of Bremerhaven.

The next morning we boarded the SS United States, a new state-of-the-art passenger liner, complete with adjustable stabilizers to give better control during storms. We stood on the deck as the band played "Auf wiedersehen." Betty shed some tears. She didn't care much for Marseille as a ministry venue but she did love Augsburg and the surrounding State of Bavaria.