

## A FRENCH ALCHEMICAL ROMANCE AND ADVENTURE

(Received from Hans Nintzel, the author, on Sept. 22, 1986)

Since I promised many to recount to them the circumstances of my trip to France and sojourn with the Filiation Solazaref, I set down this chronicle of the salient events of the trip, how it came to be and the portents for the future.

It started with a letter from a correspondent, Sig. Jose Anes, in Lisbon Portugal. In a letter, he mentioned the Filiation and that he understood they had published an outstanding book on alchemy, in French to be sure, but that I should look into it. I needed no further encouragement! Having secured their address I wrote the Filiation and inquired about the book by one "Solazaref". Simultaneously, I wrote to a few other organizations in France concerning their publications. I did not realize until later, that these groups were publishing the Solazaref material as written as magazine articles. In particular were the "Verité Inderdite" and "Temepeté Chymique". Both had material written by Solazaref not contained in his book.

I received a notice from the Filiation with an inquiry as to how I came to learn of the group and the book and the "Master" (for such they call him) Solazaref. That they were a private group and that the book was privately published and not generally available to the public-at-large. If I desired more information, I could write to a certain Mmme. Roux in Clermont-Ferrand for further information, making formal request for this data. This I did and first received a letter, in French, that described in broad terms the purpose of the book and some indication of its content and some indication of the author, Solazaref.

Immediately thereafter, I received a telephone call from Montreal from a Camille Coudari who introduced himself as a member of the Filiation "...and would I have time to talk?" WOULD I??? **SURE!!**

He asked me several questions about if I felt that more alchemical knowledge was being made available and if I had noticed that much of this knowledge was now coming from France. Affirmative! He confirmed a suspicion I had that the Soviets had taken, or have tried to take, Afghanistan because of the alchemical centre in Nuristan, etc. This, of course, made me warm up to the man!

He talked about the book at length and its contents. I was impressed. He asked about my work in the lab, my work with

RA.M.S. and so forth. He asked if I was interest in the book. My comments about the bear's personal habits in the woods died on my lips due to great modesty! I simply grunted: "Shoot, yeah"! He thereon asked if I would write him a letter outlining my alchemical activities and requesting the right to procure a copy of the book and the right to get it translated as I read almost no French. I agreed and he promised to hand-carry the letter to France and present it to the Master. He also suggested translating "L'Alchimie Expliquce Sur Ses Textes Classiques" & "Le Laboratoire Alchimique" by Eugene Canseliet and Atoréne respectively. He told me both these books were **VERY** revealing and worthy of the "R.A.M.S. treatment". He agreed to purchase the two books on my behalf and send them to me. He did and I have them in my library now awaiting further action.

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At this time, I was under a lot of stress. The business was not going very well, due to the oil crisis and I was really hustling trying to keep things going. Well, in late July of 1986, I got a letter from France, from the Filiation. It said, in fine: due to my communications with Camille Coudari, the Filiation would like, no the MASTER, would like to meet me on the native soil of the Filiation. Once I arrived, I would understand why the trip across the Atlantic was necessary. So, if I could pick a day between August 3 and 14, they would arrange for a rendezvous! Wellsir!

Several questions popped to my mind. First, who would pay for the trip (although I suspected I already knew this answer! How long would I be there? What would the purpose of the trip be? And did the fact that I spoke virtually no French mean anything? Whew. If I was going to haul off for Clermont-Ferrand (wherever **THAT** was), I needed a little reassuring. No?

So, I wrote this letter off in haste. I also had several personal problems. Like how could I get off from work for this escapade? How could I possibly justify spending all that money when things were, well, "cash-flow-slim"? And so on.

While awaiting a reply from France, I discussed this with a good friend who has some interest in the occult if not alchemy. A genuine interest as can be seen. My friend said: "I think you should go. There could be many implications". In my own sweet manner I asked if he was going to buy me a round-trip ticket to France? He replied: "Well, if you don't mind going tourist class " I admitted I wouldn't mind! Seems he had accrued a lot of mileage under his American Airlines AAdantage plan and was

willing to let me cash one in for a round-tripper. Whew. And he "booted in" discount ticket for Sheraton hotel and a week of free car rental. Wow. I graciously accepted.

Other problems were solved by the Universe, which seemed BENT on my getting there! My job terminated. An inquiry for a speaking engagement was augmented by a sale of a large order of R.A.M.S. materials. Voila!(as they say!) I now had the time and some spending money as well. With no further ado, I started making arrangements. Getting the ticket, calling Mme. Roux, etc etc. Everything, as it turned out, got down to "squeaking in" and "in the nick of time" situations.

The tickets required a certain amount of time to process. Not enough time, through the "regular" channels, as it turned out, for me to make it. So. With the help of some friends, we got some "inside" data and managed to go pick up the tickets (an 'impossibility' I was told!) the day before I would have to leave if I was to be able to spend at least five days or so with the Filiation. We did it. Also, a call to Madame Roux revealed I was quite lucky in catching her as she was about to join the Filiation in their "camp-in-the-woods" where there was no phone!. Wow!!!

Now Mme. Roux speaks o.k. English except when she gets excited which is about one minute into any series of communications! I asked her to "hang loose" and I called Nathalie in Colorado a French translator. I explained to Nathalie what I wanted and had her call Mme. Roux with my message as to what I wanted done.

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Specifically, this was to have Camille call me (he is fluent in English and French) so we could iron out details. The Thursday night, prior to my leaving the next Tuesday, he called at four ayem, and the conversation was something like this: Camille: "Mr. Nintzel"? Yes. "When can you arrive in France?" On Wednesday morning at 9:45 August 13. "O.K. From Orly, take a cab to Paris to Gare d'Lyon. Take a train to Clermont-Ferrand where you will change to a train that takes you to Brioude. I will meet you at the trainstation in Brioude at 5:45 in the afternoon. Oh, do you have a sleeping bag? I ask because there may not be room in the house for you?" Well, uh, yes.. "Good. Airight. See you next Wednesday". CLICK. Hello? Camille, Hello, operator, operator... .hello. Silence reigned supreme and the die was cast!

First thing was the plane had a "little tinkering to be done on

the electrical system". This caused an hour and a half delay. Realize, there is no phone where I can call Camille and Mme Roux is now in the camp and not at home. And, before I left, a friend from India, Pierre, who had taken up summer residence in Lyons, wrote and said, "Don't bother coming. It will be a waste of time".

We made up ten minutes time and arrived an hour late. 10:30 am and the train to C-F was to leave at 12:07pm. First cabby wanted 400 Francs to go to Gare d'Lyon. "Trop Cher" said I. (too much). I got a guy who would go for 100 francs the going rate. Hit it son! We arrived and I was 'schlepping' two suitcases (one with my sleeping bag in it) and a "U-Tot'M" hanging around my neck. I mean we are talking **WEIGHT** here!!

At the trainstation I huffed and puffed to the information desk where they, it turned out, spoke 'Anglais'. In the queue rotation, I came up and panted, "I need a ticket for Clermont-Ferrand. Where..." "I" he said. "I"? Oui, "I"! and he pointed out to the great spaces. I espied "guichets" or ticket counters. They had letters A... .M lit up on them. I ran to "I" and.. .no one home! I ran back to the info counter and (im)patiently awaited my turn. It was now around 11:30 am. I said: "There is no one at "I". He said: "Ten minutes". Ah. I 'hung out' for ten minutes. No signs of life and it was getting to be quarter of twelve. I ran back. "For God's sake, where else can I get a billet for Clermont-Ferrand"? "Any ticket window" quoth he. "But" I whined "You told me "I". "Train **LEAVES** on Track "I". You can buy ticket at **any** window". Oy.

I huffed to a window and the clock spun inexorably on. If I miss the train, no way I can call and explain I am on a later train, right? RIGHT! This si the BIG one. I explain to the chap in front of me using my newly bought French-English-French dictionairé. He was sympathetic but not enough to let me go ahead. In fact, he wrote a check for his ticket and spent some time fetching suitable i.d. God! I finally bellied up to the Guichet and in my best French croaked: Une billét pour Clermont-Ferrand, premier classe, sil vous plait". Ticket in hand I sped for track I. My nervous eye sought a clock. It was noon-straight up! Seven minutes to go before the choo choo went bye-bye without me!!!

Track I, was of course, at the far end. With my suitcases causing me to weave like a drunken Godzilla and my travel bag swinging rakishly from side-to-side, I hoofed it to track I. One

train so no decisions to make. I jumped on...it started off..now!

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I should mention, that before I left, I made a reservation for Tuesday night at the Sheraton-Montparnasse (at \$160/night) in Paris. I also wrote friends in Switzerland, Belgium, France, Paris, Pierre in Lyons (who I wished very much to meet), Andorra, Italy, Spain, Germany, Norway and Portugal. I invited all to meet me in Paris at the Sheraton and we would get together, have dinner and generally groove on one another's presence.

As the train slicked its way out of Gare d'Lyon, I slumped in a chair trying to regain my breath and slow my beating heart. I started to wonder how I could be so stupid as to do this. I could be home slipping into a nice dry martini and here I am huffing and puffing my way to some unknown destination.

The conductor's harumph startled me and I handed over the ticket. He said something in French which I couldn't get. "Je Americaine. Je ne comprend pas" said I. "First Class" said he. "This IS first class ticket" I huffed. "Teecket EES first class. Thees coach is second class". Oh. I trudged on into the night. (at least to the next car).

I looked at the ticket. (Computer generated). It said: "Clermont-Ferrand via Nevers". Via Nevers? Did that mean I had to change at Nevers? Oh shoot. Well, I found a woman who knew enough English to make her dangerous and between her and my trusty dictionary we concluded this train went straight through to Brioude. In fact, she was "going out of Brioude" so just stick along. Alright! At Clermont-Ferrand, we realized that, in my haste, I had not specified BRIOUDE. Uh oh. So, at C-F I had to schlep my bags to a guichet to get a ticket. Incidentally, I had been told, quite incorrectly, that everything in France was cheap due to the superior worth of the dollar. Ha ha. Accordingly, I went to Deake-Perrera and purchased only a thousand Francs worth of French currency. A mistake. By the time I bought the Brioude leg of the ticket, I had spent five hundred of my 1000 francs!! And a week to go! I felt queasy again.

Then, I couldn't find my way back to the lady who was "sponsoring" me. Too many passageways. I ran back and forth and finally found her. She motioned me to get on the train. It lurched forward. As I swung suitcases aboard, and jumped, I noticed the terminal said that this train was going to...NIMES!

I nearly had a stroke. I hurriedly sought my dictionary and inquired of the lady. Oh yes, this train WAS going to Nimes. Where she was in fact, going. But, but, I thought this was the train to Brioude. Oh yes, it goes to Brioude. But, which is it? Nimes or Brioude? Both, she said firmly. I suddenly realized, it must stop at Brioude on the way to Nimes! (the case.)

I sat down and the lady next to me started a conversation. "Je ne comprend". She shrugged and stared out the window. The lady (a third one) next to me, said "Next stop is Brioude". AH!! As we pulled into a little jerkwater town, the conductor clearly announced: "ARVANT". I looked at the lady, she grabbed her schedule, looked at it, at the sign coming into view which said: "Arvant" and shrugged HER shoulders and stared out the window!

My "first" lady came in shortly and said: "Next stop is Brioude. Bonne chance". Yeah. Next stop WAS Brioude and I disembarked, walked to the stationhouse. It was 5:45 and deserted!

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This of course, set me heart racing. Was this not the right place? The right day? The right, for God's sake, country? And why wasn't I home slipping into a nice dry Martini? I flopped into a bench and decided I could do no more than wait. After ten minutes, a young, bearded man came in. He looked around, saw me and said:

"Mr. Nintzel"? Yes, oh YES, thats me! Said I quite calmly.

It was Camille, of course. We lead me to the car and we drove out of Brioude and into La Chappelle Laurent. A lovely, tiny French Village. At a three story stone building encompassing many acres of land, we opened a gate and drove in. I saw many tents and cars. The cars had license plates from places other than France.

Camille introduced me to some people, and one, George, spoke German, so we got along pretty well with broken German and dictionary French. I was then introduced to Mme. Tu Trih, one of the "incorruptibles". These are five women Solazaref has personall trained. This lady was of Vietnamese extraction. When introduced, I said "Comment alléz vous"? She turned to Camille and laid a lot of verbs on him. Camille explained that she felt that such comments were inapporprate for this type of place. Uh oh. I explained to Camille, that in addition to that, Bon Jour was the only other French phrase I had readily committed to memory. He suggested I limit myself to Bon Jour. . .at least to her. I found out that this building was strictly for women and children. The wives of males alchemists who did not wish to

participate in the rigors of alchemical camp life or just had no great interest in alchemy anyway. I met one or two and had a pleasant, if difficult, conversation. The kids, once they knew I spoke no French, had fun with me anyway. They, continually speaking French, intuiting I would devine their meaning. And so I did, and so did they.

Camille then started to pack the little Renault station wagon, in which we had come, with food. He ran a "shuttle" three times a day from this house to the camp, bringing the appropriate meal. This one was to be dinner. And I was to have my first meal with the alchemists. We departed and passed through some lovely meadows that overlooked valleys formed by the volcanice subsidence. The view was spectacular. Passed old windmills, and finally came to a rutted road that was to lead down 1000m to the valley floor below.

And down we went. At the base, Camille drove to a shelter, rough, but expertly made with plastic sheets covering it all. The sheets had water in them and they acted as "air conditioners" during the day, the evaporating water keeping all remarkably cool. Half-rounds consituted benches for the tables. All sawn from local timber and lashed together. A remarkable job, I thought. Camille's arrival always, as I was to learn, brought the men. Like Pavlov's dogs!! And they came and preparations for the evening meal were underway. A tin plate, plastic bowl and cup and a fork and spoon were secured for me. Soon we assembled, standing, at the tables. We joined hands in prayer and the Master then arrived. He lead all in a very Catholic-oriented rituel. Then we sat. (I wish the half round had been placed with the flat side UP!) The 'dining room attendants' started to serve. First, wine. A bottle per each four diners. Then, the customary buttered, rough, bread. Then the meal.

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I might as well set down here, in one fell swoop, what mealtimes were like, in general, so not to repeat myself. First of all, I was amazed at how delicious everything was. And there was always plenty to eat and drink. Every morning, the wooden box of buttered peasant (like corn-rye) bread appeared. As did jars of miel (honey) and various local jams. Pitchers of cold fresh milk were passed. Boxes of "Meusli" a sort of granola was available and usually, but not always, some fresh fruit (melon, Queen Claude plums-of which I have become inordinately fond-pears, peaches, etc.). Some mornings there was cheese. Usually a light bleu and always "Tomme". I brought home a wheel of this lovely fromage!

There was usually a salad with a marvelous dressing made from malt, oil and vinegar and spices. Always a vegetable. And even a simple dish of haricots vert when cooked, lovingly, with butter, garlic and spices, came out a culinary wonder. Entrees were varied and delicious. Once it was a rough pate en crouete, once marinated lamb chops grilladé, once brown rice with a sort of "hash" on it. Great. One night, Nadia (an Indian-German girl) made some Indian dishes. Super. And one night, sigh, they brought out what looked like pizza pies without topping. There were actually huge shortbread "cookies" and they ladled a custard on this and covered it with the freshest, largest framboise (raspberrys) man has ever seen. Merci! Well, you have the idea now.

The first night, it was question and answer time. I was the answerer and everyone else had a 'whack' at asking questions. One chap asked, (and he was Italian--there being Italians, Belgians, Columbians, Portugese and one Yankee) "You write people all over the world"? Yes, said I. "Have you ever written to an Italian named Luigi Veranacchi?" I said, why yes, for years, but we have never met. "I am Luigi" said he!

Another chap, from Lisbon, proved to be the best friend of the man who first told me about Solazaref! One fellow wanted to know my opinion of Western Imperialism encroaching into Europe. Say What sucker? Solazaref (yes he was present) indicated this was an inappropriate question for this forum. Well, yeah! Solazaref announced we should celebrate my arrival by passing out some cigars; which he proceeded to do. He asked is I wanted one, he puffing away. I said "No, I don;t smoke, BUT, in honor of this auspicious occasion, I would take a puff of his! While he roared with delight, once my statement had been translated, there was a burst of applause. Solazaref came over and asked, through the interpreter, if I thought it strange for an adept to smoke and drink. I replied in German, as I was told he spoke that language, "Not at all. In fact, I like a little toddy for my body now and then myself". He roared, ran to get a bottle of Mayville (a rather potent little drink made from tiny plums) and another burst of applause. He then asked if I thought it strange to see some of the brother alchemists wearing uniforms. (sort of belted sheaths, they wore) I said: "Being of German extraction, i am not only used to uniforms but put on arm bands and boots when no one is looking"!! (I wasn't sure if my subtle humor would be appreciated... .but...) A TREMENDOUS burst of applause and laughter. (They loved me in Sheboygan, mom!) And so it went until at 9:30, as per usual, we gathered around a roaring



bonfire to listen to the "Mater" talk.

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The first night, Solazaref allowed ANY questions to be asked. I asked about HIS Master. This was a Russian priest, Fra. Michel who came to France to teach Solazaref alchemy. After a few years, he returned to Russia to siad with the forces of Light. Last they heard, he had been put in the Gulag. (Not known is if this was by plan or simply the Soviets way of saying they didn't like Light!)

It was asked, how he came to be an adept. Solazaref responded that he was once a plain old, struggl ing alchemist. However, he had a visit from extra-terrestrials. Following this, and a subsequent encounter, he was transformed into an "Adept". Hmmmm. He also discoursed on how positive he was that the Soveits were going, within one year, take over all of France!!! Now, I thought this was paranoia at its finest. I voiced an objection that this was not possible. He asked who would stop the Soviets, if they did indeed try this. I replied, "Well, the U.S.". I was asked where we were when Hungary, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Lithuania, etc etc. fell. I said, "Well this is different. France is a N.A.T.O. country". Not so, it was pointed out, there had been an assassination attempt on the life of Charles DeGaulle. C.I.A. working with a NATO chap. DeGaulle felt a little 'blue' about being shot at by an ally and threw them out. So, they aren't NATO. It was pointed cut to me that there are some 10,000 KGB agents in France. They are called 'sleeping agents'. 'Sleeping' because they are keeping a low-profile. Working, teaching, being regular neighbors. However, when Russia will 'make a move', they will get the word and do whatever it is they are scheduled to do. (like sabotage, disrupt power, etc.)

Well, after listening to some more compelling arguements about this, I was forced to conclude the possibility, absurd as it seems, exists. Other Europeans agreed. I mean, Russia going into Afghanistan sounds fairly absurd, doesn't it? A friend in Norway assures me that the Soviets have been harrassing Sweden and Norway for some time hoping to make them take some step that can be construed as war-like and then 'retaliate' (by moving in). Remember the Russian submarine a few years ago detected in Malmö harbor in Sweden? A classical example. Turns out, the small tractor-treaded Russian subs have been detected off the coast of Japan and in the fjords of Norway! Frightening!

I was asked in various occult factions or groups in the U.S. are constantly at "war" with one another. I replied, "No. In fact,

as far as I can determine, and I am certainly no 'expert', they pretty much cooperate with one another". This was met with surprise. Turns out French groups, be they Masons, Rosicrucians or what have you, are of the opinion if you ain't one of them, you are the enemy! I was suprised at this until Solazaref reinforced this by pointing out there had been two assasination attempts on him. The last one, by four men with machine pistols! (He had been hit, but had a .45 automatic with him and fired back wounding two!! Solazaref is the master of Martial Arts, Zen Archery and (apparantly) the Colt .45. He kept a AK 47 in his tent at night!

Well, at 10:30 we turned in. I was assigned a tent but had brought my own sleeping bag. I slept extremely well having picked a handfull of raspberries that grew in abundance as a late snack. The air was now very cool, but sweet-smelling and pleasant.

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At 8:00 am, a drummer beat a tatoo to wake all and sundry. The stream that ran nearby provided (icy) cold water as an aid to wake up. Now one dared bathe in it. Brrrr. Few men shaved. The toilette was any space in the bushes. The "official" bathroom, and there were both ladies and gentlemen's, was a hole in the ground with a wooden shed around it to provide a modicum of modesty. The path leading to these, had, as you went forward, a bush with a string attached. If the string stretched across the path, the WC was occupied. Lovely.

This day, I was "shown around" and was very impressed with what I saw. First, they had found clay and built a kiln using the clay as a cover; which they baked. Then, they built a potter's wheel, from wood. They 'threw' the clay on the wheel making crucibles, retorts, dishes and the like. These were fired in the kiln. And a helluva good job at that. They built two furnaces, each one having either a pump-type bellows or holes in the structure by which, using hoses, one could puff into the thing to increase the heat.

There was "on the premises" an antimony mine. I crawled into the entrance, donned a hard hat complete with an acetylene miner's lamp, and with hammer and chisel worked in the mine for a few hours. Quite and experience. The stream had a tributary which went through a different section of the mine and it washed out chunks of antimony. SO, another task was to filter the stream searching for bits and pieces of antimony. They found plenty, high grade ore at that! The antimony was ground in a large metal mortar and pestle that Solazaref had made. (He has some devices

for sale, this is one. And a thing of beauty it is!) This was "purged" (of sulphur) in one of the furnaces. In the other, iron, tartar and nitre were added to "purify" the antimony. The molten metals being poured into a metal "cone" also made by Solazaref.

We gather juniper berries, pine and "achil" (maybe a plant called 'thousand flower'). In the morning, dew was gathered by dragging sheets on the ground. I inquired if this did not 'ground' the dew. Answer: NO. When I pointed out that Mutus Liber shows the sheet raised on stakes, I was told that the sheets in those days were often silk or other expensive cloth and they just didn't want to get them dirty. Hmmm. The flowers and berries he gathered and mashed were covered with the dew. The idea (and here is a little alchemical "goody" for you!) is that instead of putrefying the plant (i.e., making wine), a tedious process, the dew is macerated with the plant for a week or so and then it is distilled. The first fraction coming over will be dew and... the mercury of the plant. Then, one can add more dew and using now suitable apparatus, distill off the sulphur or essential oil. (This was a beautiful blue color due to the 'genveve' or juniper.

Solazaref, later, made a combination of the salt (laboriously calcined over a wood fire), oil and dew/mercury combination. He poured this into the herbal infusion one morning. (Every morning, the hot beverage was an herbal infusion. Once in a while they had "solube" or instant coffee in addition). This of course, was a medicine and was 'designed' to safeguard health for the camp. (And there were fifty of us!)

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As you may have guessed, one of the main purpose's of this 'alchemical encampment' was to teach one that even though the sources of glassware, chemicals, hot-plates, and the like, go away (as when the Russians might take over!!!), one can still be an alchemist and get what one needs from nature. Just like the 'ancients' did. No, not as convenient to be sure, but you can still 'operate' in a tightened environment. And we did. Oh, Solazaref also recommended, and we did, rolling naked in the morning dew. This will give you energy. Actually, I needed all the sleep I could get, so I only did it one morning. And yes, there WERE women as well as men in the camp! Modesty rolled down the einbankment....jnto the W.C.!!! Now, that night, even though we got drummed out of bed at 8:00am, I was up rapping until midnight and felt not a whit tired. Woke up bright eyed and bushy-tailed, too. Was it the dew? I think so! So, there is

another little "goody" for you. Of course, this needs to be done (and sure you can wear a bathing suit when you roll on your lawn past your neighbors' window!) before the sun hits the dew. The sun will start to dissipate the energy if it shines on it.

One day, the village celebrated the Feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary. We were given leave by Solazaref to "sit in" and had been invited by the local priests to attend mass. Armed with my trusty dictionary, I accepted a ride to town and wandered in. They had a local brass band that did a little parade down the main street of the village (La Chappelle Laurent) to the square where they proceeded to belt out some pop hits. Circa 1900! People danced in the streets, so did I. (Some sweet young thing grabbed a hold of me. Or was it the other way around? No matter!) The smell of French cooking permeated the air and set my gastric juices bubbling. A nearby set of concessions and rides found me a "merguéz" seller. This is a North African sausage surrounded by a chunk of French bread and swathed in some snappy mustard. Then the pastisserie and a Napoleon followed by an éclair. (just sampling the local goodies!) At this point, I ran into Jacky Bonneau. His wife Audréé and he were at the camp. And they spoke English. I invited Jacky to the local bistro for a drink. He ordered for us, Panache. This is a mixture of a third limonad (Seven-Up) and filled with beer. I did not think I would enjoy such a combination, but it was pretty good. Jacky asked me what I planned on doing after the camp broke up. I told him I had made a reservation at the Paris Montparnasse hotel for Tuesday and wanted to go there to meet friends. (I had written many alchemist friends in Europe to meet me there) Also, I wanted very much to visit Pierre Munier near Lyons but did not know how to contact him. He suggested I go home with he and Audréé to their home near Rouens. Paris was less than an hour train ride away and I could easily get there when I wanted to. Since they had a car, and I would not have to travel by train for six hours, I joyfully agreed.

At the camp, Stefane Proniewski, who also spoke English, invited me to spend time with him and his wife in their Parisian apt. Unfortunately, they had to be out of town until the day I was slated to return to the States. Some other time.

That afternoon, I met with Mme. Tu Trih. She and Camille and Dominique, their publisher, talked to me about the book Solazaref had written and which was one of my reasons for coming to France!

Camille had already told me about the contents of the book. Solazaref gave techniques of becoming "in tune" with the matter the alchemist works with, how to make the vessels in the 'correct shape' so they will actually 'work' during an operation, etc etc. I was anxious to get the book. At this meeting, it was agreed that I take the book and see if I can get it translated into English. Seems they they are as eager as I am to see it get translated. However, they were adamant in my finding the "right person", preferably someone with a 'feel' if not understanding of alchemy. This effort will probably represent the last work I do with respect to alchemical translations. If my lady, who has done so much magnificent work already, will consent to do this last item, it will be done extremely well as she is superb. A master of French and German and is quite "in tune" with alchemy due to certain personal experiences. So, I trundled "La Introitus Lapide Philosophorum" home with me and will soon start to see if in fact I can arrange to get this tome translated. Now, the Filiation also suggested two other items, one by Canseliet and one by Atoréne, to be translated, but these will be of lesser priority than Solazaref's book.

On the last day, it was clean-up time. Everything was dismantled, dis-assembled and everything restored to the condition as when we arrived. The idea was, to let it look like no one had been here! Furnaces, kiln, wheel, etc., all were taken down. What was done with the heavy logs used to build the eating place, I am not sure. But, when done, it was very difficult to tell anyone had been here!

Following the noon-day meal of haricot vert, coté de agneau and fresh framboise and cream, Solazaref took a sort of medallion. He cut it into four parts. Gave one fourth to the Italians, one to the Portugese (Dr. Estefan de la Miranda with whom I had become very friendly), one to the French and one to me as a mark of brotherhood and fraternité. He told me, this medal was transmuted from tin to silver. And, if I wished, I could have it tested. HmMMM. In any event, a nice gesture. He told me he would like to come to Texas to join in the Sweetwater rattlesnake round-up. I told him to "come on. .that he could stay with me and we could transmute a little more tin into silver". He bellowed with approval. (Has a lovely sense of humor!) Finally, he may just DO that as he would like to consider starting an American branch of the Filiation. I told him to holler when he was ready.

We made our farewells and Audréé and I started walking up the hill. Jacky's Renault was a little puny and he didn't want to go up the rutted road with all the people and all the suitcases. So, we left the suitcases and started the 1000 meter hike. The air is thin there, folks. In less than a 100 meters I was huffing and puffing. Audréé, bless her heart, suggested we stop to catch our breath. Yeah. About five or six of these and we were close to the summit. And it was also quite hot. Just as I thought I would drop from exhaustion, Jacky came wheeling by and picked us up. Whew.

It is about a six hour drive to Buchy where the Bonneaus lived. So, I was treated to more French countryside views. In Southern France, most of the buildings have red tile roofs. Just like L.A.! (or Spain, I suppose!!) Now, the French like to drive at 130km/hour about 2 feet from the person in front!

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Outside Clermont-Ferrand, we ran into a serious traffic problem. Seems a cyclone had struck an hour before us. We found it killed 54 people, wiped out a trailer camp and caused considerable structural damage. Much of which we saw. So, we got delayed for a fair amount of time. Then, freeway construction in Paris caused further delays. One time, on a hill, Jacky had to hit the break in an emergency stop. We slid ten feet, sideways. I was unconcerned, merely requesting some toilet paper! I told Jacky and Audréé and Pierre (from Buxelles) that I was anxious to have a large bowl of ice and some grape soda or orange soda. I explained that this was Jus de Raisin with L'eau avec bullé. (Grape juice with sparkling water). You know, fruit flavored soda water. They asked, a little incredulous, if I really liked that sort of thing. "You bet" said I. "With lots of ice". (ice, you see, is very rare in the smaller villages) Well, we stopped to eat about eleven pm at a country inn. I went to the W.C. and when I returned, on the table was a bottle of Jus de Raisin and a 'fifth' of Limonade. (like carbonated water with a squeeze of lemon). And, a bowl of ice. I was quite touched by their thoughtfulness. And drank it all.

Dinner was Prix Fixe at 70 francs. (about 11 dollars) We had salad, melon in port (for me) canard fume for the Bonneaus, I had Coq au Vi, they had escargot (many), for dessert I had poivre belle Helene. (ice cream and chocolate sauce over a poached pear. Nummy) Then the obligatory plate of various cheeses. A fluffy goat cheese was my favorite although I managed a little of the Tomme and a little of the Brie. Some excellent Pouillée Fuse (we were in that region) washed it down. Not bad for 11

bucks. However, everything else, except for this Prix Fixe dinners, is fairly expensive)

The Bonneaus live in a house that is 250 years old. Across the street, the farmer kept cows. (I introduced myself, the next morning on a walk, to the cows and offered to conduct a Tupperware party for the ladies that night! They stared mutely at me. Sigh!)

When we got to their house, I HAD to take a shower. We talking lots of brown water going down the drain!) And a night in a bed with clean sheets. And no drummer in the morning. Ah. Audréé made some wonderful croissants, some confiture, buerre and miel and hot coffee. Yeah man. This camping jazz is alright, but I find I am a creature of comforts, by-and-large.

We spent the day calling the Sheraton-Montparnasse to see if I had any messages. NONE. Seems one chap from Paris (as indicated, lw rote many European friends to try and meet me in Paris) was going to the States as I was going to France. Ha. Also, in Spain, Julian and Manuel had set out on a tour of Europe themselves. Urs in Switzerland was busy, Jose in Portugal was in Israel, Jean in France was on vacation (as were most Frenchmen during the month of August) and so on. Well, I managed to find Pierre Munier in Lyons wjho could not make it to Paris, nor I (now) to Lyons. He actually lives in India and we had never talked or met, just corresponded. Now we had a nice, satisfying chat on the telephone. In fact, he and the Bonneaus got to talking. With that, I cancelled my hotel in Paris and opted to stay with my new-found friend, Jacky and Audréé for another day.

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And it was a delightful time. We talked about alchemy, for the most part and life in France vs the U.S., life in general, and of course, books! Jacky has a marvelous library. He gave me a couple of books, in English, that he copies of in French. I gave him my personal copy of "Golden Chain of Homer" and he gave me a book of the color plates of "Splendor Solis". What generous, loving people they are. The next day, they drove me to Rouens. We visited the incredible Cathedral. Astomnishing. The markets, shops, a musueum or two and then back home where Audréé had made, for me, some wonderfulo soup along with the Pate and other goodies. The next day, she gave me a bag of Queen Claude plums, which I so loved and put a large rose from her garden in it. (I told her roses were my fabvorite flowers).

The next day, after a tearful farewell, Jacky drove me to the train station. I got off at Gare d'Azare and grabbed a cab. He spoke good Italian.. .but little English. However, he took me under the Arc d'Triomphe, down the Champs Elysee and to Notre Dame Cathedral. It was pretty whirlwind, alright, but I did get to see some of Paris. It is wonderful, but you know what? I will take the U. S. of A. anytime. We are just not aware of what we have in our own backyard. Yes, I loved visiting France. as I did England. Would go back at the drop of a hat. And mostly because of the many friends I made there!

In sum, it was a magical tour alright. Many things, I feel, were 'started' and remain to gestate before they come to fruition. What are they? I don't really know. I can only feel that there is SOME thing. I learned some things, got different viewpoints on many things and, most importantly, met some wonderful people along the way who are stars in my galaxy of marvelous friends.

As a sort of postscript, when I got back, I started my new job with Kentek Services, Jody had to go into the hospital for two days for an Angiogram. She has blockages, the bad news. However, the good news is they think they can alleviate some of this via oral medication. We will just have to see.

Shortly after, I virtually collapsed. I was 'down' all Labor Day weekend, running 102+ fever. The next weekend, something. What? Not sure, but we figure it was no doubt stress-related. I have been "going" for six months. Up everynight for months til 2:00 am writing and working translated items, corresponding, etc. Also, trying to keep the business going, various other problems that were quite stressful, etc. Then when Jody announced she had to have the Angiogram, well, that might have been the proverbial 'last straw' and my body caved in.

We are both in fine shape, as I write this. Jody is taking care of herself and I have been going to bed at 11:00am and getting up at 6:30. Even on weekends. So, some physical changes have taken place, in addition to some mental and spiritual ones! What all this is leading to, only time will tell. Anyway, there is a bit lengthy chronicle of my Alchemical Mystery Tour to France. I hope you enjoyed my recounting of it as much as I have in writing of it. PEACE and LOVE.

In L.V.X.

*Kans*