

Dandy Andy

Remembering Andy Varipapa's Whirlwind Tour of Europe in 1965

THIS YEAR MARKS THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY of my grandfather Andy Varipapa's AMF-sponsored tour across 14 European countries. I was 9 years old in 1965, so I didn't know about the trip, which lasted five weeks, until he returned and stopped by our house to deliver some gifts he bought. He presented me with a distinctive pocketknife featuring images of London's Heathrow Airport — a memento unlikely to pass through today's modern airport security.

Andy visited nine countries in the first three weeks, including six U.S. military bases in Germany. Many of these locations were sites he had previously visited in 1951 on a Brunswick-sponsored tour, which included Hall of Famer Joe Norris and renowned billiards champion Willie Mosconi, a close friend of Andy's and fellow trick-shot artist.

Upon Andy's return to London, he and Paul Lane, then Director of Marketing for AMF Europe, also visited two bases in England, including RAF Mildenhall, which had just been modernized with new AMF 82-70 automatic pinsetters. Besides being a base for the Royal Air Force, Mildenhall is the current home of the USAF 100th Air Refueling Wing.

"Someone once said to me, 'If you don't have an anecdote, then you never knew Andy.' In my experience, I must agree," Lane told me in an email after we reconnected at last year's Bowl Expo in Denver.

"Apart from being involved in the planning and scheduling [of Varipapa's European-wide tour], my direct involvement with Andy was limited to two British bowling centers and a 210-mile train ride from London to the city of Manchester in the Northeast."

During that train ride, Lane recalled, "Andy, Alan Mole, AMF U.K.'s Public Relations director, and I were sitting at a table for four when the steward informed us that they were full for lunch and asked us if he could seat a fourth passenger at

On Guard

Varipapa got a glimpse of London's famed guard horses during his whirlwind 1965 tour.





Far and Wide

No destination was too far-flung for Varipapa to bring his inimitable trick show.

our table. We agreed. He returned with an elderly and very prim and proper tiny English lady who made me think of Miss Marple.

"When the food arrived, Andy observed the delicate way she was eating, nudged her, and said, 'Gee honey, you sure eat pretty.' To which she replied, in a plum-in-the-mouth, high-pitched English accent, 'English people do not speak to each other on trains.'"

"Andy nudged her again and said, 'I ain't English, Honey.'

"We finally made it to Manchester, where Andy was scheduled to give an exhibition at the Granada Bellview Bowling Center, which was owned by Granada Television. As soon as we arrived, Andy walked straight down to the lanes, looked at the General Manager and said, 'There's no oil on the lanes.' 'No,' said the manager, 'We were waiting for you to tell us how much and where you'd like us to oil.' Andy's response was, 'There's no oil on the lanes.' 'No,' said the manager and repeated what he said previously. This exchange was repeated at least once more, but happily he finally told us how he'd like them to prepare the lanes, and the show went on to the delight of a packed gallery of avid bowling fans."

When Lane encountered my grandfather again in April of 1981 during his 90th birthday party at the Wheatly Hills Country Club

and Golf Course, held in tandem with that year's PBA Long Island Open, "Andy said, 'Paul, England, Train Ride.' I was amazed, as it had been some 16 years since we first met and spent no more than 36 hours in each other's company back in 1965. What an amazing memory he had. And he was as sharp as ever, astounding the packed galleries of bowling fans who came to watch him perform his bag of trick-shots."

My grandfather visited numerous bases over a 25-year span, beginning in 1940 and concluding with the 1965 European Tour, which was the most extensive of his career. In 2015, I donated this scrapbook to the International Bowling Museum and Hall of Fame.

Andy's dedication to supporting the military is reflected throughout his career. Inspired by his commitment and through the encouragement of former Bowlers to Veterans Link President John LaSpina, I became an active supporter of BVL, an organization established by former President Truman to assist wounded and retired veterans. Given Andy's unwavering support over the years, it is an honor to continue what he started.

— Andy Varipapa III