

The

Venezia Voice

Tuesday, 25 September 2007

Day 2 of 11

Vicenza and Venice (Venezia), Italy



We were hosted at a welcome dinner in Vicenza by Lisa Preysler, right, wife of Col. Charles Preysler, commander of the U.S. Army's 173rd Combat Brigade. Others at the dinner were (L-R): Beth Thompson, Shay Morris and Annette Evans, civilian employees at Caserma Ederle, and Nan Williamson, whose mother Margaret will be honored by the 173rd today.

Long night's flight to Venice lands weary travelers in Italia

A couple of hundred strangers don't drape themselves all over each other in pretend sleep except in the most desperate of circumstances.

But there comes a point in the coach section of transatlantic red-eye flights – and in our case it came pretty early – when fatigue is at a peak, space is at a minimum, the movie is over and it's the only thing that can be done.

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Here's our full itinerary

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Sept 23	24 Fly to Italy	25 Arrive in Venice	26 Vicenza Dedication of Margaret Williamson Memorial Garden	27 Vicenza to Lake Como	28 Lake Como	29 Lake Como to Rome
30 Rome	Oct 1 Rome to Florence & Tuscany	2 Tuscany	3 Tuscany to Milan	4 Fly to United States	5	6

Weary travelers land in Italy

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Fortunately, before anything that resembled a terrorist act occurred, the rays of the early rising sun came through the cabin windows indicating the end of our flight to Venice, where we landed only half an hour late on a warm, humid morning.

We were trapped on the autostrada between the airport and Caserma Ederle in Vicenza, where we are being hosted by the U.S. Army, by a traffic jam that held hundreds of cars and trucks motionless for an hour. But we eventually arrived grungy and weary for the ceremony tomorrow that will honor Nan Williamson's mother for her service to the U.S. Army and in particular to the 173rd Combat Brigade based here. (See story below)

Lisa Preysler, wife of the brigade's current commander, hosted a small dinner for us tonight, but otherwise our first day in Italy was spent resting up from our night crossing the pond. Tomorrow's newsletter will have tourist and ceremony pictures.



Today we're in Vicenza, a city between Venice and Verona.

Why Nan, Beth and Jody are in Italy: Margaret Williamson

The late Margaret Williamson, Nan's mother, will be honored Wednesday, Sept. 26 with the dedication of a memorial garden by the U.S. Army's 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team at Caserma Ederle in Vicenza, Italy. She was founder of the Dependents Assistance Office, an organization that evolved into what the Army now calls Army Community Service.



As wife of General Ellis Williamson, the 173rd's commander in 1965 when it was deployed from Okinawa to become the Army's first ground combat unit in Vietnam, Mrs. Williamson assumed the critical role of leading and caring for some 700 family members left behind. She acted as counselor, mentor and guide to these dependents with financial and emotional problems, babies due and, inevitably, grief.

Mrs. Williamson reached out to the
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Would it be OK to call?

<i>When it's this time in California / it's this time in Italy</i>	<i>When it's this time in N.C. / it's this time in Italy</i>
9 a.m. / 6 p.m.	9 a.m. / 3 p.m.
Noon / 9 p.m.	Noon / 6 p.m.
3 p.m. / Midnight	3 p.m. / 9 p.m.
6 p.m. / 3 a.m.	6 p.m. / Midnight
9 p.m. / 6 a.m.	9 p.m. / 3 a.m.

Why Nan, Beth and Jody are in Italy: Margaret Williamson

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 brigade wives on Okinawa for help. Most of these were young women who had never had their spouse in a war zone – let alone injured or killed. Under her guidance, and with the help of officers left on island, the Dependents Assistance Office undertook to “take care of our own.” They helped to deliver death notifications, counsel those undergoing severe emotional distress, helped when children were sick, injured or born.

After the Brigade had been deployed about 90 days, Headquarters – Department of the Army decided that the Brigade’s dependents would not be allowed to remain on Okinawa. A whole new set of problems arose and the Dependents Assistance Office, with Mrs.

Williamson’s encouragement, stepped up to help. In conjunction with the Air Force and Army personnel, families were prepared to be evacuated off island – papers signed, forms completed, families notified.

Soon after the evacuation was completed, the Army created Army Community Service, modeled on Mrs. Williamson’s organization, which serves Army families worldwide today.

Margaret, a native of Morganton, N.C., was married to Ellis Williamson for 64 years. They lived in Washington, D.C., until last winter. He died Jan. 28, and she died Feb. 16 at age 88. They are buried together in Arlington National Cemetery.

Where we’re staying in Vicenza

Tuesday-Wednesday, 25-26 Sept.

EDERLE INN

Caserma Ederle, Bdlg. 345
 Viale Della Pace
 Vicenza, Italy

Caserma Ederle in Vicenza is the home to the Ederle Inn, a 12-room hotel. The hotel is operated by the U.S. Army for guests visiting the military base about 40 miles west of Venice.



You flew to Venice and didn't see Venice?

Hard to believe, isn't it?

But we wouldn't be here except for the U.S. Army, so we felt obligated for the first two days of our trip to let the Army schedule our time. We felt confident that since Caserma Ederle, the base where we are staying, is just 40 miles from Venice, their sight-seeing plan would include some canals, gondolas and the usual things you'd expect.

So for the remaining days of the trip, for which we were responsible for our own planning and reservations, we assumed we would have already seen Venice.

But the Army decided it wanted us to see Vicenza instead, and we will complete the trip having seen Venice only from across the lagoon at Marco Polo International Airport. Some of our future accommodations can't be changed at this point.

Whatever's Italian for *c'est la vie*.



What Venice looks like to people who do more than just use its airport.

Today's picture page

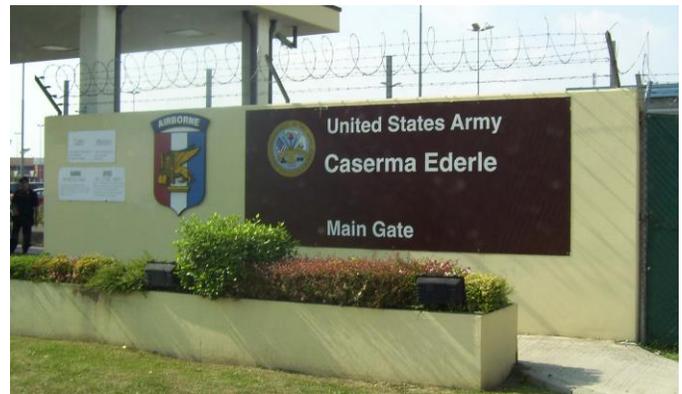


Left: Jody and Beth in Philadelphia before boarding flight to Italy. **Right:** Beth and Nan waking up before landing in Venice.



Ray from Panama, our Army driver, while we wait on the autostrada for traffic to get moving.

Main gate at Caserma Ederle outside Vicenza.



Jody and Lisa Preysler. Col. Preysler, her husband and commander of the 173rd, is currently in Afghanistan with the rest of the brigade. It is their second deployment to the Afghanistan war. They have also been deployed once to Iraq.

