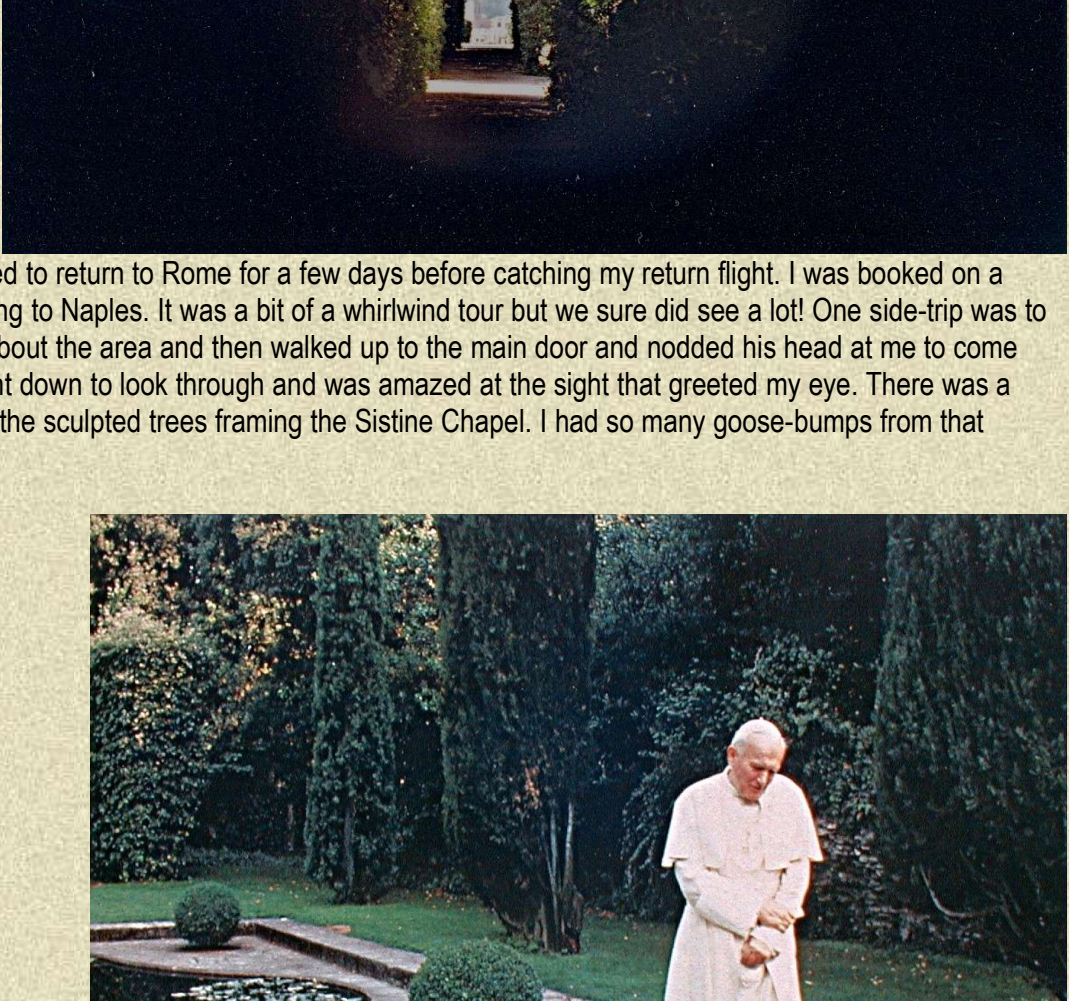


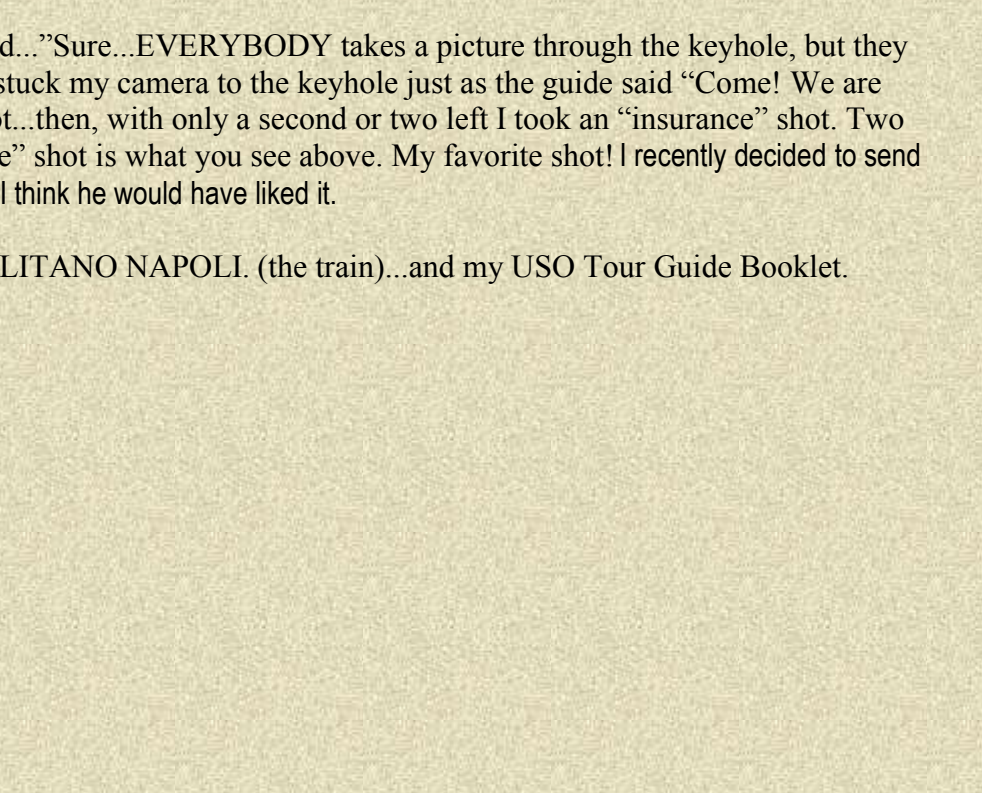
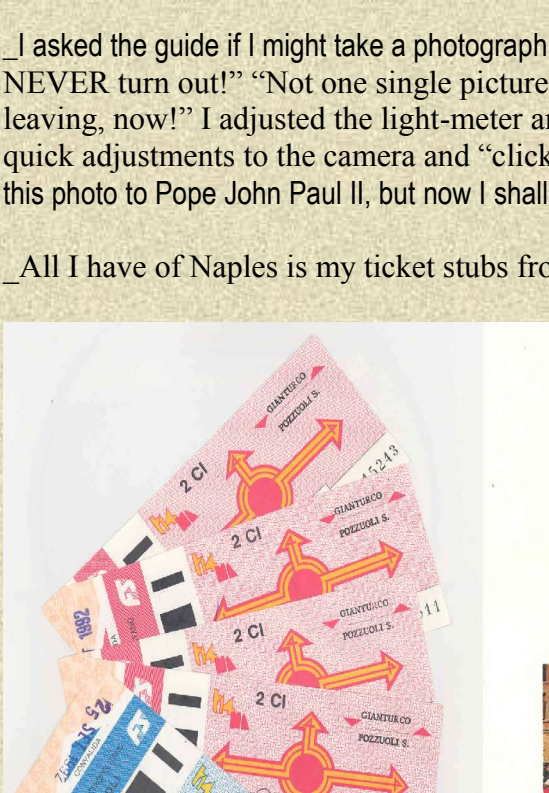
POPE JOHN PAUL II

_In 1992 I went back to Europe to visit friends living near Naples, Italy. It was a very nice trip and it was great to see my friends again. I am not sure which European country I have been in I would consider my favorite, so I guess I would sum it up by saying my "favorite" is whatever country I happen to be in at the time. Not all my trips have been wonderful, but I have always enjoyed traveling and exploring around different places and meeting people.

_The picture below is my favorite picture in the whole world. It is one of the very few pictures I have left from that trip through Italy. I changed to a new roll of film at the Vatican and set everything down on the base of a column and promptly walked away from several of my other rolls of film. They may still be there, but I kind of doubt it now. I am sure that I had many prise-winning photographs on those rolls, but I was so excited, I just walked away...



_After spending a week or so in Naples sightseeing (and eating), I needed to return to Rome for a few days before catching my return flight. I was booked on a USO tour of Rome and they would drop me off at my hotel before returning to Naples. It was a bit of a whirlwind tour but we sure did see a lot! One side-trip was to Castel Gondolfo, the summer residence of the Pope. Our guide told us about the area and then walked up to the main door and nodded his head at me to come closer. As I approached, he was pointing at the keyhole in the door. I bent down to look through and was amazed at the sight that greeted my eye. There was a walkway covered by trees, a walkway running across, and near the end, the sculpted trees framing the Sistine Chapel. I had so many goose-bumps from that sight! Amazing!

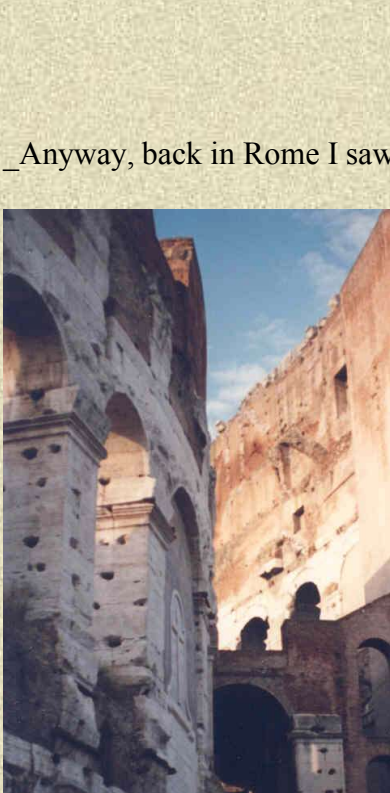


_I asked the guide if I might take a photograph through the keyhole and he said..."Sure...EVERYBODY takes a picture through the keyhole, but they NEVER turn out!" "Not one single picture has ever developed!" Well! I stuck my camera to the keyhole just as the guide said "Come! We are leaving, now!" I adjusted the light-meter and the focus and snapped a shot...then, with only a second or two left I took an "insurance" shot. Two quick adjustments to the camera and "click!" The result of that "insurance" shot is what you see above. My favorite shot! I recently decided to send this photo to Pope John Paul II, but now I shall never have the chance to do so. I think he would have liked it.

_All I have of Naples is my ticket stubs from the SERVIZIO METROPOLITANO NAPOLI. (the train)...and my USO Tour Guide Booklet.



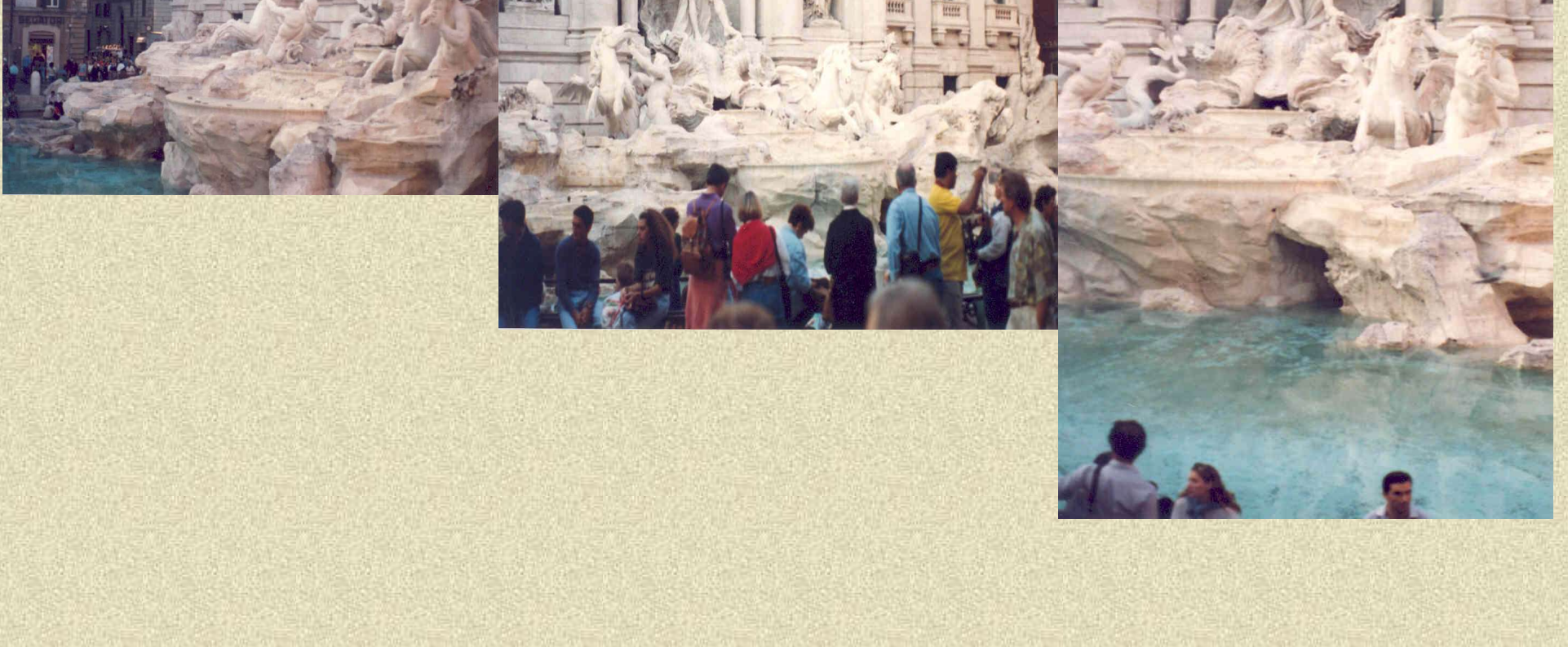
A few exchange receipts and one MILLE LIRE note...



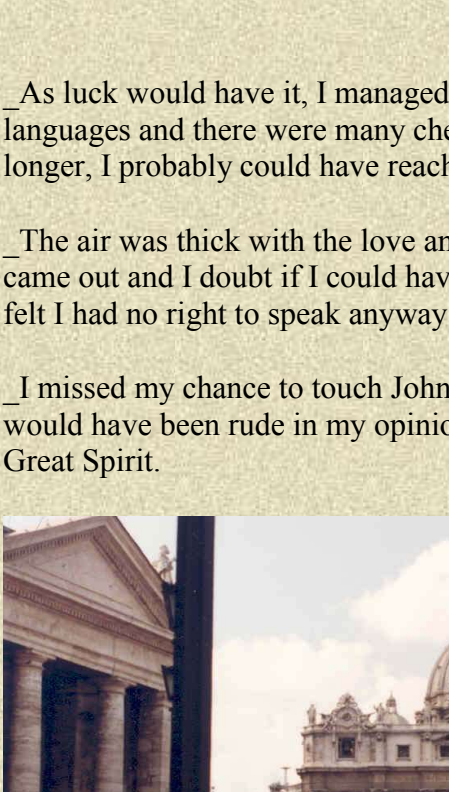
_I have a few pictures of Hurculanium and Pompeii and one picture of me on the top of Mt. Vesuvius and a rock I picked up, up there in the clouds! (the rock is at the bottom of the picture...I am at the top...just so you know.)



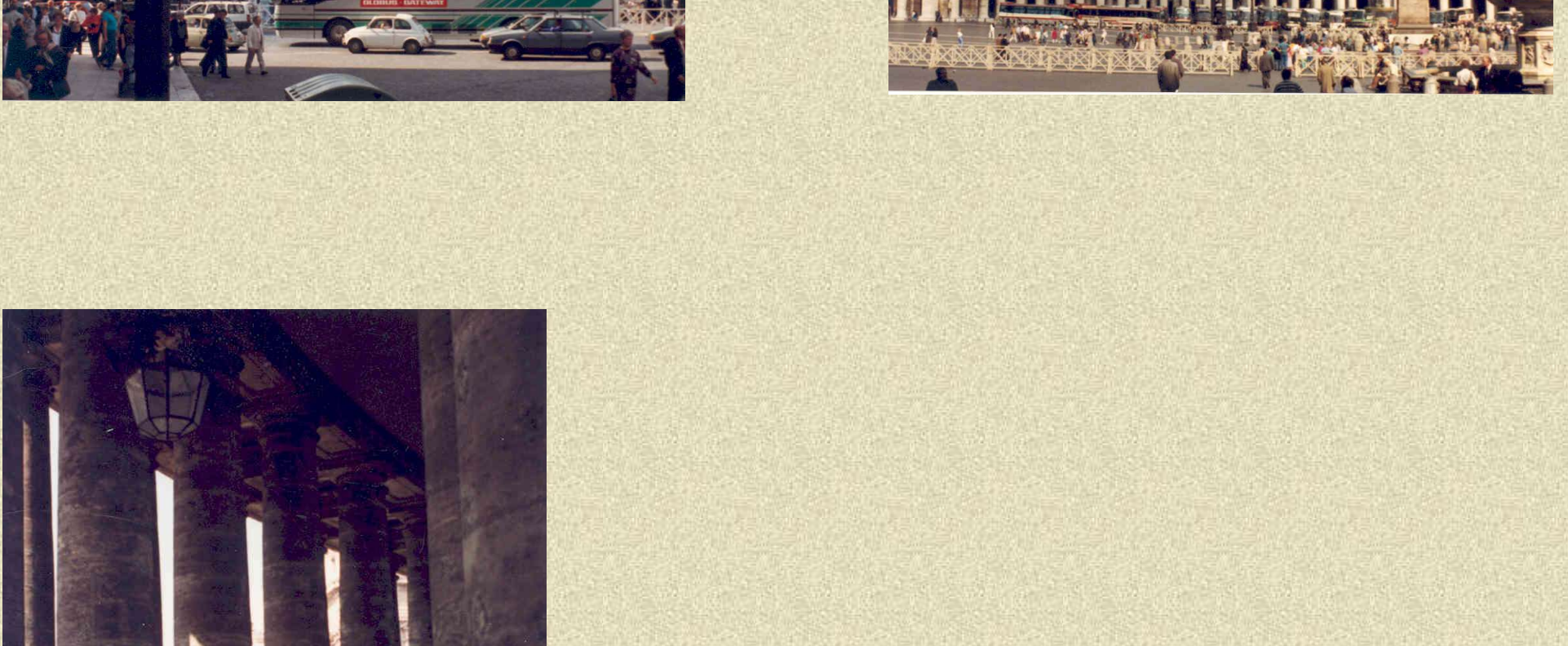
_Anyway, back in Rome I saw the Colosseum...



I saw the Spanish Steps...



_I gazed at the Trevi Fountain in awe...(I also tossed a coin over my shoulder!)

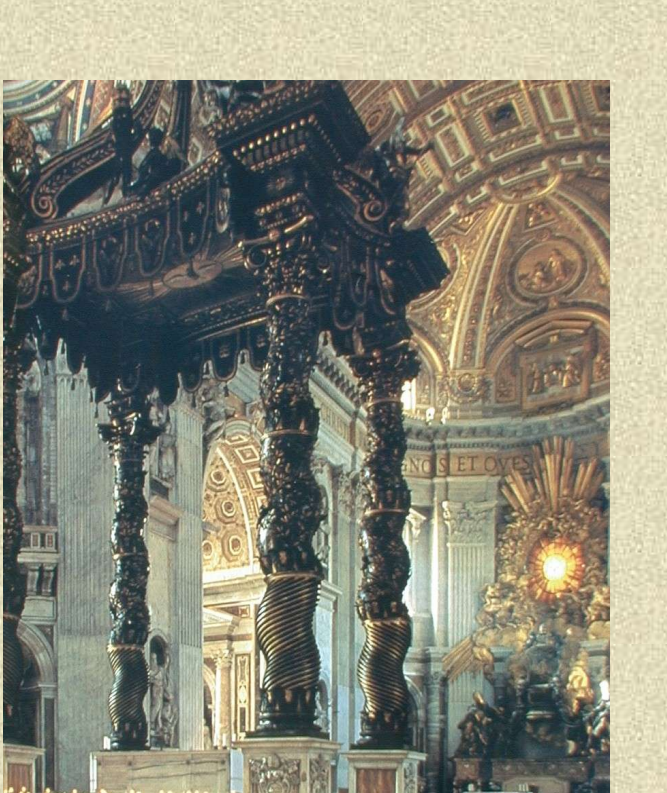
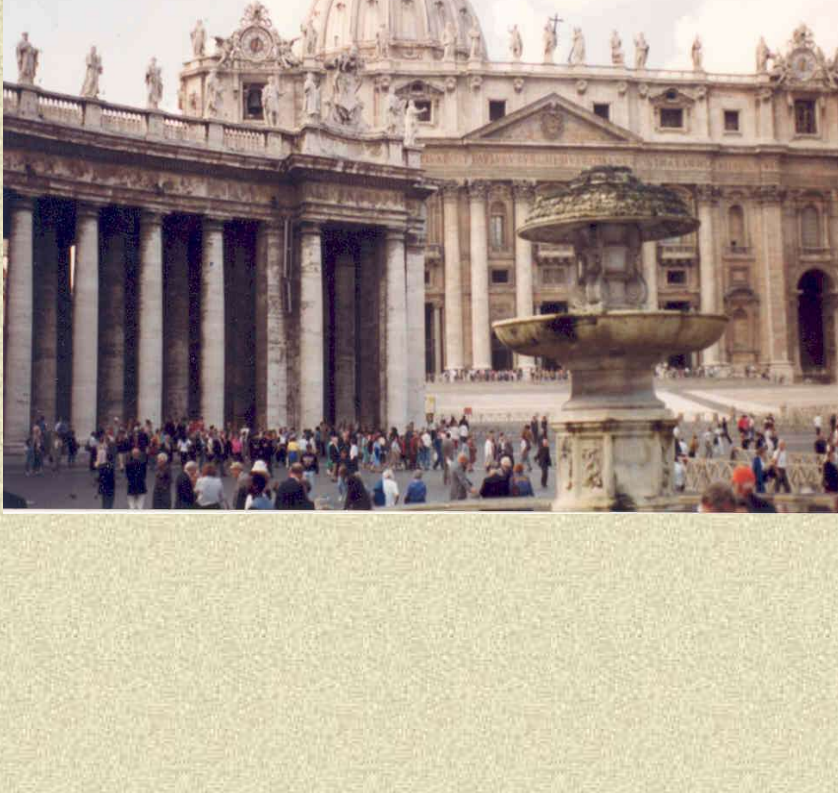


_and I saw part of the old Roman Empire...

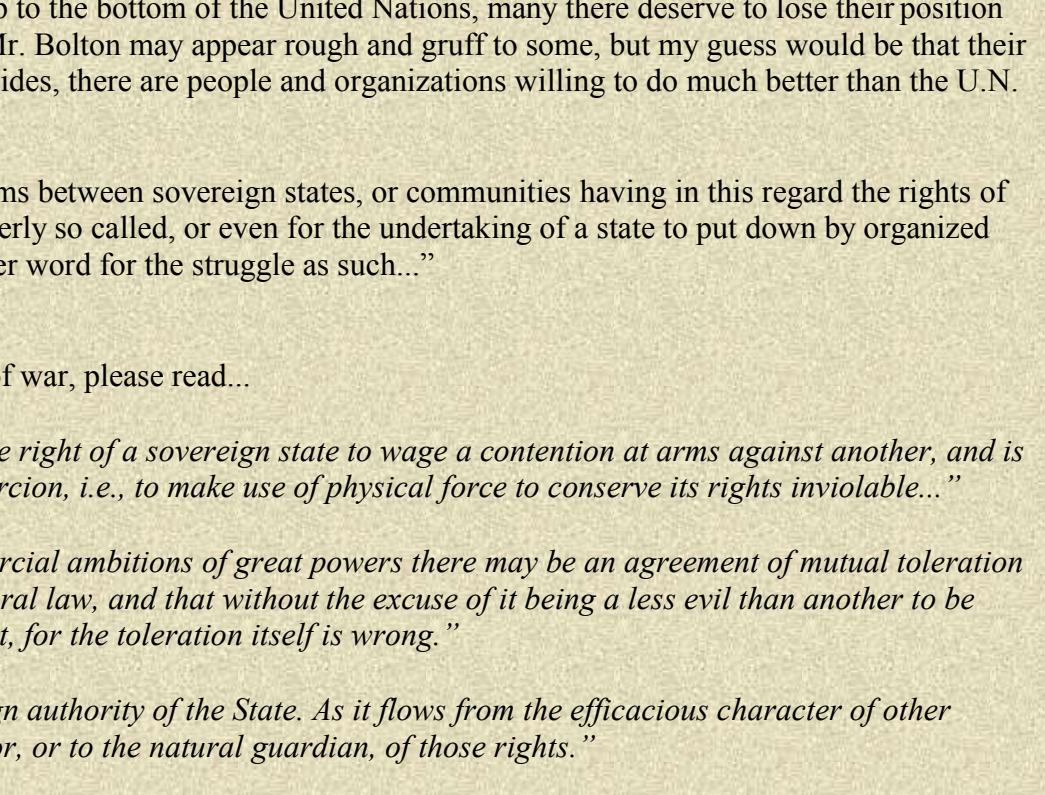
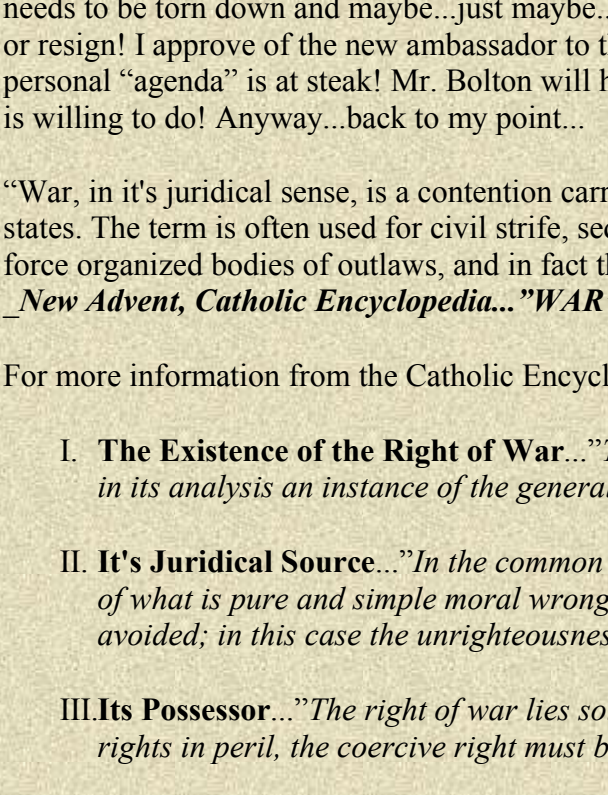
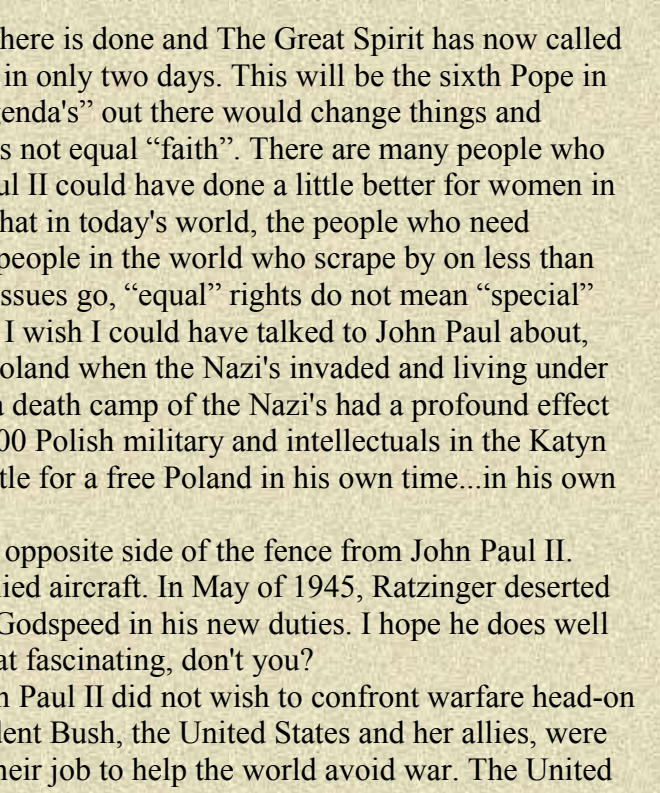
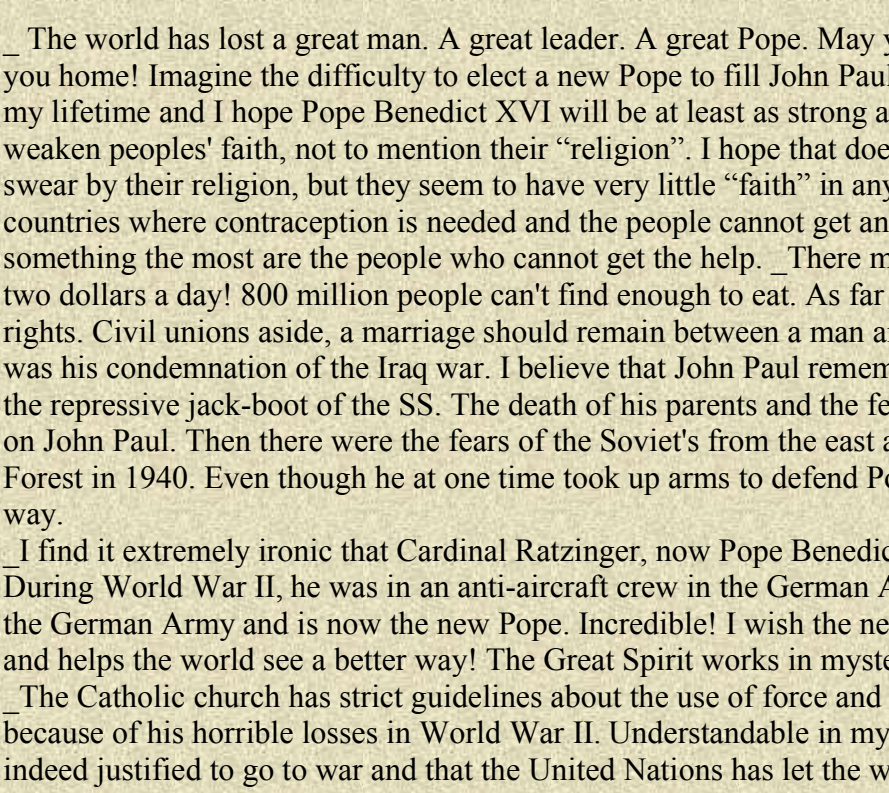
_As luck would have it, I managed to get to the Vatican on a day Pope John Paul II had Mass for thousands of people. He spoke in several languages and there were many cheering people. As I was trying to find a place to sit, down the isle came John Paul II. If my arms had been a little longer, I probably could have reached out and touched him. I just watched him walk by.

_The air was thick with the love and affection all these people had for this man walking so closely by. I wanted to at least say "hello", but nothing came out and I doubt if I could have said much even if I had really tried. The fact that I am not Catholic made me feel a bit of an "outsider" and I felt I had no right to speak anyway.

_I missed my chance to touch John Paul II. I missed my chance to say "hello" to him. I even forgot to raise my camera and take a picture, but that would have been rude in my opinion. Now I shall never have the chance. I am, however, happy for him to be out of pain and to be with God. The Great Spirit.



_On the base of this column (above), near these Carabinieri, are my rolls of film...just in case you find them...



_The world has lost a great man. A great leader. A great Pope. May you rest in peace. Your work here is done and The Great Spirit has now called you home! Imagine the difficulty to elect a new Pope to fill John Paul II's shoes and yet they did it in only two days. This will be the sixth Pope in my lifetime and I hope Pope Benedict XVI will be at least as strong as John Paul II was. Many "agenda's" out there would change things and weaken peoples' faith, not to mention their "religion". I hope that does not happen. "Religion" does not equal "faith". There are many people who swear by their religion, but they seem to have very little "faith" in anything! I believe that John Paul II could have done a little better for women in countries where contraception is needed and the people cannot get any birth control. It seems sad that in today's world, the people who need something the most are the people who cannot get the help. There may be as many as 3.5 billion people in the world who scrape by on less than two dollars a day! 800 million people can't find enough to eat. As far as the "Gay" and "Lesbian" issues go, "equal" rights do not mean "special" rights. Civil unions aside, a marriage should remain between a man and a woman. One more issue I wish I could have talked to John Paul about, was his condemnation of the Iraq war. I believe that John Paul remembered all too well living in Poland when the Nazi's invaded and living under the repressive jack-boot of the SS. The death of his parents and the fear of deportation by train to a death camp of the Nazi's had a profound effect on John Paul. Then there were the fears of the Soviet's from the east and another massacre of 22,000 Polish military and intellectuals in the Katyn Forest in 1940. Even though he at one time took up arms to defend Poland, John Paul II would battle for a free Poland in his own time...in his own way.

_I find it extremely ironic that Cardinal Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict XVI, would come from the opposite side of the fence from John Paul II. During World War II, he was in an anti-aircraft crew in the German Army trying to shoot down allied aircraft. In May of 1945, Ratzinger deserted the German Army and is now the new Pope. Incredible! I wish the new Pope well and I wish him Godspeed in his new duties. I hope he does well and helps the world see a better way! The Great Spirit works in mysterious ways, indeed! I find that fascinating, don't you?

_The Catholic church has strict guidelines about the use of force and of warfare. I believe that John Paul II did not wish to confront warfare head-on because of his horrible losses in World War II. Understandable in my opinion. But I believe President Bush, the United States and her allies, were indeed justified to go to war and that the United Nations has let the world down tremendously in their job to help the world avoid war. The United Nations and many of the people there are only interested in their own agenda's...not the worlds. I think that is despicable and that the United Nations needs to be torn down and maybe...just maybe...rebuilt. From the top to the bottom of the United Nations, many there deserve to lose their position, or resign! I approve of the new ambassador to the United Nations. Mr. Bolton may appear rough and gruff to some, but my guess would be that their personal "agenda" is at stake! Mr. Bolton will have a tough job! Besides, there are people and organizations willing to do much better than the U.N. is willing to do! Anyway...back to my point...

"War, in it's juridical sense, is a contention carried on by force of arms between sovereign states, or communities having in this regard the rights of states. The term is often used for civil strife, sedition, rebellion properly so called, or even for the undertaking of a state to put down by organized force organized bodies of outlaws, and in fact there is no other proper word for the struggle as such..."

_New Advent, Catholic Encyclopedia... "WAR", under "W".

For more information from the Catholic Encyclopedia on the issue of war, please read...

- I. The Existence of the Right of War...***"The right of war is the right of a sovereign state to wage a contention at arms against another, and is in its analysis an instance of the general moral power of coercion, i.e., to a make use of physical force to conserve its rights inviolable..."*
- II. It's Juridical Source...***"In the common territorial or commercial ambitions of great powers there may be an agreement of mutual toleration of what is pure and simple moral wrong by virtue of the natural law, and that without the excuse of it being a less evil than another to be avoided; in this case the unrighteousness is still more evident, for the toleration itself is wrong."*
- III Its Possessor...***"The right of war lies solely with the authority of the State. As it flows from the efficacious character of other rights in peril, the coercive right must belong to the possessor, or to the natural guardian, of those rights."*
- IV. Its Title and Purpose...***"First, the fact that the state's right (either directly or indirectly through those of its citizens) are menaced by foreign aggression not otherwise to be prevented by war; Secondly, the fact of actual violation of right not otherwise reparable; Thirdly, the need of punishing the threatening or infringing power for the security of the future."*
- V. Its Subject-matter...***"In the prosecution of the war the killing or injuring of non-combatants (women, children, the aged and the feeble, or even those capable of bearing arms but as a matter of fact not in any way participating in the war) is consequently barred, except where their simultaneous destruction is an unavoidable accident attending the attack upon the contending force."*
- VI. Its Term...***"In conclusion, a war, to be just, must be waged by a sovereign power for the security of a perfect right of its own (or of another justly invoking its protection) against foreign violation in a case where there is no other means available to secure or repair the right; and must be conducted with a moderation which, in the continuance and settlement of the struggle, commits no act intrinsically immoral, nor exceeds in damage done, or in payment and in penalty exacted, the measure of necessity and of proportion to the value of the right involved, the cost of the war, and the guarantee of future security."* (these issues may be found at www.newadvent.org under "W", for "war"!)

_It matters little to me what religion a person has, or even if a person has a religion. What is important to me is faith. Without faith, a person has nothing to believe in and without something to believe in, a person is likely to believe just about anything. The earth and the people who live here deserve better treatment. We can all do better! We all deserve better!

_Remember...God may be Allah and Allah may be God, but The Great Spirit is God and there is no God but The Great Spirit!