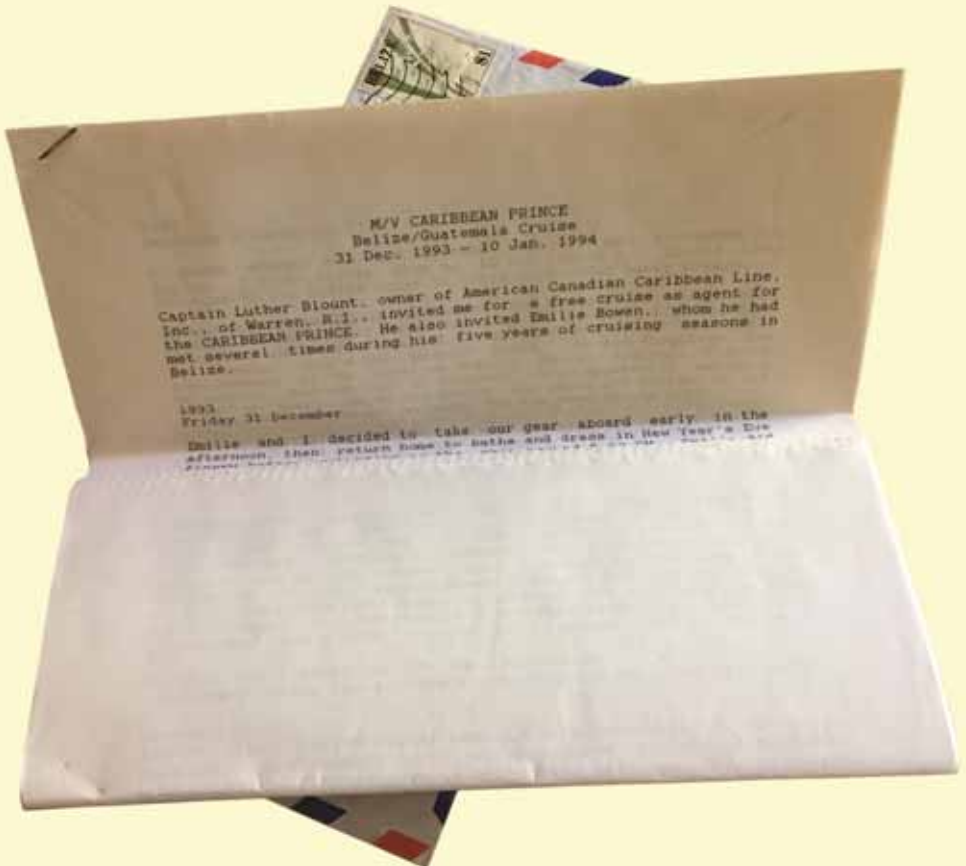




Travels, 1961 – 1994

Kate V. Scott

Edited by Carli Scott



Book 3

Travels, 1961 – 1994



Kate V. Scott on safari in Tanzania, 1988

Cover photo: Trip report that Kate sent to family and friends in 1998

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<www.tcracs.org/kvswp>

The four books in this series are dedicated to the people of Belize, who received the Scotts with a warm welcome and lasting friendships, and who accepted our family as an integral part of the community in which we made our new home.

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Forward

Back when people relied on letters sent through the world's postal systems to keep each other informed, my mother, Kate V. Scott, was a prolific correspondent. For decades, her delightfully written, newsy letters and reports enchanted and entertained family and friends. Following her death, and with the help of family and friends, I collected as much of Kate's writing as I could find. This is the third in a series of four books that I assembled from the collection:

1. *Life & Times*, 1922 – 1979
2. *Life & Times*, 1980 – 2014
3. *Travels*, 1961 – 1994
4. *Travels*, 1995 – 2007

Books 1 and 2 consist of letters of general interest and other descriptions of incidents in Kate's life; Book 1 also includes a draft memoir and essays describing her first few years living in Belize, British Honduras. I've organized this material into chapters that I present in roughly chronological order to tell Kate's life story in her own words. Books 3 and 4 consist of Kate's reports of her various trips, mostly vacations but some including business as well; again, the reports are ordered chronologically.

For additional information about the source material that I worked with, see page 373 in Book 1: *Life & Times, 1922 – 1979*.

When a trip report in this book refers to an incident that is described in one of the *Life & Times* books, a footnote gives a reference to the relevant chapter in that book.

I have maintained Kate's usage and spelling. Readers from countries other than Belize will notice that she followed the Belize custom of using anglicized Spanish adjectives for people or things from nearby Spanish-speaking regions. When Belize was still a colony, a person from British Honduras was called a *British Honduran*; in contrast, a person from the Republic of Honduras was, and still is, called a *Honduranean* to

reflect the Spanish word *hondureño*. Similarly, a person from El Salvador is a *Salvadoranean*, from the Spanish *salvadoreño*; a person from the Mexican state of Yucatán is a *Yucatecan*, from the Spanish *yucateco*. (Although many people in Belize refer to a person from Guatemala as a *Guatemaltecan*, from the Spanish *guatemalteco*, Kate always used the standard English word *Guatemalan*.)

I have modified Kate's original text only where necessary for clarity or to remove redundancy when combining related material from different sources. On the first occurrence of any acronym or foreign word that may not be familiar to all readers, any word whose use in Belize is different from its use in standard U.S. English, or any word or name whose pronunciation may differ from what some readers expect, I have added a footnote to "translate" Kate's meaning or to indicate how the spoken word or name sounds. My occasional comments on her narrative or her wording can be found in separate editor's notes (page 289).

When the Scotts moved to Central America, the country where we settled was *British Honduras* (or *B.H.* for short) and the city was *Belize*. The country's name was officially changed to *Belize* in 1973, in anticipation of independence. To avoid confusion, the city thereafter was called *Belize City* (though, when the context is clear, it sometimes still is called simply *Belize*). In the first few chapters of this book, Kate uses *Belize* to mean the city, not the country. However, in the trip reports written after 1973, she uses *Belize* to mean the country and refers to the city as *Belize City*.

— Carli Scott

El Salvador with Mama

March 1961

My husband Bucher's* mother, whom we both call *Mama*, arrived for her annual visit full of plans for the two of us to make a three-day trip to El Salvador like the one we made to Guatemala some years ago. Surprisingly, we could get almost no information about the country anywhere in town. The Salvadoranean honorary consul here is the proprietor of a liquor store who, judging by his daily appearance, drinks more than he sells. With some difficulty, he focused his bleary eyes on me when I went in about our visas. He mumbled that no one had sent him any pamphlets recently...not for two or three years. He did manage to give us



Bucher's mother, Marie Alexander, "Mama"

* *Bucher* is pronounced *BOOK-er*.

the visas, which much to our surprise were actually in order. But as an asset to tourism in Salvador, I think old José has to be counted out.

The library was able to dig up two or three books, vintage 1924, that mentioned Salvador, and I skimmed them to get a little geographical and historical background. Finally one of Bucher's friends produced a quite invaluable book on the country written just for tourists...not a pamphlet, but a full-size book. This gem gave lengthy background on the country plus some data on arts and crafts, summaries of natural scenic spots, and a little information on the towns and villages.

So off we flew, without reservations, without even the name of a good tourist agency, but with Endless Faith.

The flight down is lovely, first along the British Honduras coast, with the blue and green and aqua bay below, dotted with mangrove islands and coconut cayes,* the reef, and then finally from Honduras on, endless ridges of mountains all the way over to San Salvador, the capital city.



Health, Immigration, and Customs were quick and simple. Once inside the rather large airport lobby, I enthroned Mama in a high-backed, heavily carved, leather-cushioned chair to watch our suitcases while I went to the airport's branch bank. I changed our money at the pleasant rate of two-and-a-half Salvadoranean Colones to one U.S. dollar. Next, I asked at the airport's government tourism office for some information.

Out of nowhere appeared an eager man with excellent English who seemed determined to whisk us away to his hotel. Since we already had been advised which hotels would suit us best, I was not to be swayed. But he wasn't one to give up. He tried to call a tourist agency for us, but when I threatened to escape while he was telephoning, he made do with simply giving me its name. Then he called us a cab and told the driver to take us to each of the hotels in turn and, as soon as we had seen that they weren't the kind for obvious gentlewomen like ourselves, to take us on to his own

* *Cayes* is pronounced *keys*.

hotel. As soon as we were safely under way, I explained to the driver that we had no intention of doing anything of the sort and simply to drive us to the Astoria.

When we alighted at the Astoria, we found that every room was filled with basketball players there from all over Central America for a tournament. They kindly called our next choice, the Nuevo Mundo, where we were promised a room.

The Nuevo Mundo is right in the center of San Salvador, somewhat old fashioned but gracious, with excellent service and fine meals. It is owned and operated by Mrs. Van Buren, a charming French woman, widow of a Dutchman who escaped ahead of the Germans during the War and moved to Salvador, where much of her family lives. She was an elegant lady, graciousness personified, and couldn't have been lovelier to us. She not only changed rooms so that Mama would have only one flight of stairs to climb, but also visited with us. She even gave us a card to her club, one of the elegant ones Salvador is known for, so that we could have one evening seeing the elite of Salvador, whom you simply do not run into otherwise. Landing at her hotel was a great stroke of luck.



We arrived at noontime, had lunch, and then set out for the tourist agency to which my enthusiastic friend had directed us. We found out later it was the best in town, and it certainly was a fine, substantial-looking place. Since we already had moved into an hotel, we could not take one of their package tours, which included hotel accommodations elsewhere. But with the help of the young man at the desk, we worked out two-and-a-half days of touring, which actually let us see much more than their package-deal managed. He was in something of a jam trying to find a guide for us, and tried several before one appeared.

I feel sure that our Enrique is a fine guide. He couldn't have been more thoughtful, a better driver, or more pleasant personally. But I bet that he is not usually sent with English-speaking tourists. He speaks adequate English, though I think he doesn't understand it as well as he speaks. He

could understand me perfectly, and I could go into Spanish when necessary. But in all the time we were with him, I doubt he and Mama ever understood one word that the other said. On the few occasions that they tried to converse, I was almost convulsed because the answers to questions never had the slightest relationship to what had been asked.

I had to repeat every word Enrique said. I didn't want to hurt his feelings by making him think his English was inadequate, so I explained my repetitions as due to Mama's slight deafness. (I explained in Spanish, so I didn't hurt *her* feelings.) It was fascinating.



The first afternoon, Enrique drove us all around San Salvador. It is a large, modern, clean, lovely city of, he said, around 200,000 people.

We had heard much about the handful of vastly wealthy families in Salvador and the peonage of the balance of the population. So we were not prepared either for the large, attractive middle class, or for the miles and miles of stunning public housing for the “poor workers,” the “poor teachers,” and the “poor civil servants,” to quote Enrique. Much of this housing consisted of charming-looking duplexes in lovely grounds, terraced on the side of a mountain. Each housing group had recreation grounds, ball grounds, picnic area, outdoor dancing area, and usually one or two or three swimming pools. Enrique said a family living there paid thirty Colones (US\$12) per month for a home and would own it at the end of ten years.

We did see the most ramshackle hovels, too, but quite obviously the country has done more in recent years to try to equalize life than is generally mentioned in the press.

The city of San Salvador is situated in a valley surrounded by mountains and dominated by an extinct volcano. Enrique told us that Indians have moved into the crater and have their homes and tiny farms there, getting out to the rest of the world by trails winding up to the rim and then back down the mountains.

Our drive wound up into the mountains overlooking the city, and at one point we could see past the first ridge to Lake Ilopango, a volcanic lake, and off in another direction to the Pacific.

We had heard a lot about the lovely homes in Salvador, but nothing prepared us for the size and magnificence of them. Enrique told us happily that many of them cost two million Colones or more (call it US\$800,000). Not only were there elegant mansions in elaborate estates, but also there were dozens and dozens of lovely homes that would have been mansions in almost any other city. All were done in perfect taste with imaginative decoration, but without the “early modern horrors” of Guatemala, and with the loveliest planting imaginable. Each was different, each was handsome in its own way, and each added to the elegance of a spectacular residential section.

We returned from our drive around five in the afternoon. Mama went up to the room for a rest, and I dashed off in search of the public market. It was only a few blocks away, so I had a lovely prowl through it, buying nothing but stopping to chat with the vendors here and there, asking about their goods in my apparently comprehensible Spanish.



The morning of our first full day in Salvador, Enrique called for us promptly at nine and drove north on our sightseeing trip. The highways in Salvador are quite properly famous throughout Central America. Many are four-lane boulevards, and even off through the more distant parts of the country they are well graded, well maintained blacktop. Furthermore, the side roads off the Pan American Highway are almost equally good, so that you can travel in great comfort.

The drive was lovely, past endless coffee fincas,* fields of sugar cane, and ranches, in and out of mountains, and through fertile valleys where every inch of arable soil was under cultivation.

* *Finca* is Spanish for *plantation*.

Just outside the city we stopped to see Los Chorros, one of the many natural beauty spots that the government has cultivated primarily for the enjoyment of the people rather than for tourists. It is a waterfall, high on the mountain, that has been directed and caught into a series of three natural pools edged by irregular walks of native stone so that you can climb all the way up or swim in any of the pools. Even the sheer rock cliff has been planted with tiny red flowers, which cling to each crevice or bit of soil. A series of caves on the opposite side are being reinforced and will house a small restaurant eventually. Lovely gardens have been made on the terraces, and the whole site is charming.

We drove all around in Santa Ana, the country's second city, surprised at its size, modern buildings, and many schools.

We drove on through other towns to the Mayan ruins of El Tazumal. They are small but well excavated and restored; a small museum full of artifacts is established to one side. Salvador was sort of on the edge of the Mayan empire and never had the heights of civilization that were reached in Guatemala and Mexico.

We back-tracked to Lake Coatepeque, a very popular resort where most of the wealthy Salvadoreños have resort homes. Believe me, the word "cottage" does not apply. Most of them were estates with a great rambling tile-roofed home and several smaller houses clustered to one side of an estate-sized yard. Often there were swimming pools, large boathouses down on the lake shore, and elaborate concrete dock-side terraces. Furthermore, there was a resort for Enrique's "poor workers" also...a large establishment with row after row of motel-type accommodations on terraces leading down to the lake, ball grounds, outdoor bandstand, dance pavilion, three swimming pools, and restaurant. The members of the Social Security Institute (which, I gather, the workers join, though it obviously is a government-sponsored thing) are eligible to go there for a day or a weekend, free, and just sign up for the time they want.

We had lunch at the most run-down, third-class-looking lakeside hotel. However, when we ignored the shabby, ordinary tables and building and

looked instead at the pretty lake front...and tasted the divine food...we were impressed in spite of ourselves. The lake is volcanic, set down in a hollow surrounded by mountains and volcanoes, with two little lava peninsulas jutting out into it. Our lunch began with crab soup, which we were told was a specialty. It was brownish and thick, with the small brown crabs floating whole in it, nicely seasoned and quite delicious. Then we had lake fish, which we think was bass, beautifully fried whole. At that point, when we were completely full, they brought on a strange-looking, thin steak that we didn't know had been ordered. We picked at it out of politeness, but found it so tender and so beautifully cooked that we ended up eating that, too.

The highpoint of that day was the moment on the return trip when Enrique pointed out the Pro-TEST-ant church. Since he had spent the entire day showing us an uninterrupted sequence of Catholic churches and schools, Mama commented and asked what denomination it was. She asked about her own Presbyterians and some other denominations, and he agreed that they had those in El Salvador. Then I asked if they had Anglicans (that being, usually, the more quickly understood name outside the U.S. for Episcopalians). Enrique hesitated a moment, obviously bitterly upset at having to disappoint me, and said, "No, no Anglicans"...and adding with inspiration..."We have Masons."



We were home around four...Mama went in for her rest...and I headed for a new and larger market I had spotted on our drive. I have fairly good city sense and orienting myself carefully, I walked straight to my new market.

It was marvelous. This time I could not resist buying some of the sweets that (according to my book and my own observation) are such a matter of pride to the vendors. There were stall after stall and basket after basket heaped with an amazing assortment of candies. Some are made of icing sugar like the flowers on a wedding cake, in the most elaborate designs, accented by touches of vegetable (I hope) coloring. Others are obviously coconut or a sort of marzipan. Another, pulled like taffy and twisted into a

flat coil about four inches long and oval, is made of cane syrup and is delicious.

Each stop gave me a chance to have a little conversation, and if I didn't start one, the vendor would. They all wanted to know where I was from and where fascinated in my dual homes.

My main target at the market was a series of stalls around the far corner where I had seen masses of earthenware, which is one of their few native products. Salvador has almost no textile craft the way Guatemala does, and ceramics are its main art. What I found in the market, of course, was fairly rough stuff for local use, ranging from the enormous water jugs and cooking pots down to plates and cups and saucers. In recent years they have been using potter's wheels so I had to do a lot of looking to find a few pieces made completely by hand in the old way.

I finally located a basket of what I wanted, up a few steps on the way into the cavernous and forbidding interior of the market, and I pounced. The owner came up to see what I wanted, and then her daughter joined us. The little girl must have been around seven, slim, pretty, with long tangled black hair and sparkling black eyes. She understood just what I wanted and pawed through the basket unearthing things faster than I could carry them over to a safe place to make my selection. I picked out a few smallish things that would do as ashtrays or just bric-a-brac, and bought them. It still was a fairly good sale, I rather assume. This was accomplished by much conversation, exclamations of delight to make the little girl happy, and much chit-chat. Meanwhile, a gallery had gathered. People were standing around three and four deep grinning, giggling, offering suggestions, and generally enjoying the show. By the time I left, I felt like Helen Hayes at the end of a First Night.



Our second day's tour took us near the Volcano of Izalco, which dominates much of the countryside and most of the written materials about the country. The government built a lovely resort hotel on the mountain just across from Izalco so that tourists could see its constant

eruptions...brightly orange clouds by day and dazzling fireworks by night...and then, after about a century of constant glory, Izalco when to sleep. The hotel is closed now and probably will be reopened whenever Izalco gets back in business. Anyway, it was a disappointment not to be able to see it.

We drove by another natural park with mineral swimming pool, where a husky Salvadorenean man was giving swimming lessons to about twenty tiny black-haired boys. I was excited about going through the Indian village of Izalco, remembering the fascinating market at Chichicastenango in Guatemala. Salvador has very few pure Indians left, around 7% of the population in comparison to Guatemala's 85%. Most of the natives are Spanish-Indian mixtures and wear modern dress. So going to Izalco was the great treat.

Well, we turned off a dusty, bumpy road and jolted our way, rock by rock, up a hill, past fields white with the dust, and men working with machetes, around a turn, up a steeper hill. It was hot. It was dusty. It was unbearable. The street turned into cobblestones just as I was giving up hope of Mama's being able to endure it, and we were in the village. It was the usual blank adobe walls with fading pastel paint and, through the small doorways, the usual dingy shops or glimpses of courtyards beyond. We turned again, past an old Colonial Church, and I began anticipating visiting the market, the interesting Indians, and my many fascinating native purchases. At that point we went past the plaza, saw a few deserted stalls, and in a moment were on a paved road and speeding out of town. Mama looked at me, I looked at her, and we both hooted.

A short time later we did drive around Sonsonate, the head town of the district, and in the market there, Enrique pointed out a mere three Indians in native dress, who he said came from Izalco.

From there we drove on to the port of Acajutla on the Pacific, then back along the Carretera del Litoral, a highway that eventually will stretch along the coast through all of Central America. We had heard so much about it that we felt miserable to realize that we rode through hot level

plains just out of sight of the ocean. After our disappointment with Izalco, we knew we were jinxed that day; Enrique sustained our depression by answering Mama's question about when we would see the Pacific by saying when we reached La Libertad (our lunchtime destination).

A few moments later we wound up into the mountains, and suddenly, far below us, the brilliant blue and peaceful Pacific was breaking in a foamy line in coves at the foot of the hills. It was breathtaking. From that point, the highway curved back and forth along the coast in a series of hairpin turns sharp enough to make each new vista a jolting glory, but not sharp enough to make the drive itself anything but comfortable. The road is well graded, with cuts of one- and two-hundred feet in the rock wall at places, and with six tunnels of varying lengths. In some places we could see wide stretches of black volcanic sand with the waves rolling in on them. In other places the mountain vanished into the surf, and the water had cut caves and towers of rock out of the mountainside. It was the most magnificent drive imaginable.

Our lunch that day was in the oceanside resort of one of the largest private clubs in Salvador. It is stunningly modern and quite elegant with terrazzo floor, plantings, large swimming pool and smaller children's pool, lovely bar, much open-but-covered patio area, and an enormous and well equipped dressing room with an entrance directly onto the waterfront. We had taken a picnic lunch (put up by our hotel) and got Cokes there. There wasn't a guest in sight in the middle of the week, but about seven men on the staff were standing at the back watching TV. They have some locally produced shows and buy regular U.S. programs, such as *Perry Mason*, with Spanish dialog. I believe they have seven TV stations.

The pool was being cleaned so we decided to swim in the Pacific. Enrique had his suit with him so we assumed he would join us. Mama had flat shoes but I was wearing walking heels, so I set off for the beach barefooted. As soon as I got near it, I remembered that it would be hot, being black. But I did not know that I would practically sear the bottoms off my feet just running to the water. I nearly died, it hurt so.

There was quite a surf, and not knowing the water or the tides, we were afraid to venture out. The Red Cross poster in the dressing room had given the “hours of least danger,” which is not a reassuring way to word it, and they were some six hours earlier. So we just splashed about in the surf without trying to pass the breakers. Enrique, meanwhile, had let us two helpless females loose on the ocean and had taken himself a siesta. I do think he was a bit remiss since we might have been swept off to Tokyo if we hadn’t been water-wary.

For the record, neither Mama nor I is impressed with black sand. They can say all they want about there being less glare for your eyes, but think of the burn you get on your feet just getting near the stuff. Furthermore, no matter how often you remind yourself that sand is clean, that stuff swirling around in the surf still looks like mud, and with the shade of skin that we happen to have, it is disgustingly visible when you come out, and you look like refugees from a coal heap. All in all, I’ve bathed in the Pacific now, I’ve enjoyed the fabulous black sand, and I’m going back to my nice coral-trimmed Caribbean and silver-sanded Gulf, thank you.



I dashed back to My Market, of course, as soon as we returned to the city. This time, I even ventured inside; my earlier forays were simply among the stalls crowding the sidewalks surrounding the market. It was like Dante’s Inferno. I was swallowed up by the endless chain of its interior caves, tiny black stalls on each side of an eight-inch aisle, each with a smoky fire, big cooking pot, and one or two people sitting around eating some interesting-looking mess and staring at me.

I followed my first path as far as it would go and ended up with a naked native boy taking a shower under a hose in an unexpected opening. I back-tracked, turned down another narrow aisle, extremely dubious but sure that eventually I could find my way out if my nerves demanded it. I could see that I was approaching an open area of the sort I expected, where fresh and smoked meats and vegetables would be sold, so I paused for a moment, attracted by a couple of parrots. A crone thrust a flapping

hen at me, asking if I wanted to buy it, and I recoiled in surprise. I explained that I was looking for certain items...Chintz dolls carved roughly of wood and painted brightly, and decorated gourds; these are two of the few native crafts left.

A very attractive young woman took over the conversation, started to tell me where to go, and then dashed off, beckoning me to follow. She led me outside the market (to my enormous relief) and back to a stall I'd passed three times. There a huddled old wisp of a woman, who looked ten years older than God, presided over a great heap of all the things I was looking for. She was just as chatty as could be, poked around and found the things I wanted, and my friendly guide stayed there to make sure we understood each other and that I wasn't overcharged. The usual gallery gathered to enjoy the show, and I left with a large market bag crammed with things, principally for children, mine and Mama's other grandchildren. My total expenditure was around US\$1.

Mama was so pleased with my finds that she sent me back the first thing the next morning, and I got another bagful, to my ancient friend's delight.

That evening we went to Mrs. Van Buren's club for dinner...elegant surroundings and divine food, perfectly served. The following noon we returned to Belize.

Guatemala with Muriel & Don

December 1963

Bucher and I left Belize in Cessna Zero-Four-Uniform on a business-pleasure trip the afternoon of Friday the Thirteenth, to the despair of superstitions employees who begged almost tearfully that we wait a day. We went with our very close friends, Muriel and Don Stauffer, half-owners of the plane. Don is the manager of Hercules B.H., Bucher's biggest customer.

The weather was gorgeous and clear. As we left Punta Gorda, where we cleared B.H. Customs and Immigration, we could see a Guatemalan mountain peak some eighty miles away. Not a cloud the length of the valley leading to the city, so we could see the mountains on either side; cultivated milpas* scarring the sides at what appeared to be 60-degree angles; the river, highway, and railway underneath; and at the far end, beyond Guatemala City, the two volcanoes, Agua and Fuego, the latter smoking slightly.



Don & Muriel Stauffer with Bucher, April 1963

* A *milpa* is a cultivated field, usually growing a variety of vegetables.

Saturday morning the men left to do their business at Texaco, and Muriel and I headed for the market...of course. We finished there an hour before we were to meet our husbands for lunch, but I promise you, it took the entire hour to negotiate the dozen blocks between market and hotel.

Muriel is an inveterate disappearer-into-doorways, and I kept losing her in shop after shop...particularly in shops with Christmas decorations...the most gorgeous selections I've ever seen anywhere. She wanted to pick up a few little items...two atomizers of a type she uses to spray her pieces when she's doing enamel-on-copper ceramics, an omelet pan, a pocket flashlight, and a particular type of executive's pocket notebook.

Muriel's Spanish extends to *thank you*, *why not (como no*, which is a common Latin phrase), and *another scotch and soda, please*. Obviously, I was to be her interpreter. Well, my Spanish is getting fairly adequate for most situations...but atomizers and omelet pans were a bit difficult. We visited store after store, where we saw everything in stock by the time we worked past the language barrier and made our desires known. By the time we made it to our lunch date, we were exhausted.



We scheduled our trip for that particular weekend because Pete Crawford of Texaco, who had been in Belize about three weeks earlier, insisted we attend a late Thanksgiving dinner on the Saturday evening. By the time we arrived, his little dinner party had grown to 125 guests with two bands. His home is large, with tiled floors, several terraces, and a fireplace that felt rather good this time of year. Some of the guests spoke English, and we managed quite nicely. There was dancing, of course, and Bucher and Don went completely to pieces over the perfectly gorgeous, beautifully groomed women. It really was a wonderful party.



On Sunday, Pete picked us up at noon and drove us to Antigua for lunch. (We insisted on a late hour, and it was a good thing, since he said he swept the last guest out at five that morning.)

I had been to Antigua during my trip with Mama years ago, but we had not visited the Posada Belén. It is a Spanish Colonial convent that was destroyed partially by the earthquake. It has been restored as an hotel, keeping as much as possible of the early building. You can wander through a great maze of courtyards, patios, and gardens, some roofed, most open with vines overgrowing the ancient brickworks. It is charming.

We climbed an outside stairway to the second floor, examined a room, and lost Don. He had discovered a tiny, steep circular staircase and had disappeared up it. I do not believe the steps could have been more than a foot wide, and I wasn't sure I could navigate it without getting stuck. We came out on the roof, climbed over it and on up broken brickwork to what must have been a bell tower. The view over the city, the surrounding mountains, and volcanoes was glorious. The roof was drifted inches deep with volcanic ash from Fuego's recent eruption. Seeing it, we could imagine the horror of the ash-fall that Costa Rica has had lately.

We had a lovely lunch at the hotel, watching the brick patio with two free-flying macaws, Indians working at their looms, and dozens of excited little Guatemalan children there for Sunday dinner with their families.



After lunch, Pete drove us through the city a little. He got permission to take us into the home of a prominent artist. It is a restored Colonial home with one wall adjoining, and in common with, a roofless, wrecked old church. You enter directly into a patio, a view of the volcano in the background. We went into a large stone-walled formal drawing room, furnished completely in Spanish Colonial furniture...historic but most uncomfortable looking.

The whole point was to see the open court beyond the drawing room. There, with one wall of the old church, a niche above a stone staircase holding a beautiful old statue, and vines growing down the walls and around a tree inside the court, we saw a lovely carved black mahogany "chest" whose louvers opened to reveal a modern wash basin, mirror, shaving rack, etc. To one side was a tiled circular trough that was

obviously a shower. And dead center of the courtyard, open to the sky, and overlooked by the balcony outside the master bedroom, was the third fitting common to bathrooms.



Pete then drove us to the park in the center of the city. The fountain there, erected by the Spanish in 1614, is something of a talking-piece. Four almost life-sized women carved around the center of the fountain provide jets of water, two per female, from what we considered a highly unaesthetic source. Interesting, though.



Pete decided he would take us on to Palín, where the massive ceiba tree in the center of town spreads its branches so far that it extends beyond the sides of the large market square beneath it. Leaving Antigua, he got a little confused, asked directions of a bystander, turned a corner, and realized too late that he was blocked by a procession down the next street. At first we thought it was a funeral, but as it continued, we could tell it was something else. We all got out of the car and walked to the corner to see what it was.

On one side of the street came a single file of barefoot Indian men, each wearing a medallion of St. Francis on ribbons over each shoulder and a strange rectangular picture on his back. On the opposite of the brick-paved street marched a single file of brilliantly dressed Indian women, some carrying babies slung in lengths of native-loomed cloth across their backs, all barefoot, all with head coverings of thin white cloth. Both men and women were murmuring a low chant. Occasionally down the street between the lines would come one or two brown-robed, sandaled friars.

Then a group of twenty-four Indian men came down between the two endless lines of marchers and stopped in two lines of 12 each, just in front of us, facing each other. Behind them, marching between the lines and on down the street came three Indian women dressed in brown, monkish robes, singing *Ave Maria*. They sang the verse, and the entire line of

Indians, hundreds far down and far up the street, joined in the chorus each time.

Suddenly, far up the street (and I use the expression advisedly, since it was on a hill) lurching slowly down toward us, came some sort of float. It obviously was an enormous carved mahogany platform with a life-sized statue of the Virgin (we learned later, as Our Lady of Guadalupe). The statue was done in somber colors and was quite surprisingly good; in contrast, the angels crouching at each corner of the float were pink-and-white blobs of saccharine and very poor.

The float was quite close to us before I realized with an emotional jolt I will never forget, that it was being carried on the shoulders of twenty-four staggering, barefoot Indians. The group just in front of us relieved the bearers with a smooth, practiced alternate insertion of one shoulder for another in the leather-padded arches grooved into the lower edge of the massive float. The wide-eyed awe on those impassive Indian faces is something I will never forget either, as one group of bearers replaced the other. The procession was an impressive thing for us to have happened on accidentally.

We drove on to Palín, saw the tree, which is quite spectacularly large, and then went on back into the city.



On Monday, Don was sick with *Mal de Turista** and couldn't possibly leave. Bucher and I flew back alone. The weather changed on us and clouds closed in down the valley so that we were flying quite low to stay in view of the river. Cutting across one of the low ridges toward Punta Gorda was out of the question, so we followed the river all the way to the coast, far out of our way. As we got there, it was closed in solid toward the north, and we thought we might have to turn south to Puerto Cortez, Honduras, where I envisioned a happy night in a Honduran jail after

* *Mal de Turista* is Spanish for *Tourist's Illness*, diarrhea that results from eating contaminated food or drinking contaminated water.

landing without papers. However, we went out over the water, the clouds cleared, and as we gained altitude and turned north, we could see the B.H. coastline all the way to the Belize peninsula. We went on home easily.

Tuesday morning, Muriel and Don chartered a plane to fly them to Punta Gorda. I flew down in Zero-Four-Uniform to meet them and fly them back to Belize.

Mérida with the Family

New Year 1964

All of us were sick, in relays, before Christmas, so we stayed fairly quiet. As usual on the 24th, we had a delightful Christmas dinner with the Tattersfields, our closest friends and former neighbors.

We had a lovely but simple Christmas. Our Christmas present to our children, Alex and Carli, was a trip to Mérida. With nothing much to buy in Belize, we pooled our own funds, added Christmas checks from generous relatives, and wrapped Mexican visas and travel brochures in large boxes so the children would have something to open Christmas day.



On December 31st, we took off. A new cold wave had surged into the area, so it was a long and bumpy flight in our Cessna. Head winds, which I calculated...through astute use of my Terribly Complicated Calculator...at 45 miles per hour, put an extra hour on our usual two-hour travel time. It was clear enough, but rough and tiring.

The Mérida authorities are used to Cessna Zero-Four-Uniform by now and whipped us through Customs and Immigration very graciously.

We were checked into the Hotel Tropical Maya shortly after noon. We fell in love with this motel out near the airport on a trip last summer. The layout is charming, with thatch-shaded walkways connecting the rooms; an irregular pool that meanders the length of the patio, often making islands of trees; imaginative, lush planting that creates many little private areas for tables or sun chaises in nooks along the pool's edge; a picturesque outdoor dining room with stone wall, fishnet-draped ceiling, lights in woven baskets; and spacious, modern rooms.

The children each had a single room in a separate two-unit cottage with a real thatched roof...terribly interesting from inside or out. Bucher and I had what they consider their minimum-price double: a large room with

tiled floor, two double beds, armchair, small table with two chairs, a large dressing table built against one stone wall, walk-in closet, and tiled bath...also with one stone wall.



The weather was very cold; the wind whipped around the patio in a most unfriendly way, so it was obvious that the lounging around the pool, which we had anticipated, was out. Instead, Bucher made arrangements to rent one of the hotel cars for 24 hours.

In the afternoon we drove into town for a short shopping trip. We missed our turn and wound up in a perfectly gorgeous old residential section that we wouldn't have seen otherwise. Mérida was established by the Spanish in 1542...allegedly set up as a new capital for Yucatán after repeated pirate raids on the seaport of Progreso, which had been the capital. I suspect some of these homes date back to that era. They are monstrous, ornate, ancient, and utterly charming.

Finally we made our way to the central market...which unerringly attracts me in each Latin City...after thirty minutes of utter confusion in the one-way streets and some choice remarks in Spanish when we made the wrong decision at intersections. Having *Tropical Maya* emblazoned on every flat surface of the car probably saved us; a policeman was most helpful about showing us where to park when we finally reached the market vicinity.

One of the great tragedies of our marriage is that Bucher is not an aficionado of markets. He detests them. And if there's one thing he hates more than a market, it is being involved with me in one. With this in mind I moved quickly, lingered seldom, and didn't enjoy the visit much. We located a little shop where we had been well treated on our earlier visit, and both children made purchases. I'm developing into a Latin-style bargainer, though I hate it. But apparently even in stores you aren't expected to pay the quoted price. I learned this a little too late in Guatemala, but I'm ready for 'em now. I knew you played that game in the markets...but in a nice store! Well, really!

Anyway, Alex bought himself a *guayabera* (tucked shirt-jacket) and Carli picked out a *blusa*...a blouse heavily embroidered around neck, bottom, and armholes with multicolored flowers. By the time we finished, it was getting dark, and Bucher was nervous about being in a strange city at night. We did have a city map and got back to the motel with no trouble. Christmas decorations still were up, and the lights were lovely. Both the Coca Cola and Pepsi plants outside town had the most elaborate displays I've ever seen...Coke, a giant crèche with live cows, donkey, and sheep.

Since it was New Year's Eve, we dressed up a bit for dinner. Thank goodness at the last minute I had tossed in coats for Carli and me. We needed them. The men had sweaters under their suits and said they could survive. The food at the Tropical Maya is typically Yucatecan and excellent (though you can get more ordinary things if you prefer). All but Carli ordered shrimp in a garlic sauce, which is divine...so good Alex had it three nights running. Carli had Chicken Mole...a Yucatecan sauce, dark with spices and the tiniest bit of bitter chocolate. Bucher thought wine would be in order. The waiter simply assumed the children were included, and he brought glasses for them; Alex and Carli saw to it they weren't returned. Mexico has some lovely light wines, and this was awfully good.

Toward the end of our meal, a couple took the table just next to us. From their talk it was obvious that they were from Chicago, that bad weather in New Orleans had delayed them so that they missed their connecting flight to Campeche, that they were freezing to death, and that they had been trying to compensate for all this in the bar. They were loud, raucous, made embarrassing comments on everything around them, and yet under it all, obviously were nice people, basically well bred and kind, who simply weren't careful enough about their manners. I looked over at Alex, and his eyes were twinkling, that dimple at the corner of his mouth crinkling, and he was trying exceptionally well to keep a straight face. As we left the table, he couldn't wait to tell me, "I know now why they talk about *Ugly Americans*."

We took the car after dinner and went out to the airport to make sure Zero-Four-Uniform was tied down securely. Went back to the motel and had a

liqueur, since the children are allowed a creme de menthe frappé on Special Occasions. About 9:30 we all bid 1963 good night.

The motel was having a dance that night, and guests had begun arriving before we retired. In spite of the weather, the most glamorous and low-cut gowns were in evidence. Although we woke up once in a while to notice the band still was playing, it was a very orderly party, and we never were aware of loud voices.



On New Year's morning we left about nine to drive to Progreso, on the coast. We stopped on the way to see some famous half-excavated Mayan ruins. While we are not dedicated ruins-goers like some of our friends, the ruins always are fascinating.

Drove on to Progreso and turned north along the coast. This is where Mérida people have their vacation cottages...little concrete Colonial-style bungalows that probably sleep thirty guests. They are magnificent, one after another behind their high walls along the beach.

We had heard of a new hotel north of the city, so we kept driving through mile after mile of scrub land along the beach on a sandy rut road. Only periodic signs spurred us on. Finally we found the hotel, and it was charming. It was built by the same people as our Tropical Maya, in much the same style: stone, thatch, and very irregular and imaginative layout. The beach is wide and white, reminding us of Sarasota. They have a large, very deep, slightly irregular pool, and a sunken bar with windows looking underwater into one end of the pool. There is an outdoor bandstand and dance floor and glassed-in lounge and dining room overlooking the Gulf. The one trouble is the hotel's inaccessibility. We were assured that they intended to put in an airstrip, and when they do, we'll be up. The rooms are almost identical to those in the Tropical Maya, the prices the same (reasonable), and it would be lovely to be on a beach again.

We left the hotel and drove back into Progreso. Now if Bucher is not a market-goer, there's one thing he is...a wharf rat. We drove out to the end

of every pier along the way, got out, examined cargo facilities, ships at anchor, warehouses...the lot. And when we ran out of piers, we drove along the shore, where many shrimp boats were careened on the beach in the old-fashioned way and where the rest of the shrimp fleet was anchored just off the beach. I'm not dead sure, but I suspect Alex could give you the name, rigging, color, and possibly repairs needed for every boat in the fleet.



Bucher had been studying the map, and it appeared that there was another road back to Mérida that we could intercept by following the beach road south of Progreso. We had time, and it seemed like a good idea, so we did. Saw more beach homes, less elaborate; much new construction. Got lost in the first village when we lost our highway and circled the sleepy square without finding the extension of it. Returned to a little cantina and ordered a Coke, thinking that we might get directions. I feel sure the heavy proprietress had never been out of town herself because the best she could do was send us to find someone else at the square. Meanwhile she showed us out to a patio behind the cantina where we could sit at long marble-top tables. This was obviously a dance floor at night, with thatched roof supported by thin poles, the sides completely open. To one side, under a separate thatched roof, were the couple's living-working area. The old man was making charcoal, and the woman doing her washing. Chickens, dogs, and ducks wandered around the area. It was charming.


We went on, decided where the road had to be, recognized the fact that the pavement had ended, and continued on a dirt road. Alex commented that we must keep looking for a causeway. I waved the map at him and said that the road junction came before the bay that made a narrow peninsula out of the lower end of the area. Alex replied that that was fine, but as far as he could see, we had nothing but water to the left of us, and we'd better think about some way to get across it. You know, he was right.

Finally there was a dirt road running off to the left and sure enough, there was our causeway cutting directly across the bay and disappearing


straight through the woods on the other side in the direction of Mérida. When I say *causeway*, forget all those solid concrete things you've been exposed to. This was a rut road on a tiny hillock of sand some two inches above the water and just wide enough for the car. It seemed solid, though, so we proceeded.

After a bit, Bucher casually wondered why that stick was standing up in the middle of the road. He plowed over it and a moment later, eased to a slow stop as our causeway ended in a six-foot wide slash of waterway. There had been a severe storm the week before, and obviously, our causeway had washed out. Fording would have been nice...but dubious in our little rented car.

Back we went to dry land, and then there was a decision to be made...back to Progreso or ahead to a possible other causeway. You know what we did. We followed rut roads one direction and another, found a causeway that led to another causeway that ran around a little bayou and led to another causeway, and after miles of meandering, we realized that we were in the middle of the salt flats. There was a conical pile of salt to one side, gates in the middle of each causeway to let the water flow or be stopped. It was fascinating. I doubt that many Gringo tourists see it, and we decided that we'd seen enough of it. Back to Progreso it was, and home to Mérida.



Friends from British Honduras had arrived in the mean time. Bob and Lynn Edwards live in Big Creek, where he's manager of the Hercules resin-extraction plant. With their three children, they had come to Mérida to meet Bob's parents and to put their oldest son on the plane back to the States and college. We visited with them for a little bit before diner.



When we had left for Mérida, we were undecided how long to stay. Given the cold weather, we decided we probably would leave the morning of the 2nd. By then, however, it seemed warmer, and the wind had dropped, so

we asked the children what they wanted to do and got an enthusiastic pair of votes for staying an extra day.

Bucher, Alex, and I established ourselves with books in chaises beside the pool and shed layer after layer of clothing as the sun made coats and sweaters unnecessary. Carli was restless, wandered to the shop in the lobby, and bought herself a pretty silver key chain with a ferocious silver bull on the end of it. She started around the edge of the pool...and then she disappeared.

I guessed the answer and was right...she had bumped into a group of Mexican girls around her age and had joined them. About an hour later they all strolled by us, arms around waists, headed for their bathing suits. They jumped in at the other end, with the wildest giggling and squealing ever heard, and then gradually worked their way to our end. Not only the shape of the pool is irregular, its bottom is too, deep in one place, ankle-depth in another. Rather fun.

Well, the girls finally got down to our end, and the prettiest girl you ever laid eyes on...a dainty, curvy, black-eyed teenager with creamy skin, and her black hair piled up in an informal knot...asked Alex if he weren't coming in. He cranked up his Spanish in a hurry and explained that he had to finish his book first. She smiled and nodded...and by the time the girls reached the other end of the pool Alex was bathing-suited and in with them.

And that was the end of Alex and Carli for the day. The group swam, dried off, lunched, and stayed together till evening. Alex and Carli admitted that conversation was a little halting, but somehow they managed and all enjoyed each other.

Meanwhile, Bucher and I had company. My flight instructor, Al Malone, who worked for Maya Airways in Belize, had been transferred from their local run to Maya's international run, and was based in Mérida. We got in touch with him, and he came over late in the afternoon. We called the Captain on the run, George Innes, and got him to join us for dinner and had a wonderful evening of "hangar flying."

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Our flight home the next morning was a bit rough. We still had rough weather, and the wind thoughtfully had switched so we again had some head winds. North of Belize it socked in completely so we flew out over the water just along the beach, where we had visibility at low altitudes, and followed the “coconut beam” home with no trouble.



Back home in Belize, Kate, Alex, and Carli in her blusa  
from Mérida, 1964

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## Guatemala with Carli

January 1965

Carli and I flew (commercially) to Guatemala together to have our eyes checked and new lenses made for our glasses. Arrived at noon on a Wednesday, checked into the hotel, had lunch, saw the eye doctor, ordered lenses, and by mid-afternoon, we were through.

Bucher's parting words had been...not "have a good time" or "take care of yourselves," but "neither of you needs to go near the pastry shop."

Guatemala has absolutely superb pastelerías; a great square, fragile box of delicacies is one of our favorite take-home treats. As it happens, the best pastry shop in the city is around the corner from our hotel. As it also happened on that trip, because of prior commitments, Carli and I were not able to disobey Bucher until almost four o'clock the afternoon of our first day.



That evening Carli and I had dinner with some close friends, Chris and Joan Hempstead. Bucher and I had met them before they were married, when we first lived in Belize\* and Chris had a boat built here. They have a lovely home, three enchanting tiny daughters, and are delightful long-standing friends, so we had a lot to catch up on, back and forth

The following day, Carli and I had planned to accept an invitation from Chris's mother to visit her in Cobán, a town in the mountains to the north of Guatemala City. However, an elderly relative (ninety-ish) died that morning, so we cancelled our trip and changed plane reservations to return to Belize a day earlier.



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\* "U.S. Independence Day" on page 105 in Book 1: *Life & Times, 1922 – 1979*

With our trip to Cobán cancelled, we spent the morning in the market, naturally. That afternoon, despite a light rain, we took a taxi out to the very interesting archaeological museum. As a matter of fact, the nucleus of the museum had been given to the country by Chris's uncle some years ago. It is beautifully housed in a large building around a central patio and nicely displayed...Mayan artifacts plus interesting exhibits, past and present, of the various Indian groups who live throughout the country.

The zoo is near the museum, and Carli was determined to see if they had an ocelot. The rain did not stop but slackened, so through the mist ran two slightly demented Gringas, giggling and enjoying each cage to the amazed entertainment of the few Guatemalans huddling here and there for shelter. Carli was incensed not to find a *Felis pardalis*, and even two massive lionesses who emerged from their cage as the rain stopped couldn't sooth her.



I felt sure we could get a bus from the zoo to the hotel, so asked the guard at the gate which number to take. He told me and added where to wait for it. It was in a direction opposite from a bus-stop sign. Carli was intent on going back to the sign, and I insisted that I wouldn't hurt the man's feelings by disobeying his instructions after our nice little chat in Spanish.

Carli wondered how I'd make the bus stop, assuming, she added loftily, one actually came along. I replied that it was simple; I'd jump up and down, wave, and shout. Carli didn't have time for more than a horror-struck glance in reply, for the bus rounded the corner, and I started waving. Carli got ready to leap into the underbrush if I showed signs of jumping up and down, but was relieved to find the bus stopping before the need to abandon me forever presented itself.

Guatemala has a fine bus system. The vehicles are small and old, but fairly comfortable. The routes are winding, and you get a chance to see things you miss by car. Carli was fascinated.





That evening I took Carli to La Tablita, one of our favorite restaurants, for dinner. They serve divine charcoal-broiled steaks and have the best garlic bread and garlicky salad anywhere. I suspect that lone females don't go out for the evening in Guatemala, but I decided that we were tourists so it didn't matter. Also, we went rather early by Guatemalan standards. The taxi driver insisted on waiting for us, so it all was very simple.



Next morning we got our glasses and were packing to leave when Joan Hempstead called to say that Mrs. Hempstead Senior was crushed at our cancelling our visit, couldn't we come anyway and delay our return to Belize. There was a wild confusion of could-we-or-couldn't-we get reservations and, after finding that we couldn't, having a nice lunch with Bucher's Texaco man Pete Crawford, and then finding out from Pete that of course we could get back to Belize the day the airline said no one flew.

In thirty minutes we finished packing, called Aviateca to hold their Cobán flight for us, let Joan know we were going after all, cancelled our return to Belize and made new reservations, checked out of the hotel, and drove about ten miles to the airport. Let me tell you, it was wild but we made it.

There was even time for Joan to meet us at the airport to say that she had spoken to Mrs. Hempstead on their radio, who was delighted that it worked out. Joan promised to double-check our return reservations and send a third cable to Bucher informing him of another change in plans.

So, still slightly out of breath, Carli and I piled into an ancient DC-3 along with the other passengers, all Indians. Off we went through the clouds and over the mountains...which weren't nearly far enough below us for my nerves.

Thirty minutes later, we came down in a long, high valley and settled bumpily onto the grass. We were the last ones out of the plane, and as we alighted, a tiny Spanish priest dashed up to us delightedly saying that we must be the ones Doña Rosita was looking for. Let me tell you, it wasn't

too hard to pick us out of the crowd. I was glad to know we were being met.

Just then a small, brusque, tailored figure sorted herself out from the crowd and strode toward us, her wrinkled, alert eighty-year-old face warmly welcoming. She reached up to kiss Carli, shook hands with me, and explained that I certainly knew she was Mrs. Hempstead's sister, didn't I. Well, fortunately Callie Young had described Doña Rosita, so I was somewhat prepared.

Doña Rosita had a driver and a Jeep Camión (Jeep or Land Rover...heavy, enclosed, 5-passenger vehicle). She issued orders to the mob of little boys hoping to manage the baggage and, giving the impression that she had also given everyone in the area strict orders on what to do for the next 24 hours, marched us off to the car.

In the five miles into town, we got a quick capsule history of the area. Most of the early European settlement and farming of the area had been done by Germans. They were run out and their lands confiscated during the First World War, but her family, the Duesseldorfs, had been allowed to stay...quite probably a matter of the museum and possibly more changing hands. As she pointed out their property, it was obvious that they had had vast holdings, and half the buildings in the town were theirs, too.

Doña Rosita told us that the road we drove in on, which led straight for some miles, rising gently at the end into the town, used to be a lovely wide highway, and they had their horse races along it. The government took over the road, let it go, and "look at the state of it now." I gradually realized that, in all probability, the last horse race along that road was held about 1910.



We stopped in front of Mrs. Hempstead's home...the old family home where both she and Doña Rosita were born...a long, unimpressive wall directly on the street, studded with shuttered and barred windows, but with fresh gray paint and white stripe and tiled roof. The wooden door

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was large and handsome, with brightly polished brass...and it opened into the most welcoming patio I've ever seen.

The patio is a large rectangle of grass with large flowering shrubs and, near the center, an enormous night-blooming cereus that arches higher than the roof and gives the feeling of privacy to the sitting areas on the surrounding walkway. The wide, covered, tile walk on all four sides of the patio has beautifully polished Spanish Colonial furniture, comfortable, casual wicker, etc. There must be at least three separate groupings so that a crowd can gather wherever the sun is...or isn't...alongside the patio.


Opening off all four sides of the patio are the various rooms, of course...and I can't imagine how many there are...at least ten large bedrooms, I would guess, remembering the names that went with them; Mrs. Hempstead keeps a room ready at all times for each of her children. Carli and I had separate rooms with an adjoining bath. Then there are dens and offices and living rooms and dining rooms. We weren't there long enough to get really oriented.



Mrs. Hempstead is a lovely, frail, white-haired woman of 85, quite severely crippled, but active with her cane, alert, and interested in everything. Bucher and I met her eleven years ago when, shortly after she emerged from the hospital with a newly mended broken hip, she got into Chris's Cessna and flew with him to Belize. She went along on a picnic at sea on the large boat *Siesta* that Bucher and Ford Young had then, and we were completely enchanted with her. We have been corresponding ever since, and she has begged us repeatedly to visit her. This was the first time it has been possible. She could not have been more gracious and made Carli and me both very welcome and very glad that we had gone despite all the setbacks.

She showed us to our rooms. Carli's, one that her granddaughters use, had canopied bed and dainty white furniture. Mrs. Hempstead had a little gift, beautifully wrapped, waiting for Carli and had put out a new book thinking that it would interest Carli...*Etiquette for Teens* or some such


thing, by Amy Vanderbilt, I think. My room was through the adjoining bath, and quietly gracious in heavy damasks and satins, rich shades of deep rose.



And then we started eating. My after-view of Cobán is a montage of meals alternating with jolting rides over gravel roads.

Carli and I had had a lovely but generous lunch with Pete Crawford just before we started our frantic flight to Cobán. We hadn't relaxed enough to digest that before we were faced with tea. Happily we did not have to eat too much and just being at Mrs. Hempstead's outdoor table was worth anything.

She had a small porch jutting out from the back of the house, overlooking the garden and pool, clustered with brilliantly flowering vines, and with a view of the surrounding mountains. The tea was lovely: dainty cucumber sandwiches on home-baked bread, sliced paper thin and spread with butter from her own dairy; delicate cakes and cookies that she had taught her Ketchi cook to bake.



After tea we were bundled back into the *camión* for a drive around Cobán. Carli and I perched together on a single seat alongside the driver in the front so that Mrs. Hempstead and Doña Rosita could be comfortable in the back. The town is charming, old, and quite typical of that part of the world. The running commentary from the back seat peopled it for us.

Outside of town we drove up a rather forbidding road to the new stadium...which neither of the "girls" liked a bit, since it was too small and the curves too tight for safe horse racing.

From there we drove up to a charming old church, high on a hill, heavy and white in the Spanish-Colonial style, with a door at least two stories tall. The church was surrounded by great white tombs of varying sizes and shapes.

The church fairly finished off our daughter. Even I was a little jolted, though I have seen some Latin churches. The nave was quite open with rows of benches only near the front. Around the sides were the usual statues of the Virgin and various saints...done in different styles, some old and quite charming, some pretty horribly modern plaster and bright paint. But set into one side of the church was a glass coffin with a life-size male figure looking more early Spanish than late Bible. Carli went rigid. Doña Rosita, who was accompanying us while Mrs. Hempstead stayed in the car, explained that after Good Friday the coffin is taken out of the church and carried in the Indians' procession.

One interesting thing...the priests have been modernizing the church and, in the process, removed a beautiful old dark mahogany hand-carved screen that used to be at the front. (The "girls" were highly critical of the priest's interference.) The screen had been put off in a storeroom adjoining the church, and the Indians went in there to pray directly in front of the carved, massive wooden piece, and to burn candles and leave flowers, just as if it still were in the church. The dirty floor in front of the screen was studded with wax and candle stubs and dried blossoms.

We wandered around the church's burial ground for a while and Doña Rosita pointed out ancestors and close family friends, keeping up a running and vivid commentary on their lives and personalities.

The view from the courtyard in front of the church was breathtaking, across the rooftops of town and the surrounding mountains.



We drove through miles of Hempstead land, past coffee and tea and corn and cattle. Saw Doña Rosita's charming little house...Chris and his brothers talked her into moving in with Mrs. Hempstead after she broke her hip. Doña Rosita is a nurse and still is active in medical work...doing experiments on the new, highly successful food supplement, Incaparina, which had been so effective in preventing death and semi-starvation among the Indians.

We saw the dairy. Knowing that Carli liked animals, Mrs. Hempstead gave instructions for us to go around the back of one group of buildings...and without 4-wheel drive we never would have made it. The Indian superintendent brought out a gorgeous white rabbit and gave it to Carli to hold while he found some pigs for her!



On our return to the house, we separated to bathe and dress for dinner, then gathered around the fireplace at an informal living area at the end of the large dining room. Guatemala gets cold at night, and it was pleasant to have the fire and to have heavy dark draperies drawn across windows and doors.


Darling Ketchi maids scuttled back and forth dressed in their native costume... great full skirts of hand-woven materials and a sheer white *huipil* (blouse) with great flounced, embroidered trimming on the low neck; hair in one great long shining black plait with a huge floppy red bow at the base of the braid rather than at the end.

Dinner, again, was superb and beautifully served. Mrs. Hempstead's table was covered with a type of native material I never had seen before, and she explained that she always used Guatemalan material for her "outside" friends and imported linens for her Guatemalan friends.


Mrs. Hempstead and Doña Rosita are wonderful company, and the conversation ranged widely. I was particularly pleased at Carli's having a chance to see the special charm of gracious, well educated, and elderly ladies. They both went to school in England and France, have traveled widely, and still read greatly.

About mid-evening we went off to bed, Mrs. Hempstead coming along to make sure that the maids had turned down the beds properly and given each of us two hot water bottles...Carli's first experience with that delightful and, in my mind, out-of-the-past, bit of comfort. We were asked what time we wanted coffee, and then we settled for the night.

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At 7:30 the next morning a gentle knock preceded the maid with a beautiful tray, complete with a flower...the first breakfast-in-bed I've had in years. The Hempsteads primarily grow coffee and are very proud of it. She has a maid whose job is to roast the coffee daily, grind it, and make the coffee essence...a very rich distillation that you then cut to taste with hot water. So you can imagine that the coffee was matchless. With it was toasted homemade bread and marmalade. Let me say it was a luxury I would be happy to enjoy daily. Carli, of course, was equally happy with her taste of life-as-it-should-be.



Although I fretted about those two elderly women jouncing along the roads, they were insistent on sightseeing. The countryside all is beautiful, and their running commentary was fascinating. The backseat was a constant argument...no matter what one said, the other remembered it differently, and they had a glorious time back and forth. Meanwhile, I was entranced.

Throughout the visit I was never sure what time era we were in, since one moment we were galloping across the countryside with the girls' beaus, and the next we were just last week. Mrs. Hempstead has a town house in The City but hates it because all the new building has simply destroyed the charm of Guatemala! In contrast, Tegucigalpa has kept its graciousness, she says, somewhat to my confusion since I've heard how modern it is...and then her son Chris comes into the conversation, age 8!

First we went to the next town to see the market. Carli went into this town's church with misgivings, but survived. The thing I remember best from this one, which Doña Rosita pointed out with utter loathing, was a hideous statue of a young man in a modern brown suit, oxfords, bow tie, and halo. Doña Rosita sniffed and remarked, "I know Christ never wore a bow tie, and I don't think the saints did either."

We detoured to another little town, Santo Tomás, which according to Mrs. Hempstead was the one place the Spanish never could subdue during the Conquest. Later, after the Spanish were in control of the country, the King sent two huge brass church bells to the community in recognition of their bravery.

We went to the church here, which to Carli's delight did not have a glass coffin. As a matter of fact, it was being rebuilt following an interior fire some years ago, so little of it was in the original state, though it was the usual massive white Spanish-Colonial style.

Rodrigo, the driver, offered to take us up to the bell tower, so we started up a wide, uneven set of stairs in one wall (no guardrail, just open stairs). At the top they turned to the right and narrowed to barely body-width, disappearing into a steep tunnel. Rodrigo went first, and most reluctantly, Carli and I crawled after him. Midway up the tiny, narrow, irregular stairs we were in almost total darkness since Rodrigo blocked the little light at the top.

We finally emerged onto an open stone platform alongside the bells, nothing between us and the distant ground but a few tiles on the roof, another story lower. We clutched at the arch and enjoyed our view of the village, farms, and mountains, praying that we not faint. The bells were lovely, great ancient greenish bronze with archaic inscriptions, and they were lashed in place with the original thongs, made of elephant hide, according to Rodrigo.

I missed some of the things Rodrigo told me since the Cobán accent is a little foreign to my version of Spanish. But I was quite aware of his meaning when he laughingly told us that we were among the first women ever to see the bells since it is not permitted, and in the past, they have even hung a woman who climbed up there. Later Joan was amazed that we had been up there since her sister-in-law had been run off fairly firmly not too long ago.





We had time for a lovely lunch on our return to Mrs. Hempstead's home, and left that afternoon. It was a wonderful visit for Carli and me, and an experience I feel we both were very lucky to have had.

Joan met us back in Guatemala, and another Hempstead, Baysis, absolutely insisted on our spending the night with her. Her husband, Allan, was on the finca, and she was alone. She has a huge, beautiful home that would look perfectly in place on the outskirts of Atlanta, frame-and-stone, white board fences around acres of lawn, gardens, and orchard. We had a lovely afternoon and evening, went to a movie, and left for Belize next day.



Kate and Molly Fox, 1966



Kingsley Fox and Kate, 1966

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## Honduras with Molly & Kingsley

May 1965

After repeated visits to Guatemala and Mexico, Bucher and I finally branched out to another neighboring Republic. Honduras is the backward child of Central America...underdeveloped except for the banana industry, a country of mestizos grown away from its earlier Mayan culture and lacking native arts and crafts to a degree that exceeds even British Honduras.

Molly and Kingsley Fox joined us on the trip in Cessna Zero-Four-Uniform. They are British friends who, according to Molly, “speak American.” As a matter of fact, they are closer to America than to England in their views after thirteen years in Peru with an American mining company.

Bucher had business in San Pedro Sula, so we spent the first night of our weekend there.

La Lima, a little southeast of San Pedro Sula in a broad valley just past the first range of low mountains inland from the Bay of Honduras, is a rapidly developing area and the economic heart of the country. Its businessmen take enormous and well deserved pride in the expansion of that part of the country in the very recent past. As a matter of fact, they have used private funds to build a magnificent jet airstrip between the two cities, anticipating the time it will be needed. We could have landed eight or ten times on its length.

The terminal building is still under construction, and I never have seen such casual Immigration and Customs officials. Usually the moment you land in these countries, armed soldiers and uniformed officials swarm around you. Here, we parked the plane and had to wander around to find someone who cared that foreigners just had invaded their country.



I remembered San Pedro Sula as a dusty, dingy little town where we used to have to wait three to five hours en route from Belize to Miami, with a depressing and dirty old hotel. It has changed. The hotel has been completely modernized with tile and paneling, a lovely patio and pool, and the rooms freshened and air conditioned.

We had a slight contretemps in the hotel. Bucher had been in San Pedro the week before and had carefully reserved rooms. By the time we arrived the reservation, of course, had been lost. Somehow, although there was almost no one in the hotel, the rooms he so carefully had selected at a reasonable rate on the second floor were not available. Instead we had to walk up three flights to their new story and pay double rate.

The rooms were quite nice...small but attractive, with paneling and pleasant furniture and fixtures. The bath was ceramic, tiled in pink, which was set off with ceiling and walls of lettuce green and door-frame of old gold.

Kingsley and Molly had the extra privilege of walking miles past half-finished rooms and piles of materials, bags of cement, and mounds of sawdust to their room...and having their closet door (equipped with the wrong-style lock, and defective at that) lock itself. When Kingsley called the desk for a key, after finding that their room key did not fit the closet, he got a flurry of Spanish...flurried back at them in his fluent Peruvian...and no action whatever. Molly had unpacked, and all their things were in the closet, so Kingsley and Bucher finally took the door off the hinges with a great deal of perseverance and tools such as keys, beer openers, and pen knives. When they finally got it free, it became obvious from marks on the door itself that this had happened several times before. Incidentally, as we went out for dinner, we saw several people at the desk worriedly pawing through a great box of keys.



San Pedro Sula now has endless stores offering a complete range of imported goods. We prowled the town, of course, and Bucher and Kingsley considered it an ideal place to visit since there was not a single

thing to buy. As I say, there were “things” but nothing we couldn’t get in Belize for less, since duties on imported goods are high in most Latin countries. And there were none of the charming local things you can find in other neighboring countries.

Assuming that the food in the hotel would be mediocre, we investigated restaurants. The best appearing one was, of all things, a pizzeria, and we had the finest pizza, without exaggeration, I’ve ever tasted.



Bucher left the hotel around 8:30 next morning to see the Texaco manager, and I went down to sit by the pool. Molly and Kingsley joined me around 9:30. We were the only ones there, and the water was lovely. Bucher came back around 10:00 and we left for the airport around 11:00.

The flight to Tegucigalpa, the capital, (*Teguice* for short) was interesting and pleasant. We spent about half of it climbing to a high enough altitude to clear the mountains. Most of our check-points, the highest peaks, were shrouded in clouds so that we couldn’t find them, but we still had an occasional lake or village to reassure us that we were on course. Also, we were flying on the army radio beacon just past Teguce...call letters *TNT*.

Tegucigalpa is in a broad valley surrounded by mountains, with half of the houses clinging to their sides. Lacking the volcanoes of Guatemala, it is not as spectacular. But the close-packed, pastel adobe buildings and red-tiled roofs, cramped streets, and quaint arched bridges over the river that bisects the city, make it far more charming than the more modern Guatemala City.

A fascinating contrast, crossing a bridge, is the Palacio Nacional on one side...a real castle with turrets, battlements, and pennants flying, rising with sheer walls from the river’s edge...and opposite it, the handsome glass-and-steel addition to the University. Incidentally, that magnificent building, standing free on 20-foot pillars, with a patio and large statues beneath, overlooking the rooftops of the city below, had great, gaping, jagged holes in the glass facade where bombs had blasted them during

recent student riots. Diagonally across the street, the electricity plant was draped with black crepe for the people killed inside it when it was bombed, the steel-curtain doors were bent and battered, and the roof, smoke-blackened shreds.



There are two nice hotels in Tegucigalpa; we chose the Prado since it is nearest the center of town. The lobby is large and very modern, and our rooms were moderate in price and very pleasant. Molly and Kingsley had one on the floor above us. It opened onto an inner patio, open to the sky, brick floored, and lush with planters. There was lawn furniture, and an umbrella-ed table made it a lovely private place for a pre-dinner drink.

Our room looked over the long red-tiled roofs of the building opposite and onto the square little houses tossed against the mountain behind like children's blocks. It was charming, and I never tired of looking at our view.



We fairly well covered the immediate area on foot...parks, old churches, stores, and a market that was a crushing blow to me since the vendors wore ordinary clothes (not a native in sight as far as colorful costume went). And the goods...aside from the usual food stuffs, it all was the cheapest stuff importable from Hong Kong. Molly wasn't surprised; she says that through South America that often is the case. But I'm spoiled by the Guatemalan, Mexican, and Salvadoranean markets. I had particularly wanted to get Carli an Indian dress to take to camp...but I gather they haven't seen one in Honduras since the early days of the United Fruit Company.

As we walked past the open, enormous doors of the cathedral, Bucher and I were entranced by the elaborate gold screen covering the entire end of the church behind the altar. It is characteristic of Spanish Colonial churches and Molly and Kingsley have seen dozens, of course. I hadn't happened to run across one before. Kingsley slipped into the church to

take a picture (which is permitted) and I followed just to look. Bucher wouldn't have considered doing that...and didn't particularly want to get closer as I did. Molly knew that while an uncovered head was all right (I had covered mine with a handkerchief), bare arms, such as her dress showed, would be a shocking irreverence. I didn't know that, but happened to have a dress with sleeves.

People were wandering in and out of the church, kneeling briefly, talking, and gathering near the altar rail. Naturally old Original Tourist "gathered" with them. I couldn't see too well from the back of the group, but there was a statue of a woman set into a temporary sort of bower and banked with flowers. The people were going up, lighting candles, adding flowers, praying briefly, or simply standing and looking at it. We learned the following day that this was the statue of Our Lady of Suyapa, which had been carried from the basilica miles outside of town for a special festival.

Back to the cathedral itself. That immense and elaborate gold and silver screen at the end of the church had been brought over from Spain, as had the church bells. I've never seen anything like it. The pulpit, too, a great carved semicircle jutting from one side of the nave near the front, was the same fantastic gold work, and there were smaller but still fabulous gold screens around some of the niches for statues of saints near the front of the cathedral. Flood lighting was used to make it all even more impressive as the rest of the long church was unlighted.



Since this was Saturday night, we decided to go out for dinner and planned to visit a highly recommended restaurant on a nearby mountain. As usual, it had closed the week before. We always seem to run into this sort of thing. Instead we were advised to go to the Club Zora for a good dinner, dancing, and floor show.

It was quite attractive, semi-open with table and dance floor under corolux, and a large patio nearby. The band was adequate but the worst-looking bunch of characters I've ever seen...dressed in untidy shirts and rumpled slacks of whatever color or style they chose...an unshaven,

grubby group of all colors and appearance, from the most African to a bearded beatnik-type.

It was hours before dinner came, but they did serve on immaculate linen with masses of silver. The food itself was hardly superb...French onion soup, hastily whipped up from what I suspect was French's dried chopped onion flakes, and a very greasy and uncharacteristic shrimp thermidor that involved an unfamiliar but nice-tasting sauce.

As for the floor show...one very attractive young dancer, who cavorted in a performance almost as brief as her costume and then disappeared for hours. I assume she reappeared; we didn't wait to see. Still, we had had a nice evening, enjoyed dancing ourselves, and particularly enjoyed watching the other guests.

All the clientele were quiet, nicely behaved, and well dressed, but I must make two points. First, each dress fitted about two-thirds of its owner; I cannot think what process is used to wedge those curvy young women into those dresses and keep the zipper from giving up once it is secured. Second, every other jaw was hypnotically pledging its dedication to Mr. Wrigley.



Sunday Bucher and I surprised ourselves by having breakfast...our only "native" meal, the Honduran version of huevos rancheros, and quite nice, with fresh tortillas. After that we took a little walk past the Palacio Nacional and University, waiting for the Foxes to emerge. When they appeared, we hired a car and did a sightseeing tour around the city.

Early that morning Bucher and I had heard the cathedral bells clanging in brassy impatience, a band, crowds, and speeches. Peering from our window, we could see that the streets and corner of the park in front of the cathedral were jammed. We thought it might be a bit of a revolution, but found it was a procession forming to carry Our Lady of Suyapa back to her basilica.



As we came over the top of the hill on our drive, we saw that the highway ahead, down to the bottom, up the next hill, and disappearing over it, was an absolute ocean of people walking to the basilica...not fewer than ten or twelve abreast, with no apparent space between. They had been walking for almost four hours at that time and were about half way. Note: for obvious reasons we turned around and did *not* visit the basilica ourselves.

The drive was interesting...the town is charmingly Colonial, as I have said, but up on the surrounding mountains are some handsome modern homes and apartment buildings, many literally clinging to the cliffs so that every floor appears adrift in space. Most of the embassies are on the Avenida de los Revolucionarios, a lovely boulevard with busts of important leaders of freedom set along it at intervals...the usual Simón Bolívar, José Martí, San Martín...others of the world, including our own George Washington and Russia's Lenin.

There's just one thing...the traffic in Tegucigalpa is unbelievable. Even Kingsley and Molly, who have visited much of South America and Europe, said they were awestruck. First, there are literally hundreds of the little Volkswagen buses zipping from corner to corner and darting back into traffic without a backward or sideways glance, and nine out of ten cars are Fiats, or that size car, which also whisk about like drunken mosquitoes. There are lots of large trucks, and one never knows whether one of a dozen motorized miniatures is lurking behind each, ready to emerge fearlessly at the first questionable moment. And then there's the happy lack of concern for rules. You want to turn...fine, swing from the extreme right across four lanes of traffic for a left-hand change of direction. You might like to blast your horn to warn people, and possibly they will blast back, but more often smiles and screeching brakes are the only protest. Bucher refused to sit in the front seat of the taxi and Kingsley was noticeably bleached of countenance when we finished our tour.

One interesting place we stopped was a park that is full of reproductions of Mayan buildings and carvings uncovered in Honduran ruins. They are very well done, with even a scaled-down pyramid copying the major

temple of Copán. Lovely planting, tall trees, curving walks, streams, benches, statues, and arbors...utterly charming and restful.

For lunch Sunday we took our taxi driver's advice on one of the best restaurants; to our amazement, it turned out to be another pizzeria. Clean but simple in style, with perfectly superb Italian food.

By this time we had pretty well finished Tegucigalpa. There wasn't much more to see or do. So we went to a movie, *Zorba the Greek*...which won't reach Belize for two or three years. I find that, in these countries, the movies are in English with Spanish subtitles...which is nice for us. We went to the 6:30 show and had dinner, when we got out, at the rooftop dining room of the other main hotel. It was lovely, overlooking the city, and the food was excellent. But we were the only people there, which was a bit flat-feeling.



We left fairly early Monday morning to fly back to Belize. We had one small delay over clearing the country. Bucher went up to the tower to file his flight plan, and they wouldn't accept it until he showed a receipt for his landing fees. Coming back down to the main office, Bucher found that Aduana\* wouldn't let him pay his landing fees until he showed his copy of a filed flight plan. Kingsley took over, and happily, the man at Aduana had enough sense to just shrug and shake his head and agree to do it in a way that apparently was backwards to him, and Kingsley went back up to the tower with Bucher just-in-case. Aside from that, again, they couldn't have been more casual about our clearance or modest about fees, unlike some countries.

The trip back was lovely. There usually are fewer clouds in the morning this time of year, and we could see far better this time. It was a pretty flight, smooth, and quick, and we were back in Belize for lunch.

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\* *Aduana* is Spanish for *Customs*.

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## Mérida with Bucher

March 1971

The trip—half business, half pleasure—was postponed once because of the delayed arrival of a ship and almost had to be cancelled because of another sailing foul-up. Fortunately that vessel was late enough to let us slip off Wednesday through Sunday.

We left at five in the morning, so most of our suffering was over by nine. The British Honduras “Northern Highway” is something. After twenty-some miles of quite decent roads, it becomes a wavy, potholed, multi-patched, single-lane strip snaking through the bush. Forty miles of that give way to marl, a packed clay surface heavily etched by weather, rough but of generous width to allow loaded sugar-cane trucks to pass each other.

There were only minor formalities leaving B.H., and hardly more on the Mexican side of the border. They have a beautiful new Immigration and Customs building, and their officials are brighter, neater, more cordial, and less hungry than we remember from past years. Probably by direction from the federal government. They did not even examine our luggage, but just waved us on after we had cleared Immigration.

We had heard that the road from the border to Mérida now is fully surfaced and good. It is excellent. The first stretch of nearly one hundred miles seems to have been laid out by two giant surveyors standing at towns at each end, a straight line of double-lane pavement striking undeviatingly through the wilderness. For miles, a hedge of a sort of wild daisy made a yellowy-green border along each side of the highway, as formally as the white strips edged the paving.




At the first town past the border, Bucher decided to fill up our truck with gas, not knowing what sort of villages were ahead. We drove slowly through Bacalar without finding a station, so I asked a clutch of Mexican

women standing outside their hut where we could buy gasoline. One answered enthusiastically with detailed directions illustrated by a flung arm. We turned around—followed exactly—found the central plaza but not a gas station anywhere.

On our second circuit of the plaza we stopped to ask. This man didn't know, but sprinted across the grass to ask someone who did. More flung arms. No more results. This time we followed past the plaza toward the lagoon, around old Fort Bacalar, giving me the guided tour I'd wanted the whole time, and down to the pretty little beach resort area Callie Young had described from a visit a couple of years ago. But no gas.


Two inquiries later, we made it back to a yard we had tried once before, which had appeared to be the residential buildings attached to a school. Not at all. It was the gasolina. I'm chagrined to find that so many years of civilization in Belize have made me forget that gasoline doesn't have to come out of pumps—it also comes through siphons from 55-gallon drums into pitchers and can be poured into the vehicle's tank.

Naturally the next town, where we made our turn to Mérida, had a huge and modern Pemex station.



Quintana Roo, adjacent to the B.H. border, is a territory of Mexico, not a state, and has been something of a stepchild. The government now is making increased efforts to develop it. Tiny clusters of thatched huts had a neat modern market or government building or a pretty plaza laid out and being landscaped. In the middle of jungle, there would be a clearing and a miniature stadium, perhaps five tiers of benches, concrete, to accommodate fifty to seventy-five people, overlooking a rough baseball diamond. Around the next curve would be the handful of huts belonging to the sports field.

*[Editor's Note 1 on page 289.]*



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Quintana Roo and Yucatán would seem to have the market cornered on rocks. It is incredible that they can scratch anything out of that soil. Each plot is bordered by a dry masonry stone wall—sensible for purposes of defining lots and confining children and stock, and for using the material cleared from the land without having to lug it away. Even in the towns, each little house or group of huts is walled in. Even so, the proportion in cleared land seems 90% rock and 10% soil.

Once past the Río Hondo, which separates the B.H. from Mexico, there is no river or stream all the way to Mérida. However, the entire area is underlaid by underground rivers, so wells are common and even large acreage can be irrigated.

Two things are sad through the area—the great derelict churches, and the vast fields of henequen gone to bush since man-made fibers took over the rope industry. The churches, often cathedral-size in tiny villages, date from the Spanish conquest. Doors and windows are boarded up, occasionally roofs are off, sometimes shutters are broken so that the stripped, barren interiors can be glimpsed.

The Mexican government tromped hard on the Catholic Church in the Twenties, and while their proscriptions have eased slightly, they have not permitted restoration of these old churches. It is a shock after seeing the many churches of the same style and period that remain the center of village activities in other Central American countries!

Nearer Mérida, the villages grow larger, the stone walls painted white on the street side, and more thatched adobe homes than palmetto-and-thatch ones. Some villages obviously once adjoined huge fincas that are now drying up without the henequen industry. Bucher was reminded of southern mill towns during the Depression.



We had reservations at our former favorite motel outside Mérida. It has been taken over by a chain, enlarged, polished, and much of its charm destroyed. It used to have one of the best restaurants in Mérida, open-air

under thatching, with superb Yucatecan food. Now it has a great glassed cafeteria with blue and orange booths and food to match. In the patio they have double-decked the row of pool-side bedrooms and removed the lovely overhang of thatch that gave both shade and privacy. They have filled in one end of the winding pool for no apparent reason, since it is now simply a great expanse of empty concrete. Still, the islands in the pool have great trees wound with jungle vines, and lush bushes and flowering shrubs line the walks and buildings. The rooms are as large and attractive as ever and, if possible, even more immaculate.

While Bucher and I still were in shock at the modern facade of the Príncipe Maya where we had expected our quaint Tropical Maya, we had a bit of confusion over moving the truck. I expected Bucher to move it while I checked in, but somehow the keys were handed to one of the hotel employees, and I was rushed out to go with him to supervise the unloading. He made it into the boulevard before he stalled. I realized he probably didn't know how to shift gears faster than I realized I couldn't possible say so in Spanish, and by that time he had restarted the truck and veered directly toward a truck that was passing us on the right. I screamed. He missed but I don't know how. Bucher said he and the manager were watching and that by that time, the manager was half-way on top of the desk trying to get out to do something.

My happy driver, whose smile wasn't the even disarranged, buck-jumped the truck across the remaining lane, into the driveway, and to a halt under a tree, about one inch before the first tiled step. Beaming with pleasure at his performance, the grinning youth madly began unloading baggage—and it was too late for me to do anything but give a little prayer of thanks and remind myself that he probably never had had the magnificent experience of driving a truck before.



That night our business partners, Billye and Robby Robinson, flew in from Jacksonville, and we met them at the magnificent new airport terminal, about half a mile from the motel. The building is gorgeous and

modern—and they said that although there wasn't another plane in sight and they could have taxied almost to the door, they were offloaded at the end of a corridor and marched miles, as in Miami, before reaching Immigration and Customs.

I won't go into details of our stay—sitting around the pool, looking for good food, a brief excursion to the market, and another brief one downtown in nostalgia for the old Gran Hotel de Mérida, which obviously is having a renaissance. It all was restful and fun.



Robby telephoned an old friend of his, a man he has known since the days he used to ship lumber out of Progreso. Señor Palomaque came over to the motel to visit on Friday evening, and he insisted we all come for tacos at his drugstore next midday. It is a funny, dim, old-fashioned-looking place, mainly tables and chairs like my childhood drugstores used to have, and just enough drugs to be an excuse for keeping the shop. His wife joined us, a blithe little bird of a woman who talked rapid-fire Spanish and English, with no particular consistency.

And the tacos—I learned something. I put far too much in my tortillas. These had just a narrow strip of filling and rolled up as neatly as a cigar. And the filling—first roast venison with a garnish of marinated, finely chopped radishes and cilantro; then *chicharrones* (tiny bits of crisp pork skin) with bits of this-and-that; then diced octopus cooked in its ink in a bit of olive oil (delicate and delicious—the taste too fine by itself to kill with the sauce of finely chopped chiles and onions in lemon juice, which I had used...carefully...on the earlier tacos), and finally another meat combination, which almost did me in since she had said that it was baby pig, and it was almost gelatinous. Billye told me latter that the Señora had turned and told her that it wasn't really baby pig, that was just a nickname for it. Still, we used to have a baby pig named Montague and whatever those tacos were, I barely finished the one, just to be polite.

And after that lavish display, the Palomaques insisted that we all go to their house for a family breakfast Sunday morning before we left. They

have a lovely home, which was out in the country when they built it and which now is in the middle of the industrial park between our motel and the city. However, they have ample land and planting behind a high wall, so they are perfectly content. The value of the property has skyrocketed, of course, and they are talking about moving back into one of their houses in the city.

Breakfast began with a dish of cantaloupe, diced, and a large glass of half-lemonade, half-watermelon juice, which was lovely. Then tamales—a fine, thin layer the masa with a thick filling of hotly seasoned meat—and for those who were strong enough, there was a little dish of chiles Eduardo had picked that morning, cut up with onions in lemon juice, to put on the tamales. After that, bread! That is, five different kinds of breads or pastries with homemade marmalade. Delicious, but not what Bucher and I normally start a long trip on.



We had an easy drive to Chetumal, about five hours. Had a good lobster dinner and then checked in at a new motel outside the city. Quite decent. Left at seven and agonized through the B.H. end of the trip, getting home about ten-thirty—before the first of our ships had anchored.



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## San Andrés with Bucher

April 1974

The trip materialized almost literally overnight. Bucher came home tired, Belize-happy (rhymes with stir-crazy), overworked, and with a heavy schedule ahead. He announced that Monday was a holiday (The Queen's Birthday), and we were going somewhere. Look up schedules. Make reservations. Don't care where.

We have wanted to go to San Andrés for a long time. It is a small island (7 x 3.5 miles) off the coast of Nicaragua, belonging to Colombia. It was part of the Miskito Coast, settled by the British and administered by them for many years, along with Belize. About half the people are the same Black Caribs\* as in Belize, with old English names, many of them seafaring families. Although the official language is Spanish, of course, most of the Blacks are bilingual and speak an English barely discernible from Belizean English.

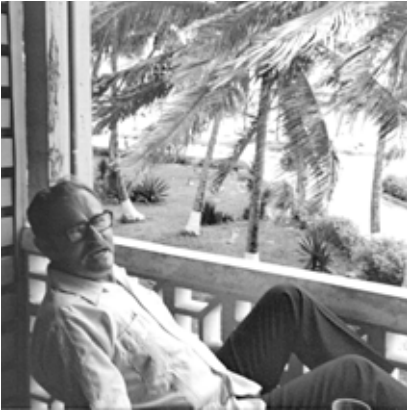


The trip was easy. We left early morning, spent two hours in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, and were in San Andrés at noon. I had cabled El Isleño, the only hotel I could find listed, for reservations, and the cable arrived the day after we did—full rate. Fortunately our choice was a good one. There are other hotels now, but none seemed as happily situated as El Isleño.

It is on the main street, which runs along a wide white beach lined with tall coconut palms. The hotel is set back somewhat in graciously planted grounds, and each room has a private balcony overlooking the sea. The beach is public, of course, but was not crowded, and it was immaculately clean. We saw one bit of litter, and that appeared to be a tin a child had been playing with, which was washing at the edge of the waves.

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\* The *Black Carib* people are correctly called *Garifuna* (singular) or *Gariganu* (plural).



Bucher



Kate

Relaxing on balcony of room at El Isleño, San Andrés, 1974

We were there two nights. Had a very restful time—swam, walked miles up and down the beach, walked for hours back and forth through the town, and hired a taxi for a drive around the island. (Incidentally, it developed that our taxi driver had been a sailor on a ship that Bucher was Belize agent for a couple of years ago.)


Our favorite pastime was people-watching from our balcony. There are more motorcycles than cars—mostly small Yamahas. Many of them are family vehicles—a smiling young man, pretty wife perched behind, and between the two helmeted heads, a baby or small child peering serenely around.



There is a ridge down the center of the island around 300 feet high. Starting at sea level, that gives a pleasantly hilly aspect. The foliage was typically tropical—endless palms, breadfruit, papaya, and heavy bushes of various types.

Most of the shore was heavily eroded rock beaten by waves, with no beach. Only at the northeast end of the island is there a reef and a pretty beach, and it is there that the town has developed. There are tiny native huts and houses here and there around the island, a tiny settlement at a cove on the southwest, and another at the extreme south tip.


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By accident we found we had arrived on election day. Fortunately, Colombia is among the most democratically stable countries in South America, so it was exciting and colorful and happy.


By six o'clock Sunday morning, the taxis and motorcycles were out, flying red or blue pennants to advertise their party loyalty or decked with the Colombian flag. The cycles had pennants, too, and the cyclists were dressed totally or partly in the bright red or blue of the principal parties. It appeared that almost every car on the island was being used as a jitney to ferry voters to the polls. We saw them frequently stopping to collect or return people on our drive around the island.

During our late-afternoon walk around town, we found sidewalks and streets mobbed with supporters near what probably were party headquarters. I was not sure it was any place for us to be promenading, but as we got closer, it was obvious that the gatherings were excited and happy with lots of laughing and clowning. The army—which had patrolled rather casually through day—had one street cordoned off where, apparently, votes from various polling places were being compiled. We learned the next day that the expected candidate, Liberal López had been elected—the “red” party (color, not politics; López, according to the Miami Herald, is expected to be fairly conservative, continuing reforms and promoting private rather than government investment.)




The food at El Isleño was selected from an extensive and interesting menu, was served with a flourish by well trained, attentive waiters, and was almost completely tasteless. However, the same description fits our Fort George Hotel here, so we were disappointed but not unduly distressed. Most things were closed election day so we could not try an interesting-looking restaurant that we had found on our walks, but we did find a pizzeria that had excellent Italian food. We have learned that when

in doubt in this part of the world, try the Italian places—usually they are superb.




Money is pouring into San Andrés, most of it private capital we understand, and the “new town” is a forest of newly finished or half-built concrete-block construction. The “new town” is shop after shop after shop, all carrying the same gleaming imported goods. The “old town” resembles a latinized Belize, partly shabby adobe-type construction and partly old frame two-story Colonial buildings with verandas across the front. The old town strings along the water front on both sides of the harbor. The new one branches out from the beach.

We felt that the Colombian government had been quite imaginative and pragmatic in the development of this little “forgotten” island. First, they made it a free port—but not all that free, according to our taxi driver, who said that there still is some duty on imported goods. There are a few Gringo tourists and some of miscellaneous other nationalities, but the island’s main business is mainland Colombians. They swarm over to San Andrés, since it is Colombian territory, and load up on low-cost electrical appliances, TV sets, linens, French perfumes, imported clothes—spend their money in the shops, hotels, and government-operated casinos as tourist—and then can take their loot back home without paying the much higher duty that the same things would carry if bought there.



I learned one interesting and useful lesson. Bifocal-ed elderly types should order their priorities when strolling and should decide whether to look in the shop windows or to watch for potholes in the sidewalks. I ended up on my knees, apparently praying to a GE steam iron. Bucher and a gracious passing gentleman hauled me erect and propped me up until the stars disappeared and I decided that nothing was broken. The ankle was swollen and sore but I found that I could walk—carefully—as much as I liked.

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Because of plane schedules, we had to overnight in Tegucigalpa on our return. We insisted on staying in centrally located Hotel Prado, which was the best hotel on our previous visits. We should know by now how quickly hotels die in this part of the world. Our favorites in Mérida, Guatemala, and Cayman were disappointments on repeat visits. However, we avoid the towering chrome-and-concrete monsters being erected on the edges of Central American cities.

Had our usual prowling through town, the market, the Cathedral (Colonial and with the magnificent, intricately golden nave wall). Our favorite restaurant (Italian, what else?) was closed Mondays, so we had dinner in the hotel, which we remembered as being quite good.

We ordered shrimp cocktail and lobster thermidor and Bucher decided that a small bottle of wine would be in order. White wine? None. This was faintly ominous since the menu specifically described it in the thermidor. Rosé? Let's see. Long wait. Oh, yes, rosé was available but not by the bottle. He would serve it, and we would pay for just what we drank. Again, faintly ominous.

Came the shrimp. Lovely. Came the wine—somewhat muddy-appearing, in heavy glass tumblers that no self-respecting gas station would have given away in the Olden Days.

So we sipped. Can you imagine any one thing more calculated to take the glamour out of foreign travel than a bit of communion wine with dinner? This was well watered red wine with the faintly vinegar-y taste that was first known with awe after confirmation forty years ago.

We laughed our way through dinner over the incongruity—and managed to avoid demanding the rest of the bottle. As for the lobster thermidor...the lobster was nice, and the “thermidor” elegant—if you happen to prefer your lobster in Fanny Farmer's basic white sauce.

The next day we found our Italian restaurant open and obviously even better established than on previous visits. The plain tables with

red-checked tablecloths are the same, but the walls have been paneled and are hung with Honduran scenes painted by three or four different artists—all of them good—and the food is as beautifully prepared as we had remembered.



Bucher has devised what he thinks is a perfect system to cope with the threat of wifely shopping during travel. He doesn't realize that the framework of his scheme is highly visible.

On our first exploring of a city, we stop and investigate any and all shops carrying native crafts. But of course one doesn't want to buy anything before comparing prices and making sure that one has found the best selection.

On the next walk we turn corners suddenly or go out through arcades to streets we seem to have missed on the first walk. Then there's the discussion over coffee, probably on the final morning. Yes, we really *do* want whatever-it-is. But how will we carry it? Where will we put it? How will we mail it? Are we talking about buying just for the sake of buying? and anyway, we'll be back in a few weeks when all those questions will have evaporated.

And our final stroll through town again magically winds past shoe stores and hardwares, doctors' offices, and shuttered residences. The next craft shop is the one at the airport—and everyone knows that that's the *worst* place to do that sort of shopping.

On this particular trip we found nothing Colombian of interest in San Andrés (the one time we passed the only junky little shop). I was dead set on buying a Honduran lamp base, beautifully carved and (to me) very handsome. Bucher got me on the where-will-we-put-it. It is either too large or too small for any location I could think of. However, he only thinks I've given up on that one. All I have to do now is manufacture a place where that lamp is the only possible thing to use.

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## England with Bucher

June 1974

### Wednesday, 12 June

We built up to the Great Excursion gently. Took TACA to Miami the day before we were to leave for England.

We telephoned the ship's agents to see if, by chance, the Wee Scots Captain were in port—Capt. Thomas Dickson, currently of *MV Domburgh*,\* formerly of *MV Westkust*, which Bucher and crew had salvaged when she was aground on our reef in March.\*\* The Captain was in port, but the ship was to sail that evening. Bucher said there was no way he would disturb a ship's Master before sailing.

That was about 4:30 in the afternoon. By 5:30 we were in our car just to drive out on Dodge Island and see what sort of ship the *Domburgh* was. We found the ship, and there was no loading activity—or activity of any sort around her. Bucher decided to go aboard. A few moments later he was back, motioning me to join him.

That was a gentle way of summoning me to scale a narrow gangplank, hanging onto ropes, cross a bulwark, and then leap down into a narrow well of deck (which appealed to me more than walking a narrow catwalk over the holds). A very large, nearly naked young man met us as we entered the quarters and bellowed, “You *must* be the Scotts. Thank God you've come. The Captain has been in a most fearful temper thinking he had missed you,” and about that time Tommy rounded the corner and enveloped me in an enthusiastic welcome himself.

We went on up to his stateroom—a large saloon with bedroom and bath off it—and caught up on what each had been doing. Quite naturally, the Captain got out his bottle of Scotch, and he and Bucher reminisced about

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\* *MV* before the ship's name means *Motor Vessel*.

\*\* “Westkust Stranding” on page 349 in Book 1: *Life & Times, 1922 – 1979*

their toddies on the *Westkust*. Engine trouble was holding him up, so he was in no hurry, and we had about an hour's delightful visit with him.

### **Thursday, 13 June**

In the morning, Bucher went out on business, and I hit the stores briefly. Best purchase—a tiny Convert-a-Volt so that we could use our coffee pot on British current. Regrouped for lunch in the room, a nap, and an unhurried departure for the airport around 6:00 PM.

Checking in was traumatic in the extreme, although we were among the first, just seeing all that red-white-and-blue and listening to the lovely accents of the counter clerks (pronounced *clarks*). Of course, trying to select a seat on that monstrous plane was awful, but I congratulated myself on getting a pair just behind a bulkhead where we would have a modicum of privacy for sleeping.

Going aboard, I was frisked for the first time. Men and women were cut into separate lanes in a smooth operation, and three no-nonsense young women went over us from head to toe—literally—by hand, while another stood by with one of those electric gadgets. Among those near me was a nun who was patient, but obviously unsettled by the ordeal.

By the time we had walked several miles back toward our seats, the stewardess took our tickets, clucked several times, and said that we would hate those seats and wouldn't we like to select others. Seems my lovely bulkhead was a wide aisle in front of our seats, right by the galley, so that there would be lights and activity the entire flight. She found us a marvelous cubicle, just behind the bulkhead of First Class, and since there was a storage cupboard across the aisle, we felt quite private, with lots of leg room and those great wedge-shaped, cushiony footrests. She explained that we would have to move back to other seats to see the movie, but the plane was not crowded so that would be no problem.

First lovely touch (which Callie Young had described from her BOAC flight) was an offering of ice-cold towels to cool our fevered brows and touch our hands, which really had not had time to become soiled. Then



another hostess came around with earphones that plug into the armrest and provide 6 channels of music or entertainment and also have the sound for the movie.

The earphones are lightweight with tiny plugs, but gradually they bothered slightly. Furthermore, I do not enjoy music while I read. So I sat hour after hour with the earphones putting pressure on my eardrums and distracting my reading, just because I had them.

Soon after taking off we had drinks, then a beautiful dinner, and about an hour later we moved back to the section behind our seats for the movie.

The movie was *Sugarland Express*—a wild and funny and sad chase about a delinquent couple trying to reclaim their baby, which had been put up for adoption while they were in prison. I enjoyed it; Bucher did not.

Moved back to our seats, and Bucher was asleep before I could cover him with his blanket. I dosed fitfully through the next three hours.

## Friday, 14 June

Awake for breakfast about an hour and a half before landing.

Exceptionally clear day, so we could see the outer islands, Wales, and part of England perfectly as we approached Heathrow.

The British do this Immigration-and-Customs thing beautifully. Chop chop—and the Customs officials smile and nod welcomingly as the porter wheels one's unopened bags past them.

Outside, no trouble getting one of the matchless, huge, and practical British taxis. Saw my first Bobby, who was all that a Bobby should be.



On taxis—one enters comfortably, stepping upward at an easy angle and literally walking across a floor to the seat. It is like a mobile small room. The driver, of course is separated by glass, though the chatty ones keep it open to talk. Amazingly, this majestic vehicle can turn in its own length, like Alex's Volkswagen. The drivers we had were unfailingly courteous

and capable. They ranged in age from the twenties to one who might possibly have been in his eighties (but probably wasn't).

This is a good time to discuss London traffic. It is courteous. It moves smartly; streets are well marked once you figure out the signs; and the traffic, in the main, is surprisingly genial. We noticed—with initial dismay—that our taxi, deciding to turn right, would make his move from the farthest left lane and simply cut across two or four or six lanes of traffic, all of whom slowed to let him pass without sounding their hooters.



Our first view of the Park Court Hotel was lovely—a great long stretch of gracious old mansions built one against the other, newly painted the softest grayish green with white trim, with gardens and pools and walks across the front and a white wall separating the garden from the street. Across the wide thoroughfare was Hyde Park, lushly green of lawn and shaded by stately spreading trees.

Turning off Bayswater and around to the entrance on the opposite short street was a shockingly inappropriate entry of chrome and glass and a functional lobby of stripped-down modern of the Prosaic Period. I was absolutely sick since I had looked forward so to one of the old, dignified London hotels.

The lobby was a madhouse with a minority of the people speaking English. When Bucher went to check in, the girl got a horrified look, flipped frenziedly through some sheets, then gave the sole bellboy a key. We went up, and he showed us to a room—twin beds. Old Kate said that there had been some mistake. The boy seemed quite nonchalant about it and packed us back down to the lobby, baggage and all.

The girl at the desk looked quite ill when we returned, scurried through more papers, and gave the boy another key. Up we went to the top floor. Down a hall. Into a room. With Bucher and me in it, the boy had to push the baggage ahead of him since there wasn't space for luggage and him both.

After sitting up all night, this was not quite as I had expected my arrival in London to be. However, standing on tiptoe I could see out the high small window, across the street below to the lush grass and greenery of Hyde Park. Decided to worry about things later and flopped into bed for a two-hour nap.



The room would have been quite all right for one person; actually it was rather charming. Obviously started life as servants' quarters up under the eaves. The decoration throughout the hotel is the same—sunny yellow walls, white Formica bed-and-night-stand combinations, white Formica vanity-bureau, armchair upholstered in the same burnt orange as the bedspread. Duller shade of russet for the carpeting.

The little window was pretty, with two panels that opened into the room, the way our living room windows do. Only problem, they hit the sloping ceiling and did not open fully but extended over the edge of the bed on my side; to get into bed, I had to be very careful to duck under them. There was a narrow walkway around the foot of the bed and enough room for Bucher to get into bed on his side.

The bathroom was somewhat more gracious with a huge tub and toilet on a riser that obviously housed the pipes but made it a foot-dangling throne. Ample hanging wardrobe in the "hall" opposite the bathroom.

The window looked out through the battlements at the top of the old Victorian building, and there was ample room for someone to walk from one window to the next—which made me nervous since there were no screens. But it was quaint, and I was determined not to let it worry me.



We got up in the afternoon, bathed, dressed and went out. Walked up and down Bayswater a bit, enjoying the hotel garden, the street, and the park across the way. Finally caught a double-decker bus—top deck, of course—and rode down through Piccadilly Circus, Trafalgar Square, to Parliament Square.

We walked past the Parliament onto the adjacent bridge over the Thames and looked back at the magnificent building. Despite years of having seen pictures of The Mother of Parliaments, I was unprepared for its magnificence. My first feeling was that it was incredible to accuse the British of being unimaginative and pedestrian with this heart-lifting inspiration of a building. Every bit of carving is a grace-note of hope and courage.

As we have read, the British are doing an Herculean job of cleaning the dirt of centuries off their main buildings. This is not completed, but is beautiful where done. However, even grimy, these buildings are beautiful. We walked back slowly, admiring every inch.

The House of Lords was in session, or rather just breaking up, and there were beautiful limousines with uniformed chauffeurs waiting in the yard for their lords to come through the stone archways.

We walked on over to Westminster Abbey, which is just across the square, but found all the doors closed. Finally hit the main entrance and discovered it had been a memorial service for the Duke of Gloucestershire, who just had died. There was quite a crowd so we could not see which troops were at attention, but recognized the Archbishop Michael Ramsey with what we took to be peripherally Royal ladies, who paused to be photographed.

We walked on up the wide main street (can't find my map and have forgotten the name) to Downing Street and down to No. 10 to gawk with a handful of tourists at the simple entrance and bored guard. Went on to catch a bus back to the hotel.



We had tried, both when we checked in and when we left for our jaunt, to speak to Jennifer Dawson, who had been so kind about making our reservations. She is the assistant manager of the hotel, and the sister of our friend Scott-Cowper. She had left a call in our absence, and we were able

to say hello, thank her, and invite her to meet us for a drink when she was through work.

We found a beautiful arrangement of flowers in our room when we returned—tiny yellow roses, yellow glads, bits of coral-colored flowers, which matched the decor perfectly—from John and Anne Gratton. I forgot to say that we called them as soon as we were settled in our room. So I called back to tell Anne how delighted we were with the flowers. Being able to dial direct from our room was blissful.

We also had received a letter from Muriel and Don Stauffer on our return, saying that they would arrive on the Saturday (next day). The Grattons had hoped we would go to them for the weekend but I had explained that we could not.



We went down to meet Jennifer around 6:30. She is a most attractive brunette of about thirty, quietly capable when working, and an amusing conversationalist. She was absolutely seething—as Bucher and I had predicted to each other. We had not told her about the room mix-up but obviously she had found out. Seems they had given away the room she had saved for us, and she had nothing complimentary to say about that particular reservations clerk. We told her that it was perfectly all right, but she said orders were in for us to be moved the next morning. She really was most upset about and it, and we didn't want her to be.

Had a very pleasant visit and Jennifer suggested that if we did not plan to go out, we have dinner in the adjacent restaurant, the Charcoal Grill at White's, which is a separate hotel, connected to the Park Court by an inner corridor, but operated independently. It is the sort of hotel we thought we were going to, and while it is a little more expensive, Bucher and I think we might try it if / when we return to London. It is quiet, with more service and none of the travel-tour crowds that the Park Court caters to. Anyway, the Grill is lovely and quiet, with continental chef and staff and perfectly delicious food. We had prawn cocktails (shrimp), grilled Dover sole because that it one of the things you *must* have (got that out of

the way—ten thousand hair-like bones and not one bit better than any other fish, which is on the bottom of my list anyway), wine of course, and the most glorious fresh strawberries with thick cream for dessert.



Dinner put us in a glow of happiness at being in London, and we decided we could not put off seeing the Grattons. When we got back to the room, we called for the third time and asked if we might go down for lunch next day. Anne was delighted and gave full instructions for finding “Fir Trees, Camberley, Surrey,” which I wrote down verbatim.

### **Saturday, 15 June**

Had a nice breakfast in the very crowded Park Court dining room. Breakfast is included in one’s room rate and no one misses. We were seated with a slightly older couple and had a very pleasant talk. They were from New Zealand and on a round-the-world cruise. They had left the ship at Southampton and were going to motor through England, down to France, and catch their ship either there or in Italy, as I remember. He said he had spent his 70th birthday on the ship in mid Pacific and was just getting over the celebration. Made one interesting comment that Bucher and I think is fairly close to the truth. Said that he had observed that the same item tended to cost the same numerical amount regardless of the currency involved. That is, despite the wide variations in value of different currencies, a pair of shoes that would cost him £30 in New Zealand were \$30 in the States and £30 in London, and it is so similar in our experience—a BZ\$10 pair of shoes is US\$10 in the States or 10 Pesos in Mexico, for example. In other words—you can’t win.



We had much more trouble about renting a car than we had expected because it was the weekend. The Hall Porter (equivalent of Bell Captain, except that he seems to do many more helpful things) finally located a small independent car-rental place that had one car left, so we took off in

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a taxi to Sloane Square. Got the car and set off for the Grattons' at least an hour later than planned.

London was a very easy city to get around in—since we did not have to find obscure little mews and terraces and lanes. Bucher quickly was comfortable driving about.

Since we were leaving from a different point in London, we made some exotic turns and twists before settling onto the proper highway, and then the helpful map reader directed driver right through the middle of two small towns at high noon on market day instead of taking the bypass routes because those weren't shown on her map. And from the center of one of the towns, she shot straight out on the wrong side until husband became suspicious as road turned into country lane. All very time consuming. It was almost one before we reached the Grattons'.

John and Anne look marvelous and exactly the same. Felt we had seen them only yesterday. Their son Robert was there, a handsome, pleasant young man, now a commodities broker. Their house is charming, set back in a nice-size lawn and protected by high trees and bushes from neighboring view. It was a lovely sunny day, and they had put lawn chairs out on the sunny side.

Champagne to celebrate. Leisurely luncheon, and Anne insisted that we examine the place mats—the same place that made our tray from the nautical chart for our Bay Islands trip\* took some of the Grattons' color pictures and blew them up as insets in heavy plastic mats. All sorts of scenes of the Bay Islands trip, of all of us, and of their boat, and other Belize scenes. Delightful.

It was a lovely visit, and we found it very difficult to make ourselves leave. Robert had drawn a map of our return trip, and we belted back to the hotel in one hour flat.



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\* “Exercise Bay Rum” on page 331 in Book 1: *Life & Times, 1922 – 1979*

I had left a message at the Stauffers' hotel to say we would be out of town but would call around five. They were there, and while they had been disappointed to miss us, they had enjoyed a nap, since Muriel had arrived on that same sort of schedule from the States, and Don had flown in from Holland. We arranged for them to come on over to us for drinks. The hotel had moved our things to the new room in our absence, so we had a nice room with double bed and two arm chairs—not huge by any means, but adequate.

Muriel and Don also looked exactly the same. No, Muriel looked better. She has put on a shade of weight, which she needed; her hair is lightened and set in a very becoming style; and she is far more relaxed. Don started out relaxed but by our last evening he was spinning out in the old way, we were sorry to see. Anyway, we felt as if we had been together day before yesterday and started trying to catch up on each other.

Decided to go to one of Don's favorite restaurants, an Hungarian one about two blocks from our hotel. It is upstairs (since there was a fire downstairs not long ago) and seats perhaps two dozen people. There is a trio—middle-aged men with violin, cello, and a strange middle-European sort of xylophone with metallic strings played with padded hammers—and they were good. So was the food.

Don was able to make recommendations, so we got some peculiar things we otherwise might not have. It was fun being with the Stauffers, the restaurant was entrancing, it was all very strange and glamorous.

After dinner Don insisted that we needed a nightcap and suggested that we go to the Post Office Tower, which overlooks all of London, much like the top of the Regency in Atlanta. We took off in his car and learned the Stauffer secret to driving in London. The person sitting up with the driver is commissioned to say "Think Left" every block or so.

I don't know how long we careened around London before Don located the P.O. Tower—it was a hair-raising expedition. Fortunately, London traffic tapers off after dark quite decidedly, and the streets are fairly wide and easy to negotiate. When we got there, we found that it was open for



dinner guests only. So Don decided to take us to The Angel, a very old pub on the Thames on the site of Shakespeare's Globe Theater. It was on the other side of the river, just under one of the bridges.

One problem...too many bridges and Don didn't remember which one. I feel that we crossed something like five bridges two to three times each, back and forth swinging madly around to go back the other direction. It was chaotic. Finally Don decided to find the street closest to the water and simply drive along that. Sure enough, by the third bridge we passed at right angles, Muriel was beginning to find remembered landmarks.

The Angel dates from the Fifteen or Sixteen Hundreds. While the boys were getting beer, Muriel showed me all through the building, through small rooms, up tiny staircases, into funny little rooms and balconies, up a step here, down two there, duck through a doorway almost too small for me. Age-darkened wood, pitted and split and worn. Benches that must have known ten generations of bottoms.


It was packed. While most of the crowd were well dressed 18–30 year olds, there were others of ages or styles that made one realize that it was a pub in the true British sense of a local gathering place. We took our beer out onto a large platform built over the river and watched boats and tides and lights and tried to believe that it was London and we really were there.

Would you believe that I have read since? A recent British detective story had a group gathering at The Angel, and I knew where they were heading before the name was mentioned because of the description of Rotherhithe Street surroundings.

### **Sunday, 16 June**

Dining room too crowded to accommodate everyone so were directed to the Charcoal Grill. Walked through the long corridor to White's and had the same breakfast in far more congenial surroundings. Tried this several times but finally were informed that, as Park Court guests, we really were


to have breakfast there. A tip changed the headwaiter's thinking on the subject, and he invited us back.



Don and Muriel picked us up at ten to drive to Greenwich and Canterbury. We happened to pass where the Queen's Horse Guard were being mounted, so stopped to see the show. Two lines of mounted guards in elaborate uniforms facing each other across the courtyard, the current guard and the ones relieving them. With properly British concern for the tourists, a mounted guard rides through the gate and stands outside so the tourists can take pictures. Our young man appeared about 18, and from the gray tint of his complexion, we decided he was given the duty as punishment after too long and vigorous a Saturday night. His face stayed expressionless, but he was gulping rather pitifully. Perhaps the fresh air helped. Eventually he looked a bit recovered. His enormous black mount was completely quiet under the unsolicited pattings from stray hands.

When the troops moved off, Don belted around the way to Buckingham Palace, and we were there as they trotted past and on into the Palace grounds.

We drove down to Greenwich. By this time we had an in-joke, after our pelting around looking for The Angel the night before—no matter where we were going, we went through or past Elephant-and-Castle. That's a section of London on the other-side-of-the-Thames, a working-men's district. We were in and out of it constantly during our bridge-crossing phase, and the drive to Greenwich began with our driving through it.



We went to the home of Trevor Lloyd-Jones, manager of the Hercules London office, which is in Don's regional group. Apparently Don had set things up with him, and while Bucher and I were embarrassed to absorb most of his Sunday as we did, there was nothing we could do. Trevor was a dour but delightful Welshman, and we enjoyed him more and more through the day.

We went first to Greenwich, known from Alex's pictures. Saw the actual date line and stood with a foot on each side thereof, as one is expected to do. The *Cutty Sark* was closed to visitors but we wandered about the outside of that and the *Gipsy Moth IV*.

From Greenwich we drove to a little town called Sevenoaks for lunch. This was off the main highway and on a pretty country road that curved through villages, past small fields, and through lovely woods. Our destination was a beautiful Elizabethan Inn, the home of William Pitt the Younger. Again, an unbelievable old place that we explored thoroughly. We were allowed one glass of sherry as an aperitif and then shown into the old dining room. It was so totally and correctly Elizabethan there is no point describing it—you've seen it in dozens of movies. The waitresses were dressed in period dresses, and the food was very good.



Trevor went back home, and we continued down to Canterbury through the unbelievably lovely Kent countryside. I have heard of The Downs but did not realize that there are three fairly high escarpments paralleling the coast, with great rolling fields in the long valleys between.

Canterbury was a quaint old town with cobblestone streets, high boxy buildings with numerous chimneys and chimney pots, and the Cathedral, set on a lushly green lawn, is glorious. Cathedrals are Cathedrals when it comes to wandering inside, but I loved it. Bucher has a limited tolerance for strolling there. I am more interested in the feeling, the architecture, and the general atmosphere than of the specifics of history. I did a lot for my general sense of well-being by deciding ahead of time not to flail my memory with more facts than it was prepared to cope with.

We drove about Canterbury before leaving, past the ruins of Roman forts, and then back to Greenwich.



We picked up Trevor, and he took us on a pub-crawling tour back to London.

First, in honor of Visiting Americans, he took us to The Mayflower in Greenwich. He says that the Pilgrims left from there on their first trip, the one that took them to Holland before they returned to England and set out for the New World again. He made me walk down the narrow, steep stone steps from the street almost to where the Thames was lapping against worn treads, green-velveted with algae.

Inside, the pub was one of the ancient ones with tiny rooms, low doorways, smoke-darkened wood walls. Tables were tiny, scarred, dented, and worn from generations of customers. Across the river were the East India docks, and as at many pubs, there was a large platform built veranda-like over the river so that you could watch the boats going back and forth, see the lights of the city, and watch the water boil past.

From The Mayflower he took us to The Captain Jones near the new tower bridge, a similar old pub, and from there we walked along the Thames toward the bridge to another well known pub, The Angel. This I remember mainly as red brick set on a bright green lawn with a terraced walk approaching it.

We parted company with Trevor there, and the Stauffers dropped us back at our hotel around nine at night.

## **Monday, 17 June**

Today began Bucher's working days. He had an appointment with his solicitor at 10:30 and we wanted to do some essential shopping first. It was drizzling, just a cold, misty rain. We returned our rental car, got a wonderful London cab. We intended to buy Bucher a raincoat and said that we wanted to go to Burberry's. The driver gasped with pain and explained that we hardly could get there—"Big Ben has been bombed, and the entire area is sealed." We both were stunned, of course, especially after having gloried in that magnificent building just a few days earlier. I told the driver what we wanted and asked him for a suggestion.

"If I were you, Madam, I should go to Harrod's."

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So off we went to Harrod's, the pinnacle of London stores, where one even may see the Queen shopping on a good day.

We entered a typical department store, more conservative in decoration than a U.S. store, but with similar departments laid out in similar ways and with familiar merchandise. The prices, however, were distinctly unfamiliar.

Found Bucher's Burberry (obviously that's a trade-name for one of the fine ones), and as I remember, he bought the first one the very gracious gentleman showed him. The palest beige, belted. The clerk—pronounced *clark*, of course, and far too elegant to be called one in the first place—explained about a personal Export Card. UK has a deal permitting you to buy things that you will be taking out of the country, taking them with you, and having the store refund your Value Added Tax (VAT) later. Of course, this hinged on buying everything in the same store, to a total of £100 (which was not what we had planned to spend). However, offered a good deal, what does a red-blooded American do? We instantly were put in the position of *having* to spend money to make up our £100.

Next we went to get Bucher a document case (a flat, envelope-style briefcase that can be carried under your arm; he finds an attache case too large for most use). Found the department after ascending the narrowest wooden escalators ever seen. I had forgotten that the steps used to be made of wood. There is much polished woodwork in Harrod's, and the escalator matched. There was a sign saying that pets must be carried up in arms.

Found the luggage department, found the document cases, picked out a gorgeous one first off. Looked at price tag. Bucher turned on heel and started out. Kate grabbed him by back of new Burberry, saying that there must be others. Found a handsome one in cordovan with zipper and brass lock for only twice what we intended to pay. Smothered arguments by referring to the Export Card.

Time was running out for Bucher to make his appointment, so once we were in the process of writing up the sales ticket, I told Bucher to take the

document case and go while I took care of paying. Off he went in his new Burberry with the new document case under his arm, and guess who had both sales slips? The clerk was distraught when he couldn't find the document case, and I casually said Mr. Scott had left with it. He was not a very sensible man anyway, though he had a pompously distinguished look. I reassured him by explaining that the store security authorities certainly would check with him when they arrested Mr. Scott for shoplifting, and he obviously felt much better. I didn't. Apparently all export items have to have an explanatory sticker on them. I left the poor fool wailing, and Bucher had no problems. Can't imagine even a British security gentleman intercepting as distinguished a personage as Bucher looked that morning.



I had planned to meet Muriel at the National Gallery. Knew it was not too far, so decided to take a bus. Harrod's doorman, an elegantly uniformed individual, directed me to the proper stop. I got myself mildly lost but found a fascinating little alley with a greengrocer and other tiny shops in the process of getting to the proper street.

Security was very tight because of the bombing, and our purses were searched when we entered the gallery. Uniformed and plain-clothes police were everywhere. They outnumbered visitors.

Muriel is an artist so, she was a wonderful person to visit the gallery with. Not having too much time, we started with the Impressionists, which she especially wanted to revisit, and eased on through adjacent rooms. There was one marvelous moment when I was waiting for Muriel and happened to glance around, discovering that I was literally surrounded by Rembrandts. Muriel, who has been living in Holland, said that they weren't especially good ones, but that didn't dampen my delighted awe.



We took the Tube to the Tower of London. It was my first experience. Muriel is a pro. I did well traveling with Bucher and then her. He's an expert on buses, and she loves the underground.

When we arrived at the station, Muriel decided she was starving. Set off looking for a restaurant. It was a very business-y area (if it isn't in The City, it is on the edge of it), but two obviously office workers returning from lunch passed, and to Muriel's horror, I stopped them to ask. They seemed delighted and couldn't wait to explain in detail how to get to a lovely sandwich bar nearby. They left. Muriel and I looked at each other and took the next turn in the opposite direction...and stumbled onto Ye Olde Cheshire Cheese, one of the well known old pubs, under an overpass.


We hardly could push our way in through the downstairs, mobbed with upright men, and to the narrow stairs at the back. Upstairs there was a very pleasant lunchroom where women were welcome. For the only time on our trip we had a surly, deliberately rude waitress, which made both of us uncomfortable, but the lunch was pleasant.

I knew Muriel had been to the Tower twice before and didn't care that much myself about the full tour. What I really wanted to see—and so did she, since she always had missed them—were the crown jewels.

They are beautifully displayed. You start through a large room with glass cases of old swords, copper, brass vessels of various sorts, costumes, honors, etc. Included the various uniforms that the Queen wears—the Garter regalia, things she was painted in, etc. Then you start walking down, and down, and down. Just as Muriel remarked that it felt like going into a bank vault we turned a corner, and there were the great vault doors, open.

After enjoying the crown jewels, we wondered around a bit; Muriel commented on what we saw, based on her earlier visits. We saw the armory, encountered narrow, winding, stone staircases, climbed far down and far up to the tower.

I was tired, so we headed home.



I was ready for dinner before Bucher returned from his meetings. We met the Stauffers at The Britannia and dined together at Simpson's. Don then suggested we go to a wine cellar he knew of, and we careened around town until he found it, just before closing.

*[Editor's Note 2 on page 289.]*

## **Tuesday, 18 June**

After the full and tiring day before, Bucher and I were both ready to take it easy. We didn't see the Stauffers, who were returning to Brussels in the afternoon. Bucher had more meetings, but came home early. While he was away, I walked down to Queensway on a few errands. We had a quiet supper in the cafeteria.

That evening, we sent a telex to Alex, who was working on an oil rig off Scotland, to see when we could get together.

## **Wednesday, 19 June**

Spend a leisurely morning. Much of what we wanted to see was off limits because of a bomb scare and heightened security. As we wandered, Bucher carefully steered me away from shops.

We took the Tube to Madame Tussauds, which we found to be all tacky-ed up with psychedelic pin-ball machines, vending machines, etc. Enjoyed a quick run through the exhibits.

Bucher asked if I would like to go to the zoo around the other side of the park. I was touched by his thoughtfulness, but declined.

Tube to Queensway, where we made dinner reservations at an Indian restaurant.

When we return to our hotel, Alex telephoned from the rig to say that he would come to London late Thursday or early Friday, depending on whether he got in on time from the second chopper.



We had a marvelous Indian dinner and an early night.

### **Thursday, 20 June**

Shopped for presents at Harrod's. Bucher spent the happiest time browsing in the meat and cheese departments.

After lunch in a pub in the theatre district, we took in a matinee, *No Sex, Please, We're British*, which was light and amusing with marvelous comedic timing.

As on most of our leisure days, we watched the World Cup on TV in the hotel room.

We had dinner at the Charcoal Grill so that we would be nearby in case Alex arrived.

### **Friday, 21 June**

Alex arrived about 10:00 AM. He looked marvelous but thin.

We all took a taxi to Sloane Square to get a rental car, then set out on a tour of the Royal Docks. I was surprised to discover that they are locks. A horse and rider on a small bridge in the dock area looked bucolic. When he discovered that I was having a guided tour of Limehouse, he kept suggesting that we stop at the pub, much to Alex's dismay.



Bucher (with new document case) and Alex in London, June 1974

In Greenwich, we toured the *Cutty Sark* and then went to a lovely old pub now named “The Gypsy Moth.” A highlight for me was a Cockney man whose Golden Retriever picked up its own leash to follow him and then sprawled across the threshold.

We ended the day with dinner at Simpson’s.

### **Saturday, 22 June**

Leisurely day. We visited Westminster Abbey and did some exploring, but the Abbey itself was closed for a service.

We stopped at a discount department store that Alex found in Queensway. Alex bought three pairs of slacks, and I bought a gold necklace that is just right to fill in the V-neck of my tan Orlon shirtwaist.

Jennifer met us for drinks in the evening, and we gave her the shawl I bought for her at Harrod’s as thanks for all her help with our accommodations. After that, Bucher and I took Alex for dinner at the Hungarian restaurant that Don had introduced us to.

### **Sunday, 23 June**

We left early to drive to Camberley and from there, set off for Winchester with the Grattons in their caravan. John took us on a lovely drive on country roads. We stopped in a beech wood for a wonderful picnic lunch—salmon, green salad, sausages, potato salad, strawberries.

We saw Winchester Cathedral and then Winchester College, with boys in their college robes. (John is an *Old Wykehamists*, as former pupils are called.) My impression of Winchester is flint buildings outlined in brick throughout the area.



Back at the Grattons’ for the night. Anne and I visited in the kitchen while cooking, and the men talked boats, etc. over drinks. Highlights of the dinner were lamb chops and then the fresh strawberries for dessert. It was a delightful visit throughout the evening.

We spent the night in a pleasant guest room with bedding appropriate for below-zero weather, in concession to the Scotts.

### **Monday, 24 June**

We said goodbye to the Grattons and started early for our drive through Southampton to Portsmouth, where we caught the ferry for a short, smooth ride to the Isle of Wight. On the island, we stopped at an old but touristy pub. Drove along the coast. Saw the harbor, which interested Alex. On to the tourist area for a lunch of the most amazing—and excellent—prawn-on-brown-bread sandwiches.

Drove around half the island through gorgeous country, past beautiful farms, then close to the coast where we could enjoy views of the sea and the chalk cliffs. Periodically we were unnerved to meet huge “luxury coach” tour buses at curves on narrow roads. Bucher was concerned at their apparent lack of structural strength because of the large windows.



Bucher (in new Burberry) and Alex on ferry, June 1974

We returned on a larger, newer ferry, where we had drinks in the spacious bar of the top deck, enjoying the view.

We drove along the coast to Old Bosham, one of several small peninsulas between Portsmouth and Chichester, where we spent the night. The old inn was full, but we found a beautiful small hotel in an old building. The entrance was white throughout with white carpets. Each room was decorated like a private guest room. Ours was red with red-pink-and-green flowered full-length draperies over glass curtains. The large bath was trimmed with a line of decorator tiles. The floor-to-ceiling window next to the john was a bit unnerving.

After settling in our rooms, we met for drinks on the lawn at Alex's request. He spent much of the time investigating a small boat on a trailer nearby. The bar was attractive, white with bamboo and yellow trim.

We shared a beautiful dinner, and then Bucher and I had an early night. Alex told us the next day that he had stayed up a bit longer, watching TV in the lounge next to his room.

## **Tuesday, 25 June**

Another early start. After a nice breakfast in the hotel, we returned to Portsmouth. First stop was the Portsmouth History Dockyard, to see Admiral Horatio Nelson's flagship, HMS *Victory*.<sup>\*</sup> The crowds were so thick that we did not go aboard, but walked around her to see as much as we could. After that, we toured the National Museum of the Royal Navy.

The drive back to London was lovely, mostly through woods with some long vistas of the Downs. We stopped in Chelsea at Alex's request. Found some houseboat moorings along the Thames. The houseboats were lovely with many elaborate "gardens" of pots and planters.

At dinner in the Charcoal Grill, Alex took one bite of his Filet Bearnaise and said, "You mean you had me listening to Gypsy violins when *this* was here all the time?" We ended the evening with Irish Coffee.

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\* *HMS* before the ship's name means *His Majesty's Ship*.

After dinner, we went back to our room, talked, and watched TV; by chance we caught a gloriously English show on traditional sculling races.

We said goodbye to Alex, who was to leave on the 6:00 AM plane on Thursday and the next day had to see a solicitor about leasing a flat.

### **Wednesday, 26 June**

We spent a leisurely morning on this rainy day. Turned in our rental car. Stopped by Harrods to get a gift for the Grattons. After much searching, we found a Royal Doulton black cocker spaniel—unfortunately male. We hoped for a figurine that looked like the Grattton's cocker, Eartha, whom we had come to know when they lived in Belize. No problem! Anne later wrote thanking us for sending the “husband for Eartha.”

I continued shopping to use up the balance of the £100 that we must spend to qualify for the Personal Export VAT refund. Found a beautiful long coral-print dress with pleated skirt.

The afternoon was devoted to packing. By late afternoon, the skies had cleared, and we returned to the Indian restaurant for dinner. This time my chicken tandoori was beautifully tender.

### **Thursday, 27 June**

More rain. Jennifer insisted that we leave early for Heathrow because the previous day there had been a snap inspection, searching all incoming cars, passengers, and baggage. We learned later that this was repeated as part of security for some international dignitary (Rabin?) who arrived a couple days later.

A nice young taxi driver took us to the airport. We encountered no security—I've never been through an airport so rapidly. A young British Airways man took us to the Customs officer for inspection of our personal export items, which were all together in Bucher's briefcase, except for the Burberry, which he was wearing, of necessity.

The British Airways flight was delightful. We left London at 11:00 AM local time and arrived Miami at 5:30 PM local time. That meant we'd get a

full night's sleep. We watched a good movie, had an excellent lunch, another movie, and a drink. We were served tea far too soon after one drink and two hours before landing. Those last two hours were very tiresome for two tired Elderlies.

We checked into the Columbus, our favorite Room 704. TACA was closed so we were unable to reconfirm our flight back to Belize the next day.

### **Friday, 28 June**

TACA reported they had no space for one week. TAN had no space until Tuesday. TACA from New Orleans had no space until Tuesday or Wednesday. We were already packed, so we went to the airport to try to go standby.

Five minutes before departure an official announced that, "Probably all 30 of you standbys will ride." Then doors opened and 30 late ticketed passengers arrived. Bucher retrieved our bags; I check us into the International Airport Hotel.



We should have tried standby on TAN's 6:00 AM flight the next day but didn't...We eventually made it home. The problems on this last short leg didn't tarnish the glow of a wonderful trip.

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## *Mississippi Queen with Carli*

March 1982

It all began calmly enough. I unwrapped Carli's birthday present, easily recognizable as the Sierra Club Engagement Book, which she has given me for years. Inside, untidily, were papers. The first was a roundtrip ticket to New Orleans and the second, a brochure of the *Mississippi Queen*, in which a note from Carli asked me to join her March 12th through 19th on a cruise to celebrate our "Ninetieth Birthday"—my sixtieth and her thirtieth.

The weeks between January 4th and March 12th were so bedazzling with anticipation that they culminated in a depression because soon the trip would be past. (Author's Note: Naturally, once the trip *was* past, there was a glowing memory, relivable at will, and the happy knowledge that not one moment of the cruise was less than perfect.)

Telephone companies in California and Belize could have declared extra dividends as the time approached.



Our final call established that we would meet on the pier at 6:00 PM Friday since Carli had all the documents, and I would not be allowed aboard without her.

Allowing Carli over an hour to travel from plane to boat, I set off by taxi for the long-awaited reunion. Fifty yards from destination, we were blocked by a train. Twenty-five agonizing minutes later, I begged the driver to find a way around it. His bypass again was blocked, but after a few moments the train moved on, and we were able to proceed by approved broken-field driving back down a series of wharves to the Julia Street Pier where, through the shadowy clutter of a warehouse, the wedding-cake shape of the *Mississippi Queen* appeared aglow in the floodlights.

My luggage was deposited at the foot of the “stage” (riverboat term for the gangplank that is swung up at the bow of the boat underway or lowered to join boat to shore). I looked eagerly around for a beaming blonde. Next thing I knew a tall stranger in ruffled shirt was escorting me aboard as I protested that I had no documents.

In the lounge an elaborately costumed young brunette—Some 250 pounds of curves topped by a beautiful face—took me in hand to see if we could locate Carli. The Purser checked her list, established that Carli had not checked in, asked if I were Katharine Scott, arranged for my luggage to be taken to our stateroom, and sent me on my way in a blaze of friendliness.

By the time I returned from a quick hanging of hangers from my val-pac, Carli was emerging from a limousine in the doorway of the warehouse, looking frantically for a pathetic mother perched by her suitcases in the gloom.

When we returned to the cabin together we found a bottle of wine chilling in a cooler. It was a bon voyage gift from Carli’s travel agent (who has reason to feel she has caught a Live One, what with a trip to Tahiti and a Mississippi River cruise in less than a year).



The stateroom was surprisingly roomy. Twin beds separated by a four-drawer chest. Across the room, a small armchair next to a narrow four-drawer chest. Hanging locker approximately a yard long across from the small but gracious bathroom. Shower across the back corner of the cubicle was small but adequate. Large medicine cabinet. Basin set into a wall-length counter. Commode firmly planted dead center of the floor leaving just enough room to maneuverer around it. The special mechanism that permitted flushing with only four pints of water appeared to work on a vacuum principle that put one in utter terror of being sucked down through the pipe by its violent but momentary whooshing.



The prize of our stateroom was its private veranda with two chairs and a table, where we could sit at leisure and watch the river as we caught up on conversation.



Sailing night there was a spectacular buffet supper served early enough to allow passengers to be on deck for the calliope serenade that traditionally accompanies departure from each port. We listened to the exuberant and brassy music as miles of wharves and warehouses slipped past on one side of the boat and tugs, pushing their burdens of barges, worked up and downstream on the other.

Later there was superb Dixieland music in the Grand Saloon and an entertaining introduction to the staff and life of the *Mississippi Queen* by the Cruise Director (Karen, not Julie). That night, as every night, the band continued playing till midnight as the dance floor was taken over by some of the loveliest dancers I have seen in years, most of them white of hair and abundant of bulk, but light on their feet, untiring, compatibly skilled.



The *Mississippi Queen* is a new steel ship, built on traditional lines, with twin reciprocating steam engines powering a huge paddlewheel. She is a dream to manage, despite her bulk and boxiness, because of four separately operating rudders and bow thrusters. In Vicksburg as her nose was obviously stuck in the mud at the riverbank, the Captain quieted passengers who appeared to be preparing to panic by calling down from his picturesque position just above them on the wing-bridge, "I never worry about getting her off as long as I have that big paddlewheel going. She'll come off." A few moments later he called down, "Look there on the port. Isn't that bow thruster the prettiest thing you ever have seen washing her out of the mud!" The prettiest thing we ever had seen proved to be a rectangle of churning muddy water off the port bow, but as our handsome young Master said, she was backing out smoothly, as the jets of

steam began erupting from the calliope pipes at the stern, blasting out the departure music.

The boat (always referred to as a boat, not a ship) is carpeted throughout, with brass-railed double staircases ascending two flights from our Cabin Deck to the Observation Deck where Dining Saloon and Grand Saloon are located. The decor is a graciously modernized traditional.



The first morning we woke around seven, realized that we were not moving, raised the shades on our windows to look at the river, and discovered that we could not even see the rail on our veranda. Later we learned that the Coast Guard had halted all shipping in that area because of a pea-souper. The fog broke gradually, and Carli and I sat on the veranda drinking coffee as the boat shoved off from shore and proceeded upriver.

We sailed all the first day. Carli and I explored, got lost, sat in on some of the activities, enjoyed our veranda.



Captain Chengery (Czech: *Chin-GEAR-ee*) gave a fascinating talk on navigation. He is an exceptionally handsome, mustached man of 33, quite properly more proud of his recently acquired Mississippi River Pilot's License than of his river Master's papers. His talk was lucid, entertaining, informative.

Of all we learned, what gave us the most continuing pleasure was finding out that boats zig-zag up and down the river from side to side, instead of staying to the right. Running upriver, boats look for the slack water under points, crossing from one side to the other. Downriver, boats want the extra speed of the fastest current and ride the bends. To avoid accidents, boats signal to say which side they will be passing on—port to port, one whistle; starboard to starboard, two. Alex says that now that most river traffic uses radio, they will say to each other, for example, “We’ll pass on

the two-whistle side.” It was fun understanding the whistles and knowing which side of the boat to go to to see the passing vessel.

All of the tugs now push rather than tow barges. (None-the-less, the raft of barges being pushed is called a *tow*.) We passed one of the maximum tows—35 barges, five across and seven long. There was constant traffic, but very little to see on the river banks. To our surprise, the river side of the levees is an undergrowth of bushes and slim trees with only occasionally open fields or lawns and homes visible.



One of the more colorful events of the first day came mid-morning when the *Mississippi Queen* nudged into a bank at the foot of a long lawn leading up to a magnificent antebellum plantation house. A costumed young lady stood on the veranda as a brass-buttoned majordomo hurried to the boat with several suitcases. The luggage of two of our table companions had been lost by the airline, rushed to the boat just after she sailed, and had been driven some eighty miles up along the river to catch up with them.



Since Carli and I skipped breakfast in favor of coffee (or herb tea, for heaven’s sake) and sometimes continental breakfast on our veranda, we first joined our table at luncheon on the Saturday.

We were at a table for six—Carli’s choice, reasoned thus: we would be together constantly so did not need mealtime privacy at a table for two; a table for four was chancy since we might loathe our companions on sight; a table for eight might break up into cliques; a table for six seemed ideal.

One couple was a retired oil man and his striking, friendly wife. Their last foreign post was Iran, but Mr. Miller resigned after four years there rather than risk the rising revolution. They left six months before the hostages were taken, and a friend who had scoffed at them was murdered by mobs.

The others were two peripatetic widows of about my age who have traveled all over the world together. One talked and one smiled. They were good company if one made allowances for endless comparisons of everything with earlier trips.



We were charmed by the staff members whom we got to know. Our Cabin Stewardess, Becki, was a bright-faced, exuberant, plump young girl, part way through college and now engaged to one of the engineering officers.

Carli had brought along to show me a delightful album her friend Cathy had made of their plane trip to a resort in Baja California—part photographs, part typed commentary. After I had read it, it stayed out on the bureau. As we were going along the corridor one morning, Becki caught us and exclaimed, “Carli, I simply loved your album about your Baja trip!” Carli made pleasant sounds as we both choked back guffaws until reaching the privacy of our stateroom.

“If I had looked into someone’s private things,” Carli finally gasped, “I certainly would have been too embarrassed to admit it.” Becki, on the other hand, was cheerfully certain that we would be pleased at her sharing the trip.

Every evening the beds were turned down and a foil-wrapped chocolate mint left on the pillow. On St. Patrick’s Day, however, Becki spent her own money to buy small green-decorated paper plates and an assortment of green-wrapped mints to leave for her cabin guests.

Our waiter was a quick, amenable young man named Joel. The first time I asked for my prime ribs rare-rare-rare, he asked if I would permit the Chef to warm the meat in the middle. When I replied, “Just barely,” he went off to return with a magnificent slice of meat cooked exactly to my taste. Other evenings he presented steaks and roast beef precisely as I wanted them.

One morning Carli and I went to breakfast, just to see what it was like. I asked Joel what the Chef’s Choice Omelet was that day. When he replied,

“Spinach,” I was so manifestly horrified that Carli and our table-mates burst into laughter. Kate Was Not Amused at the idea of anyone’s putting vegetables in her eggs, however, and asked if the Chef possibly could come up with some cheese instead. Soon Carli was relishing her spinach omelet, and I was luxuriating in a beautiful cheese one, accompanied by what they consider an order of bacon, eight slices. I mellowed somewhat about the matter when Carli pointed out that the green omelet probably was in celebration of St. Patrick’s Day.

Our busboy, Trong Nguyen, was unobtrusively omnipresent, whisking away used items the instant they were finished. Late in the trip Mr. Miller began some friendly repartee with him, and Trong succeeded in being incredibly quick with replies that were delightful without ever overstepping the bounds of propriety.



The boat had a full schedule of activities—shore trips at four stops, first-run movies shown three times each day, game shows, bingo, bridge, exercise class, kite-flying competition at the calliope, and a lot more. I should think anyone could find something to do any time of the day or evening. But there was no one hassling you to join in activities, thank goodness. In the evening, the Dixieland band played in the Grand Saloon with a special show about 45 minutes long after dinner, continuing with music for dancing till midnight.

The Paddlewheel Bar, glass-enclosed, two decks tall, stretched the entire width of the stern, overlooking the paddlewheel. A balcony behind the Dining Saloon let guests look down on the dance floor and entertainment. Here, Carli and I found, was the top entertainment on the boat.

Three young musicians, probably in their early thirties, provided the best in ragtime, jazz, blues—anything—with a little low-key historical introduction to the classics of those genres. They all dressed in turn-of-the-century clothes. The men had waxed mustaches, the pianist’s describing full circles at each tip.

The pianist, Steve, was a superb and versatile musician; banjoist, Fred, did things with that instrument that I did not know it was capable of; singer Sherri (the large young woman who had been so kind on my arrival), always draped with a brilliantly colored boa, was billed as the “Red Hot Mama” and could belt out a song in the style of, and approaching the talent of, some of the classic singers of blues and ballads.

How do I know? Carli and I ended up living in the Paddlewheel Bar. We could not get enough of that music. It took us a couple of days to realize that they were so good and what their show schedule was. After that, we turned up at their 5:15 pre-dinner show for the First Seating, their 7:15 show for our seating, and the 11:15 show after the Dixieland show was over in the Grand Saloon. I found myself taking a nap every afternoon so that Carli and I could close up the Paddlewheel each night.

The atmosphere there and throughout the boat was pleasant, with quick, attentive bar service, but no pushing of drinks. You could sit in the Paddlewheel Bar for hours without a drink or with just a glass of soda. The staff gave you the feeling that you were welcome guests and that the bar was simply available if you wanted it.

We visited with the musicians during intermissions and got quite friendly with Fred Dodd, the banjoist. His wife, Karen, was the Cruise Director. Both Carli and I bought his record. Playing it here at home has done more than anything to bring back the fun we had.



Carli and I went on all four of the tours offered. The first was in St. Francisville, with the most elaborate of the antebellum homes and gardens we visited. In Vicksburg we drove through the battlefield as a dear little ancient gave us a brisk, vivid description of the siege and surrender.

When we returned to the boat after the Vicksburg tour, Carli set off back up the road, where she picked a large bouquet of yellow wild flowers.

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Tastefully displayed in a small plastic glass, they still were fresh days later when we departed.

Natchez was my favorite of the cities we visited since so much of it dates back to the late Seventeen Hundreds, the Civil War's having bypassed it. Unfortunately we were there during their annual pilgrimage so that all the houses we visited were jammed with people. We did not have the leisure to observe and enjoy that we had had in the earlier tours.

Baton Rouge was our last stop, somewhat different, a modern business city. Huey P. Long's contributions much in evidence. At the University of Louisiana their mascot, Tommy, a Bengal tiger, was prowling regally in his newly enlarged cage almost alongside the bus as we stopped for a traffic light.

One of Carli's and my favorite sites was the Rural Life museum, several acres holding antebellum overseer's houses, slave cabins, school, infirmary, sugar mill, grist mill, etc. After seeing the gracious plantation and town houses of the wealthy, it was fascinating to see something of more modest ways of living.

In Baton Rouge we returned from our tour to find the *Delta Queen* (owned by the same company) berthed alongside the *Mississippi Queen*. She originally ran between Sacramento and San Francisco, but some years ago was taken under her own power down through the Panama Canal and back to New Orleans. Alex says that since she is a wooden boat, each year a special Act of Congress is passed to permit her to continue to carry passengers. He adds that she has the best fire-fighting equipment of any boat anywhere.

After dinner that night, Carli and I toured the *Delta Queen*. The dark paneling and gleaming brass give her a turn-of-the-century elegance. We even were able to go into the engine room, gleaming with white-painted engines, each with pristine oil cans sitting on clean paper towel every few feet along the base. Gauges are in heavy brass cases. It was a showplace.



Much of our time was spent on the Promenade Deck. Eight laps equals a mile. After the first few laps strangers in deck chairs begin calling out encouragement as you pass. Carli and I did the mile or more together a few times without missing a syllable of conversation. She walked afternoons while I was napping, and visited with the young officers and staff. There was only one hazard, a wizened little old lady, whose age we all put at over eighty, who jogged lap after lap, head down, taking it for granted that all would clear a path for her.



The cruise was perfect. Plenty of time for Carli and me to catch up on our talking; perfect weather; room and leisure to walk; enough sightseeing, all of it interesting though I felt housed-out at the end and was delighted with the change of pace in Baton Rouge. Shipboard activities were well designed; the food was excellent and far more abundant than we needed. We skipped breakfasts and midnight buffets, though I think we should at least have looked at them since the ice sculptures were striking, we were told. The atmosphere throughout was modeled on the friendliness of the old riverboats.



Leaving was hard. We went separately because I had an errand before going to the airport. After checking in, I looked for Carli and finally caught her flying through the lobby with barely time to make her flight. Their bus had been held up by a train as they left the pier.



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## Mérida with Becky

March 1986

Bucher's youngest sister, Rebekah Bryan (whom I call *Becky*), and I had discussed the trip through our last several visits with each other. It is not easy to get to Mérida from Belize, but plans finally were worked out. We would drive to Corozal, leave our car with a friend, take a taxi to the Chetumal airport, and fly to Mérida.




The drive was pleasant. The new road, bypassing the old narrow, curving, dangerous road, is a joy. We sailed along with Becky enjoying the Northern scenery, which she never had seen. About 15 miles outside Corozal, I became aware of strange noises and feelings. Just before I had time to become really alarmed, there was a tremendous bang with successive unwelcome clattering; the wheel jerked; and I was able to hold the car, ease onto the verge, and bring it safely to a halt. I assumed that, at the very least, a wheel had fallen off. Not only did we find four wheels in place, we found four inflated tires. Without the comforting sight of a flat tire I assumed that the underpinnings of the car had disintegrated.

There was an equipment-sort-of place back a bit on the other side of the highway. As I started toward it, a man on a bicycle sprang out of the earth to ask if he could help. We conferred for a moment then I left him with Becky while I went to see if a telephone were available. The nearest phone was in a town "right down there around the curve," but since I barely could see the curve in the distance, I had no intention of striding down the highway alone in the middle of the drug country for endless miles, regardless of having a plane to catch.

As I was conferring with the friendly but amused men, Becky came running to say that our friend on the bicycle had found a great strip of tread that had come off one of our front tires. My new friends laughed and ushered me back across the road where they vied in helping change the

tire. Tips and smiles and good wishes all round, and we were back on our way.




I explained to Becky that I was driving very slowly because my spare was intended only to get me to a filling station in Belize City. We were about 1-1/2 miles from Corozal when it blew out, and I had a replay of keeping the car under control and getting it smoothly onto the shoulder.

Again we were within sight of a shop filled with men eager to be of help. One packed me into his truck and sped on into town where I bought two new tires, had one put onto a rim by a nice man who assured me he would be available to fix the second on Sunday so that I did not have to delay further. By the time we returned to the car, it had been jacked up and the bad tire removed. The helpful young man who had done it hurried to affix the new tire under the badgering of my “chauffeur,” who reminded everyone in sight that we had a plane to catch.

The amusing thing was that Becky had learned through visiting with our tire-changer that he didn’t even work in the shop; he just had stopped by to have his lawnmower fixed and somehow found himself delegated to change our tire. My driver even co-opted a passing truck to guide us to the Coke plant, where we were to leave the car. Again, multitudes of thanks and tips and smiles, and “may-you-have-a-safe-passage.”

Our taxi was waiting; we dashed to the border; the driver ushered us quickly through formalities on each side; and we were checked in for our flight in time for a revivifying beer, which I sorely needed. My store of grace-under-pressure had been gravely depleted.



I had planned for us to stay at the old Gran Hotel de Mérida, since I love its gracious old public rooms and general atmosphere. Alex insisted that it was ridiculous to pay their prices in Mérida, so I booked at a highly recommended nearby hotel. We made what I considered an undignified entrance to the Hotel Colón, since the taxi driver dumped us

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unceremoniously at the corner, and we had struggled half a block with our suitcases. The hotel entrance was definitely second-class, though lovely old tile and patios showed further inside.

Our room was perfectly all right, simple but immaculate, with the most aggressive air conditioner I ever remember being exposed to. That's the plus side. There was no hot water; there was no stopper in the sink; and they did not give me the plastic basin I requested for washing my stockings. I managed that by bailing water into a plastic waste basket with a small water glass (an endless process). The cold water for morning showers was a gentle trickle. They did not bring me the extra towel I requested for blotting excess water from my stockings, so I dried off from my sort-of shower with last night's damp one.

Becky and I decided that we did not need to put up with this on our long-awaited holiday. We had been further turned off by a dismal restaurant, even though the food was acceptable.

Anyway, by mid-morning we were reestablished in a lovely corner room at the Gran Hotel de Mérida. The fact that the air conditioner underperformed and that the following morning we asked to be moved is not important. They put us in another corner room with even lovelier view of old Colonial buildings. Despite Alex's horror at paying high rates in Mérida, we were quite happy with the US\$13 apiece per night the room cost us.

*[Editor's Note 3 on page 290.]*



You don't need details of our forays into the market, shops investigated, delicious food found. It was fun from one end of the day to another. As we headed homeward the first evening, we were accosted by a pleasant man urging business cards on us and insisting that we must visit his guayabera factory. I knew from Alex that this was the way to get really good buys, but was reluctant to vanish into the upper reaches of a Mexican loft.

However, his stairs were brightly lighted, Becky needed presents for children and grandchildren, and we followed him without a qualm.

Our friend thought he had died and gone to heaven when Becky began buying five of this and eight of that and nine of something else. Prices tumbled, discounts bubbled over, and she got a beautiful selection of excellent-quality guayaberas, huipiles (embroidered blouses), and Tehuacán dresses for at least a third less than it would have cost her shopping here-and-there.



Alex had given us two don't-miss names for meals. We tried the first, La Prosperidad, for our first lunch. It is a large place with low thatched ceilings on a series of semi-separated rooms. Típico\* entertainment throughout, instrumental, vocal, comics. We sat way at the back under a



Kate and Becky Bryan at lunch in Mérida, 1986

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\* In this context, *típico* (literally, *typical* in Spanish) means *traditional for the region*.

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fan (Becky's choice, and a good one, since the music was background instead of overpowering). The end of our area was open grillwork giving onto a tiny patio, where two live fawns and some turkeys improbably were cohabiting.

Two waiters rushed up as we were seated. One dashed off for *cerveza*\* and the other quickly put four *platillos* of appetizers on the table, with a great pile of fried tortilla triangles. There was a gorgeous guacamole, something slightly spicy involving ham, a plate of *chicharrones*, and something strange and unappetizing that tasted as unappealing as it looked. (We later learned that it was *chicharrones* softened in lime juice, and we could only wonder why.) Later they brought a menu and we had something-or-other delicious and Mexican. Alex said that when he was there, they never ordered since an endless stream of *platillos* appeared until they were almost too sated to move from the table.

Alex's other recommendation was El Hereford, a steak house where they semi-cook your steak and let you finish it on a brazier at the table. Since it was a Friday night, we called ahead for reservations even though we planned to eat unfashionably early. We arrived to find ourselves the first guests. However, the waiter was attentive and was pleasant about our asking to have drinks in peace before ordering. Dinner was delicious, and we laughed and visited and had a marvelous time. As we paid our bill and left, we *still* were the only diners in the cavernous restaurant.



Our original plan had been to drive home from Corozal Saturday night, but Becky had suggested spending the night in Chetumal instead. Even before our car troubles, I had agreed that it would be far easier. There now is one of the El Presidente chain hotels there, and it is lovely. First-class rooms, excellent restaurant, and breakfast buffet on a patio, which converted this non-breakfasting type to a plate loaded with five different Mexican offerings.

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\* *Cerveza* is Spanish for *beer*.



Becky at stop to pick up tire, 1986

The trip home, after having the second new tire put on its rim, was uneventful, and we were enjoying the breeze and sea view from our living room, beer in hand, by noon.

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## Guatemala on My Own

October 1987

The trip actually materialized after a planned—and cancelled—attempt in September, a postponement in early October, and the threat of another cancellation because of Guatemalan political disturbances, which fortunately abated.

I learned that it is just as much work packing for five days as for five weeks and left Belize on Wednesday, October 14th. We boarded the plane and then sat on the tarmac for almost two hours while TACA personnel tried to coax a jammed cargo door into working.

Because of political differences between Belize (which considers itself an independent nation) and Guatemala (which considers Belize a part of its sovereign area), planes no longer can fly directly back and forth, a matter of about twenty-five minutes. Instead, passengers are routed through either Honduras or El Salvador at double fare on a trip that takes about three hours. In this case it was closer to five hours.



Chris and Joan Hempstead, friends whom I had not seen in twenty-odd years, had insisted over my protests that they would meet me. I was relieved not to see them when I arrived so late. A phone call, shortly after I had settled into my room at La Casa Grande, told me that Chris had been at the airport on the balcony overlooking the Customs clearance baggage area, but had missed me because I was so closely followed by another traveler that he had assumed we were a couple.

I was lucky in my choice of an hotel, recommended by friends, and in getting a room at the last minute due to a cancellation. La Casa Grande bills itself as a residential hotel and is on Avenida de la Reforma in the Zona Rosa tourist district, close to the main tourist hotels that charge five times as much. It was a large private home and has been adapted to a gracious, inviting small hotel.

The public rooms are all handsome, with dark furniture and elegant upholstery, looking more like private living rooms than like lobby and bar. The dining room, under a skylight, is an inviting retreat of white walls, green vines, curlicued white wrought-iron furniture, and pastel napery.

My room opened off a small lush inner patio. It was tiled of floor and chintzed of curtain with white wicker furniture. The hotel staff combined the efficiency of professionals with the warmth of family welcoming a distant relative.

I settled in happily and found that I had made a major error in deciding against packing a heavy robe. The room was *cold*. I appropriated a second heavy blanket from the twin bed and slept warmly.

In the morning I examined the room thoroughly, realized that there was no inlet for heat, and asked at the front desk whether a room with heat was available. The courtly young deskman looked embarrassed as he said they had none, but offered me a room with parquet floor, which might not be quite as cold as the tile. I replied that I was perfectly happy, settled, and would not move, thank you.

Knowing how cold Guatemala City can be in the winter at its 6,000-foot altitude, I am astounded that they can keep an unheated hotel tenanted. Still, I enjoyed staying there so much that I would return regardless of the weather.



The air that was less than comfortable in my bedroom was ideal outdoors. I marched out next morning on my premiere shopping expedition into brisk but sunny weather and the clear, clean air of Guatemala. Despite being in a valley ringed by volcanoes, the city has escaped smog like that which blankets Mexico City.

Incidentally, one of the volcanoes erupted spectacularly recently and still was smoking. Later, on the trip home, we flew over a long line of volcanoes, probably in Nicaragua. One of those also was smoking, and



the cone was full of what appeared to be moving lava. It obviously had erupted within the “recent” past because the sides were scored with the forbidding gray of lava flow, and no green growth had established itself for a large area at the base of the volcano.

You do not need to know about my shopping, which was enthusiastic and successful. If you plan to visit Guatemala, I will give you the names of shops; otherwise my discoveries are of no interest, despite my own delight.



That afternoon an old friend, Patsy Shelton, picked me up to drive me to the Hempstead’s new home, up in the hills outside the city, for tea. We branched off the main road onto gravel and stopped at a heavy solid-steel door across a road on the left. It was opened for us; we drove through and paused for four uniformed guards armed with submachine guns. Patsy was driving Joan Hempstead’s car and, being a close relative, was in and out of the house regularly. Nevertheless, one of the guards came over to the car, looked closely at both of us, and peered into the back seat before smiling and waving us on.

The security system was put into place recently after five armed men broke into the house, threatened to rape the oldest daughter and the maid, and forced Joan to unlock the safe. No one was injured; I did not hear how much was stolen.

Both Joan and their teenage son Stephen had walked into the situation separately while it was in progress. I asked Joan if she weren’t paralyzed with fright, and she replied that, no, they were the same sort of people she works with all the time in her rural health clinics. She was surprised at how young they were and realized that they probably were not hard-core guerrillas. She said, “I told them that if they behaved correctly with me, I would be correct with them.” Later, when one of them started hassling her, she barked that she could not open the safe unless he backed up and left her alone.

Chris told me later that the main reason he and Joan had decided suddenly to put Stephen into school in the States this month was that he had vowed to kill any of the group if he ever saw them again. Chris and Joan knew that he meant it and felt it would be safer to get him out of the country.



Back to the tea...

I had not seen their new home, which Joan had designed and decorated. It is huge and gracious, but done in such a way that it impresses one as a lovely semi-traditional home of white stucco and dark carved wood, rather than as the mansion it is.

In Belize before the trip, as I was following Alex out the door to leave, I suddenly had thought “*tea*” and dashed back to get a pair of white gloves. I could have saved the effort since mine were the only ones in view. Furthermore, I am used to tea at a British four o’clock, which does not mean 4:01. Patsy did not even pick me up until almost 4:30 and we were among the early arrivals. Guests ranged in age from the 20’s to the 60’s and were delightful. They spoke Spanish, English, or most commonly, both.

There was no tea, or at least no one was drinking it. Joan was serving Rosa de Jamaica (*RO-sa day hah-MY-kah*), a deep pink beverage served over ice in large wine glasses. It is non-alcoholic, not sweet, and has a delicious faint bite for character. Delightful. I was told it is brewed from rose hips.

The “tea” itself, when it was served around 7:00, was lavish enough to pass for a light supper. No details, but it was *not* diet food.

Later when we left, I noticed that cars tended to travel in convoy, doors tightly locked.



Next morning I headed for downtown and the central market. I knew that the old market, which I had adored, had been destroyed in an earthquake

many years ago and was doubtful of what I would find. My first stop was a craft shop where I had been advised to look for the area rug that I wanted. From there I walked to the market and, finding nothing, inquired of a policeman. He aimed me across the street toward an enormous open plaza and told me to take the stairs...down.

Underground, looking only slightly modernized, was my beloved market, two floors of jumbled shops, able to sustain life indefinitely, if called on to do so, without recourse to the world above.

I made my way past the meat, through the vegetables and fruits, to the baskets, right past the shoes to the handcrafts, and on to fabrics. Only inability to carry another thing and the need to return to meet Joan and Chris for lunch could have pried me out of the market. My one regret about the trip is that I never had time to return for a more leisurely visit...which is all to the good, since I probably could not have afforded it.



We lunched at a small French restaurant not far from the hotel. Chris pointed out that the bushes behind me, edging the patio, were coffee trees with ripening beans. We had leisure to catch up on twenty years of news of family and friends in both countries.



That evening in the hotel, I nearly froze to death. Much of it was my own fault. I always have a couple of glasses of iced coffee late in the afternoon, so when I returned about 5:30, I ordered ice, got into my gown and robe, fixed my iced coffee and settled into bed with my book. I could not warm up. My feet were as icy as my beverage. After suffering for an hour or more, I got up, fixed another glass of iced coffee, put on my coat over my robe, wrapped my feet in my newly purchased Indian fabric to protect them from the chilly sheets, and gradually returned to the land of the living. Subsequent evenings found me coddled by cups of *hot* coffee.



On Saturday I was driven up to Antigua by another friend to visit her brother, an artist whom I knew years ago in Belize and with whom I still correspond. Antigua is the old Colonial capital of the country. When it was badly damaged by earthquake centuries ago, a new capital was established not far away in what is now Guatemala City.

Antigua is narrow cobblestone streets; blank-faced walls with grilled windows hiding magnificent restored homes and patios; fine restaurants in converted, restored buildings erected by the conquistadores; parks and small tourist shops and jade museums.



I returned the next day with Joan; Patsy and her mother, Flo, whom I had known years ago; and a charming young woman from Colombia, who was there for an international organization involved in social work similar to that which Joan does. Carolina spoke only Spanish so most of the conversation was in that language. I was amused that even when friends turned to speak specifically to me they used Spanish half the time. My Spanish is quite usable for normal occasions, but this was the first time I had been comfortable in a group speaking only Spanish and could follow easily enough to enter the conversation casually.

After lunch in the beautiful old patio of an antique-shop-cum-restaurant we strolled across to the park, into a few shops, and to the Jade Museum. Magnificent things were on display. Joan was especially taken by a handsome necklace that was an exact copy of one found in a tomb in the Mayan ruins at Tikal. The curator explained that each bead had been measured, and its size, color, and irregularities duplicated exactly. The price was 9,000 Quetzales,\* which everyone but me thought excessive. My eye had been caught by a lovely, simple strand of blue jade beads separated by small silver beads that I thought would be perfect for Carli. The price of 1,450 Quetzales encouraged me to leave it right where it was. The exchange rate is good, but not that good.

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\* *Quetzal* is the unit of Guatemalan currency.



So it was back to the hotel, forcing all of my purchases to fit into available space, and off just after dawn the next day to return to Belize.



Kate on safari in Kenya, 1988

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## Africa with Carli & Tom

October 1988

In March of 1987, Carli wrote saying that she and her husband, Tom Rindfleisch, wanted me to join them as their guest on an African safari. I floated through the rest of the day. Could not reach them by telephone that evening, and by the time I awoke the next morning, I had a dozen reasons why I could not possibly go. Before I had finished my shower the “reasons” had vanished down the drain. When I talked to Carli and Tom that night, I was overwhelmed all over by their urgent exclamations of “You *will* come, won’t you!”

After a year and a half of dreaming, studying, planning, trying to learn basic Swahili, getting inoculations, making lists, October of ’88 arrived, and to my excited amazement, there was not even another weekend between Africa and me.

### **Thursday, 6 October**

Boarded TACA with as little excitement as if it had been any normal trip. The reality of the first lap toward Africa did not register.

Had a restful few hours in MIA Hotel at the Miami Airport after checking in with British Airways and entrusting luggage to them. Good nap; refreshing bath; happy calls to family in the U.S.

Checked out of hotel and went to boarding gate around 9:00 PM to find that plane had encountered severe headwinds on flight to Miami and would depart late. As it happened, we left an hour late, but arrived in London forty minutes early, thanks to the same headwinds.

Comfortable seat at bulkhead, where I could lean back and see movie looming directly above me. British Airways ignored late departure hour and lavished drinks, dinner, and two movies on its passengers, cutting the uncomfortable sleeping time to only about three hours.

Awoke from restless dozing. Was relieved that night was almost over, but was not prepared for lights and a cold drink of grapefruit juice thirty minutes later. It was well into the morning and the crew had to rouse passengers to serve breakfast before landing.

### **Friday, 7 October**

Arrival at Heathrow was not the madhouse I remembered from my trip with Bucher, thanks to a new terminal building. Retrieved bags swiftly and was through formalities in moments. Trundled luggage cart out to the curbside, where courtesy bus picked me up about five minutes later.

It was a gorgeous day—brightly sunny, about 52 degrees, with a blustery wind. My traveling suit looked proper, but was not much more protection than a sarong would have been.

Reservation in order at Heathrow Penta Hotel. Had expected to be exhausted, but felt surprisingly fresh. Opened bags, indulged in a bubble bath, and reconfirmed all of our reservations to Nairobi before taking a nap.

Spent the early evening telephoning old friends in England and Scotland. Not having telephone numbers, I had to call Information first and was charmed with the reply:

Thank you for calling Directory Inquiries. You are being held in a queue and will be answered shortly.

### **Saturday, 8 October**

Carli and Tom's plane was due to land at one o'clock in the afternoon, so at 1:30 I took up station in a soft red chair near the hotel's revolving door. They arrived about forty minutes later, looking alert and happy rather than jaded from their long flight. They checked in and retired for an inadequate three-hour rest.

My departure from my happy in-transit home was inglorious. The line to the porter's desk was busy so I set out manfully with my two modest bags, both of which felt as if they had been packed with lead instead of khaki. I



staggered down miles of carpet, past the wondering eyes of computer conventioners, to the elevators. There a brisk gentlewoman, not much younger than I, commandeered one of the suitcases over my protests. She was out of the elevator with it and headed toward the check-out desk when I saw Tom approaching and was able to say, "Here comes my son-in-law," and offer my warm thanks for her help.

At Heathrow we were approached by a vivacious British Airways staffer who gushed a glowing offer of two hundred pounds each if we would give up our seats. At her first pause I broke in to say, "Under no circumstances! We are going on safari and have reservations for every night the next three weeks." She laughed and assured us that we would be on the flight.

### **Sunday, 9 October**

Cabin lights came on at five o'clock Nairobi time. Window shades were snapped up, and a collective-cabin gasp of pleasure greeted the pink-and-mauve sunrise streaking the African sky.


Immigration officers at the Nairobi airport are seated in high boxes so that arriving passengers have to crane their necks up uncomfortably to look at them. They look like daunting high-court judges. Ours was unsmiling, very brisk, very curt. He seemed physically pained by my jaunty "Good Morning." We all were passed through in little more than the time it takes to bring an official stamp firmly down onto a passport.




An affable young man in blazer and slacks holding a hand-printed sign reading *Rindfleisch* took us in hand as we emerged. We were shown into a van with the trademark zebra-stripe markings of the United Touring Company (UTC) and started the twenty-mile drive into Nairobi.

Flowering shrubs; miles of full-size flags on flagpoles lining the highway; long lines of bougainvillea trimmed into hedges on one side of the road and a great expanse of yellow prairie with thorn trees on the other. The

industrial park on the edge of Nairobi belied its foreignness with the familiar signs of international companies.



The Norfolk Hotel, built in 1904, was a center of British Colonial life and hosted many of its more vivid antics. It retains the charm of darkened brick, rich paneling, tiled roofs, and paths winding through a series of courtyards and gardens, with the bird calls from aviaries to charm the ear as the profusion of flowers gladdens the eye.



We all were excited rather than exhausted, so after bathing and changing, we set off to explore. Five or six blocks took us to the corner of the craft market, and we turned as if magnetized. Stall after tiny stall of hand crafts—brass and bead jewelry, mahogany and ebony carvings, batiks and basketry. We wanted to explore and compare, rather than to purchase, but a winning young Kikuyu with a bright blue shirt and brighter smile overcame us. Carli bargained with practiced ease down to what was probably the expected price. Treasures everywhere, but finally the importuning of vendors overcame the delights of discovery, and we left at close to a run.

### **Monday, 10 October**

UTC delivered a new Nissan sedan early in the morning, and we set off for the Outspan Hotel in Nyeri, where we would board a bus to Treetops Lodge. Easy drive over good road—once we found our way out of Nairobi. Tom paused to read a road sign and was blasted by an indignant horn from the car behind. Stopping in a roundabout is a strict no-no. One is supposed to circle about again and again until deciding which “spoke” to fling oneself out on.

Our first view of the Rift Valley showed a sharp drop to a broad valley of farms, with a high green wall stretching straight across the sky on the other side. Once we had descended from the escarpment into the valley, it

felt as if we were in a broad corridor between hedges hundreds of feet high.

We arrived at the Outspan in time for a lavish buffet lunch on the terrace overlooking beautiful grounds. After lunch we were taken to a show of Kikuyu dancing in the village behind the hotel. We sat in a small thatched tier of seats and enjoyed a variety of dances, singing, and music from the colorful, white-painted men and women of the tribe.



It was a short drive from the Outspan into Aberdares National Reserve. The first wild animals we saw: a colony of baboons in a clearing.

The buses stopped short of Treetops. Guests were herded together tightly and walked 300 yards to the Lodge, guarded fore and aft by armed hunters. Once in the past an elephant had charged out from under the lodge, and the hunter was forced to shoot it before it reached the arriving guests.

We were hastened across a narrow wooden bridge to a stairway and were warned never to come back down from the treehouse until time for the group to leave.

Treetops Lodge is charming, literally high in the trees with trunk and limbs growing up through its three floors. The interior is paneled and polished. Narrow corridors, like those on a ship, with barely room to pass, lead to rooms only as long as their narrow beds, with narrower standing area. Small square windows, covered with steel mesh to guard against baboons, look out on either the waterhole in front of the lodge or the creek and clearing behind. Broken strands in the mesh underline the warning given us to keep possessions out of range of questing hands.

Treetops has three viewing levels—an open deck on the entire roof-top, a long open balcony one flight down, just above the animals' heads, and a ground-floor photographers' bunker where slit windows offer a view directly into the animals' eyes but a foot-thick wall protects against charges by irritated buffaloes or elephants.

After leaving our things in our rooms, Carli, Tom, and I went to the upper deck where tea and coffee were being served. From one side, warthogs and bushbuck could be seen. In the opposite direction, near the water hole, were waterbuck, more bushbuck, and Cape buffalo. Four of the last gradually made their way around the pond to the salted area between the water hole and the lodge.

The Cape buffalo are massive creatures whose broad, heavy horns seem to weigh down their heads. They licked the salt with their great, rough tongues and occasionally paused, heads raised, to lick moist noses. Seen up close for a long period of time, they appeared more and more beatific, despite their deserved reputation as among the most dangerous of African animals.

As I moved my binoculars, a waterbuck stag walked directly into my field of vision, staring straight at me with an alert, friendly expression. He walked toward me until I felt I could reach out and touch him. He was a large antelope, coat rich browns shading into gray with an almost bluish cast. It was a magic moment and a brief disappointment when he turned away. Later I easily could pick my stag out from among the others.

I went to Africa determined to see warthogs. They were among the first animals I saw and remained favorites. They are great gray pigs with manes of long, harsh hair. Their faces are broad and slightly comical with their curving white tusks looking like a dashing Guard's mustache. Warthogs are busy creatures, dashing here and there briskly, or grazing and shuffling at the ground on their knees, moving along like scullery maids, rumps awave. When alarmed they bustle off, each with naked tail erect like a small antenna topped by a tiny brush.

Near dusk the first elephant appeared, a large mass of gray half-hidden in the trees. Almost simultaneously a second emerged from the woods on the other side of the treehouse.

Hyenas began prowling, striped beasts more appealing than their reputations. One raced out from under the lodge to the edge of the water hole, pursued by a pack of barking friends intent on taking a bone away

from him. Through the night one solitary hyena remained at the water's edge, far away from the other animals, alert and watching.

Slowly more and more elephants gathered in front of the lodge, appearing soundlessly from the shadows and moving with ponderous deliberation to the salt lick.

The elephants and Cape buffalo observed a strict truce, maintaining a modest distance and warning each other against encroachment.

Sometimes an elephant backed away as a buffalo raised his head and glared. Other times an elephant took a pace or two forward with trunk raised and ears flapping in warning, and an offending buffalo retreated.

A small elephant off by himself danced forward flat-footedly, flared his ears, raised his trunk high, and trumpeted in a shrill soprano at a surprised buffalo peacefully licking salt at the water's edge. The buffalo slowly looked up with adult patience and returned to his private concerns while the little elephant swaggered off, trunk waving proudly from side to side.

We were up and down through the night, never undressing, but napping briefly between visits to the open veranda.

By ten o'clock the elephants milling directly below numbered forty-two, of all ages, from nursing calf to giant bulls.

Elephants cannot get the salt from the surface easily with their trunks, so they paw clumsily at the dirt or dig one tusk in to loosen it, going down onto their knees or leaning over with a hind foot up in the air like a circus elephant. They clean the dirt from the digging tusk and tidily eat it, then pick up chunks of the mineral-loaded dirt with their trunks and thrust them into their eager mouths.

As one elephant loosens dirt, others try to sneak their trunks in for the easy pickings. Reproof comes with a jab on the bottom from the tusks of the offended elephant.

When a young elephant tried to steal from one big cow, she gave him a painful jab in the cheek. He ran off, rubbing his cheek with his trunk, then

slowly backed toward the cow, watching her over his shoulder, until he was pressed against her side in apology.

As the elephants moved off, I returned to my bed. Carli called me sometime after midnight. She had wakened to the sound of waves on the shore, then realized that she was miles inland. She looked out her window to see cavorting pachyderms swimming and spraying water with their trunks.

A white-tailed mongoose wandered down to the water, snuffled in the salt briefly, then returned to the woods.

## **Tuesday, 11 October**

We were up early, had coffee in the lounge, and were driven from Treetops back to the Outspan for a beautiful buffet breakfast.

Back in our Nissan for the drive to Thompson's Falls. These are an unremarkable quantity of water falling over a cliff, surrounded by gift shops and beseeching Kikuyu. We finally bought a few things when we had bargained down to below half-price, which is slightly more than they expect to receive.

Our only moment of true peril in Africa came on the drive to Lake Nakuru. A herd of cattle was grazing on either side of the dirt road. A handsomely horned male took position in the middle of the track and refused to move. Tom stopped the car; the animal lowered his head, shaking his horns, and pawed the earth. I would like to add that steam jetted from his flaring nostrils, but don't remember that it did. The stand-off continued for many moments. We commented that it would be ironic indeed if we had come all the way to Darkest Africa to be impaled on the horns of a maddened cow.

At the entrance to the Lake Nakuru Reserve, Tom assured the rangers that we were going down to the lake to see the flamingos and would be back in about thirty minutes. They looked so taken aback that he amended it to one hour.

Miles of dusty, rutted trails snaked back and forth without approaching the lake. We saw increasing game, somewhat to our surprise because we were thinking only of the birds...waterbuck, impala, Thompson's gazelles, my warthogs, and a sole gerenuk, the long-necked antelope that browses standing on its hind legs. I spotted three giraffes in the brush away from the trail. From the field guide I knew that they were Rothschild giraffes, which had been introduced into the reserve.

Eventually, after asking directions of a passing van, we passed through a thick grove of fever trees (shades of Rudyard Kipling's *Just So Stories*) and reached Lake Nakuru. A thin line of flamingos faced us in the shallow water but the famous mass of thousands of birds was a pinkish blur far to our right.

We agreed that we had seen all the flamingos we needed and returned to the car, each of us privately preoccupied with the late hour, threatening rain clouds, and possibility of a night spent mired in the neighborhood of the Cape buffalo we had passed driving in. Carli and I helped our driver make a couple of wrong turns but retired in silence as he became noticeably agitated.

I broke the quiet to whisper, "Giraffe." Carli caught a glimpse of the large animal with its burnt-orange color and geometric markings, standing alone in a clearing close to the trail, a gorgeous giant. She asked Tom to back up to see it; he glanced at it and drove on, to our major regret of the trip. Tom was too concerned with our situation even to consider his camera—and that was the only Reticulated giraffe we ever saw.

Fortunately, Tom found the direct way out. The rains did not arrive. We reached the Lake Naivasha Hotel before dark.

On opening the trunk of the car we found our suitcases and jackets covered with not just a layer of dust, but enough topsoil to plant potatoes.

The lodge was lovely and our rooms were of a gracious size, complete with a mosquito net above each bed.

### **Wednesday, 12 October**

In the morning we took the boat ride around Lake Naivasha. The birds were varied and colorful. A waterbuck posed for us on an island and hippotomi hid submerged except for ears and nostrils.

Back in Nairobi that afternoon, we separated to repack for the Masai Mara expedition, and I took advantage of the opportunity to have my hair washed at the hotel beauty salon. It was so pleasant after the dust of the trip that I indulged in my first professional manicure in fifteen years. I assumed the prices would be low, as they are in Mexico and Central America. Instead, my self-pampering cost almost as much as our elegant dinner for three that night.

We dined at Minar, an Indian restaurant where a reassuring number of fellow guests were Kenyan East Indians. We chose three entrees to share, each served on its own lighted warmer: chicken in a sauce; ground spiced lamb grilled in long cylinders; and a superb puree of spinach, slightly hot of seasoning, with small chunks of white cheese scattered in it. Our three desserts, also shared, were an icy, orangish ice cream in medallions with no particular flavor; a divinely creamy rice pudding with strange spices; and a pudding of shredded carrots cooked down with sugar and milk.

The final touch was the best—creamy tea with cinnamon, cloves, cardamom, and heavens knows what else, foamy with hot milk.

### **Thursday, 13 October**

Early in the morning we again stored spare suitcases at the Norfolk and left by plane for the Masai Mara.

The flight took us over a geology textbook of uplifted crust, great shelves of strata overlapping each other in slanted layers; long gashes of canyons, outcrops, mesas cut by deep gorges. Later, endless undulating plains with cumulus blotching the sienna-and-olive expanse with shadows like dark meringues. Arrow-straight narrow tracks in lighter gold. Masai village compounds, circles of thatched roofs surrounded by a narrow border of



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green, probably thornbush fences, and a circle of bare-earth common ground in the center.

We landed on a narrow tarmac strip set on a rise in the prairie, with a large herd of wildebeest and zebras grazing at its end. We drove through more herds to Keekorok Lodge, not far away.

We were assigned to tents with the assurance that we probably could be transferred to cottages next day if we wished. The tents were far too delightful to be traded. They were green, about 15' x 25', erected under a steep roof that extended well over each side. Center zippers for doors and four large screened windows with zippered flaps on each side.

Outside the “back-door” zipper was a narrow passageway to a structure with private facilities. I went through the open door and found only a basin and shower. In dismay, I dashed back to the passageway and explored right and left before finding a handle in the paneled wall and locating The Essential in its separate room, British-style.


Began hanging things up for our two-night stay, a rare luxury, and setting aside a bundle for the laundry, when a cold, wet wind announced rain. My window flaps were zipped down by a steward and, enjoying the dark, I settled onto my bed to write my Journal by the dim light of the bedside electrified “kerosene” lantern.

Meanwhile next door, Carli and Tom’s tent was blowing down.

Tent peg and guy wire gave way against the gusts and the corner of the tent blew inward on top of Carli who was looking through a suitcase. She and Tom pressed against the canvas with all their strength, but the force still pushed furniture and them inward. As Tom said later, it was like trying to hold back a sail of the size to move large boats.

The wind abruptly switched to the back, so they could leave their finger-in-the-dike posts to secure back window flaps, which were threatened by rain-turned-to-hail.

The storm passed quickly. A steward came around with towels to mop up puddles inside the fronts of both tents.



Our major concern was missing our afternoon game drive, but promptly at four o'clock a guide appeared and showed us not to one of the vans, but to a Toyota Land Cruiser, where guests sat high above the driver's level. The canvas top was zipped shut against the possibility of more rain, but the side curtains were rolled up so that we had completely open viewing without intervention of glass.

Three- to five-hundred yards from the lodge gate we found a small herd of elephants close to the road. It took us a few moments to realize that the reason they were black, instead of gray like the elephants at Treetops, was that they still were wet from the rain.

Gazelles—Thompson's, Grant's, and impala—were everywhere, singly, in small groups, in herds. We rapidly realized why books about Africa invariably speak with affection of the Thompson's Gazelles as *Tommies*. They are dainty, jaunty little creatures, decorated with oblique bands of beige, white, and black. Their flat, short black tails flick from side to side constantly.

A friend commented that she really could not get excited about gazelles and antelope. Exactly what I would have thought before the trip. Now I find that some of my happiest memories are of the graceful ungulates who brighten the African plains.

To the guide's surprise, Carli spotted a hippopotamus at the bend of an overgrown creek. Only the pink-rimmed ears and nostrils showed, with a bit of lumpy gray head.

We passed Coke's hartebeest with their mournful Pushme-Pullu faces and horns flaring from a pedicle in the middle of their skulls. We met topi, a large antelope, rufous gray and stately. None of us was familiar with topi but they became favorites. Carli remarked that the characteristic dark blotches on shoulder and haunch looked as if someone had spilled graphite on them.

A bat-eared fox paused in the grass near the vehicle, then trotted away up a trail.

The driver stopped suddenly on a slight rise. In the grass not ten feet away were three lion cubs, only slightly hidden by a sparse clump of grass, front paws draped over a log, watching us. One strolled away and lay down next to a fourth, which we had not noticed. As we drove off, we passed the lioness stretched out in the grass close by, keeping watch.

Rarely on a drive were we out of sight of some animal or large bird, most often gazelles, wildebeest, and zebras.

When we returned to Keekorok shortly before dusk and sat on the terrace, we could see Cape buffalo and Tommies grazing on the hill just beyond the edge of the lawn.



Our dinner that first night was interrupted as a long file of smiling staff emerged from the kitchen and wound their way among the tables. Chefs in towering white hats led the way, the lead man holding high a large candled cake. He was followed by other chefs chanting and banging with spoons on saucepans, followed by aproned cooks with comparable noisemakers. The chain of twenty or thirty ended by circling a special table and breaking into a rousing rendition of *Happy Birthday to You*.

As we left the dining room after an excellent dinner, we found a group of tall Masai men dancing on the lawn next to the terrace. They wore traditional red robes; brass arm, neck, and ear bangles; and had their hair fixed with red ocher clay like a helmet with plaited back-flap. They sang a deep, hypnotic chant with throbbing rhythm and occasional words. A man would leap into the center of their crescent and spring straight up, arrow-stiff, from a standing position, over and over as the others chanted. The most agile Masai seemed to rise a full two feet with each leap, knees stiff, while another, laughed at by his colleagues, managed a meager few inches. Before leaving, they snake-danced across the lawn, through the dining room, and into the fire-lit lounge.

Carli was awakened in the night by the sound of loud chomping at each side of their tent. To my regret, I slept through it.

### **Friday, 14 October**

It dawned clear and still and we were off for our Balloon Safari at six o'clock. Our yellow-and-orange balloon skidded sideways a couple of inches off the ground, then silently lifted over the savannah. We scanned the ground, aiming binoculars or cameras at the animals below...buffalo, giraffes, zebras, topi, wildebeest, hartebeest, gazelles, impala, hyenas, jackals, baboons, an ostrich, and a bat-eared fox. Rarest of all was a caracal, a small chestnut feline, who leaped for cover as we passed. My favorite memory is of a waterbuck doe standing in a break in the middle of a thornbush thicket, each blue-dusted gray-beige hair distinct, completely confident that she was hidden from all eyes.

The view of the Masai Mara, the mountains of neighboring Tanzania, the animals grazing below oblivious to us, and other balloons following or crowding close, was glorious. We sailed at heights of from about 50 feet to a few hundred, depending on the winds. Altitude was corrected regularly by deafening burners. I remember the silence of the flight while Carli remembered the roar.

After a little over an hour, we landed on a hillside and orange-jumpsuit-clad assistants raced from a following truck to grab the basket and hold it down as we alighted. We were loaded into Land Rovers and driven a short distance to an al fresco champagne breakfast.

A large table on foot-high legs, spread with red-and-white checked tablecloth, was ringed by the padded tanks from the balloons, each tank serving as a seat for two. On the table were great bowls of flowers, platters of fruits, croissant sandwiches, grilled meats, hard-boiled eggs, huge biscuits and much more.

The first champagne cork popped as the last guest was seated. For two or more hours, glasses were never empty. It was eating and drinking and



Carli, Tom, and Kate at champagne breakfast, Masai Mara, 1988

trading stories and enjoying the juxtaposition of luxury and the African veldt.



In the afternoon, I carried one of my camp chairs over to join Carli and Tom in front of their tent. We visited and read and wrote. Two of the lodge stewards came to ask me politely if they might move a bed out of my tent. This was no problem; I had three, a source of amusement when my tent had been designated emphatically as the “single.”


They moved the bed, and we returned to our attempts to photograph a green-and-aqua lizard on a nearby tree.

Soon the stewards were back to ask if they might move a second bed. When they asked which bed I was using, I replied that I had slept in the far one but had intended to use the one nearest the front of the tent that night so that I could see the animals which had disturbed Carli the night before.

“What animals?” they exclaimed. “Lions? Leopards?”

“No, probably wildebeest and zebras,” I answered, as Carli described the noisy midnight grazing.

The stewards snorted at the ordinariness of the animals, laughed at my wanting to watch something so mundane, but offered to move my bed to the front of the tent after removing the other. When they finished, I tipped them each two Shillings (about US10¢) for their thoughtfulness, and they went off still laughing at the idea of my nighttime vigil.




On our afternoon game drive, we saw what I thought was a little klipspringer, a chamois-like antelope leaping about in the midst of a herd of topi. The guide explained, “No, that’s just a baby topi practicing.”

We found our first male lion, a stately beast content to let us watch him yawn and stretch. As he got up and slowly started toward the vehicle the driver smoothly moved off in a wide curve away from him. Later we stopped to watch a large pride of lions resting among a clump of bushes, the cubs rolling and pouncing on each other as the lionesses dozed.

We drove an unbelieving ten to fifteen miles with wildebeest and zebras grazing hilltop to low hilltop on all sides, as far as we could see.

October is African springtime. There were baby animals everywhere: giraffes on wobbly legs, tiny painted zebras hiding behind their plump mamas, minute gazelles leaping many times their own lengths, clown-faced baby wildebeests with incipient beards. One baby topi probably had been born within the hour.



After dinner that evening, the temperature plummeted. I regretted my decision to sleep with window flaps up and remembered my intention of borrowing an extra blanket from a spare bed.

As we approached our tents I noted with surprise that the light in front was on and commented that I was sure I had left it off. We went to the tent, opened the zipper, and found my “lanterns” warming the tent with their soft glow, bed turned down, and lights showing from the facilities in back.

Carli returned a moment later to announce the *their* tent was dark and beds untouched. My tip earned dividends.

No question now about my waffling on my project. Carli arrived with spare blankets. With a small pang at sacrificing the cozy warmth of the tightly zippered tent, I unzipped my front windows and rolled up the flaps, tucked myself under four blankets, and promptly fell asleep.

Brief barking sounds woke me in the middle of the night. Without lifting head from pillow, I watched eleven zebras file across the lawn and out of sight.

## **Saturday, 15 October**

Almost as soon as we left the lodge on our morning game drive, we found a huge male giraffe standing at barely arm’s length at the side of the road. After our disaster in failing to immortalize our one Reticulated giraffe, Carli became an expert on the animal. The Reticulated is easy to identify by his color and markings; the Rothschild and Masai are almost indistinguishable except for the fact that the former’s lower legs are white while the Masai’s are faintly blotched. Carli made a career out of studying the knees of every giraffe we passed.

The hippo pool provided at least fifty of the somnolent beasts among the rocks in the river, submerged to their eyes, with chins resting on rocks or on each other.

More lions, more everything. Even three rare (for the Mara) elands on a hillside, great beige antelopes with heavy dewlaps growing from their throats.

The excitement was not in adding a new animal to our list, but in seeing the interactions of even the most abundant species. We never tired of watching, of being allowed to “share” their lives.

In the afternoon we flew back to Nairobi and the Norfolk to pack for our safari into Tanzania. To our delighted surprise the management had put flowers and a basket of fruit into each room, with welcoming cards.



I invited Carli and Tom for drinks from my mini-bar and Carli accepted, suggesting that we use their room because it was larger. As it happened, my room had no key, so I could not leave until one was made. We started in my quarters with hors d'oeuvres of a package of peanuts I had saved from some flight. I had no idea how few peanuts it contained until I put them out for three people.

As soon as my key was delivered, Carli suggested that we move around the corner to their room because she had readied it for our little party. She was shocked to find her careful arrangements “decorated” by beds that had been turned down for the night in her absence.

We shared fruit from the gift basket—delicious pineapple, bananas, and grapes; some strange things; and some pretty ones that we decided, on opening, were inedible.

Major intestinal distress—probably from the fruit—hit Carli in the night. She met the dawn alive and regretting it and slightly less comatose than she would have enjoyed.

### **Sunday, 16 October**

Left by van for Tanzania in early morning. We did not realize immediately how lucky we were with our tour companions or how much fun we would have together. Best of all, one couple were old British



Colonials and had lived in Kenya twenty years ago, still spoke Swahili, and had a great fund of anecdotes and information.

As we approached the border, more and more Masai appeared herding cattle or at roadside markets. At the edge of a clearing appeared a shape familiar to me from my pre-trip studies. "Dik-dik," I cried.

Carli, inert with illness in the opposite corner of the back seat of the van, murmured something to Tom. He turned to me, eyes twinkling, and repeated, "Goat!"

Formalities clearing Kenya and entering Tanzania were slow but simple. Masai milled about the parking area trying to sell jewelry through bus windows. Women had shaved heads and elaborate beaded collars and earrings. Men wore red cloth wraps, mostly muted plaids.

A covey of colorful, bald Masai women surrounded me, thrusting beaded jewelry into my face. I tried to say in my best Swahili that I did not want anything (*sitaka*) but by mistake said *sikitu* (you're welcome). The women laughed uproariously and pursued me as I fled to the safety of the van, mimicking, "Sikitu, sikitu..." as I uselessly corrected, "Sitaka, sitaka..." to their doubled delight.



At the border, we ceased to be United Touring people and became Lion Safari guests, as we changed to a slightly less comfortable Tanzanian van. We proceeded on in a loose convoy of five vans.

The road to Arusha was new, paved, and narrow, with only a few potholes. Lunch at the hotel was an adequate buffet but looked meager after the lavish productions we'd enjoyed in the Kenya hotels.

After lunch we shifted places in the van, with my moving to the front seat to ease my leg, leaving Carli space on the back seat to lie down with her head in Tom's lap. How she slept on the ensuing rough ride we never knew, but perhaps it was preferable to consciousness.

The countryside from the border on was like high desert—leafless bushes, bare dirt with rocks and small clumps of obviously inedible growth. Gradually it improved until the valleys showed grass, low and parched, for the herds of grazing Masai cattle, sheep, and goats, guarded by young boys in dusty robes.

We drove up and over ridges and down into valleys. Mount Meru loomed and Kilimanjaro was a vague shape through distant haze. The tarmac terminated, and we continued on a gravel road whose only asset was its width, which gave the driver his choice of which set of rocks and potholes to suffer in the interests of avoiding others.

As we neared Lake Manyara, suddenly there was lush jungle. We descended into the Rift Valley and wound up a steep switch-back road to the hotel perched at the top of the escarpment, overlooking the valley and lake. The view from our private balconies across the Rift to the mountains on the other side was spectacular.

### **Monday, 17 October**

Up before dawn. Dressed by flashlight before the hotel generator was turned on so I could be on my balcony to watch the sun rise over the far escarpment. Away at seven-thirty to explore the Lake Manyara Reserve. Huge flocks of flamingos along the shore. Jungle, woods, open glades with gazelles and antelope of various kinds. A river at the edge of a lush green meadow had a ridge of rocks down the middle, along which it was obvious some hippos were resting. Binoculars disclosed that there were no rocks, only a long line of gray beasts lying lumpily together.

The banks of the river were brightened by colorful groups of birds—Marabou storks, blacksmith plover, Egyptian geese, and many more we could not identify.



It was a rough, interminable drive to Lobo Wildlife Lodge in the Serengeti. At this time of year, the country beyond the huge Ngorongoro

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Crater was almost desert—great plains without a blade of grass or tree or living thing. We drove past flat-faced, barren mountains in yellowy-olive tones.

The road was gravel and powdery dust, clouds of it, swirled around the van, enveloping it. It was fine as flour and inches deep on the road and parched plains. Those adjacent to windows built arm muscles that athletes on steroids would have envied, closing and opening windows as passing vehicles and dust devils dictated.

Carli (largely recovered by now) mopped her face and the Handi-Wipe looked like the children's socks I remembered from playtime in the good red Georgia clay.

Farther along, the dust became the color of my safari wardrobe. Thank goodness I had resisted white shirts. Ring-around-the-collar was bad enough on yellow or moss-color. What the dust did to Unmentionables was unmentionable.

When we reached an arch that marked the end of Ngorongoro Conservation Area and the beginning of the Serengeti, we got out to stretch while our driver, Masewa, took care of formalities. To our surprise, we found new green growth pushing up among the yellowed stubble underfoot.

Somewhere in the Serengeti I acquired a mantra. At unexpected moments my mind whispered wonderingly, "You are Kate Scott and you are in Africa."



Almost by magic the landscape changed as we drove on. An arid expanse became a lush savannah of golden grass underlaid with green. Animals appeared—nimble Tommies, stately giraffes, ostrich, kori bustards, and secretary birds with their improbable hair-dos, pretentious struts, and magnificent flight.

The plain was vast; it was immense; it was endless; it was *vast*.

As we proceeded into a hillier area, leaving the last plains broken by *kopjes* (rocky outcrops), we began seeing large herds of wildebeest and zebras. The male lions had the black manes characteristic in the Serengeti.

We climbed through increasingly rocky hills, seeing animals on every side. At a distance, close to the edge of the highest mountain in view, was a gleam of light. The lodge.

Lobo Wildlife Lodge is among the rocks, is made from the rocks, incorporates the rocks into its rustic, multilevel main building. Highly varnished stairs and walkways lead from area to area.

The dining room is huge with a high-beamed ceiling, vast glass doors, and two great Blue Gum trees growing up through the floor and disappearing through the ceiling. They are boxed in glass, the reason for which became clear when a baboon bounded down one to perch in the crotch watching the diners who were watching him.

Our rooms looked out over the Serengeti to the low mountains marking the horizon. Several of the rock hyraxes, gray animals like large guinea pigs, which were abundant around the lodge, were dining in the tops of the thorn trees outside my window; I worried about the safety of their furry bottoms amid the two-inch thorns.

## **Tuesday, 18 October**

Game drives in the morning and afternoon. Great numbers of giraffe; vast herds of zebra. It appeared that more wildebeest than zebras migrated to the Mara. It never became “ordinary” to see lions, no matter how many there were, but lions stretched out on high rocks were more dramatic than lions in the grass.

Another rocky area not far from the van had a little klipspringer dancing on his toes, bat-ears alert, and two tiny dik-dik, their almond eyes far too large for their oval heads.

## Wednesday, 19 October

Breakfast at seven; into vans at seven-thirty. Game drive en route to Ngorongoro Lodge. We found a lioness who just had killed a zebra, but one of the van drivers moved in so close that she bounded across a creek and stood sullenly watching the vehicles gathered by her abandoned breakfast. Meanwhile, her mate, who had eaten first, lay in splendor high on a rock nearby.

We saw our only cheetah at some distance, but would not let our guide, Masewa, drive onto the grass to get a closer look because Tanzanian game-park rules are so strict that it could have cost him his license.

Several silver-backed jackals, including four of them fighting vultures and each other over the remains of a hapless gazelle.

We agreed that even if we had not seen a single animal, the trip would have been worth it for the magnificent and varied Serengeti scenery.

Box lunch at Olduvai Gorge, a great scooped-out-looking place with two russet eroded rock chimneys ringed by the marks of their strata. Short talk by knowledgeable Masai assistant, who told us that the original Masai name for the area was *Oldupai*, for a form of cactus abundant there. We visited the small Leakey museum nearby and saw exhibits of bones and artifacts of earliest man.

The track from the road to the gorge was easily the worst of any we had traveled in Tanzania, an appalling accolade. After the first miserable moments, I realized that I was rather enjoying it and found that I was “riding” the vehicle as if it were a horse, in a motion my torso had not used in decades.



The Ngorongoro Caldera, a 6-million-year-old caldera (volcano fallen in on itself), is nine miles long, 2,000 to 2,500 feet deep, with its rim at an altitude of 9,000 feet. We had expected to see jungle in the bottom, but it is a vast plain with patches of woods, tree-lined rivers and creeks, a large alkaline bed, and small lakes. At the end of the dry season the colors were

the most muted olive-golds and olive-grays, palest on the floor of the crater and deepening to the surrounding rim and the mountains beyond.

Our rooms in Ngorongoro Lodge looked across a narrow flower-bordered lawn along the drop-off and across the crater to the far rim, a farther valley, and higher mountain beyond.

I was half unpacked and half undressed when the telephone rang. A man's voice with attractive African inflection said:

MAN: We need to talk to you.

KATE (*protesting*): I am sorry, but I am not dressed.

MAN: Would it be possible for your party of three to share the same room?

KATE: Absolutely not, under any circumstances.

MAN (*pause, then, coldly*): I think your Tour Director wants to speak to you. (*Longer pause. Voices in background*) Sorry, he has left. I think he will speak to you later. Good...

KATE: Wait, please. Don't hang up. The thing is, my daughter and son-in-law were married only recently, and I would die before I would share their room. You may put me in the kitchen for the night if you want to, but...

MAN: Of *course* not! It is completely understood. So sorry to have bothered you...we didn't know...so sorry...

He continued to bow and scrape verbally in embarrassment, and I assured him that I understood his problems. He thanked me effusively for my attitude and did *not* suggest putting someone in with me, to my unutterable relief...probably because all he could think about was getting away from me.

It was not to be a restful afternoon. Next the water taps jammed, and I was in danger of flooding the room.

Finally, as I sat in my slip by my floor-to-ceiling picture window in what I supposed was complete privacy, a woman of at least my age with a head

full of curlers lurched into my startled view and appeared nearly to fall off the edge of the narrow grass terrace, which would have landed her two thousand feet below at the feet of some innocent elephant.

### **Thursday, 20 October**

Our final game drive—Ngorongoro Crater.

We transferred to a four-wheel-drive Toyota Land Cruiser for the rough, steep drive. There is one rocky, single-lane switch-back road down into the caldera and another out.

According to our van rotation, I was in the front seat with our driver, Jack. Inching down the road was a thrill and the view of the crater spread below, breathtaking. I contended that the grade was 45° but my physicist son-in-law, carefully diplomatic, corrected it to 20°. At my protests, he reluctantly up-graded to 25°. Everyone heard the exchange, and there was laughter when, at a particularly steep incline, I exclaimed, “Ninety degrees!”

After having taken forty-five minutes to drive an up-and-down 2,000+ feet, we reached the plains of Ngorongoro.

The vans gathered at a bare spot off the road to open their tops for photographers. Several brightly clad Masai young men, probably late teens, approached us as we got out to stretch. I offered them some of the colored rubber bands I had been carrying, as suggested in a travel article. They had been received greedily by women and children at the border, but were accepted with puzzled reluctance by the young men. One refused them and asked me in perfect English, “What are they for?”

It was not a question for which I had a ready answer, so, as my mouth hung open, he turned his back, and the other Masai gravely returned their rubber bands to my reluctant hand.

Carli later laughingly commented, “Mother, those were *warriors*.”

An Australian we talked to later said that he had negotiated with the same Masai a price for photographing them. Other tourists did the same. A

forest ranger appeared, took all the money away from the Masai, and returned it to the embarrassed photographers. Our friend protested that he could not accept its return because he had made a bargain with the Masai, and they had kept it.

“You will take it or I will put you in jail,” replied the ranger in a tone that had the Australian cooperating instantly.

Ngorongoro is one of the few places where the Masai are allowed to live and keep their herds in the midst of the wild animals, and the government is trying to maintain their ancient lifestyle, uncorrupted by Shillings. Their success looks doubtful.



The prairie was high, old-gold grasses against the mauves and olives of the weather-wrinkled rim. Large, bleached areas, which had looked like lakes from our bedroom windows, proved to be great, arid expanses of alkalies across which the animals and birds strolled. Elephants preferred the stippled shade of fever-tree woods. Herds of wildebeest, with their zebra attendants, were common.

We saw the largest herd of Cape buffalo of our entire safari. A herd of zebra extended from one side of the road to the other, and the vehicle had to make its slow way through the milling animals as if they had been a herd of cattle.

Jack stopped suddenly and grabbed his binoculars. I focused mine in the same direction and far across the golden grass, faintly silhouetted against the haze, was a familiar shape.

“Male lion,” I exclaimed.

“Male lion,” Jack confirmed with grinning congratulations.

“But you spotted him with your bare eyes,” I told him in wonder.

It was one of Tanzania’s black-maned lions, we found when we reached him. He posed like a stone lion on library steps as we studied him with binoculars and cameras from a few yards away.



Later Jack found two more male lions near a low break in the plain, both, he said, about 16 years old, magnificent beasts in full maturity with enormous, luxuriant dark manes.

A lone elephant stood in a small sandy pit, his trunk resting over a branch of a downed tree, flapping his great ears at us.

Shortly after noon, Jack began driving too rapidly for viewing and soon two gray shapes could be distinguished in the distance. We stopped a short way from a mother and baby rhinoceros quietly grazing.

Jack announced that we were through viewing, that we had seen all the animals, and would join the other guests for a picnic lunch. I was crushed. I knew our safari would end that day, but please, not yet. I had not taken my last, memorable look.

We drove to a river at the edge of the crater, a picnic spot surprisingly verdant in the rain-less months. A huge knotted tree gave shade. Hippos lolled and splashed in the river in front of us, and zebras grazed on the bank beyond.

To my enormous relief, after lunch Jack set out on a second game search, and I had my desired opportunity to whisper goodbye to each of my friends.

Actually, game drives did not stop until we were almost back in Nairobi, because we continued to see giraffes, herds of zebra, hyenas, jackals, and ostrich. Even on the sere plains, a lone giraffe would appear silhouetted against the sky with not a tree, bush, or living thing visible from horizon to horizon, or an ostrich would appear like a large black dot in the midst of the endless gold. Our last zebra was munching happily at the roadside almost within sight of Nairobi.

## **Friday, 21 October**

The drive back to Arusha for lunch and on to the border seemed less dusty, bumpy, and long than the trip out. I was amused at the buzz of

constant conversation in contrast to the relative quiet of chance companions on the earlier trip.

We had carefully disposed of our last Tanzanian Shillings before leaving because it was illegal to take them out of the country. At the border I emerged from a casual prowl of the native craft shop to find Carli haggling with a group of Masai women for one of their beaded necklaces, which she wanted to display as a wall hanging. After long negotiations, she got the necklace for US\$7, a nominal price compared to that at the craft shop near Lake Manyara, where the best price offered me (which I refused) was TZ8,000 Shillings or US\$80.

I went into the van to extract discretely my own seven dollars and emerged ready to secure a similar bargain. I was mobbed by about nine shaven-headed Masai women thrusting necklaces into my face or pulling at me to get me to go over to their own displays. One thrust a necklace into my hands, and I could not find her to give it back. I could not even start bargaining because the necklaces were shoved so close to my eyes in such a jumbled mass of color that I literally could not see them.

I yelled for Carli to hold the women back so I could make a choice. The first Masai to whom I made my offer reluctantly refused it, as did a second. A third woman pressed forward with a similar necklace and grabbed the bills. Completing the purchase did nothing to discourage the women, however, and I was so undone by the melee that, clutching my treasure, I dove into the steaming back seat of the closed van to escape.

Final farewells with our new friends in front of our beloved Norfolk Hotel—not knowing that we'd see each other briefly the next day.

### **Saturday, 22 October**

We had the entire day free in Nairobi before catching the evening train to Mombasa. We put all of our suitcases into storage and then walked to the National Museum, not far away. But uphill...at altitude.

The museum had excellent displays of the geological development of Kenya, of Leaky exhibits and early cave drawings, of current art

(including a large impressionistic painting of wildebeest migrating, which I would have bought in a moment had the price not been in four digits—U.S. currency). The diorama of early man was interesting, but the ones of animals would have pleased me more before our safari. All the exhibits were effectively presented, informative, and interesting.

After lunch at a restaurant near the museum, we returned to the Norfolk and made our first visit to the open-air lounge across the front of the hotel, finding a table next to friends from our tour group.

*[Editor's Note 4 on page 290.]*



Around 5:00 PM we collected a bag each from storage and took a taxi to the train station. The overnight train ride was fun, my first return to what once had been a regular mode of transportation for me.

Our car was new. With the sliding door open, our two compartments became remarkably spacious. The road bed is excellent, and the ride far smoother than those I remember of forty years ago.

My only complaint was that the Facility at the end of the car was African-style, to my horror. A hole-in-the-ground, whether surrounded by red earth or stainless steel is not aesthetically pleasing to me, and one in constant vibration?...even with hand-holds!

## **Sunday, 23 October**

Woke up to full daylight at six-something-or-other to find that the clacking, gentle as it was, had blanketed the sound of my alarm. Thinking we were to reach Mombasa at 6:30, I went into a frenzy of dressing and packing. By the time Carli knocked on the door to ask if I wanted coffee in the compartment and to tell me we wouldn't arrive until eight o'clock, I was in final but frayed readiness.

A UTC driver carrying a sign with Tom's name separated us from the multinational stream of detraining passengers. We drove a few miles out of town to the Nyali Beach Hotel, stark Moorish architecture with a robed

Arab doorman. Our rooms were not ready so, with commendable intelligence, we headed for the hotel shops. I found some gifts and Carli succumbed to a beautiful hematite necklace, all at prices better than those in Nairobi.

When we finally were shown to our rooms, we were delighted to find ourselves in the farthest of a row of cottages, surrounded by lawns, large trees, luxuriant flowering bushes, and black-faced vervet monkeys. Letting the sun dictate our leisure areas, we had pre-dinner drinks on Carli and Tom's porch and breakfast on mine.



We skipped lunch and took a taxi into Mombasa in the early afternoon to sightsee. Our bright, personable taxi driver, Zaverio, suggested returning for us after our tour of Fort Jesus and the Old Town. Then, he would take us on a drive through New Mombasa on the way back to the Hotel.

The ruins of the 16th-Century Portuguese fort were interesting, and the spiel of our Muslim guide, Said, somewhat more practiced, jokes and all, than we needed. The fort museum gift shop, into which we had no choice but to be ushered, proved to have the best bargains of our trip.

Said led us down into the old Arab city, where we were lost in a maze of twisting lanes, draped doorways, fretted balconies almost touching across the narrow space beneath, elaborately carved doors, and piles of garbage. It was Sunday, so families sat in doorways, as carefully dressed children played together nearby. Laughing boys in white tunics, trousers, and gold-embroidered fezzes passed on their way to the mosque. Unfortunately, on Sunday the shops were shuttered, or it would have been even more colorful.

Said delivered us back to the entrance of the fort just moments before Zaverio returned to take us on our driving tour.



New Mombasa was alive with blooming trees and shrubs and bedecked, like Nairobi, with green-black-and-yellow Kenya flags and pennants to celebrate the 25th anniversary of independence and ten years of *Nyayo* (footsteps)...President Daniel Moi's continuing what Mzee Jomo Kenyata had begun.

When we passed the pairs of elephant tusks at the entrance to the city, I knew we were in Mombasa. However, I was upset by the strings of electric lights outlining the four tusks. Carli protested that it would be impressive at night, but all I could see was daylight tackiness.

Along the roadside, we saw vendors slicing some sort of root vegetable, frying it in great pots, and selling bags to the strolling Sunday holiday-ers. I remarked that I wanted to sample whatever-it-was, so Zaverio stopped, backed the car to the nearest stand, and ordered a bag. The vendor asked if we wanted chili on the chips and at our agreement, carefully opened a plastic bag and shook powdered chili in, gently moving the chips so that the spice sifted down to the bottom. Zaverio explained that they were cassava chips—thin as paper, crisp, and deliciously hot from the chili powder.



Back at the hotel, we explored the grounds and walked down the wide white beach of the Indian Ocean. When we returned to our porch, the inquisitive monkeys peered through the wall at us or crept up the steps until they noticed us watching them and leaped away.

That evening we went to the highly recommended Tamarind restaurant, Moorish and elegant. In the fading light, we were seated immediately in a garden at a carved coffee table. A pottery container with several kinds of crisp appetizers was set down in front of us as drink orders were taken.

Carli took a slim piece of fried plantain and dipped it into a nearby small pottery bowl, which she presumed contained a dip. To her consternation, she realized too late that it was instead a deep ashtray half-filled with sand. She tried to cover her blunder by sliding her hand with the gritty

chip off to one side and staring interestedly at the wine list in the dim light. As soon as the waiter left, she broke up, told us about her gaffe, and admitted that a look of horror had flashed across the waiter's face.

Menus were brought to us as we enjoyed our drinks, and we were called to our table only when they were ready to serve our dinner.

I glanced up and noticed that there was a thatched half-roof built over the tables around the curved outer edge of the dining room. I remarked how attractive it was, except for the tacky painted dome above. Carli and Tom guffawed: my “tacky dome” was the open, starlit sky with fluffy clouds.

### **Monday, 24 October**

Breakfast was delivered to our rooms, and we ate in leisure on my porch, watching the monkeys cavort.

In early afternoon we made the short flight for the last stop on our trip, Lamu Island off the coast to the north.

We landed on Manda Island, walked about a quarter-mile to a stone jetty, and boarded a large dhow\* for the trip to Lamu. I had studied dhows in the Fort Jesus Museum, had taken notes, and had reviewed them on the plane.

As we moored at the steep steps of the jetty of the Pevoni Hotel, I asked the Captain in careful Swahili if his boat were not a Jahazi. He was delighted and assured me several times that it was a Jahazi and not a Mashua. I agreed, still in Swahili, that the Mashua (a dhow with similar lines) was, indeed a smaller boat. It was my crowning linguistic achievement of the trip.

We walked a short way down the beach to a stark white Arab-style building perched on the side of a hill overlooking the water. Our rooms were in the next-to-last cottage, higher than the others, assuring perfect privacy on our verandas.

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\* A *dhow* is a traditional wooden sail boat, typically with triangular sails.

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## Tuesday, 25 October

I was up and out onto my small private balcony before dawn to watch the sunrise over our branch of the Indian Ocean. Coffee was brought to me promptly at 6:30 by a smiling waiter. An hour later, bathed and dressed, I joined Carli and Tom on the main veranda for breakfast.

The morning sail in the *Jahazi Pepo* to the town of Lamu took us past sand dunes, Arab-style homes, other dhows, and pleasure boats.

We walked by ourselves down the wide, unpaved street along the seawall, fending off would-be guides. Fine old Arab homes now are government buildings. The street was a blur of donkeys and children and chickens and strolling tourists.

We turned onto a narrow sandy path away from the water and were in the residential area of Lamu—mud-and-wattle thatched houses, high walls, winding sand lanes. Many of the women wore the black Arab robes locally called *bui-bui*, and turned their faces away as we passed. Tom and I snapped pictures carefully when no one was in view. However, one *bui-bui*-clad woman appeared from around a corner behind me as I was aiming my camera at Tom and Carli in an especially narrow passageway overgrown with bougainvillea. She yelled shrilly and waved her arms at me fiercely as I mimed apology. Except for that one incident, people were unfailingly friendly as we passed.

We returned to the Museum on the waterfront, the first floor of it maintained as the original Arab home, with exhibits on the floor above. There were interesting displays of jewelry, of typical Indian bridal chambers, and of model dhows (which took my greatest attention).

Back by *Jahazi* to *Peponi*'s—the name not that of an Italian owner, as we had supposed, but Swahili from *pepo* (wind) and *oni* (place): Place of the Wind.



We spent a lazy afternoon reading, writing, and resting on the veranda. At five o'clock, we walked down to the beach for a sunset sail.

The dhow, a Mashua, was anchored in shallow water, so Carli and Tom kicked off their scuffs and rolled up their pants legs to wade out. I had anticipated this possibility, and was prepared to remove leather shoes and wade out regardless of surgical stockings and pantyhose. Before I could move, Achmed, the Captain, no taller than I and more wiry of build, had picked me up in his arms and was wading out to the boat. Carli and Tom whooped, and I tried to look fragile and relaxed. In a few steps I was being steadied aboard by a laughing Abdul, the deckhand. Achmed had been completely steady under the brief burden, so nothing but my dignity was ruffled.

The silent sail on crystal-clear water past mangrove islands felt like home. We talked with our delightful crew about the area's fishing industry—lobster caught by free-diving, only enough for local consumption, and fishing by hand line.

Achmed remarked that when he goes out fishing, he works day and night; when he guides tourists, he sleeps at home. He told of taking a Canadian woman snorkeling at a coral formation not far from where we were sailing. Achmed watched her put on her mask, go overboard, and then flounder wide-eyed several feet below the surface. He dove in, hauled her into the boat, and pumped water out. The woman sputtered that she did not know how to swim and had had no idea that he would take her to somewhere deep. When Achmed delivered her to shore, she gravely thanked him for saving her life and handed him five Shillings (about US28¢). He handed the money back to her, saying that her life was too expensive for him.

Achmed timed our sail so that we were in perfect position to see the sun set over the tip of Lamu.

When we returned to Peponi, instead of taking the dhow to the stone jetty as I had expected they would do, they pulled as close to the beach as possible. Achmed called to Abdul, and before I knew what was happening, each had grabbed an arm and a leg and I was ignominiously bundled the few steps to dry sand. Obviously Achmed had told Abdul in



Swahili that there was no way he was going to haul this bulk again by himself. I tipped him well for his service above-and-beyond-the-call and Carli, Tom and I laughed our way up the hill to our veranda.

### **Wednesday, 26 October**

Early coffee on my private veranda, last packing, then final luxuriating on the large veranda until time to go. Jahazi *Pepo* across to airstrip, a wait on high board benches under a thatched roof, and aboard a small plane for the flight to Nairobi.

Back to the Norfolk Hotel for the last time. Tom was dismayed when the desk clerk could not find our reservations. However, the reception agent who had sent my telex to Alex a few visits earlier emerged from an inner office, and we greeted each other like long-lost friends.

“Is everything all right?” he asked.

“Well, not exactly. They seem to have misplaced our reservations,” I replied.

“Give them rooms now and look up the reservations later,” he barked at the poor clerk. Key were immediately forthcoming.



I was hostess that night at The Carnivore, an unusual restaurant we had heard about, with heavy wooden tables around a nine-foot-diameter open grill where countless skewers of meat roast on racks.

Service was attentive. Steaming towels to wipe hands. A round loaf of bread with a generous crock of butter. A fiery hot, blackened plate placed before each of us with asbestos mitts. A two-level lazy susan with six bowls of sauce on the top tray (mint, sweet and sour, garlic, chili, Bearnaise, and something else) and vegetables, relished, and salads on the lower tray.

Waiters visited our table in an unending procession, forking from skewers onto our heated plates pieces of chicken, sausages, ribs or slicing off from

grilled joints pieces of pork or lamb or beef or eland or camel. Baked potatoes appeared from somewhere.

We could not keep up. When finally we paused with plates clean, a waiter came to ask if there were anything special we would like. We chorused, “Camel.” It was wonderfully juicy and tender, like the finest prime rib. We were told that a special variety of camel was being raised as a meat animal.

We completed dinner with a final glass of our trip favorite—Kenya Gold liqueur.

### **Thursday, 27 October**

We spent our last day in Nairobi buying more things in the market than our bulging suitcases could accommodate.

Our plane left for London just after midnight.

### **Friday, 28 October**

Landed Heathrow around six-thirty in the morning. Returned to the Penta Hotel, where we had day rooms.

After separating for a while to refresh, I joined Carli and Tom in their room to re-talk the trip and anticipate the pictures we had taken. Finally it was time for me to say farewell and leave them to the business of checking out and getting their flight to San Francisco.

It was hard for all of us to see the end of our matchless trip. It was hard for me to give up the happiness of sharing my days with them. But it was best done in privacy and quickly.

## France on Business

September 1989

I'm going to France!

As I got on the plane last May for a trip to see my Yankee family, I told myself that never again would I have the thrill of setting out on a really superb trip like the one last year to Africa, and that it really didn't matter.

My first stop was in Miami, where Alex and I attended a conference of CGM\* agents. To our delighted amazement, our little company was picked as one of three who had achieved the most during the preceding year. One of two prizes awarded was sending me to Paris for an all-expense-paid week. Even better, the trip was tied in with a duplicate trip for Ethel and Jacques Cachot; he's the retiring manager of the Miami CGM office and my old friend.

I did an intensive refurbishing of my high school French, but it was lovely to have a Frenchman in charge.

### **Saturday, 16 September**

The taxi came on time and all I had to worry about was whether the billowing black clouds would cause TAN to overfly Belize and me to miss my Air France flight to Paris.

The trip was routine except for TAN's seriously damaging their reputation for good food by serving tasteless imitation scrambled eggs and pancakes better suited to paving sidewalks than to lining stomachs.

CGM had booked me in Club Class on Air France, so in addition to the extra-comfortable seats with padded foot rests, there was a great sense of privacy due to the configuration of the seats. A storage area divided the compartment so one was aware of only the two abreast seats.

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\* CGM is the French shipping line, Compagnie Générale Maritime.

Service was lavish—champagne, steaming towels, a zippered bag of goodies including French perfume, and a dinner more suitable to a fine restaurant than to a plane.

My seat companion was a young Egyptian heading home to Abu Dhabi after a selling trip (pharmaceuticals) through the U.S. He was bright, lucid, and eager to talk. We covered the debt crisis in developing countries, the drug problem, the Mid-East situation, comparative religions (he was Muslim), the rearing of children, and prospect for world peace. It was a surprising, but fascinating, conversation.

As for the night, no matter what class you are in, you are faced with a restless night of sleeping semi-erect.

### **Sunday, 17 September**

Airport formalities were simple, and my taxi driver, far more civil than I had been led to anticipate.

The Hôtel Friedland had an unimpressive doorway among shops, but grilled balconies stretched from one end of the block-long facade to the other on the higher floors. The lobby was small. Not only was my reservation in place, but I was not even asked to check in. No bellboy. I wrestled my two bags into the tiniest elevator I ever had seen and fought claustrophobia all the way up to the second floor (third, in U.S. parlance).

My room was small and ordinary, but French doors at the end opened onto the balcony at tree-top height. Looking to the right down the line of trees, I could see the Arc de Triomphe not far away. A private wall safe with combination lock made up for the dinginess of the room. It was the first I ever had had in an hotel room, and I was ecstatic. Even before I unpacked, I loaded all my valuables into the safe and secured them with a flourish. Later, Ethel Cachot would comment that the fact that guests needed safes showed the caliber of the hotel.

I was too excited to sleep immediately, so unpacked, with multiple trips onto my balcony to enjoy the tree-lined avenue, fine old buildings across

the street, and the Arc. When I finally lay down, I slept only fitfully and awoke an hour before the time set on my alarm.


It seemed a good time to wash stockings and smalls. I had anticipated the possibility of a stopper-less basin and had rubber stoppers in three sizes in my luggage. What I had not anticipated was a basin with a broken metal plug that could not be removed. In the past I have coped with similar problems by using a plastic wastebasket as a basin. This room had only a wire basket. Fortunately, it had an extra bathroom fixture with hot and cold water and a working stopper. I scoured it thoroughly and found a convenient, if unconventional, use for it soaking my stockings.

My elastic clothesline stretched easily from a heavy vertical pipe to a towel rack on the opposite wall. By carefully positioning wet laundry on the line, I was just able to slide around the door and snake my way to the commode behind it without enmeshing myself in damp garments.




I walked down two flights of curving, carpeted stairs to the lobby on my way to a stroll down the avenue and found my trip companions, Ethel and Jacques Cachot, amid a pile of luggage that would have equipped a family of six for months. We had a quick visit before they began the trek up to their room, and I departed for my first exploration of the streets of Paris.

Naturally I headed for the Arc de Triomphe. Across from the roundabout encircling it, I paused to admire the familiar bas reliefs, feel the massiveness of the monument, and to imagine the triumphal parades in its shadow. Movement in the crenelated top caught my eye. My instant thought was, "For heaven's sake, they keep a troop of monkeys on top of the Arc." A few moments of astonished staring corrected my erring view, and I wondered how the tourists, now recognized on the rooftop, had crossed the surging traffic to the edifice. I could find no crosswalk and decided that a hasty dash among the careening vehicles could leave me dead before my first night in Paris. It was only later that I learned that there are pedestrian underpasses.



The Cachots and I met in the lobby a bit after six-thirty that evening and walked over to and down the Champs-Élysées. The famous avenue was choked with shaggy young people in blue jeans, rather than the elegant Parisians I had expected to see. We continued along a series of diagonaling streets to an elegant restaurant where the *Fin de Siècle* \* decor would have been treat enough, even without the superb food.

Getting a taxi back to the hotel was another matter. Several empty ones passed us, with or without gestures to illustrate their drivers' views of people who hail cabs. One driver stopped, asked where we were going, then drove off, refusing to take us. We walked.



Now, about the Hôtel Friedland. It was clean, beautifully located, and pretty third-rate. Ethel and Jacques were wild. After checking in, making three trips each in the minute elevator with their luggage, and finding a nondescript room without a bathroom door and with broken furniture, Ethel collapsed in tears, and Jacques rang CGM to say that the room was “minable \*\* with a capital *M*.”

There was a great deal of huffing and puffing and many calls before the story finally emerged. Two or three CGM people in succession had passed on the job of booking our hotel until it reached a secretary who selected one out of a guide, based on its location. Jacques insisted she probably had never seen the inside of an hotel in her life.

Ethel was inconsolable long after it made any sense not to come to terms with the situation and get on with enjoying Paris. Unfortunately she had especially looked forward to staying in an hotel better than the one they usually used, and the Friedland was far less comfortable or attractive. There was nothing to be done immediately; every hotel in Paris was

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\* *Fin de Siècle* is French for *End of Century*.

\*\* *Minable* is French for *shabby*.

booked full that Bicentennial summer. We all felt the Friedland incongruous, considering that CGM had sent us all Club Class on Air France and had delivered enormous bouquets of flowers to Ethel and me on our arrivals.



My large assortment of electrical converter and adapters traveled to France with me so that I could make my early morning coffee. Tragically, the one plug I needed for French outlets I did not have. It was only when, much later, I moved to the Hôtel Opal that I found a nearby hardware store that quickly supplied the missing fitting. Mornings were brighter for the rest of my stay.

However, before I found my adapter, one thing became clear about life in Paris hotels. I stayed in three, of varying classes. In each I found that in the morning, one rings for petit déjeuner,\* then hangs up the telephone and walks briskly to unbolt the door. A Smiling Someone with tray of coffee and croissants will have materialized in the hall during the 30 seconds or so it has taken to cross the room.

## Monday, 18 September

First touring—The Louvre.

Driving through Paris was a strange mixture of seeing wonderful new sights and of feeling utterly at home because everything was so familiar. The tree-lined avenues with their handsome be-grilled facades and vari-shaped chimneys, the Places\*\* with familiar statuary, the scuttling taxis—all were remembered, rather than seen for the first time.

The Louvre is more encompassing than I had realized. The new focus of interest is, of course, the I. M. Pei pyramid entrance. It is handsome in itself and less obtrusive than expected because the palace beyond shows through its slanted glass sides.

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\* *Petit déjeuner* is French for *breakfast*.

\*\* *Places* is French for *squares* or *plazas*.

From inside, the pyramid is magnificent. A great curving staircase soars skyward from the marble lobby floor below. The immensity, light, and spaciousness dwarf the horde of tourists.

The Louvre and its exhibits have been pictured and described too often to need my words. It was enough to speculate on those vast and ornate halls in daily use as a palace.



Inside the museum, chance led me to a particular spot beside a particular glass case in a long gallery displaying elaborate vessels of many sorts. The crowds were dense, so I waited until there was an opening to approach a case. Inside were a number of small bowls hollowed from semi-precious stones and decorated to a king's taste with elaborate golden handles and gems.

One slightly oval vessel, thin, delicately mottled sienna with an elaborate jeweled handle and ornate gold decorations caught my eye. It seemed thinner than the others, thinner than a stone bowl could be. I recognized it suddenly as a calabash, the same shell-like dipper used by Belizeans in bath and sink for generations.



The *Mona Lisa* now is protected by an air-conditioned glass case. Visitors are held back by velvet ropes. There is little sense of immediacy in seeing the original.

Jacques told a wonderful story of the time when the *Mona Lisa* was sent to New York aboard the *Normandie* while he was an officer on that ship. The painting was given a private stateroom all its own.

To move the painting ashore involved a very short stretch outside the temperature-controlled areas of the ship, a few meters, then down a gangway, then a few more meters into a waiting van. Authorities from the Louvre insisted that CGM enclose the entire outside transit-way from the



ship to the van, to heat it, and to set fans to distribute the heat evenly, just for the five-minute transit of the invaluable painting.

Later, Jacques suggested to the Captain that a plaque should be placed on the door of the painting's stateroom. For the rest of the life of the *Normandie*, that room carried a small brass plaque stating, "Mona Lisa Slept Here."



An unforgettable moment came when I paused at the bottom of a long, tapering marble staircase and saw, as the tourists parted by accident, the glowing statue of the *Victoire de Samothrace*, the *Winged Victory*,\* arching forward in abounding joy hardly contained by its marble form.

The *Venus de Milo* stands alone bathed in light in a small round room at the far end of an ornate gallery. The press of tourists blocks the view but occasional gaps give flashes of the intended impact of the statue's placement. Of the statue itself, I had a sense of unreality, slowly circling beauty incarnate, captured.

There cannot be enough time in life fully to savor the paintings, statues, displays in the Louvre. The extravagance of the palace itself is matched by the treasures it holds. That impression will remain with me.



We left the Louvre, walked a short way, crossed one of the Seine's handsome bridges to the Left Bank, and stopped for lunch at a sidewalk café. It was the simplest of places, perhaps four tables in all, but we could watch the Seine, and the food was superb, to my surprise.

After lunch, we went on to the Île de la Cité to see the Cathedral of Notre Dame. As often as one has seen pictures, one is not prepared for the grace and elegance of that immense structure. The afternoon sun made the right-hand rose window blaze with color. Severe personal restraint was

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\* *Winged Victory* is the English name for the statue whose French name is *Victoire de Samothrace*.



Kate with Jacques Cachot in Paris, 1989

needed to avoid the simile of “kaleidoscope” as unbecoming. The ghosts of the men whose dreams and skills conceived and executed that masterpiece were as real a presence as the soaring columns, vaults, and exquisite stained glass of the Cathedral. Notre Dame awes, but embraces one.

We walked on to the Palais de Justice, submitted to a careful search by gendarmes,\* and went through the passage to Sainte Chappelle, the private chapel of the king.

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\* *Gendarmes* are armed police, a branch of the French military.

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Standing in line outside and peering into the gloom within, I could see a souvenir kiosk and thought to myself that this was one bit of touring we easily could have skipped. Moments later, inside the chapel, I was enchanted by its riot of color—soft reds, greens, blues, golds, painted in wallpaper—like designs of small fleur-de-lis, leaves, etc., columns one color and wall panels different ones, all blending in a joyous and welcoming but uncharacteristic informality. One part of my mind said “tacky” and the other said “exhilarating.” I thought how easily the King could have talked to his God here, but learned that this was the chapel for the servants, and that the royal chapel was above it.

Up a narrow curving stone staircase, the main chapel was more formal, but incredibly airy in manner and effect. Long, narrow stained-glass windows set close together along most of the wall area lightened one’s heart as they brightened the chapel. It was a different paean of praise from Notre Dame’s, but equally inspiring.

We returned to the hotel for R&R,\* then went out for a superb dinner at one of Paris’ fine restaurants. Jacques and Ethel, of course, knew Paris well, and in this case, I was the beneficiary of their familiarity.

## **Tuesday, 19 September**

It had been a late evening and was an early morning. Jacques put me on the train to Le Havre at 8:00 AM. The car was comfortable, with airplane-type seats, and the ride was smooth. I had looked forward to seeing something of the countryside but had forgotten how much of a train’s course runs through dismal industrial areas. I found myself napping most of the way, rousing to see the quaint Norman farms and villages, and fields spotted with dairy cattle.

An old friend who had been Regional Manager for CGM met me at the train and took me back to CGM. I had a full and fascinating day with charming, astute men, becoming acquainted, talking business, having the usual fine lunch (where I succeeded in delighting them by nonchalantly

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\* R&R is U.S. military slang for *rest and recuperation*.

ordering a Kir as an aperitif). I was given a tour of the extensive wine cellars, which I did not even know CGM had. After a full day, it was back to the train and back to Paris.



Jacques and Ethel met me, and we walked to a nearby restaurant that they knew. We sat in a glassed-in veranda overlooking the square and were entertained by the passers-by as we enjoyed dinner. I ordered lightly after my large lunch, but the salad-with-bacon that I ordered proved to be virtually a feast. It would have served a family of four, and the “bacon” was something thick and lean and too delicious to forgo.

Ethel announced delightedly that CGM had found us rooms in a better hotel and that we would move in the morning.

### **Wednesday, 20 September**

Morning was chaotic with packing, wrestling our suitcases downstairs without assistance, checking out early, and worst of all, finding a taxi that would take our pile of luggage. An angel in a Citroen finally appeared; bags vanished into a surprisingly capacious trunk; and we all piled in. We dropped Ethel and all the luggage at the Hôtel Cambon, a few steps from the Tuileries, and Jacques and I headed north to La Defense, a new commercial area of Paris with enormous modern office buildings, only slightly late for our first CGM appointment.

Again, the business sessions were stimulating, and I was able to meet people who heretofore had been only names or initials at the bottom of telexes. I had not been advised ahead of time that CGM Paris was primarily interested in an indoctrination course on Belize because personnel in the CAROL (Caribbean Overseas Line, the service that calls at Belize) Department had changed. Fortunately, talking is something I do easily—no laughter, please—and organizing material extemp is automatic.

We had an elegant luncheon, served in the executive dining room. CGM had arranged that following our late lunch, Jacques and I would visit the new Grande Arche nearby. For once Jacques' favorite adjective "extravagant" (strongly accented on the final syllable and usually used inappropriately) was apt. I liked the clean massiveness of the Arche amid the ultra-modern high-rises of La Defense; Jacques snorted, "Too much concreted."

We climbed three flights of 17-step stairs that stretched handsomely the width of the edifice, unbroken by railings. We took one of the exterior elevators to the top of the Arche, enjoying the view of Paris spread out far below. A Human Rights organization exhibit in the gallery at the top displayed curious, touching photographs of refugees from throughout the world over recent years. We were back in the hotel around five, and Jacques discovered in his pockets tickets to some show in the bottom of the Arche that CGM had intended us to see.



The Hôtel Cambon was a pleasant change from the Friedland. It was typical of many small but excellent Paris hotels, modern in decor, attentive in service, and above average in accommodations. My room was not large, but it was elegantly decorated, and the size of the tiled bathroom made up for it. My only reservation was the step upward into the bathroom, but I resisted stumbling up or down it during my stay.

I was hesitant to join Ethel and Jacques for dinner that evening because a friend was going to meet them, but by 7:00 PM, I realized it no longer was a matter for discussion. I was in a complete collapse after the stimulating stress of two CGM days in a row. I telephoned my regrets, fixed a Scotch from the mini-bar to sustain me while I washed my stockings, and turned the lights out at 8:00 PM for a rejuvenating, uninterrupted twelve hours of sleep.

## Thursday, 21 September

At a comfortable hour in the morning, Ethel, Jacques and I set out for Les Invalides and the tomb of Napoleon. By great good luck, our taxi turned onto the approach to the building just as the French military mounted guard curvetted down the avenue. Stalled in traffic, we had ample time to admire and photograph the magnificent horses and uniformed riders.

I was not prepared to be as touched by the building and tomb as I was. Again, the building, the bas reliefs, and statues were magnificent. One cannot help being impressed, looking over the marble railing onto the mighty porphyry tomb standing alone in the rotunda. I had not realized that Napoleon's son, some of his generals, and later heroes also had sarcophagi in the transepts and shrines beyond the central hall. To me, the tomb of General Foch was the most touching, topped with life-size bronze World War I soldiers bearing high the effigy of the general.



We continued to the museum of the army, next door. Just leaving the museum was a legless World War II officer in Naval uniform, wheelchair pushed by his officer-son, surrounded by his bright, laughing family. He was a handsome man, ruddy with a white military mustache, laughing and obviously excited about his visit to the museum.

We went through the ground floor display of medieval armor, the finest I ever have seen. The exhibits were as polished as if the squire just had prepared them for his knight. Some figures were mounted on life-size horses, great heavy beasts able to carry the weight. In one striking display, a black giant of a horse carried a knight wearing black armor etched in silver, a forbidding figure.



We barely touched other exhibits because Ethel had been successful in getting us lunch reservations at the wildly choice Jules Verne restaurant at the top of the Eiffel Tower. We paused just long enough by the carpeted

steps of the tower's exclusive elevator to glance at the menu posted there and note that appetizers ranged from US\$30 to US\$50. We did not linger to read more unsettling prices.

The elevator ride through the intricate framing of the tower was spectacular, and the restaurant, overpoweringly elegant in black decor.

In an excess of exhilaration I ordered a Kir Royale (made with champagne rather than white wine) and Ethel joined me. Ethel and I were given menus without prices but Jacques looked so worried at his priced one, even though CGM was paying, that we took turns borrowing his menu. Lunch for the three of us was going to run close to US\$300.

Jacques reached for a small folder near the table lamp, but the waiter quickly told him that it was not a wine list and replaced it. In desperation we ordered, the waiter moved off, and Ethel picked up the small folder. It was a menu and offered a set meal for 20 Francs, about US\$30. Ethel begged Jacques to call the waiter back; I added my coaxing; and after momentary hesitation, he did. Despite Jacques's embarrassment, the perfidious waiter seemed amused at our discovering his deviousness in time to do him out of a larger tip.

We all were vastly relieved to have escaped the exorbitant prices and enjoyed one of the finest meals we had in Paris.

## **Friday, 22 September**

The plan had been to go to Versailles, but Jacques had business meetings and lunch, so Ethel and I went shopping. Later we learned that the palace was closed for repairs anyway.

The Galeries Lafayette is one of the largest department stores I ever have been in, gorgeous but crowded. Paris prices were very high. Fortunately neither Lafayette nor the endless handsome displays in boutiques tempted me because nothing they showed would have been suitable for Belize. I could admire without longing.

We had lunch in the store restaurant, did a few errands after lunch, and returned to the hotel in time for a rest before dressing for the CGM dinner aboard a Bateau Mouche on the Seine.



Paris taxis! We were out looking for one well ahead of time on Rue de Rivoli alongside the Tuileries, a main artery with heavy traffic. All we saw hurtling down the middle traffic lane were full taxis or empty ones that disdained to stop. We all were getting frantic because we had a deadline for arriving at Le Bateau Mouche.

Both Jacques and Ethel decided we should walk farther up the street where the doormen from the big hotels could not grab taxis ahead of us. It was only minutes before one finally stopped. We arrived at the pier in good time and joined our CGM hosts.

The Batteaux Mouches were docked one beside the other, all brilliantly lighted. Aboard ours, CGM had a long reserved table. It was a congenial group that included the two top CAROL officials with their wives, and young CGM couples from Venezuela and Panama, who happened to be in Paris at the time.

A typically French combo played, three instruments including clarinet, something like a saxophone, and something bass, not as large as a tuba. The musicians were dressed as French sailors in white duck trousers; 3/4-sleeve jerseys with horizontal navy stripes; and flat-top caps with a navy band, white top, and red pompom. Our French friends told us that touching the pompoms was said to bring good luck.

The Bateau proceeded along the Seine with panoramic views through window walls and overhead glass. The Tour Eiffel, with its extensive new golden Bicentennial lighting, was magnificent. A bit farther down the river, we came abreast of the replica of the Statue of Liberty. Moments later the two were in line—the Statue of Liberty with the Eiffel towering behind, a sight to thrill.



Service was faultless and the food, good. Our châteaubriand was excellent. The French are masters at cooking beef to the exact degree requested.

In the center of the Bateau on a raised platform was an impressive organ embellished by an elaborate pair of dark gilded life-size creatures, somewhere between cherub and angel, jutting outward like figureheads from the prow of a sailing ship. As we cruised past the floodlit Cathedral of Notre Dame, the organist segued into the Hallelujah Chorus, with choir provided from some unknown source within the instrument. All chatter ceased, but here and there a few good voices softly joined in.

The scenery along the Seine was endlessly fascinating—magnificent, familiar buildings; parks, people strolling, trees; Rive Gauche, Rive Droite; Île de la Cité, Île Saint-Louis—up one side and back the other. A charming evening, etched in memory.

### **Saturday, 23 September**

Saturday Ethel had to return to Miami. She had been lucky to have been given two weeks' holiday on a new job that she had held for only four months. Ethel packed; we said goodbye; they left for the airport.




As you know, we are also the Belize agents for Air France; M. Jacques Bankir, the vice president of Air France who had been in Belize the previous month, had insisted that he must take me to lunch, though I protested at his breaking up his Saturday. He called for me at the Hôtel Cambord after having parked in the Place de la Concorde nearby. We walked to the nearby Hôtel Ritz. I admitted my pleasure at his choice and privately thought it especially charming that he had chosen to take me to one of Paris's finest hotels.

Beyond the Ritz's massive glass and brass front doors, everything was gilt and crimson. Formally attired young attendants were everywhere, white gloves spotless, to open doors, direct, or serve. M. Bankir had made a

reservation at The Grill, so we walked the length of an ornate corridor lined on both sides with showcases displaying jewels, accessories, bric-a-brac—a lavish array of exquisite baubles.


The Grill was a handsomely informal room, opening onto a luxuriantly planted courtyard. Service was exemplary, and the luncheon, perfect. My appetizer was a “fence” of upright leeks enclosing an aspic of shrimp and lobster. M. Bankir and I shared a small lamb rib roast that was sliced into four tender chops apiece. I declined dessert but my host insisted on calling for the dessert cart. We both had creamy concoctions too divine to leave us taunted by guilt.

After luncheon, I excused myself. To my consternation, I was escorted most of the way to the ladies’ room by the White Gloves of whom I had asked direction. A carpeted, curving staircase with brocaded walls and gold rail led down to an elegant lounge that opened into a mirrored dressing room. The adjacent marble enclosure was too small to be termed a room but far too large to be considered a cubicle. I returned to let golden swans pour warm water over my hands into a marble basin.



After M. Bankir left me back at the Hôtel Cambon, I took a taxi to the Musée d’Orsay, a much-talked-of museum that now displays most of the impressionist paintings that used to be in the Louvre. It is housed in an old railway station that was to have been torn down. Public outcry was so great that, instead, the facade was retained, and the interior was restored by an Italian architect in an elaborately modern style that incorporated the old steel-girdered ceiling.

It was an overpowering sensation to move through room after room full of Monets, Manets, Cezannes, Van Goghs, Degas’, Toulouse-Lautrecs and all the other Impressionists. At the end of two hours, I was so overwhelmed I could not continue. I had to leave the antiquities on the ground floor for another visit.



Jacques and I met at 7:30 that evening, and after the usual frustrating search for a taxi, we went to the Left Bank. We had a pleasant stroll along brick-paved streets through the Latin Quarter, past a number of famous cafés, including Les Deux Magots, looking for a particular restaurant to which Jacques had taken one of his daughters. It was a fascinating walk. Jacques finally abandoned his search and went into the next nice restaurant we passed. It was a bit garish with a decor of red and black and mirrors, crowded and noisy, but it had a happy ambiance, and the food proved to be good.

Our after-dinner walk took us to one of Jacques' favorite Paris spots, the tiny Place de Furstenburg, two half-circles of handsome apartment buildings overlooking a small island of grass set with four large trees in square formation.


The street lights were dim. A young musician was playing a plaintive French ballad on a guitar and quietly singing. We stopped to listen, as a few Japanese tourists already had done. After a short while, Jacques dropped some change into the open guitar case, and we slipped silently away.

### **Sunday, 24 September**

Sunday afternoon I took an excursion by bus to the Château de Chantilly outside Paris. The bus ride took us past low white stucco houses with French windows holding planters of red geraniums on their sills. Steep tanbark-colored tile roofs were beset with small chimneys. Hand-made tiles roofed older stone houses. Neat gardens were partially hidden from view by walls or hedges.

Chantilly is a beautiful château, set next to a lake with both a large formal French garden and an informal English-style one. It was the private home of a branch of the Orléans family. The final owner, who had no heir, left it to a private foundation. His art collection, displayed in the newer part of the château, has earned it the name of *Le Petit Louvre*.


The part of the château that dates to the 1600's is all gilt molding and crystal and tapestry. Among the exquisite pieces of furniture are small chairs and settees made for Marie Antoinette's children, still with the original upholstery.



Adjacent to the château are the stables, said to be the largest and most luxurious in the world, an extensive building matching the château in style. A large racing oval is in front. Some twenty or thirty horses, handsome animals of various blood lines, are housed in large box stalls. Displayed on the fronts of many of the stalls are pictures of their inhabitants' successes in racing or dressage. The extensive building is full of exhibits of various types concerning horses. Past the stalls is a practice ring and beyond that, a long, wide, high-ceilinged hall displaying three or four dozen scenes with life-size models of horses and riders or drivers of various eras or styles, all beautifully modeled and accoutered.

While I was there, they had a succession of shows in the practice ring, trainers putting horses through the special paces used in dressage, but there was no mounted exhibition.

I was so afraid of missing the bus that I brushed past exhibits I would have loved lingering over, such as the large stone room equipped as a veterinarian's clinic, with displays of common equine problems.



Tours are a good way to see things, but one is slave to the clock.

Which brings me to My Problems at Chantilly. After leaving the tour of the château itself, I fell in with a German couple from our bus. I had understood from the dainty tour director that the group was to wait at the main gate for the guide, and then go as a group to the stables. The Germans assured me that our group already had gone on ahead, so I walked after them as they bustled up the hill along the path toward the stables. The woman pointed to the parking lot where the bus was standing and where, I had understood, we were to meet it at 5:15; she told me that

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we must meet the bus at the main gate because they would not allow us to board in the parking lot.

Fearful of being stranded, I left the stables earlier than I wanted and was at the main gate at 5:00. No bus. 5:15, no bus and no familiar faces. By the time it registered that I was in the wrong place, it was too late for me to dare move away. The woman in the caisse (ticket vendor) listened to my problems, detailed in French as clear as I could manage under the stress of the moment, and assured me that the bus was to come to the main gate.

By 5:25 I was pondering ways to get back to Paris forty miles away, late on a Sunday afternoon, with no public transport available and without walking. Hitch hiking was not ruled out. At 5:30 I saw a bus with familiar markings pull up at the road from the parking lot, a good distance from the gate where I stood, and died a dozen deaths waiting to see whether it would turn toward Paris or toward me. Gradually I could see that the bus's slow arc was bringing it back down the tree-lined main approach to the gate. Its door opened in welcome. I boarded with dignified haste, apologizing.

I was greeted as a Prodigal Daughter. The pretty little guide, obviously distraught with worry, kept insisting that I had "lost myself," which I denied. I had been in the right place in plain sight, as far as I was concerned. The passengers clucked and cooed and tried to soothe us both.

Hoping for instant invisibility, I sat down quickly, did my best to appear composed, and fought back tears. I decided it was not safe to turn me loose on my own and thought seriously of returning to Belize as soon as my CGM time was over instead of risking another tour.

It was dark when the tour bus dropped us at Place des Pyramides. On the short walk back to the hotel I picked up a "club" sandwich to eat in my room. It proved to be a long crusty roll with all the proper things crammed untidily into a slit. Tasted lovely with a revivifying Scotch.

## Monday, 25 September

It was time for me to take over my own expenses after CGM's generous week, so I moved to the charming small hotel recommended by the Cachots. The Hôtel Opal is in a busy area near the Madeleine and close to the major department stores. Mirrors enlarge the small reception area and charming period furniture makes the lounge area at the rear inviting.

The elevator was, if possible, even smaller than the tiny ones I had found in the other two hotels. I could just barely get in with my two suitcases.

My room was within three inches of the elevator's door when I emerged on the fourth floor. The size and shape of the hotel could be guessed by the fact that room 23 was on the fourth floor. A great old-fashioned key let me into a wedge of a room that tapered from the bathroom at the broad end to a far end no wider than its French windows with the customary grillwork outside. There was an ornately carved wardrobe, marble-topped table with brass chair, single bed, and just enough space to pass. The bathroom was more generous with an enormous tub, the first I had had in Paris, equipped with the hand-held shower head I had learned to love.

Changing hotels twice was a nuisance but having a chance to see the differences made it worth while. Each had its special features:

- The balcony with tree-top view of The Arc de Triomphe and the wall safe at the Friedland
- Everything at the Cambon
- The window, tub, convenient location, and charm of the Opal

Late in the morning I returned to La Defense, where CGM wanted me to meet the contingent from CGM Barking, the office outside London. We had a pleasant and productive working lunch, and that ended my CGM visit to Paris.

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## Tuesday, 26 September

Checked out of the Opal early Tuesday morning and took a taxi to the Place des Pyramides to start my tour of Normandy, Brittany, and the Loire Valley.

The bus drove north from Paris to the quaint old port of Honfleur across the harbor from Le Havre. It is a picturesque village of tall old slate-sided buildings crowded together. The lovely little church of Sainte Catherine was built centuries ago by local craftsmen, and its double-vault, hull-shaped wooden ceiling is clearly the work of shipbuilders.

The Normandy countryside was lushly green with placid cows busily manufacturing rich Norman cream. Half-timbered houses with steep thatched roofs were common as we proceeded east along the coast through the famous holiday towns of Trouville and Deauville.

Our next stop was the Omaha Beach of the D-Day invasion, where only a few stubs of pillars in the sea remain of the floating docks (arramanches) that enabled the allies to resupply their invading troops.



On to Bayeux and the exquisite embroidered history of events leading up to and through the Battle of Hastings. Queen Matilda almost certainly did not embroider the tapestry named for her, though she still gets the credit. Correctly speaking, it is not even a tapestry.

The entire trip would have been worthwhile for me if we had seen nothing but the “tapestry.” It is about 18 feet wide and stretches some 24 feet, displayed under glass in a long oval, lighted case. One carries an audio cassette that describes the action in each of the numbered scenes as one walks slowly along. The embroidery is exquisite; the figures, almost cartoon-like; the story, wittily told; the sense of action, surprising.



By the time we reached Caen from Bayeux, it was 5:30 and I was ready for a bath and brief rest before dinner. Unfortunately, not only had the

days' tour not ended, but it deposited us at the recently inaugurated Memorial Museum, which I did not want to see.

I was surprised at my own reaction to a World War II pilgrimage. The museum is handsome and imaginatively laid out, mixing photographic exhibits, real World War II planes and vehicles and uniforms, with large models of ships, and short films in tiny theaters.



It was 7:30 PM when we were deposited in the modern and welcoming hotel Novotel. We were offered a small glass of the famous Normandy cider when we picked up our room keys. Luggage was deposited at our doors within moments, and there was time for brief freshening before we went down to a delicious dinner.

### **Wednesday, 27 September**

Early in the morning we were en route from Caen to St. Malo, the old fortress city on the Brittany Coast. Caen is a new city, rebuilt with yellow limestone after eighty percent of the town was destroyed in the War.

The countryside became very hilly; the fog, barely penetrable in valleys. When we could see again, we could study the Normandy practice of *bocage*, the surrounding of each small green field with a line of trees to prevent erosion. The typical misty Norman weather was responsible for the bright lushness of the fields, which enabled the dairy cattle (mostly speckled dark brown and white) to produce the rich cream and butter featured in Normandy cuisine.

It was apple country, with trees planted casually, green apple trees among the red. The area produces cider and Calvados (apple brandy), but no wine.



As we moved into Brittany, the land changed: poorer fields, more often gold than green, good mainly for potatoes, cauliflower and artichoke. The



Bretons, a fiercely independent people who still retain their own language, traditionally fish or raise pigs.

The Normandy limestone gave way to Brittany granite, and farm houses and towns were a heavy, forbidding gray. Streets were so narrow that one wondered if the bus could thread its way through without rasping its finish on the granite facades. Long slate roofs slanted steeply.




St. Malo, long-ago lair of corsairs, was carefully restored after World War II and is a walled city of close-packed granite buildings on crooked streets. A walk up stone steps to the ramparts takes one above the tacky souvenir shops and self-conscious cafés and restaurants.

From the broad stone battlements, one sees the gray, rough Atlantic and feels its fierce, mist-laden wind. I started walking rapidly, elated and strangely “at home.” It took the turning of too many corners to break into my single-minded pleasure with the realization that I was not walking around a simple square.

I pushed my pace, turned another corner, and overlooked another unfamiliar view beyond the wall. There were stone staircases. I could have descended into the town, but then how would I have found the main gate—by diving into the warren of narrow streets and trusting fate to lead me in the right direction or by following the wall?

Walking was faster on the open ramparts. Visions of the tour bus leaving me forever pacing in the wind spurred me to something approaching that awkward pace used by former joggers. To my relief, another turn brought the remembered view of the harbor, the sky above it pierced by myriad masts. One last long stretch of rampart brought me to the staircase near the main gate, and I became the first of the passengers to await the return to the bus.

St. Malo was the one place to which I longed to return and stay, cozy and isolated in front of a fireplace in my granite apartment, reading and writing.



That afternoon, the high point of the tour—Mont-Saint-Michel. Familiar as the island was from photographs, the approach by causeway across tidal sands felt eerily forbidden. We parked at the base of great stone walls and began the climb up a steeply curved stone-paved road. By the time a brisk pace by our two young tour guides brought us to a catch-your-breath pause at the beginning of a long flight of stone steps, I noted with pleased amazement that this non-athletic office denizen was alone among the 30-year olds, while her contemporaries puffed along far below. I am glad I did not know that we were only about a third of the way up.

The view from the summit is worth the agony of the climb.

The abbey of Mont-Saint-Michel was built at the top of a high hill in the midst of a forest by two men who believed they had heard a summons from God. The work of the sea gradually killed the surrounding forest and now only the hill, stone abbey on top, and fortified town below remain, with a bit of forest creeping up the back of the Mont as a memorial to its origins.

According to our guide, only the center of the church rests on rock. Rooms at its sides rest on rooms below, which rest partly on rock and partly on other rooms. The entrancingly young Gallic brunette guide explained seriously that in the early years this top wing or that “slidded off the mountain.” We English-speakers were charmed with the image of complete stone rooms detaching themselves and gliding downwards like great boxy sleighs.

The abbey was a beautiful example of medieval building with a lovely gardened cloister. An adjacent work area held a massive wheel whose pulley was used to lift building materials to the top.

The road down wound easily through gardens and the village, where every inch of space seemed dedicated to enticing tourists to stop. I was glad we had taken the other route to the top of the Mont, able to enjoy the ancient structure without the intrusion of crass commercialism. There is

an hotel in the village, and I should have liked to spend the night there to watch the sea roll over the flats and turn Mont-Saint-Michel into an island.

We drove back over the causeway that now connects the Mont to the mainland, through the ever-lovely countryside to Angers in the Loire Valley, where we spent the night. Angers is built of white limestone with slate roofs. The nearby town of Treloze produces 50,000 tons of slate per year.

### **Thursday, 28 September**

Leaving Angers, the homes were pale gray with white louvers and trim and darker gray slate roofs, an interesting contrast to the rich cream with brown trim of the Normandy homes we had passed the day before. The fields were far larger than Normandy pastures. Instead of the lines of trees characteristic of *bocage*, they were broken by power poles marching sturdily across the fields in no discernible pattern.

We paused to see a 13th-Century fortress whose claim to fame was its seventeen towers.

The road ran alongside the Loire River on top of dikes built in the Middle Ages to control the river's dangerous spring and fall rampages. The Loire no longer is navigable. The water was very low. Islands of greenery sat on the greenish sand with a meandering, narrowing and widening bit of water snaking along the wide river bed. It was not pretty. Allegedly, however, the river is France's least polluted and supports fishing when and where it is flowing freely.

Vegetables were planted on long narrow plots of land between river and dike. Fields were surrounded by tangled strips of forest rather than by set rows of trees, as in Normandy. We passed a hunter, gun over his shoulder, carrying a large bird that he apparently just had shot—pheasant or grouse, perhaps.

Gradually, chalk cliffs appeared on the side of the road away from the river. Buildings were only facades, with the actual rooms dug back into

the cliffs themselves like dank, dark grottoes, because King Francis I levied taxes on homes according to their floorspace. Caves were not counted.

We passed miles of these caves. Many have been converted to use for the growing of mushrooms or the storage of wine.



In Saumur, we had a brief glimpse of the huge French military equestrian school that rivals the Austrian school with its Lipizzaners. Members are called *Le Cadre Noire* because of their black uniforms.

We followed the Vienne River after it branched off the Loire, finding larger fields with Charolais beef cattle and fields of grapes.

The Castle of Chinon, an important fortress from earliest times, remains as impressive ruins on a hill overlooking the Vienne. Some say Richard the Lionhearted died in Chinon. It was here that Joan of Arc first met her half-brother, Charles VII. Only the fireplace wall still stands of that room, but their spirits, I felt, remain there in almost physical presence.




We stopped for our first château, one of the most famous, Chenonceau, built for Diane de Poitiers, by King Henri II, whose mistress she was.

One approaches on a long, broad, ruler-straight avenue set on either side with formal rows of sycamores (plane trees). The château is surprisingly light in feeling for its size and graceful, with the long wing built out behind supported by stone arches over the river.

Traditionally, the royal family had chambers on the first (not ground) floor, and Diane was wise enough not to challenge the king's wife, the strong-minded Catherine de Medici. Diane's bedroom, on the ground floor, has been restored. It is a charming room with damask covering the stone walls and a fireplace that can only be described as "sensuous" because of the plumply rounded white marble figures carved from mantle to ceiling.


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From the great airiness of Chenonceau, we drove to the enormous and handsome Château de Chambord, a royal hunting lodge set in a vast forest.

In construction unusual for the time, four identical apartments were built at the corners of the castle, each with its private entrance so that guests and their large entourages could be accommodated conveniently. The showpiece of the château is a semi-open double spiral staircase of 102 steps that winds upward from the middle of the central hall, through three stories to the roof. Here the ladies, who would have preferred to remain at home in their own comfortable châteaux, were forced to stand in the open air to watch the hunt. The king had ordered trees felled and the forest underbrush cleaned away at the edge of the castle's lawns to make it easier for the luckless ladies to see the successes that so delighted their liege lords.

Many rooms in Chambord have been restored, and we had time to climb up and down from the enormous entry hall to roof to subterranean kitchens, exploring before returning to the tour bus.



As we turned toward Paris, the guide diverted our attention to a large cloud of lovely blue-gray smoke. Soon we saw the massive curved shape of the attendant atomic energy plant.

It was the first I ever had seen. I had not realized how overwhelming they could be, crouched on the earth as if pinning it to a wrestling mat. The guide said that the nearby town was paid millions of francs to accept the facility. We were not happy to learn that this particular atomic plant was of the same design as Chernobyl's and was to be phased out the next year. I felt distinctly uneasy until we were far down the highway.

The early evening drive back to Paris was not as draining as I had expected, because my tardy return to the bus after lunch had put me with a

new seat mate, a wizened but vigorous woman who must have been in her late eighties. I had glimpsed her at the châteaux, delightedly exploring, and had passed her coming down the spiral staircase at Chambord as I was puffing my way up.

We had a wide-ranging, delightful conversation all the way back to Paris. Along the way, I learned that she still is active in a choir, singing solos, and that she plays tennis regularly. Her community-service work includes an active part in the Planned Parenthood organization in the San Francisco Bay Area town where she lives. We exchanged warm farewells, though not addresses.



Back at Place des Pyramides, familiar with the problem of finding a taxi on Rue de Rivoli, I picked up my suitcase and laboriously walked a few blocks, hoping to attract one before it reached the streets where the doormen flag down cars for their impatient guests. It was forty-five frustrating minutes of watching both full and empty taxis speed past before one happened to deposit a passenger at the curb in front of me, and I was able to grab it.

### **Friday, 29 September**

My last day in Paris was dedicated to wrapping and mailing packages—crystal that the fine French store had refused to send for me.

Major mistakes can be made in misguided moments. I had to go to the nearby Bureau du Poste to try to buy packing boxes. Somehow this brief errand necessitated my changing purses. I put the minimum of things into the new one, told myself that there was no need to lock my suitcase, zipped it shut, and through habit snapped the lock. Then I remembered that my other handbag was in the top of the suitcase, and the key to the lock I just had fastened was in it.

I decided to ask the Hôtel Opal receptionist for any tools she might have. The vice grips she provided were useless against the steel of the lock,

fragile as it appeared. I dashed across the busy street to the hardware store I had discovered when searching for an electrical adapter. The dour proprietress spoke no English and quite obviously did not understand my tortured French explanation of my dilemma. Fortunately, there was a display of tools on one wall, and I was able to point to a lethal-looking instrument and arrange to buy it. I returned to the hotel with optimism that soon was justified as I was able to disengage the zipper fastener, open the case, and successfully reinstall the fitting.

I went down to the reception desk and presented the bemused attendant with the ferocious tool, explaining that she was to keep it available for her next stupid guest.

When I finally finished my mailing, a long story that I will not go into here, I took the time to explore the neighborhood looking for a lunchtime restaurant and made the lucky choice of a place frequented by Parisians rather than tourists. My final French meal was a fitting farewell.

### **Saturday, 30 September**

Jacques and I met in the Opal's lobby before 10:00 AM and went on to Charles de Gaulle Airport.

Air France has its own terminal, elegant and spacious, a pleasant contrast to Miami's chaos. When I handed my ticket to the Air France clerk, she fluttered a bit, saying "I have a message for you." I had time for brief worry before she announced, "You have been upgraded to First Class." Obviously one last courtesy by Air France VP, Jacques Bankir.



To my amusement, Jacques (Cachot) proved to be a dedicated airport shopper. We went to shop after shop before going up to the café. Jacques, ordering nothing, excused himself and returned to his ultimately unrewarding search for bargains in the one location where none exist.

Jacques and I parted as we stepped aboard the plane, he turning right to the comfortable Club Class, and I turning left to the luxurious Première.

Seats appeared as small islands spaced far apart to allow backs to go down and leg rests to come up for almost-horizontal reclining.

The introductory small glass of Champagne, offered by a polished steward, was followed by presentation of a small spray of orchids. The little zippered case of gifts that he then gave me was white where the Club Class case had been red, and it contained a few more clever, trip-oriented items plus an ornate bottle of a different perfume.

The trip was luxurious, with two beautiful meals served with a great flourish of napery, silver, and china. The East-to-West trip always is easier, scheduled as it is during normal waking hours.

In Miami, baggage appeared quickly and passed through customs unopened. I quickly checked into the airport hotel and collapsed after the long trip.

### **Sunday, 1 October**

I had a restful twelve hours of sleep and a pleasant morning of telephoning before an easy flight back to Belize on the wrong airline. My TAN reservation had been cancelled because it was not reconfirmed, but I was able to get a seat on TACA. It involved some frantic trips between room and counter, plus early packing, but luck was on my side.

Aqua waters and green savannah appeared below us the plane banked, slowed, and landed, and I was home.



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## El Bajío with Muriel & Don

January 1991

When I was in Atlanta last November, a telephone visit with Muriel and Don Stauffer, close friends who lived in Belize in the Sixties, resulted in our meeting in Mexico this January. Seven years ago, we had traveled in the triangular area in the mountains north-west of Mexico City known as the *Bajío*,\* though at elevations between 5,500 and 6,700 feet it is “low” only in relationship to the city’s 7,500-foot elevation.

The Bajío encompasses some of the most charming old Colonial cities of the country. On our earlier trip, we visited Morelia, Uruapán, and Guadalajara; this time we went to the eastern part of the triangle.



We met in Cancún, the man-made resort at the tip of the Yucatán Peninsula. Apparently it was charming in the beginning, though Bucher and I found it easy to a void. Now it is literally miles of concrete malls and looming identical hotels. Admittedly, the sea and beach are beautiful, water activities are varied, obviously it appeals to thousands. Probably it is one of those places one wants to see because one has heard so much about it.

We had fun because we all were delighted to be back together, but my lasting opinion is that Cancún is a magnet only if one has an insatiable desire for a neon-printed T-shirt or a beach towel with wording in dubious taste.



After two days in Cancún, where the excitement of reunion, twilights together on private balconies, and sufficient fine food made up for the

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\* *Bajío* is Spanish for *lowlands*.

enameled atmosphere, we flew to Mexico City, rented a car and started our tour...

Slowly.

We spent about an hour and a half in fast and irascible traffic, trying to make our way across the city on through-ways under repair, whose route signs had been removed. Rush hour was well underway before we finally arrived on the other side and found our highway.

Keeping to the spirit of the day, we proceeded not to be able to find our hotel in San Juan del Río, though we traveled endless nighttime miles through nothingness before turning back. We had reservations at La Mansión Galindo; Don was incensed that the guide books showed the wrong location.

We returned to La Estancia de San Juan, a handsome hacienda-turned-hotel I had noticed on our way through San Juan. A telephone call to La Mansión revealed that they had never heard of us and were fully booked. Fortunately, we were able to get charming rooms at the Estancia. It was one of our luckiest mistakes.

The Estancia itself was a beautiful old place. Our rooms opened off either end of a small landing at the top of a private stone staircase. The dining room served delicious Mexican-style dinner and breakfast. I would love to return.

Unfortunately, Don had scheduled San Juan del Río purely as a necessary overnight stop on our way to Querétaro. We did not realize it was a craft-and-gem center, or Muriel and I would have insisted on prowling the mercados.\*



A leisurely tour next day took us to Querétaro, where a combination of one-way streets, pedestrian malls, and manned barricades prevented our reaching our hotel for more than an hour. Mesón de Santa Rosa was worth

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\* *Mercados* is Spanish for *markets*.

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it, however, when we finally arrived; it remains in memory as one of my favorite hotels anywhere. It is a lovely old mansion with multiple patios, lush with flowering shrubbery.

We had the entire second floor of one wing. Both rooms were enormous. Mine had beamed ceilings and a fireplace, plus couch and comfortable chairs in addition to two double beds. The bathroom was larger than a Paris hotel room. Doors in the dark wood paneling on each side led to separate cubicles for toilet, tub, and closets. The marble vanity across the end of the room had two wash basins with gold fittings and was topped by an immense gold-framed mirror.

From my room, I walked down an open veranda to a locked grill door leading to the Stauffer's area. First was a private balcony with white wrought-iron table and chairs, overlooking one of the patios. A door led from that into a huge room similar to mine. It was January and bitter cold, but we forced ourselves to have Happy Hour on the private balcony so we could take advantage of it.

The Mesón formed one side of a large public plaza (called *jardín*, garden, in the Bajío). Broad steps at each end of the plaza led past shops and restaurants to a lower plaza with an old-fashioned wrought-iron bandstand. More broad steps led past the side of a cathedral, and more importantly, past the stands of craft vendors.

We loved Querétaro and spent a happy two days there exploring before proceeding to San Miguel de Allende.



Cobblestoned streets, high blank walls dripping bougainvillea, sudden lush jardines, hills, hills, hills...those are my memories of San Miguel. It is a thoroughly charming town.

Our hotel, Villa Jacaranda, was lovely. We were close to a delightful, woody park. There were beautiful shops.

San Miguel is something of an artists colony and home to generations of U.S. retirees. All-in-all, it was not the kind of place I went to Mexico to visit.



Guanajuato is charming and unusual. It is built in a deep ravine with the town sprawling up the surrounding mountains. Our hotel, on one edge of the city, had a panoramic view plus a closer view of nearby rooftops; I remember the drive into town as being at an angle close to the vertical.

The days were brilliantly sunny and warm, but at night we nearly froze to death.


We stayed at the Parador de San Javier, a big old place whose rooms were charmingly “old Mexican.” We were almost the only guests. Muriel and Don had spent a night there on the earlier trip after I had returned to Belize. They were disappointed this visit to find that our rooms did not have fireplaces. When we arrived, Muriel was hurrying to return to paint a picturesque group of little houses she had seen on the way into town, and I wanted to try to call Alex; it was only when we got together after sundown that we realized how cold it was.

I was delegated to call the desk to ask if the hotel had heat. I was told that it did not, but within moments a valet arrived at the door with small electric heaters for each of our rooms. Don quickly discovered that theirs cycled for exactly eight seconds, then relaxed for twenty. With no fan to assist the little heat it managed to put out, the heater was of minor value to us. I do not remember who solved the problem, but we finished our Happy Hour with Don holding Muriel’s hair dryer and aiming its warm blast on each of us in turn.

The dining room was a frigid barn, despite the corner fireplace, and we had the feeling they had sent out to a nearby restaurant for our food.

Next morning we asked for rooms with fire places. We probably could have had them the first night if any of us had chosen to complain.

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Guanajuato sits above a maze of tunnels that carry traffic through dim passageways hacked roughly from the rock. Side roads appear as ominous passages leading off at angles. The subterranean streets emerge suddenly to follow old watercourses under stone arches that hold the towering banks apart. Don navigated the maze as if he had been doing it for years.

Improbable parking garages are hacked out of the rock periodically. One climbs nearby stairs into the light and the quaint old city. Houses are cantilevered slightly over the streets. In mid-downtown, none of the brick streets seems to run straight for more than a few yards.

Everything is straight up. Stone stairways lead upward from street to jardín to street, or perhaps to a cul-de-sac where three or four private homes share a small landing and a señora sits tating in the sun on her tiny stone veranda.

We wandered through a couple of adjacent little plazas and took a stone stairway. I could have walked around Guanajuato for hours. We returned to our first plaza and found a tiny restaurant. We were led down a stairway into a room just wide enough for one small table. The other diners seemed to be students from the nearby university. I don't remember what we had but remember a delicious meal in delightful surroundings.



All in all, we spent a happy ten days enjoying entrancing towns that each charmed us in a new way. The jardines were cool under massive trees and active with the life of the city, with few other tourists around.

We visited far too many churches to keep them apart in memory: some simple with almost child-like statues; some elaborate with massive reredos, aglitter in gold and silver; others noteworthy for the goriest statues and paintings I ever have had to look at. I think, however, we all will remember emerging from one in a dusty village and being almost swept off our feet as a herd of goats pounded past us and up onto the

terrace outside the church, where they quietly began chomping on the straggly grass.

Muriel and I diligently prowled each town's market and shops for bargains, while Don recorded it all on his new camcorder. Muriel was never without a small sketch pad and captured quaint bits of buildings or street scenes or interesting faces. In Guanajuato, where she insisted on being left by the highway to paint a particularly charming group of rustic homes, she acquired a gallery of three small boys who stood silently, slightly away from her, watching every brush stroke for two hours.

The restaurants we found were varied in style and charm, but invariably provided superb food. Their clientele was local, rather than tourist, and the meals correspondingly good. Don and I learned early to ask for the special house salsas that the locals enjoyed, usually after a skeptical look from a reluctant waiter. The heat of our food counteracted the chill of January-at-altitude.

We laughed our way through the usual quota of contretemps, linguistic and otherwise.

I cannot imagine enjoying another part of Mexico as much, though I intend to try.



Muriel and Kate on Bajío trip, 1991

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## Cousins' Reunion in Austin

April 1992

Bucher's youngest sister (and my adored friend), Becky, told me some time ago that their cousin Katherine and husband Charles Beckwith (who is called *Beck*) had invited her to visit them in Austin, Texas, this April. In March, out of the blue, I received a flurry of wonderfully welcoming faxes from Katherine begging me to visit at the same time. My automatic reaction was that it was not possible; second thoughts and Alex's encouragement ended in a delighted acceptance.

Early on our first day together I remarked that we were in for trouble. We had two Becks and two Katherine's. I call Becky *Beck* half the time, and she calls me *Katharine* as a nickname. No matter what name was called, two heads turned. (To avoid confusion, I'll refer to Becky as *Rebekah* in the rest of this report.)



The Beckwiths are delightful and interesting people. Katherine is the daughter of Bucher's mother's sister Julie, whose husband had an executive position with GM\* in Detroit. Aunt Julie was an absolute love, and Katherine is very like her. She has her mother's wacky sense of humor. I have seen Katherine several times through the years, but met Beck only once. By accident I was in Atlanta a few years ago when their daughter was being married. Bucher's sisters Bibba and Rebekah and I drove up to Fort Bragg for the wedding and had a beautiful weekend.


Beck is a retired Army colonel. During Vietnam he was disastrously injured trying to get his men out of an ambush and no one thought he would live. It took a long time, but he recovered and went back to active service. He is the man who designed and bulled through the creation of Delta Force, against all the arguments of the stuffier Army brass.

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\* *GM* is the U.S. automobile company *General Motors*.


Beck also is the unfortunate person who ended up with the blame for the Carter fiasco trying to get the American hostages out of Iran. The operation included Army, Navy, and Marines, with no one Service in charge. Who ever heard of a military operation run by a committee! Beck resigned his commission over it, though he was no more responsible than the top Marine and Navy people. They may have resigned, too; I don't know. Before he retired, the army asked Beck to try to prevent such disasters in the future by planning what he had proposed earlier—pre-arranged support (air, land, sea) for Delta, under Delta command, with their own equipment and men who had trained with them and could be relied on in emergency.

After Beck retired, he and Katherine moved to Austin, and Beck set up a security business, primarily aiming at avoiding terrorist attacks or kidnappings. Bob Hope was one of his first clients. He now is semi-retired from that, though he still does some consulting work.



On Tuesday, April 21st, I left Belize around noon, changed planes in Houston, and reached Austin around eight o'clock in the evening. As I walked through a door into the baggage claim area, I almost bumped into two ladies of a gracious age, heads thrust forward, stoutly striding toward the carousels. Neither Rebekah nor Katherine wanted to be distracted by some strange person of an even more gracious age who seemed to be trying to get their attention.

Beck was waiting outside by the car. I would not have recognized him. He has gained fifty pounds since stopping smoking—and since his retirement. He was used to heavy exercise, and growing roses hardly qualifies. He was as warmly welcoming as the other two. I was thrilled to learn that Katherine's sister, Constance Madsen (called *Connie*) was coming from California two days later.





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The Beckwiths have a lovely home on a mesa at the edge of Austin. There is a pleasant patio in the back, with a large yard for Beck's roses and vegetable garden. Life is lived in the kitchen around the breakfast table or out in the patio. The sitting wasn't the best for me, but I kept my footstool handy and managed.

Their (much) youngest daughter Charlotte (who is called *Charlie*) is now working / going to college and recently moved into an apartment of her own. During the visit, Rebekah and I had Charlie's room and bath.

The other member of the household was Josie, a black-and-white fox terrier. She was a nervous, yappy animal, skittishly shy of people. Naturally, I went out of my way to win her over, to Beck's delight. I still can't understand his choice of a breed, in terms of size and temperament, but she is very much his dog. Charlie is the only one Josie will permit to hold her, and she looks as if she is being tortured the entire time. I succeeded in holding her once. Josie was relatively docile, but she obviously hated it, so that I did not impose my wishes on her again.



Katherine is an attractive woman with a quiet sense of humor. Her hands are badly deformed with the arthritis. She no longer can write easily or sew, but she hasn't slowed down her cooking. She had a menu for the visit taped to the side of the refrigerator. We were allowed to help with some of the food preparation, but were ordered out of the kitchen area, or sometimes out of the house entirely when Katherine was in production.

It took several days and a three-against-one attack for her to let us set the dinner table. She started out doing it after everyone went to bed at night—against Rebekah's stern commands. Every dinner brought different table linen and china, all perfectly lovely. It occurred to me that, as much as they moved around and as much as Beck was away from home, Katherine probably had limited chance to play at being a hostess, especially to family.



Beck is one of the most exceptional people I ever have known. As many contradictions as a multiple personality. I expected him to be the quintessential army man, even though I knew he was a maverick. Instead, he seems to incorporate the finest qualities of the dedicated military, the mental agility of an alert loner, and the diplomacy of a skillful politician. Tears were in his eyes talking about some of his men. He showed up as rock-hard tough in other anecdotes. He can sound like Archie Bunker one moment and demonstrate his deep concern for people the next. He is impatient about little things and endlessly patient about big ones.

Tough as he is, Beck is an absolute pussy cat with Katherine. One of his great loves is his rose garden. To see this giant, scarred across half his body from battle wounds, gently cutting his roses and bringing a bouquet into the house each morning, made Rebekah and me smile with affection daily. He himself arranged the glorious flowers in vases and put them around the house.

Beck has an arsenal of more than 150 guns of all sorts in his library. The long guns are arranged in a shallow closet the length of the room, with beautiful lighting to show them off when the doors are open. At the end of that display is another closed cupboard that contains a massive safe in which he keeps his hand guns. A few collector's-type old pistols are displayed on the walls. Katherine showed it all to Rebekah and me when Beck was out one day, but Beck took Rebekah back later so she could photograph it with her camcorder to show her gun-happy son, Alex.

Charlie was in and out of the house a lot. She's a perfectly beautiful blond, bright and poised. She is in a loving, running war with her father, who promises quite sincerely to kill every man she goes out with. Charlie handles Beck firmly, though their fierce question-and-answer periods had Rebekah and me paralyzed in awed terror.



Usually I was the first one up. By the time the coffee was made, Beck had emerged and was ready for his Earl Grey tea. We had some of our best conversations then, before the rest of the cousins appeared. One day I

happened to say the magic words that started him on a two-hour riveting talk about Delta Force and the attempt to rescue the Iran hostages.



One of the week's major moments of amusement involved me inadvertently and Katherine's misunderstanding of something I said. Katherine had a charming habit of greeting a remark that surprised her by hunching her shoulders, cocking her head forward, and slapping her left hand against her bosom as she exclaimed, "*My word!*" (Try it to see how charmingly archaic the pose is.)

The rest of us were sitting around the breakfast room table while Katherine was the other side of the counter in the kitchen. We had been talking about baking bread and my son-in-law Tom's bread machine. Then I mentioned Ken, the chef from the *Caribbean Prince*, who gives me loaves of his home-made-style bread when they are in port. In trying to edit my comments to the fewest words possible (which I actually am trying to teach myself to do), the words did not come out exactly as I wanted. I said something along the lines of, "I have a friend who is a master baker and..."

In the kitchen, Katherine went into her my-word act. Later she took Rebekah aside to tell her how horrified she was when I casually remarked that I had a friend who is a masturbator. Of course. Rebekah broke up and couldn't wait to tell everyone else, to my mortification.



Beck is a hearty, outgoing person, more relaxed than I had expected (or remembered), who appeared to enjoy the female babble around him. He escaped to his garden or office as necessary. Our sightseeing forays must have been amusing to watch...massive Beck charging forward, head lowered, looking neither right nor left, tailed by four giggling women, any of whom was subject to distraction at any moment. I do not remember his ever becoming impatient.

We kept a busy schedule—all laid out by Beck in advance.

## Tuesday, 21 April

Rebekah and I arrive Austin, separately.

## Wednesday, 22 April

Fredricktown:

- Wildflowers along roadside. Great patches of yellow or pink or coral or the blue of the Texas Bluebonnet. Less often, mixed, in wide bands emblazoning the verge for a hundred yards or more.
- Past LBJ ranch. I think Lady Bird was responsible for sowing seeds of wild flowers profusely along highways.
- Herd of buffalo. Rebekah gets out of car to photograph them with her new camcorder.
- Fredricktown is in middle of area settled by Germans. Slightly quaint, but very for-the-tourist. Delightful shops.
- Admiral Nimitz museum in rebuilt former hotel owned by his family. The building is characterized by a great projection from the top story that looks like the wheelhouse of a ship. Museum is small but excellent.

## Thursday, 23 April

Puttered around house until time to meet Connie. New reunion.

I am very fond of Connie. She is bright, well educated, well read, far more “literate” about art and music than I, and can be delightfully amusing. She is a volunteer at the Huntington Library and is voluble in her praise for the institution. Her field is American Literature, and (according to my notes, not my memory) they have more than 900 original volumes.

Connie has many wonderful abilities and qualities, including a charming sense of the ridiculous. She gives regular lectures to school groups and others. She related that, on one occasion, she talked about Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter*. When she finished, she asked, “Does anyone know what the letter A stood for?”

“Available,” came the prompt reply.

In another group, Connie asked if anyone knew who Gutenberg was. One of the young people answered, “The president who delivered the address.”

## Friday, 24 April

San Antonio:

- More wildflowers.
- San Antonio mobbed. Parking difficult. Bleachers set up.
- Reached our objective, The Alamo, just as gates closed. Guard explained to Beck that it was being closed for the big parade and would not be opened again until mid-afternoon. We never saw more than the outside (which was not a heart-breaking disappointment).
- We walked down to nearby Riverwalk, the charmingly designed canal among buildings. I had read about it and was pleased to see it. Beautiful planting along sidewalks, curving bridges, steps, flower carts, sightseeing barges.
- Went to nearby hotel for leisurely lunch. Returned to site of parade. Chose position near beginning, just behind Alamo. Rebekah and Connie, eaten up by curiosity, approached strangers till they found someone willing to explain parade. Name: *Battle of the Roses*, celebrated Texas' gaining independence from Mexico. Week-long festivities.
- Watched about forty-five minutes of parade—Military groups, spectacular horse troops, civic authorities, police, firemen, elegant white-haired ladies in Eighteen-Eighties costumes in horse-drawn carriages.
- Returned to get car and escape before heavy traffic.

## Saturday, 25 April

Beck determined to show me Mr. Sam's, an enormous discount store. They needed a few things, but the expedition was more sightseeing than shopping.

I replaced the camera that took me through Africa. At Christmas I had begun having trouble with the flash. It got worse. I took it to Hugo at Tito's. He checked it, shook his head, said it was electrical. We had learned with a little camera of Alex's that repairs involved sending it off and paying about 3/4 of the camera's worth in fees. No way.

Got an excellent buy on a Minolta with telescopic lens. It is slightly larger than the other and will not be as comfortable to carry on trips, but I was determined to have the telescopic lens. The batteries were included, which was a saving of about \$15 off the posted price of the camera. Beck agreed that it was a good value. At the check-out stand they knocked an unexpected \$40 off in a one-day special. I did *good*.

## Sunday, 26 April

- Tour of Austin. It is a charming city, as Alex had told me. Looking from the plane before landing, all I could see was acres of green, each house apparently surrounded by trees and planting. It is in flattish country, ringed by mesas. Beautiful old homes, classic Southern, Victorian, and early nouveau riche. Enormous, expensive homes of all styles in newer developments on mesas. Houses tend to be set surprisingly close together, but to have gracious-size enclosed patios and back yards.
- University of Texas (drive through area): Modern and impressive.
- Capitol building tour: Grandiose. Even the specially-cast huge brass hinges with their maps of Texas were oversize. Everything handsome.
- Lunch at Mexican restaurant. For once I was able to grab check.
- LBJ Library. Excellent and most interesting.

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### **And Then Came Monday, 27 April...**

Rebekah got up before me. I assumed she would put the coffee on, so took advantage of the privacy to bathe and dress quickly. To my surprise, all three girls were in the kitchen, but Beck was not. I was busy patting the ecstatic Josie and ignored Rebecka's orders to sit down. Went over to the coffee pot and saw, to my amazement, that not only did it have only a few ounces of coffee, but it was not even turned on. Connie said, "We drank it all during the night," which made no sense at all. Rebekah continued to order me to sit down. I finally began registering as she came over and hissed fiercely in my face, "Beck's in jail."

I had been awakened during the night by Josie's frantic barking. I remember thinking, "We have an intruder," and then deciding that 1) my getting up and going out to meet him could be counter-productive, and 2) it was someone else's responsibility. About that time the telephone rang and was answered, so I knew someone was awake. Having discharged all the obligations considered mine, I immediately fell asleep.

What had happened was that, a little earlier, a neighbor had telephoned Beck to say that an intruder was trying to break into her house and to ask him to help. The neighbor was a young divorcée with two little boys who had moved in about three months ago. Beck knew that she had had an intruder around the house a few weeks earlier. Beck asked if she had called the police. She replied that she had called a friend and asked her to call the police. Beck dialed 911 to report the intruder, slipped into trousers (no shirt or shoes, though the temperature was in the 40's), grabbed his Forty-Five, took Josie, and went next door.

Beck walked stealthily along one side of the neighbor's house and at the corner, bumped into five policemen walking carefully toward him along the adjacent side. The officers took one look at the half-clad, heavily scarred man with a Forty-Five not only loaded, but cocked, and arrested him. Beck later said that all he wanted to do was unload his gun before someone got hurt. He is slightly deaf and said that he did not hear the police tell him repeatedly to give them the gun. Beck said that he did not

fight them, but by the time they had him handcuffed, they were quoting charges of carrying an unlicensed firearm (untrue), resisting arrest (allegedly untrue), and public drunkenness (completely untrue; Beck had had dinner with us, then gone to bed at about nine o'clock, leaving us to clean up and chatter).

By this time, the neighbor had come out of her house and was frantically telling the police that they had made a mistake, that it was her neighbor, Colonel Beckwith, and that she had asked him to come over to help her. Made no difference. The police slapped handcuffs on Beck and shoved him into the patrol car. That was when Josie went crazy barking. Meanwhile, in the dark behind the police, Beck watched the intruder slip down from a tree house, where he had been hiding, and escape under cover of the confusion.

Katherine and Connie were outdoors in their robes protesting.

Katherine tried to get a shirt and shoes for Beck but the police would not let her. Katherine later said that the police were businesslike, but not rude, except for a policewoman.

Connie began (as the British say so effectively) “creating.” The policewoman told Connie that if she said one more word or took one more step, she would be in the squad car with Beck. Connie said she considered it, but Katherine pulled her back into the house.

Katherine called a lawyer, and they settled down to drink coffee, worry, and tame their adrenalin.



The lawyer arrived at the house early the next morning, soon after I learned the story. Katherine gave him a bag with clothes for Beck and his vital medicines. He has very high blood pressure. This was what worried Katherine and Connie so, given Beck's low tolerance for aggravation. They were seriously concerned about a stroke or heart attack, not to mention pneumonia. I could understand that and took it seriously, but



really expected Beck to sail through the experience with fortitude and humor.

Another of Katherine's worries proved unnecessary. Neither the morning papers nor the early TV news had picked up Beck's arrest.

It was an endless morning. Katherine was on the telephone to friends, other lawyers, and over and over, the regretful neighbor. Connie thought it would be much better simply to walk next door and massacre the poor girl for putting Beck into such an awful situation, but we all calmed her down.

Katherine went back to her room and rested periodically. In the breakfast room Rebekah, Connie, and I communicated in whispers and diligently avoided using the telephone to leave the line open for the lawyers. Two of them, one a close friend whom Katherine had called first, and the second the one working for Beck, each called every hour to reassure Katherine. When Katherine had called the friend / lawyer in the middle of the night, he said he did not dare get into the case because the Austin police hated him. Beck later explained that he is a lobbyist and would have been the worst person in the world to have involved. Both Beck and Katherine were delighted with the young lawyer he recommended.

To keep ourselves occupied during the dragging hours. Rebekah got into a whirl of washing the mountain of laundry Charlie had delivered to her mother the night before. We had a production line of washing, hanging things on the outdoor line, bringing in dry things, and either folding them or giving them to Connie to iron. Connie had set up the ironing board a few inches from the breakfast-room table and was pressing clothes with fury. The three of us had decided that when we heard Beck return we would disappear into the woodwork—or bedroom or patio—soundlessly and let Katherine and Beck have privacy for their reunion.

As it happened, the morning disappeared uneventfully. About one o'clock we all decided to make ourselves sandwiches for lunch. We just had sat down to eat when Katherine exclaimed, "Here's Beck." With sandwiches in our hands and the first bites in our mouths, Connie, Rebekah, and I exchanged frantic glances then realized that there was no way we could

vanish gracefully. No matter. The front door was flung open and a booming voice announced:

“Jailbird’s home.”

Beck strode into the kitchen beaming. At the flutter of anxious comments from his harem, he remarked. “I’ve been in a lot worse situations than this one.”



At one point during the night, Beck had been seated on a long bench, still half-naked, with six well lubricated vagrants. They all were cordial, as if welcoming him into their home, obviously delighted at having been picked up from the cold streets and offered a bunk indoors for the night. Later Beck was put into a two-man cell and was given a blanket. He grumbled that his cell mate’s snoring kept him awake, but Katherine and Connie both snapped back that it served him right. Beck’s snoring was legendary.

In the morning after his lawyer arrived, Beck was taken before a magistrate, who set a trial date for early June, and then was released on his own recognizance.

Soon after Beck returned, Connie brought in the mail. With it was a long, charming note of apology from the neighbor. She telephoned almost immediately, asking Beck if he would talk to her. He went outdoors, and they spoke in the yard for about fifteen minutes. During that time Beck managed to give her a lot of advice about securing her home so that she would have to worry less about intruders. He also made it clear that next time she was to call the police, not him.

He returned to announce that the young woman had assured him that she had talked to several other neighbors, and they all had told her that if anything happened at their homes they intended to call Beck for help. He leaned back in his chair, grinned expansively, and announced that he had resigned from the knight-in-shining-armor business.

Beck's lawyer is a former assistant district attorney. He said that he intended to see his former boss, let him know what a tiger he had by the tail, and get him to drop the charges. All the neighbors opined that Beck must insist on a trial because they wanted to be character witnesses. Only a few months earlier there had been a fire in the neighborhood, and Beck had rushed into the house to alert the family and help get them out. The neighborhood was not about to let the charges against his name stand. Beck himself mentioned suing the Austin police, but admitted that he needed some time to decide what, if anything, he should do.

The rest of the day was a combination of euphoria that Beck was home safely, the routine of packing, and a desire to get through the afternoon and evening as painlessly as possible.

We unset Katherine's dinner table, changed her menu, and had a simple meal in the breakfast room. Beck disappeared for a nap, missed dinner, but surfaced for a late meal after the rest of us had cleaned up and gone out into the patio. He came out and sat with us for about an hour, but it was obvious that he was dragging, and we encouraged him to go back and get a decent night's sleep.

## **Tuesday, 28 April**

Early in the morning we said our goodbyes. Beck drove Rebekah and me out to the airport around seven o'clock to catch our flights. Connie had a midday plane, and the Cousins' Reunion was over. Plans already are in hand for a repeat performance, probably without the final day's fireworks display.



Katy Jenkins, Hank de Geus, and Kate in Colorado Springs, 1992



Peggy, Mary, and Ellis Robinson, Kate, and Carli in Durango, 1992

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## Family Visits in Colorado

September 1992

I am now gearing up for a visit to my sister, Mary. When her husband, Ellis, retired from his law firm last year, they startled their friends-and-relations by moving from Toledo, Ohio, after forty years and settling in Durango, Colorado. They built a charming home in a wooded development and are ecstatic about their new life.

I will stop first in Colorado Springs to see my “niece” Katy Jenkins (actually first cousin, once removed—my namesake and the daughter of my adored cousin Helen Anne, who died of cancer a few years ago). Katy’s father is coming out from Michigan at the same time so that we can have a sort-of family reunion. I will spend two or three days with Katy, then go on to Durango for about eight days. Carli and Tom are coming in the middle of my visit, and so is Mary’s oldest daughter, Peggy, the cousin closest to Carli in age. Another house party and family reunion. I really am looking forward to it.

From there, I will fly to Phoenix with Carli and Tom, and we’ll drive to Mesa where Tom’s mother lives. She is older than I and fighting a recurrence of cancer. I have not met her, though I have been writing fairly regularly since Carli and Tom married. This could be my last good chance, and I want to make the effort. I will stay there only overnight, then I fly to Atlanta on doctor’s orders.

### Colorado Springs

The first stop on my September trip was Colorado Springs to visit Katy and her husband Larry. Katy’s father, Hank de Geus, was there at the same time. In the short stay, we ran into such a succession of out-of-the-ordinary sights that by the end of the sequence Katy, Larry, and I all were convulsed.

I happened to arrive at the time when there was a gathering of balloonists from all over the country, a hundred or more of them. One night Katy and Larry took us to the “Glow In” at the park where all the balloons were tethered. It was eerie. There was a countdown, with the thousands of visitors chiming in, and at “...three, two, one, go!” all the burners were lighted with a great roar, illuminating the towering, multicolored balloons in an awe-inspiring spectacle.

While most of the balloons were the usual striped design, there were many in special shapes—Snoopy, a tennis shoe, a roll of film, a moving van, a Champagne bottle, a polar bear, and an entrancing green dinosaur.



On the last day of our visit, we drove south of Colorado Springs to visit a monastery. I don’t know what Katy expected, or why she was so anxious to go there, but it was a lovely drive. As we approached the huge and handsome building, we saw, quite improbably, several large motorcycles, attended by ominous-appearing, black-leather-clad people. As we came closer and turned around the side of the building, we realized that:

1. There must have been at least fifty motorcycles.
2. Their riders may have been wearing black leather, but they all were Mom-and-Pop types whom you would have expected to meet at church on Sunday morning.

It was a wildly inappropriate gathering for a monastery, we thought.

We toured the public area on the ground floor of the Monastery. It was noteworthy only for an endless series of oil portraits of former abbots. Most of the faces from long ago showed the most kindly of smiles, rather than the sternness I might have expected. One portrait almost leaped off the wall at us. It was a young abbot in a World War II army officer’s uniform, cap at a jaunty angle. He looked exactly like Father Mulcahy in the TV series *M\*A\*S\*H*. All of us were taken aback at the uncanny similitude. I studied the portrait a second time as we walked back through the corridor and found the resemblance even more striking.

As we left, the motorcycles were drawn up in parade fashion, and we were waved off to another exit. Behind us, we could hear them roaring to life.



At the end of my visit, Hank took an early flight home to Michigan, and Katy and Larry collected me to drive me to Durango. As I waited for them in my hotel room, I watched the balloons take off from the nearby park, floating serenely across the face of the distant Pike's Peak. Once on the highway, it was an unexpected delight to find that our route took us past the area where they were landing.

The sky was full of balloons. Some skimmed so low over the car that we expected them to alight on the roof. Nearby fields were studded with balloons, landing or landed. It was a fascinating, colorful display.

I had barely stopped exclaiming about the delightful and unusual scenes of balloons and motorcycles, when a magnificently restored car, at least half a century old, approached us on the opposite side of the highway, gleaming with wine-colored enamel and chrome. We still were marveling about it when a second old car approached, then another, and another. It was a caravan of antique cars—all makes, all ages, all colors—apparently headed for some sort of rally. They were beautiful, with enamel so polished that it looked inches deep. Some were crazy colors of bright yellow or aqua or lime green. Larry estimated that there must have been forty to fifty of the lovingly restored cars.

There couldn't be anything else special to see—but there was: a group of three covered wagons accompanied by a group of a dozen riders. Signs indicated that it was part of a special camping project.



The drive to Durango was a perfectly glorious trip through the Rockies and over the Continental Divide. It was my first visit to that part of the country, and I was awestruck.

## Durango

My visit with Mary and Ellis in Durango was the loveliest I ever have had with them. It was only later that I realized how relaxed they both were, not at all wound-up as they had been my last few visits to Toledo. This move apparently is what they both needed.

Their new house is gracious and livable. Huge windows look out through Ponderosa Pine forests to nearby mountains, where the green is highlighted by great gashes of jagged crimson rock. Deer wander into the yard to eat Mary's carefully tended flowers, and elk pass by, spring and fall, on their migration route.



Mary and I went to town on the Monday and decided to stay for lunch. I found a beautiful, simple pendent-and-earring set of polished bronze-over-silver, set with malachite, as a birthday present for Alex's "friend," María. Indian styling, but restrained. That evening the three of us went out for dinner, then attended the last performance of an old-fashioned melodrama and vaudeville by a talented young repertory company. Utterly delightful.

On Tuesday, Mary and Ellis had a cocktail party for about twenty-five of their neighbors. I was most impressed by the variety of the people living in their "ranch," and by their warmth and lack of affectation.

Carli and Tom arrived mid-afternoon on Wednesday and Peggy flew in that evening. The house expanded easily to hold us all. It was a glorious mini-reunion.

I was impressed by Peggy, whom I hadn't seen in decades. She is at ease with herself, interested in others, bright and knowledgeable. A charming, thoughtful, gracious young woman. Of course, she also is a vegetarian, which to me is like saying a Martian. Mary managed a mixed menu that suited everyone. I swear, Mary does not know how to put a meal on the table that doesn't look like an illustration from *House Beautiful* and taste like Julia Child's.





Peggy arrived with some last-minute urgent work to do on her first morning, so Mary sent Carli, Tom, and me off with a picnic lunch to see Mesa Verde. They all had done it more than once and did not want to go again. I was thrilled that I had seen the ruins in / near Colorado Springs with Katy and Larry so that I had a background for the tour.

Mesa Verde is a fascinating area of deserted cliff dwellings. The mesa is about 7,000 feet high, which means labored breathing for a sea-level type like me. The caves are accessible by arduous climbing over difficult paths. For the most part, we walked down to the overlooks and used Carli's binoculars to bring them close.

We walked down to one ruin—probably because I was determined to do it, and this looked like an easy route. It began with two steep downward flights of comfortable iron stairs.

I did not know that at the bottom of those, I would be forced to wedge myself into a slit between two towering rock walls and continue down steep, narrow stone steps. All the way down I kept thinking: "What goes down must come up."

When we finally reached the enormous cave, with its extensive cubist buildings, we could not explore inside, but could climb a ladder and stand on the walls overlooking the kivas. With that, and by peering through windows at inner walls covered with pictographs, we made a fair examination of the ruins.

And then it was time to return to the car, which as far as I was concerned, was on another continent. We started with an innocent, winding walk. Then came another slit in the rock with steep stone steps going upupupupup. My progress was accompanied by Carli's worried refrain begging me to stop and catch my breath. Catch it! I was racing to keep up with it. My only thought was to go up as fast as I could and get the climb over.

At the end of the crevice came ladders—lovely, sturdy ladders, almost vertical, going up, one after the other, for the equivalent of three stories (that’s three stories with 14-foot ceilings, I suspect). Up I went, with Carli cautioning me to stop and rest. Once I did because I had virtually stopped breathing. At the top, which believe it or not, actually arrived eventually, I had that wonderful, (to me) unfamiliar feeling of having exceeded one’s capacity to exercise and having survived.

Ellis had told us to be sure to stop at the museum. We all were delighted that we did. It had charming dioramas of various stages of development and living situations of the early Indians.

The museum had displays of artifacts—early stone tools, arrowheads, baskets, the medicine man’s herbs and charms. Seeing them in that setting was like walking back into the Jean Auil books I had read (*Clan of the Cave Bear, The Valley of Horses, The Mammoth Hunters, The Plains of Passage*). Each tool was as familiar as a whisk from your kitchen or a drill from your toolbox. I have seen artifacts like these dozens of times in the past, of course, but never in connection with the actual dwellings of the people and never after having read detailed (though fictionalized) accounts of their lives. It was an out-of-time experience.



The next day, the plan was for Ellis and me to drive The Young People to Silverton to catch the train back to Durango. There was a boggle in Silverton with a surly station master refusing to sell tickets despite assurances to Mary earlier that he would.

I was outside the station, happily crunching back and forth in the cinders surrounding the old-fashioned building and remembering the feel and sound from my childhood, while Ellis was having his blood pressure elevated to dangerous heights by the man he was sure was waiting for a kick-back.

It resulted in our driving on to Ouray for lunch over a spectacularly gorgeous route, and everyone's deciding that they didn't want to take the train anyway. Ellis drove us back another way, stopping to see Telluride.

We went directly to an informal restaurant when we reached Durango, and Mary met us there at about the time Ellis, Tom, and I were mid-way through our second beer. That was when Tom asked if I realized that each glass held a full pint and mentioned that I would have polished off a quart of beer if I finished. I assured him that I had no idea of the amount but that I was dehydrated from altitude and thought that it should be considered medicinal—at which point I continued to finish it off with the greatest of pleasure and without ill effect.



Throughout the visit, Ellis was determined that I would see deer. Day after day and night after night we went where they ought to be, lucklessly. Finally, returning near dusk from our visit to Mesa Verde, Carli spotted three deer in a meadow. I was looking elsewhere. As we entered Falls Creek Ranch, where Mary and Ellis live, Carli exclaimed, “Deer!” I looked up in time to see the bottom, tail, and hind legs of a disappearing doe. Half a deer is better than none, and I was quite satisfied. My brother-in-law was not.

Mary's post-visit letter told me, with some dismay, that when she returned from the airport after delivering Carli, Tom, and me, she found a huge buck happily lunching on the yellow flowers beside her front door.

## Mesa

The flight to Phoenix and drive to Mesa were uneventful. I regret to say that the temperature was 104 when we landed, and I greeted the heat like a long-lost friend. I was completely comfortable in both Colorado Springs and Durango, and loved the unlikely combination of 80's days and 40's nights. I admit that while I embraced Arizona's heat, nothing else about the place attracted me, especially after the glories of Colorado.

Tom's mother, Vera Rindfleisch, has a pleasant house in a retirement community (not a retirement home, as I had expected). I shuddered to hear her say that there now are 5,000 people in Leisure World. She is a dear—outspoken, sassy, gallant. She is fighting breast cancer, glaucoma, diabetes, and skin cancer, but waves it aside impatiently and gets on with her very limited life. I was touched by how grateful both she and Tom were at my making the effort to meet her.

## Atlanta

Atlanta was a worthwhile medical detour. Nothing serious, but a particular long-term condition was not responding properly. My glamorous and gifted doctor sorted things out quickly. I first met her after leaving Austin last spring. I can't tell you what a shock it was to have my new doctor prove to be a stunning blond with a china-doll complexion wearing a candy pink suit and spike heels. The soft, Southern voice and graciousness were in contrast to her focused intellect when she went to work on me.

Although I was not particularly pleased to spend the time and the money for the extra trip to Atlanta in September, it gave me a chance to visit family. I was in Atlanta for three nights with Bucher's oldest sister, Bibba, and in Jefferson with his adored youngest sister, Becky, for two.

The trip home was remarkably easy. I had a bulkhead seat between Atlanta and Houston and could brace my foot comfortably against it to elevate my leg. By great good luck I was the only person in a three-seat row between Houston and Belize, so I sat sideways with both legs on the seat.

Alex and María met me at the airport. No problem with customs. The officer insisted that I open everything, which was something of a nuisance because of the straps. He poked around a little, but nodded and sent me on my way.

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## Mexico with Muriel & Don

### New Year 1993

Planning for the trip began before Muriel and Don Stauffer and I finished our trip to El Bajío two years earlier. The Stauffers would spend Christmas with me in Belize, then the three of us would go to Mexico for a two-week tour. For once, plans developed steadily to happy implementation.

Don promised to arrange to rent a car if I would make hotel reservations. Since nine reservations were involved and only one car, I wasn't sure the division of labor was fair. As it turned out, I managed quite nicely with phone and fax, while Don had a devastating time completing his solitary project.

He did not realize that rental cars can't cross the border. That finished his plan to visit both Belize and Mexico with the same car. He arranged with Hertz to rent a car in Chetumal. A few weeks later they closed their agency there. Don tried frantically to rent in either Mérida or Cancún. Eventually, he was able to book a small, non-air-conditioned vehicle in Cancún. Plane reservations were changed to suit pick-up location.

When the Stauffers arrived at the Hertz office in Cancún, they were told that there was no car available. Indefatigable Muriel, with details that I could only imagine, staged a one-woman sit-down until they provided the promised vehicle. The harassed Hertz agent supplied a slightly larger, air conditioned vehicle, still caked with mud from its last rental.

Muriel and Don drove from Cancún to Chetumal, spent the night, and left the car at the hotel in secure storage, awaiting the arrival of a taxi from Belize, which I had arranged for them. I did not tell them I intended to ride up to meet them.



Mr. Arnold of U-Call Taxi Service picked me up at 6:30 AM on December 23rd. We had a pleasant drive to the border. There I was horrified to find myself in line behind a full complement of passengers from a large bus. To my surprise, twenty-five minutes later we had cleared immigration in both Belize and Mexico and were on our way into Chetumal.

I told Mr. Arnold that my friends were at the Del Prado. He did not know the hotel. From the location, however, he determined that it now was called Los Cocos. When we arrived, I recognized it as the hotel I had stayed in a few years earlier under the name El Presidente.

Muriel and Don were sitting near the entrance, waiting for us. They were gratifyingly surprised to see me arrive with the taxi. We had a pleasant drive back to Belize City, arriving around 1:00 PM. To avoid walking into a flurry of activity fixing lunch, I planned Belikin beer...warmly welcomed...and open-face grilled English-muffin sandwiches. Afterwards, we drove around the city so Muriel and Don could see how Belize had changed since they left it in the early Sixties.

The Stauffers and I enjoyed Christmas festivities, as I have written separately.\*

### **Sunday, 27 December, 1992**

We spent the morning packing for our trip. Mr. Arnold arrived at 1:30 to drive us back to Chetumal. No one was traveling during the Christmas season, so we were through both Belize and Mexican border stations in moments.

We checked into Los Cocos. I went off to find Gemma Patterson, Emilie Bowen's English granddaughter, who had checked in ahead of us. We had offered to drive Gemma as far as Palenque on her way back to Oaxaca, where she was spending a year studying Spanish. She is a lovely young woman and was a delight to have with us. We had a brief happy hour in the Stauffer's room to celebrate the beginning of our Mexican expedition,

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\* "Tis the Season" on page 85 in Book 2: *Life & Times, 1980 – 2014*

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then walked down to a superb restaurant they had found their first night in Chetumal. Camarones al Mojo de Ajo\* all 'round.

### **Monday, 28 December**

We started on our long drive to Palenque at about 9:00 AM. The road was decent, except for:

1. Endless *topes* (“sleeping policemen,” speed bumps) so high that our little car scraped bottom dangerously crossing them.
2. A series of about eight bridges under repair. They were short spans, temporarily surfaced by logs balanced side-by-side, parallel to the direction of the road. Without exception, two or three or more logs were missing in the middle. Don had to position the car on the spans as if he were going onto an oil ramp. One time the gap was so large that he fully expected to plunge into the ravine below. At every bridge, workmen sprawling at rest alongside laughed as we made the crossing.

We reached Palenque before dark, found Gemma’s bus station after some inquiries, let her buy her ticket, then took her back to our hotel to have dinner with us. Her bus would not leave until 10:30 PM.

The Hotel Misión Palenque was charming, surrounded by lush planting. Our rooms were pleasant, though hanging space was almost non-existent. We had a nice dinner in the delightful patio dining area of the hotel, then took Gemma to catch her bus. We hovered like worried parents until she was safely aboard. Gemma was doing what she did regularly by herself, but all we could see was a beautiful young Englishwoman alone in a foreign country at night.

### **Tuesday, 29 December**

We had a poor breakfast at the hotel buffet. On Gemma’s recommendation, we took the hotel’s courtesy bus to the ruins.

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\* *Camarones al Mojo de Ajo* is Spanish for *Shrimp in Garlic Sauce*.

Palenque: A peaceful, green oasis of a time-warp. Palenque has escaped the heavy restoration and great acres of concrete of major Yucatecan ruins. It was there, as I was snapping Muriel and Don climbing down the main temple, that I realized there was no film in my camera. This took care of my Christmas pictures as well as my immortalization of our visit to the ruins.

Just as we finished our extensive exploration of the many buildings in the complex, we saw our bus from the hotel disappearing. We decided philosophically to have a cerveza as we waited. The nearby restaurants did not serve anything stronger than Classic Coke. We lamented our mistaken decision not to bring our own car; there was ample parking space, as early as we arrived at the ruins.



I managed to scare everyone on our return by stumbling up an uneven hotel curbing. I fell flat, but since both my glasses and my stockings survived, considered my shin and elbow minor sacrifices.

We went into the town of Palenque for lunch, did a little minor shopping, returned to the hotel for a rest, then gathered as usual in the Stauffer's room before dinner. We went out to another hotel, Nonotún, for dinner. We sat in its pleasant restaurant, overlooking a river, and dined much better than we would have back at the Misión Palenque.

### **Wednesday, 30 December**

We left Palenque for San Cristóbal de las Casas mid-morning. That was when we all realized that what we had suspected while planning our trip was true: the places we wanted to visit were too far apart. We spent close to half of our time on ill-paved, potholed roads, much of it winding up and down mountains, around hairpin curves with little but faith to protect us.

We paused en route at Agua Azul, a magnificent series of water falls.



At lunchtime we reached Ocosingo, a pleasant small town, and found an attractive restaurant facing the *zócalo*.<sup>\*</sup> The veranda was festooned with Christmas decorations. The table was not clean, but the food was good. Don and I ordered Enchiladas Suizas—chicken wrapped in flour tortillas, topped with a generous amount of melted goat's cheese. We used the green salsa picante copiously, as usual. Muriel had simple quesadillas.

Don remarked that their friends predicted deathly illness for all of us in Mexico. He told them haughtily that none of us ever had problems.



Before dark we reached San Cristóbal de las Casas and the Hotel Flamboyant Español, recently remodeled and renamed. No one at the desk spoke more than rudimentary English. We had reserved rooms with fireplaces but were told none were available. I was very tired and was not feeling well. I protested in rapidly disintegrating Spanish. Ultimately, I was given a room with a fireplace, but Muriel and Don were taken across the patio, through an arch, around a corner, and down a corridor to a room heated by an electric radiator. Muriel was unhappy that their window looked out onto the concrete wall of an air vent. I was unhappy at not having a tub (obviously one had been removed during remodeling). Returning to the reception desk, I asked for extra blankets and was told that they would be sent. They assured me that someone would come to build a fire whenever I asked.

Even in my jaded condition, I could admire the hotel. The patio was lushly planted. The rooms were Colonial style with dark beams, heavy paneled doors, and shutters at the windows. Old flowered ceramic wash basins brightened modern, tiled bathrooms.

I went down to Muriel and Don's room briefly. Don fussed with their TV for a while, then succeeded in showing the videos taken to date. I realized that I felt too sick to think about supper, and excused myself. Don admitted feeling a little rocky from lunch, too.

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\* The *zócalo* in a Mexican town is the main town square.

Back in my room, I telephoned the reception desk, asking again for extra blankets and for a fire in my precious fireplace. Effusive promises of instant compliance. I got ready for bed. When nothing warming arrived, I did what I could to secure myself against the increasing cold. I took the blanket off, doubled it, and replaced it on the bed. I donned panty hose under my warmest flannel gown, and put my cozy emerald robe on top. In desperation, I added my Isotoner fleece boots. They happened to be clean for the trip, but at that point, I didn't care about the hotel's sheets if they didn't care about my extra blanket. I crawled into bed and let a long night's sleep act as an antidote to my lunchtime semi-poisoning.

### **Thursday, 31 December**

I was wakened at 8:00 AM by Don's worried call asking if I were still alive. I assured him that I was reasonably rejuvenated. Dressed hastily, then joined Muriel and Don for toast and coffee. When I finished, I went to the front desk, hoping that there would be a different clerk. There was. Last night's hard-eyed young woman had been replaced by an affable gentleman who was horrified to hear that I had been given neither blankets nor a fire. I asked for a room with a heater. In fifteen minutes, without my repacking, they had moved me onto the same corridor as the Stauffers. I had my own little electric radiator on wheels and two beds, so that I could steal my own extra blankets as necessary.



We had an easy day, wandering around town, visiting churches when we saw them, doing a bit of unsuccessful shopping. Muriel hoped to find a ring, but we were in the wrong part of Mexico.

We found an open-air market next to the Temple of Santo Domingo. Most of the vendors and most of the handcrafts were Guatemalan. In recent years, thousands of Guatemalans fleeing terror from both guerrillas and army, escaped across the border into Chiapas. I found some enchanting, funny little clay animals and bought them with no idea of what I would do

with them. A gorgeous, soft rebozo\* in Carli's special shade of aqua caught my eye for her birthday.

We were more successful this time in our choice of a luncheon restaurant. Its unusual patio was a beautifully planted sunken rock garden with a winding pool filled with large goldfish. At the far side, a trio playing a native flute or pipes of pan, drum, and guitar, offered plaintive music.

After lunch, Don left us to go look for a guayabera. Muriel and I returned to the market. We continued past the crafts, found the local mercado, and wandered through it.


We returned to the Temple looking for a shop we had read about. We finally discovered Sna Jolobil at one side of the church buildings. The finest examples of embroidered clothes and linens from each pueblo\*\* were displayed. Each town had its own colors and style. The embroidery was exquisite. I regretted that there was nothing I needed, and was relieved to be spared expensive purchases.

As we left, a shoe-shine boy ten or twelve years old approached Muriel. She agreed to his price of 1,000 pesos to shine her shoes. However, when she found that he expected her to perch on one leg for the performance, and when his first swipes were directed more at her stockings than her shoes, she changed her mind. She offered him 400 pesos as a tip. He demanded the 1,000 price for the full shine. Muriel argued. The boy got angry. Muriel became nervous. I took over. My Spanish startled me as much as it did the boy with its fluency as I told him to leave us alone. I can't remember whether Muriel finally gave him the 400, but I know she did not give him the 1,000. We had been warned that Chiapas Indians are not especially fond of tourists and that there occasionally are unpleasant situations. I think we were on the edge of one. Muriel asked me later how I had been able to stand up to the boy. I admitted being worried, but said that I still was bigger than he, and probably meaner.

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\* *Rebozo* is Spanish for *shawl*.

\*\* *Pueblo* is Spanish for *village*.



That evening, Muriel and I dressed in our most festive gowns...red, of course...for New Year's Eve. We strolled into our charming, but empty, restaurant at an unfashionable eight o'clock. No one was there but the waiters, the same interesting combo of flute-guitar-drums, and us. Dinner was delightful. Guests began arriving as we departed.

Don suggested that we walk down to the zócalo to join in the festivities. The stillness should have warned us. Not a single fire cracker, left from children's afternoon activities, broke the silence. We found that *we* were the revelers. We saw one strolling couple, quite literally wrapped up in each other. A stray man strode rapidly through the park, intent on reaching refuge from the biting cold. Bells chimed eleven o'clock. I giggled as I informed Don: "If you think you're going to march me around the zócalo in this weather until midnight, you're mad." The three of us raced back to the warmth of the hotel as quickly as our best shoes would let us wobble. Even the cheerful marimba music in the patio of the hotel—played by glove-wearing musicians—could not arrest our dedicated drive toward the comfort of our warm rooms.

### **Friday, 1 January, 1993**

New Year's Day we explored outlying Indian villages. San Juan Chamula was as fascinating as we had heard. Don pulled over and parked across from the Tourist Office. The car was surrounded instantly by a horde of solemn children. I pushed past them to get our permits to enter the church. When I returned, the expressions of sheer terror on Don's and Muriel's faces behind the shielding glass of the car would have been funny, had they not been so authentic. Chiapas is known for the unfriendliness of its Indians. I brushed the children away from the car like flies and directed Don to park a little farther from the plaza, away from curious eyes.

The church was the same mixture of Christian and pagan as the one in Chichicastenango, Guatemala. While devotees knelt on pine-strewn stone

floors, their neighbors drank Pepsi Colas and visited in front of the candles honoring Saints.

Across the street in the long, low building that included the Tourist Office, smoke billowed from the last two doors. Poncho-clad devotees massed by the doors. Later we looked in and saw three large crosses, heavily outlined with branches, where some kind of ritual had been performed.

The men of San Juan Chamula almost without exception wore heavy natural-color wool ponchos over their clothes. The ponchos were fringed, and secured with a heavy belt. Hands were thrust inside the front of the poncho for warmth, giving the Indians a peculiar, unmasculine bulge above the beltline. Off-white ponchos were loose at each side; the less common black ones were sewn up the sides.

The women were wrapped in colorful rebozos. They crouched on the patio in front of the church with small piles of fruit or sweets for sale in front of them. Children in bright huipiles and serapes were everywhere.

As we drove out of the town, we passed a group of about a dozen men in elaborate holiday regalia—black with red and yellow embroidery and hats decorated by long multicolored streamers. A second group, garbed like the first, appeared in the road behind them, but turned off the track and, like Christmas carolers, entered a building. As we passed we realized that the building into which they disappeared was a cantina.



There was some question about whether we would bother to drive to nearby Zinacantán, since we already had seen the “must” pueblo. After a few words of discussion, we decided we might as well, since it was so close. We wound up a dirt road and suddenly both Muriel and Don, from the front street, exclaimed, “There it is—all that red!” From the back seat, I could not see what they were talking about. By the greatest of luck and a casual decision, we found a fiesta that will burn in my brain forever.

There must have been two to three thousand Indians around the village church. *All* were dressed in red. The men and boys wore belted red serapes, elaborately embroidered with flowers and birds in pinks, aquas, limes, oranges, deeper reds, occasionally shot with gold and silver threads. Their shirts under the serapes were red. Women wore red blouses and skirts of similar, intricate workmanship. Even the babies in slings were swaddled in exquisitely embroidered red garments.

The men, in flaming ensemble, grouped, dozens deep, around the church. The women sat on the low wall surrounding the courtyard or on bleachers set to one side near a smaller chapel, not talking, patient, out-blazing the sunshine in their collective crimson. On the other side of the street, a large group of men in their brilliant garments watched a hard-fought basketball game. The players, sweating under the sun despite the crisp air, were the only earth-tone notes.

Our cameras were locked in the trunk of the car. This particular village has a reputation for smashing cameras when in a good mood, or killing tourists, if provoked.

It was obvious that everyone awaited something. We waited with them, moving as discreetly as we could among the Indians. The “something” proved to be a typical dance with masked people representing the Spanish conquistadores, women, and a bull. It was very like ritual dances of the Mayan Indians in the south of Belize. The play-let was accompanied by great explosions, of grenade rather than firecracker intensity. The dour Indians yelled and laughed and shrieked at each blast. Over a period of about an hour, the dance was performed twice in front of the church where the men were grouped, and twice in front of the bleachers full of women.

It was only as festivities came to an end that we began to see family groups, instead of rigid segregation of the sexes. Little families strolled off together wordlessly or climbed into buses for the ride back to their isolated adobe huts.

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## **Saturday, 2 January**

As our Panamerican Highway curved back through the same area, we realized that even the common clothes of that group of Indians are red. For the rest of my life, I will warm myself with the memory of that conflagration of color.

The road in Chiapas state was noticeably worse than the one in the Yucatán. It wound up and down mountains, potholed and unprotected. We headed for Tehuantepec, an obligatory overnight stay en route to Oaxaca. We assumed the worst and found one of the best hotels of our trip.

We stopped en route at several spots overlooking Sumidero Canyon, a spectacular gash through the mountains.

## **Sunday, 3 January**

As we left Tehuantepec, we suddenly were in country that Don compared to the Mojave Desert. Instead of the jungles of the previous day, the road was bordered by many varieties of cactus and slim trees with threadlike branches, their leaves sparse to non-existent. Patches of gray yucca were pasted improbably against the mountainsides.

Impossible as it seemed, the condition of the “highway” deteriorated. The surface became a lace-work of concrete holding the potholes in their uncomfortable pattern. Hairpin curves and the perforated pavement decreased our speed to a crawl. This, we commented to each other, was the famed Panamerican Highway.

The highway into Oaxaca took us past the ruins of Mitla and a large native market. We stopped briefly, enjoying the outside of the ruins, with their unusual geometric mosaics. As I got out of the car, an Indian woman offered me a pair of colorful Zapotec dolls. I wanted them so badly for my Guatemala-ish guest room that I did not even bargain. I bought the elaborate dolls for the equivalent of US\$6 each. Moments later another vendor offered me a similar pair for half the amount. I did not regret my “extravagance.” The dolls were worth far more than I paid.



Muriel, Kate, and Don in Oaxaca, January 1993

The salmon-colored Hotel Victoria is on the side of a mountain overlooking the city. Our rooms had large sliding-glass doors that opened onto a delicate white iron railing with a red-tile roof below it. The entire room became a balcony when the doors were open. I slept as on the deck of a ship, stealing extra cover from the second bed to protect myself from the unaccustomed chill. At night, the city lights sparkled for us. At dawn, mountains across the valley scalloped the sunrise.

### **Monday, 4 January**

We walked down two easy flights of curving stairs to the garden restaurant for breakfast, secure in the memory of the previous night's excellent dinner. It was the first time our hotel provided food so good that we found no need to go elsewhere.

We spent the day shopping and sightseeing. Among our "finds" was the Tule tree, one of the largest in the world. It is said to be two thousand years old and more than 150 feet in circumference.

Late in the afternoon we made our way up the mountain outside the city toward the ruins of Monte Albán. Somehow, we took the old road. It was in such bad condition that Don thought briefly of turning back. Just then,



around a sharp curve came a herd of goats. Each of the two young goatherds guarding the flock cradled a tiny kid in his arms. We stopped the car to let the mass of animals part and pass us, then drove on, delighted in the pastoral vignette.

Monte Albán is an extensive, well excavated ruin of the Zapotec culture. It was about 5:00 PM when we arrived. Only a handful of visitors, most of them Mexican, remained. We felt that we had the handsome buildings and great expanses of grass between them to ourselves. While Muriel and Don climbed one of the low pyramids, I stood alone, immersing myself in the setting. Gradually I became aware of movement, not shapes, but their activity. I felt that I was observing the daily life of Monte Albán. The unseen forms moved with a slightly foreign rhythm. I sensed both men and women. Briefly, I was a part of the past.



We were thrust rudely back into the present with Don's decision to fill the car with gasoline in anticipation of an early departure next morning. Before we had time to escape, we were in a line with thirty cars (accurate count by frustrated females). I was sent to investigate. I learned that only green pumps supplied the fuel we needed. We were in the right line. Much later we finally arrived at the pump only to find that its nozzle was not adapted to our gas tank. By that time we were beyond frustration. In passive acceptance of life in Mexico, Don drove with uncharacteristic stoicism past station after station until, on the other side of Oaxaca, he found a Pemex station that had 1) a green pump, and 2) the proper nozzle.

We returned to the Hotel Victoria, and I announced to Muriel and Don that it was my birthday. We had birthday drinks in their room before dinner, then a superb meal. We celebrated by having a final Kahlua-and-conversation in the bar before separating for the night.

## **Tuesday, 5 January**

We were away by 9:00 on another of our long days of driving. We would not have believed it possible for the road to deteriorate more than it

already had, but soon after we left Oaxaca, we found ourselves on a narrow, twisting mountain road with potholes often more than a foot deep. Even worse, clouds blanketed the mountain tops, sinking into the valleys between. We crept along, trying to avoid pits, or easing into them slowly enough that we could come out the other side. Half the time these tortuous maneuvers took place with our car on the wrong side of the road, inches before a blind curve. We comforted ourselves with the thought that cars coming the opposite way had to be moving like nervous snails, as we were. Fortunately, the clouds lifted fairly soon so that our intrepid driver at least could see hazards clearly.

The mountains were the steepest and the most dramatic we had been through. Sitting in the back seat, with no responsibility for watching the road, I could immerse myself in the magnificent scenery.

Rarely did we pass a vehicle or a building. At about the morning *cerveza* hour, we found a simple cantina and restaurant at the top of a mountain. Despite the dirt floor, it gave an impression of cleanliness. The oilcloth-topped tables were immaculate. A variety of posters decorated walls that were made of mats of palm thatch. A smiling Indian girl of about eighteen pushed aside a curtain that apparently separated the kitchen from the dining area and took our order. She was disappointed at our not wanting to eat, but Don and I were still nervous from our inadvertent illnesses early in the trip.

When we finished, I asked her in impeccable Spanish for directions to the ladies' room. I assumed that it would be outside and sans plumbing. To my incalculable horror, she threw her arms wide and with a beaming smile said, "Campo libre." Although she had been kind enough to offer me all outdoors, I suspected that each bush might already have served as shelter multiple times. Civilization couldn't be that far away, I assured myself, as I thanked her politely and retreated to the car with my shredded dignity.

Again we had a perforce overnight stay between one of our target towns and the next. This time it was Coatzacoalcos. I knew the city only as a

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dingy port and petroleum center. We expected nothing of our hotel, and again found a gem. Our dinner at the Hotel Terranova that night was one of the finest of the entire trip.

### **Wednesday, 6 January**

We left early for Villahermosa. The drive was uneventful. The countryside was nondescript, but the road was both flat and well paved. We were in our hotel before noon. Unfortunately, the Cencali was undergoing remodeling, so things were not as pleasant as they might have been.

The main lure of Villahermosa was the charming park that displays some of the enormous Olmec heads discovered in the area. Near the entrance, some thirty or more coatimundi of all ages and sizes ranged through the woods or ventured out onto the path. They searched busily for insects with their long, sensitive noses, and ignored the fascinated tourists watching their antics. Small wild deer browsed nearby.

To Muriel's delight, most of the Olmec heads had been moved to museums through Mexico, where they can be protected from the weather. Still a few of the huge stone carvings were beautifully displayed throughout the park. We took the obligatory pictures of each other standing alongside the heads, dwarfed by their height of seven or eight feet.

There were other old carved pieces besides the heads, plus a strange structure of enormous log-shaped stones, which we learned later was an ancient jaguar cage. Adjacent to the park buildings was a large enclosure with bushes, a pool, and a live jaguar.

### **Thursday, 7 January**

We started early for our final trip destination, Campeche. It was a delightful drive, flat land and good roads, for a happy change, with a view of the Gulf of Mexico that rivaled the mountains for beauty.

We reached the ferry landing leading to Ciudad del Carmen just as the ferry pulled out. Our car was third in line behind a stake-body truck. I asked a nearby vendor with a refreshments cart whether we could leave the car. He assured us that it would be safe to lock it and walk back down the pier to one of the cantinas on the shore. He promised to watch the car for us.

We followed his instructions and settled on the sand under a palapa\* for a cerveza. Muriel busied herself with her sketching materials. Later we investigated lunch possibilities in the two or three ferry-side restaurants and decided that we could wait awhile. Open boats like Alex's ran briskly back and forth ferrying passengers from a nearby dock to destinations hidden by a point of land. In due course, the ferry returned. We walked back out the pier past the now-lengthy line of vehicles. I found the vendor with his bicycle cart and tipped him for watching our little red car. He demurred, but I insisted that he take the modest amount offered him.

The ferry ride was a pleasant half hour. We stood at the front of the open upper deck, enjoying the wind and the view of the approaching shore.

Once off the ferry, it was a relatively short drive to Campeche. We followed the coastline, the Gulf waters brilliant shades of blues and greens to the left of us. Suddenly Muriel insisted that we stop. She couldn't stand another moment without walking on the beach. She and Don walked down a slight bank and strolled along the narrow shore, stooping to pick up shells as they went. After my first step affixed five sand burrs to my stockings, I decided to stay where I was at the edge of the highway, watching their progress with amusement and recording it on film.

We reached Campeche comfortably and checked into the Hotel Baluartes. The hotel was undistinguished, but our rooms overlooked the Gulf. Around five that evening, we drove back up the coast to the commercial fishing dock to watch the return of the shrimp fleet. We were late. We had a pleasant stroll along the long jetty, the only sound the lapping of waves

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\* A *palapa* is an open-sided shelter with a thatched-roofed.

against hulls of shrimpers moored several abreast, and the slight sibilance of wind in the rigging. One late boat arrived, and Don was able to get some good pictures with his camcorder. Meanwhile, the sun set in fire-red brilliance behind the black skeletons of masts and lines of moored shrimp boats.

### **Friday, 8 January**

We spent a desultory day exploring Campeche. We climbed to the battlements of the *baluartes*, the old forts of the city. We went through its tiny but attractive museum. We found the city market, enjoyed prowling through it, but found nothing of interest. It was not our best day of the trip. We all felt that Campeche did not warrant the long drives we had to endure to include it in our itinerary.

### **Saturday, 9 January**

Our final long drive. After some discussion, we agreed unanimously to avoid the road with all the makeshift bridges on our return to Chetumal. Furthermore, we did not want to make a second risky pass through the town of Escárcega. The U.S. State Department travel advisories warned of problems with bandits in the area. We went through safely once, but were not eager to retest our luck. Don, in charge of maps, decreed that we had time to stop at two of the small ruins along our new route back to Chetumal. It was one of the best decisions of the trip.

Sayil was the first. The Palacio, only half excavated, has an extraordinary facade of delicate columns topped by a handsome frieze. Quite different from the other Mayan ruins we had seen.

Next was Kabah, noted for its Temple of the Masks. From a distance one sees only a long building with intricate carving. Up close the carving proves to be an endless progression of theatrical masks in deep bas relief, the noses protruding in splendor.

We were on a secondary road. The paving was adequate, superb even, compared to the roads in Chiapas and Oaxaca. The road was narrow,

bordered by either the low Yucatán jungle or evenly constructed dry stone walls. We passed almost no cars, but saw bicycles everywhere. Casually dressed young tourists pedaled or walked from ruin to ruin, miles away from civilization. At Sayil we met a happy couple on a bicycle-built-for-two.

Muriel, at the wheel a little later, narrowly escaped a heartbreaking accident. Just as we passed, a huge sow poked her snout out from the high grass bordering the road, starting to lunge across. Fortunately, she and Muriel saw each other in time to miss contact by centimeters. In the grass around the stiffened legs of the sow were numberless piglets, well-enough disciplined not to move without their mama.

We stopped at the small town of Ticul at a junction of the road where we had been told we would find an excellent restaurant. Our lunch at the charmingly Colonial Restaurante Los Almendros was one of the best of our entire journey.



The final drive to Chetumal was unremarkable. The guard at the hotel's enclosed car park greeted Don like a prodigal son. Something to do with his having left the car there through Christmas and generous tips, perhaps.

We checked into rooms identical with the ones in which we had begun our trip. A final Happy Hour, a final walk down the street to our Pizza restaurant and its superb Camarones al Mojo de Ajo, a good night's sleep, and an early farewell completed our Mexican holiday.

### **Sunday, 10 January**

Mr. Arnold arrived early to drive me back to Belize. Muriel and Don left at about the same time for Cancún, stopping at the ruins of Tulum en route. They would turn the car in, spend the night, and fly home the following day. Before parting, we began making plans for a fourth Mexican holiday in another two years, a return to our favorite towns in El Bajío, the mountainous Colonial area northwest of Mexico City.

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## Agents' Meeting in Salvador

April 1993

The annual Air France Agents' Meeting was held in San Salvador this year. I missed the last two meetings, which were held in Mexico. There literally was no way I could fly there except by spending an extra night en route each way and doglegging so far out of the way that the fare was double. It was not worth it for a two-day meeting.



The trip to Salvador was an easy 55 minutes. I breezed through Immigration and Customs, looked around for any other Air France people, then grabbed a cab. I had faxed Gabriela Anaya, my main contact in Mexico, that I would get to the hotel by myself. The airport is about 28 miles from the city, and the fare is US\$40. However, I had to get to the hotel, change, and be ready for a cocktail party so soon after my arrival that I did not dare risk the roundabout route of a cheaper van.

As I was checking in, the group from the Mexico City Air France office arrived. They said they had waited for me at the airport. I think they must have arrived just after I left.

These Air France meetings are fun because it has been the company's policy in Central America to appoint CGM (French Line – shipping) agents as Air France agents. With the exception of Costa Rica, all the other national delegations were old friends from earlier CGM or Air France conferences. The regional director and his deputy visited Belize a year ago, so I knew them. I had met three other members of the Mexico delegation during my training course there almost four years ago.



The meeting was held in the Camino Real, a lovely hotel. The cocktail party was pleasant. My friends were kind enough to speak English to me, though Spanish was the main language throughout the conference. I

excused myself as others began leaving and started down the hotel corridor. I heard someone running behind me, calling my name. It was Tom Kenna, the delightful young man from Panama. I first met Tom and his beautiful wife in Paris. We have seen each other several times since. Alex, Tom, and I spent a lot of time together at the CGM conference at Key Biscayne last year.

Tom quickly told me that he was just a couple of doors away, gave me his room number, and asked me to be sure to call him if I needed help in any way. I was deeply touched at his thoughtfulness.

It was not until the next day that Tom explained he was thinking primarily of gunfire. He said that early in the week, when he was taking care of his small daughter, he heard two heavy volleys of nearby gunfire. He felt completely helpless to do anything except keep his daughter distracted and in the safest possible location in the house. Tom worried that I might be frantic if the fragile Salvador peace were broken in the middle of the night.

As it happened, I already had discussed the possibility with myself and had mapped out what to do and what not to do. The “nots” were expanded to disturbing Tom at night for something he couldn’t do anything about. As it happened, there was no need. I think I heard two brief lots of gunfire late one afternoon, but can’t be sure. It was not a car backfiring and was not like any firecrackers I ever have heard.



The business sessions were long, hard, stimulating, and in Spanish. I probably understood about three-quarters. When something interesting slipped past, I asked my friend from Guatemala, who was sitting next to me, to explain briefly.

The Salvador agency did a gorgeous job of planning the conference. Even the meals we had in the hotel were well above average. The evening after the first session, we were taken to a golf club on a mountainside outside



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the city. We were told that the guerrillas had burned it, along with all the other private clubs, but that it had been rebuilt.

We had drinks on the gorgeous lawn outside a glass-walled dining room. A guitarist played and sang in the background. To everyone's surprise, Carlos Cardenal, the delegate from Nicaragua, suddenly joined the guitarist, singing beautifully and half-acting out the songs. Carlos performed for thirty minutes or more, with the surprisingly acquiescent help of the guitarist.

We had music through dinner. At the end, one of the men from Salvador joined in a duet with the guitarist. Sr. Flores had a far finer voice than Carlos, though not the theatrical flair. The impromptu entertainment continued for at least two hours, with many of the guests joining in on favorite songs. It was utterly delightful.



The Mexican delegation and I were taken back to the airport by bus on Saturday morning at 6:30. Immigration was a madhouse. A room the size of a small store held shoulder-to-shoulder nervous passengers. Lines did not move. I think I was through in about forty minutes, leaving just enough time to catch my flight.

I thought! As it happened, TACA was more than two hours late. I had arranged for a taxi to meet me in Belize, so was home a little before noon. To my surprise, Alex and María were waiting. I knew they had been invited out to Caye Caulker for the weekend. Alex would not leave until he was sure I was home, so they went out a little late.



Emily Bowen, Capt. Luther Blount, Kate, Capt. Mike Snyder, 1994



Kate and Emily on deck of *Caribbean Prince*, 1994

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## ***Caribbean Prince with Emily***

### **New Year 1994**

Captain Luther Blount, owner of American Canadian Caribbean Line, Inc., of Warren, RI, invited me for a free Belize / Guatemala cruise as agent for the *Caribbean Prince*. He also invited Emilie Bowen, whom he had met several times during earlier trips to Belize.

I thought I knew all about the *Caribbean Prince* and her cruises after being agent for the ship for five seasons. Being a passenger was like changing from black-and-white to color film.

#### **Friday, 31 December, 1993**

Emilie and I decided to take our gear aboard early in the afternoon, then return home to bathe and dress in New Year's Eve finery before returning to the ship around 5:00 PM. Emilie did just that. She told me later that her man Cecil scurried through a squall with her luggage, despite her shrieked protests.

Intermittent rain made me decide to do everything in one move. Alex drove me to the Fort George pier, where the ship was docked, at about 2:30 PM. I walked out to the vessel and met the Belize pilot, Charles Westby. He sent a deck hand, his son Erwin, back to Alex's truck to get my luggage.

Emilie's baggage already was standing neatly on the floor in cabin 55B. I spent a happy couple of hours unpacking and settling. Taking advantage of living nearby, I had packed slacks and shirts already in place on multiple hangers, which held my entire wardrobe in a couple of inches of our limited closet space. My quota of one wide and two narrow drawers, plus one shelf in the "head" medicine cabinet, held the things I needed regularly. Everything else remained in the suitcase under one bunk, where it could be slid out easily when needed.

By the time I had bathed and dressed for the First Night cocktail party and dinner, Emilie arrived. After a reunion so excited that you would have thought we had not seen each other for a decade, we got to the main order of business, deciding who would sleep where. I was perfectly happy to let Emilie have the bunk under our small window. On the other hand, she wanted the air conditioning to ease her breathing, and I lived in dread of the chill. We ended up with Emily taking the bunk on the right-hand side as one entered the cabin, while I had the one across the end, along the outer bulkhead. The bulky orange life jackets stowed neatly in designed space under my bed. We both put suitcases, shoes, and carry-ons under Emilie's bunk, where we could get them as necessary.



Emilie and I descended to the main deck. The first person we saw was our host, Captain Blount (hereafter referred to as *Luther*). We combined our hellos with our thanks to him for making the cruise possible. We circulated, meeting a few of our fellow passengers. In situations like this, one of the first questions always is, “And where are you from?” Emily's and my smiling replies of “Belize” routinely were greeted with shocked, sometimes unbelieving, gasps, followed by barrages of questions.

We were invited to sit at the Captain's table with our attractive, bearded Master, Mike Snyder, Luther, and other guests of his. Anna and Del Girard became favorite friends on the cruise. Del is a retired Mississippi River pilot and tug captain, whom Luther has asked to help on the first upper-Mississippi trips of his soon-to-be-launched vessel *Niagara Prince*. I spent many a morning over early coffee enjoying the tales I encouraged him to tell.

After a superb dinner, there were speeches by Captain Snyder (hereafter referred to as *Mike*), Cruise Director Teresa, and Luther. To our surprise, there was no special New Year's Eve activity. Passengers continued trying to meet one another. Teresa, a talented musician, played the piano for a while. One of the passengers tried to promote group singing but could not win against First Night diffidence. Gradually, the group thinned. We

learned later that only a few hardy souls remained to open champagne at midnight. Emilie and I went up to our cabin around 10:30, had a touch of the 12-Year-Old Single-Malt Scotch Emilie had brought to toast the New Year, and turned out the lights on 1993.

### **Saturday, 1 January, 1994**

I awoke around 6:00 AM, dressed hastily, and descended for coffee. I took coffee back up to the cabin for Emilie, then made three successive trips for refills for myself. This became the early-morning program.

Emilie was in the breakfast buffet line ahead of me. She took a seat at the starboard corner table by the window. I joined her. One of our new friends walked by, grinned, and said, "You girls don't smoke! That's the smokers' table." We had forgotten the announcement of the previous evening. Emilie replied, "They're welcome to join us." As it happened, there apparently wasn't a smoker on board. Emilie had picked out where she wanted to sit and guarded "our table" jealously for the rest of the trip.

Luther, Emilie, and I were joined by Jack Woods, a prominent travel writer and photographer who was aboard to do an article for his magazine. We either invited another couple to join us or someone asked if they could sit with us. I was a little embarrassed at the unintended exclusiveness that seemed to have been established. Luther was at liberty to join other tables, but seemed to enjoy relaxing in our little group. Jack made it plain that he intended to be part of the coterie. Conversation was varied, stimulating, always entertaining. The nagging little sense of guilt was easily stuffed back into a corner of my conscience.

I liked Jack Woods immediately and Emilie did not. Jack has visited Belize off-and-on for years. He had a good time playing do-you-know our first lunchtime together. One of his close friends was Jackie Vasquez, the scruffy hunter and international orchid expert who beat three murder charges in the Forties and Fifties. Bucher was fond of Jackie; when we were neighbors in the Fifties, Carli played with his daughter; he was the man from whom we got our beloved pet Oscar (the margay that we thought was an ocelot). Emilie decided that no one who consorted with an

accused murderer could be trusted. She mellowed slightly when we all howled with laughter at her admission that she let her sons go hunting with Jackie.

Jack was a depression child and went to work at twelve. He batted around all over the world one way or another and gradually became a journalist / photographer. He has done articles for National Geographic. In latter years, most of his trips have been assignments in out-of-the-way, exotic places. Jack never bragged. He mentioned other lands or other ways only a propos of a conversation's turn. I found him a bright, professional, kind person, and a delightful addition to our dining table.



Back in our cabin after breakfast, Emilie discovered that she had lost her book. She was distraught. We both moved things from under the bed, searched bed clothes, and checked every container of hers and mine repeatedly. Finally I pulled everything out from under the bed at once, lay flat on the deck, and wiggled under the bunk. No book, but a prolonged attack of the giggles. When I tried to emerge, I was blocked by luggage. Frantic attempts to return to a vertical position failed.

Emilie began calling out, "You're stuck! You're stuck!" I wasn't, but my aging frame needed more than six inches to turn and arise. Finally, in uncomprehending response to commands distorted by hilarity, my cabinmate moved her large suitcase. I was able to struggle to my feet, still laughing. A few moments later Emilie found her book in a purse she had searched twice.

By lunchtime, I had learned that Emilie loses something every hour on the hour. Chaos reigns briefly. The object proves not to have been snatched away by some psychopath obsessed with other people's glasses or hats. Little intervention was called for on my part. A gracious expression of concern and sympathy usually was enough to bridge the brief gap between loss and discovery.



The *Caribbean Prince* moved slowly away from the dock at about 8:30 AM. In line with my annual requests to the ship's captains, I earlier had asked Mike to sound his horn on departure. His eyes twinkled as he replied that he was not sure he would endear himself to anyone blowing it at an early hour on a New Year's Day.

Emilie and I spent a lazy morning, much of it under the canopy on the top deck, as we steamed toward San Pedro. After lunch, we took the ship's launch ashore. San Pedro, on Ambergris Caye, adjacent to Mexico, is our northernmost island. It has become a mecca for skin divers. When Bucher and I first visited it decades ago, it was a picturesque fishing village. Small white frame houses with thatched roofs were separated by wide white-sand roads. There was not a single vehicle on the island. Now the streets along the shore are honky-tonk. The "main drag," one street back from the shore, is lined with low modern buildings that look more like Miami than Belize, despite the unpaved street in front of them

Emilie and I found our way to see Tuto and Juanita Alamilla, dear friends who were our downstairs neighbors in the house we rented before Hurricane Hattie in 1961. The Alamilla's handsome new 3-story building has shops on the ground floor, a small hotel, and large apartments for daughter Alida and her family and for Tuto and Juanita. The roof is a vast open area, attractive with lawn furniture for lounging hotel guests. Alida has begun flying flags of various countries on holidays or when government officials of foreign countries visit. Recently Tuto called to ask me, on Alida's behalf, for house flags for the shipping lines we represent. The CGM flag has not yet arrived, but the Laser flag was flown on New Year's Day, Alida told us.

After a lovely visit with the Alamillas, we walked down the beach to visit Emilie's son, Barry Bowen. Emilie prowled around Barry's house, calling out and peering into windows as I hovered at the edge of the circling veranda, trying not to look like an incipient thief. Finally we heard a repeated "Hello" in reply. No one was at the door, but we eventually spotted two interested parrots peering down at us from an upper railing.

Just as we were about to give up, Kevin, Barry's son, strolled up from the dock. Within moments the Doberman, Rusty, rushed up to announce the arrival, in Barry's plane, of the rest of the family. They had been in Gallon Jug, Barry's enormous ranch near his resort, Chan Chich. After a toast to the New Year and a brief visit, Barry took us back to the *Caribbean Prince* in his launch, and don't think our private transportation didn't cause a stir among passengers and crew.

When we reached the ship, I asked the attending deckhand if the Bowens might board. He went off to ask the Captain for permission. Almost immediately he returned with a smiling Captain Blount. Luther ushered Barry and family aboard and gave them the grand tour. Teresa whisked 3-year-old Courtney off to her Inner Sanctum. The little girl emerged, smiling shyly, a New Year's Eve tiara perched on her blond head and a paper cup full of chocolates in one hand.



Following dinner, three musicians from San Pedro entertained with guitars and singing for a pleasant hour and a half. Emilie began calling out requests early in the performance. She stage-whispered that the musicians didn't seem to know what they were doing and that she was helping them. The trio acceded to her suggestions with commendable grace. The musicians were far more successfully than our fellow passenger the previous evening at sweeping the audience into an enthusiastic sing-along to end the program.

### **Sunday, 2 January**

By now, Emilie and I had worked out a comfortable cabinmate routine. Without discussing it, we established schedules that did not conflict. I rose early, went down for coffee, brought Emilie a cup, and returned for coffee-and-conversation, leaving Emilie the privacy of the cabin. We spent most of the time together, but separated for our own activities as we wanted. Emily and I got along gorgeously. Both of us were thoughtful in the confines of our cabin. We enjoyed visiting together, laughed a lot, and



both gloried in being where we were. As I had expected, the other passengers were entranced by Emilie's exuberance and outspokenness.

In a way, I felt I paid for my passage. Luther repeatedly summoned me for private conferences about operational matters. At first Emilie was a little annoyed at losing me unexpectedly, but soon accepted the situation, going up onto the top deck to read or visit. As for me, I was pleased and flattered that Luther included me in discussing things that were not technically agent's business. He is a darling. I never have seen him as relaxed and happy as he was on that cruise.



My special time was the early-morning coffee group. Del Girard was one of the early risers. It was easy to cue him into fascinating verbal trips through the untamed waters of the Mississippi. Another early riser was Paul from Santa Clara, California. He and his wife, Margaret, became comfortable friends of both of ours. One morning over coffee, almost by accident, I learned that he keeps Arabian horses. He described training various mounts and told about his regular half-day-long rides along the winding trails of a nearby national park. Another of the coffee klatsch was Whit Davis, retired naval officer, deeply involved in the administrative side of large-yacht racing. He measures yachts for races, including the 12-meter boats for the America's Cup. We had long discussions of the fashions and foibles of yacht racing.



The *Caribbean Prince* began its island-hopping cruise down the coast of Belize, stopping at one deserted caye after another to allow passengers to swim and snorkel.

Emilie and I spent a lazy Sunday morning as we cruised to Goff's Caye. I brought my Journal up to date, wrote postcards, and visited with passengers. After a brief time in the dining room, Emily and I retreated to our cabin to get away from the over-active air conditioning.

Meals became a high point of the cruise. We had two qualified chefs on board, one of them acting as sous-chef. Both were men of substantial girth, which I took as a promise of delight in their jobs. Meals were superb.

After lunch, Emilie enlisted me in the first of our regular sets of ten laps around the 50's deck.\* Most days we managed this after breakfast and again after lunch. A length of line coiled over a railing near the beginning of each lap became our marker. Emily, striding ahead, slapped the coil as she passed it, calling out the number of our circuit. At the end, we both leaned on the rope-cushioned rail to congratulate each other on our fortitude. Sometimes the respite turned into a convivial conversation about the past and the present and “shoes, and ships, and...”



Emilie and I signed up for bridge, hoping to find players as interested as we were in regular games. That evening after dinner, Teresa set up the three tables of bridge players for what she called a practice evening. Unfortunately, it was a little chaotic because each table scored differently.

### **Monday, 3 January**

The ship stopped at Tobacco Caye so that swimmers and snorkelers could explore the reef. The glass-bottom boat was lowered. Emilie and I were on the first trip. I have to admit that it was bitterly disappointing to me. I forgot that everything would be greenish through the glass. The colors of flora and fauna were obscured. Only rarely did color flash from a fleeting fish. Furthermore, the sea was slightly cloudy because of the waves. I have wonderful memories of snorkeling in the sea world and delighting in the glorious colors, shapes, and movement of its inhabitants. I prefer those images. I will never ride in a glass-bottom boat again.

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\* The *50's deck* is the deck where cabins 50 through 59 are located.

When we returned to the ship, Emilie stayed to take the next launch-ride to the island while I went up to our cabin to read. Emily had a wonderful time talking to the people living in Tobacco Caye's two or three little houses.



A photographer, hired by Luther to take pictures to be used in a new brochure, was with us on the cruise. Seymour is a thoroughly likable, quiet, businesslike man. He retired from teaching five years ago, had a brief, unhappy fling as a real-estate salesman, then launched the career he wanted as a photographer. He and his amiable wife became good friends of ours. Emilie asked Seymour about getting some of his pictures. He promised to make a representative package of the cruise available.




In the afternoon I made a temporary conversion from passenger to agent. We reached Placencia. I joined Luther to go ashore while the ship was anchoring. We separated near the post office. He proceeded on his own business, and I went off on Damage Control. The Minister of Tourism had telephoned me a couple of weeks earlier about a problem regarding permission for the *Caribbean Prince* to make a bow landing in a certain location.

Luther is an inspired inventor as well as a ship builder and owner. He designed a gangway, set into the prow of his shallow-draft cruise ships, that allows passengers to walk directly from the lounge, down the gangway, and onto dry land—a bow landing.

The problem of the day involved a local fracas over the landing site. A local couple, the Leslies, owned the land, and the Village Council wanted to. I had a long session with Gene Leslie, then walked briskly about a mile up the narrow sidewalk to find his wife, Janet, and go through the same diplomacy with her.

It was an exhausting afternoon, but valuable. The problem was not completely solved, but resentments were rooted out and assuaged. It was

almost 5:30 before I returned to the ship, completely jaded from my diplomatic endeavors.




That evening, we had our alleged bridge tournament. It was rather silly: two tables; two systems of scoring.


## **Tuesday, 4 January**

In the morning Luther called me for a report on my Placencia visit.

The vessel made a bow landing in waist-deep water off the Snake Cayes. Dedicated swimmers and snorkelers went ashore. I returned to my cabin to write my Journal and read.



After lunch, the ship moved to Icacos Beach and made another bow landing. Emilie insisted that I go ashore with her to try to locate Sister Josella's extensive family property. I considered it a fool's errand in view of the fact that not only were there no markers of any kind, but the only life available probably would be a reticent hermit crab. Still, it was as good an excuse as any to browse along the beach. Emily gave up her mission when the beach disappeared into a long line of mangrove. We picked up pumice and visited our way past fellow passengers, back to the ship.



It was Celebration Night—dedicated to everyone who had a birthday or anniversary during the cruise. It was pleasant that it happened to fall on my birth date. The stewardess put a card at my place, a delightful and touching one from Alex and María with a note saying that Alex had put two cases of Belikin\* aboard for my sustenance. I was absolutely taken aback and delighted at his thoughtfulness. The ship is Bring Your Own

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\* *Belikin* is a brand of beer brewed in Belize.

Bottle, and it seemed too much trouble to bother with beer, though both Emilie and I enjoy it at lunchtime. Alex said in his card that he thought I would enjoy his gift as much as anything he could think of to give me. He was right.

At the end of the dinner, champagne was served and the Chef brought in an enormous chocolate cake, alight with sparklers. Everyone sang *Happy Birthday to You*, then altered the words of the familiar tune to “Happy Anniversary.” One couple was celebrating their Fiftieth.

### **Wednesday, 5 January**

We departed our anchorage near Punta Icacos early in the morning and were at the dock in Punta Gorda soon after breakfast. Emilie and I went ashore to check at the drug store for an anti-allergen for her (unavailable). We then walked around to Alistair King’s Texaco station, hoping to find him. The Kings are old friends; Alistair and Alex were high-school classmates. I was writing a quick note to Alistair when a man I had barely noticed said, “Kate Scott, aren’t you going to say hello?”

I looked up, startled, and against the glare of light coming through the doorway saw only an unfamiliar silhouette. The man grinned, removed disguising hat and dark glasses, and became an old shipping friend from Guatemala, Peter Baak, improbably placed in Punta Gorda. Peter explained that he is semi-retired. He has someone running his marine business, and he himself is growing oranges and rice in Toledo District. He travels back and forth between his two interests.

We continued on to say hello to Mrs. Ovel Leonardo, the wife of the man who handles clearing and entering the *Caribbean Prince* in Punta Gorda and rides the ship for the Guatemalan run. I have had many telephone dealings with his wife through the years. She proved to be a lovely, friendly woman, helping out in her mother-in-law’s tiny, immaculate new restaurant. Three of the Leonardos’ beautiful little daughters shyly gave Emilie and me sprigs of a flowering bush as we left.



Back to the ship. We settled on the 50's deck to read until the sun drove me inside. I went on down to the main deck to get a beer, but was distracted by conversations until Emilie arrived almost an hour later.

We reached Livingston, Guatemala, mid-afternoon. Livingston is a charming mixture of Old British Colonial and New-World Spanish. The homes lining the hills as we approached looked almost like Belize. In town, the shops were the typical junky Central American “caves” with hammocks and garments hanging from the ceiling over a mixed array of handcrafts, tinned food, jewelry, and auto parts. All the passengers went ashore to explore. Most of us were searching for gifts for the Yankee Swap.

Emilie and I had an early night. We could not find another couple for bridge because of competition from casino games and a good movie.

### **Thursday, 6 January**

We sailed from Livingston slightly ahead of schedule at 9:00 AM. The trip up the Río Dulce was gorgeous. Steep green mountains with occasional white limestone outcrops lined either side of the winding, narrow river. Pelicans and egrets perched by the dozens in foliage that appeared to climb vertically from the water. Cormorants swam and dove and flew away in front of the advancing ship. Small birds skittered in flocks on the water. *Cayucas* (dugout canoes) with one or two passengers paddled past. The infrequent buildings tucked in tiny coves ranged from simple thatched huts, perhaps with a small dock in front, to sprawling, informal homes with sailing yachts anchored in the river in front.

After a long stretch of curving, green canyon, the hills became lower. The river broadened into El Golfete. We docked at the orphanage of Casa Guatemala. Children clustered in clutching, black-eyed groups as passengers landed. Most of the *Caribbean Prince* crowd walked directly to the gift shop, where there was a fine selection of handcrafts. Purchases were spurred by the knowledge that proceeds would benefit the orphanage, as well as by the variety and quality of the items on display.

We sailed under the new highway bridge and on to the Fort of San Felipe. Emilie and I walked ashore as far as the first open-air market, then returned to the ship. We had been warned to take flashlights to explore the ruins of the fort. I had no intention of going where light wasn't. Furthermore, both of us felt we had seen our share of old Spanish Colonial forts.



Mid-afternoon we docked at the Hotel Tropical in Lago Izabal. Luther and Mike snagged me as I was walking ashore with Emilie to listen to the marimbas on the hotel terrace. They asked me to call Alex to arrange for a carpenter to be available on our arrival back in Belize, regarding construction of a temporary crew bunkhouse Luther wanted built on the top deck.

Fortunately, I found Ovel Leonardo at the hotel reception desk. He arranged for my collect call to Belize, then took shifts with the distracted receptionist trying to get the call through. Ultimately, almost to my surprise, Alex's voice came faintly through the squawky radio-telephone receiver.

By the time I finished my complicated conversation, the marimba concert had ended. I joined Emilie as she returned to the ship.

### **Friday, 7 January**

The ship departed from the Hotel Tropical and crossed to the other side of Lago Izabal. There Emilie and I were among the passengers debarking for the trip to the Mayan ruins of Quiriguá.

The bus that met us was comfortable. The first stretch of road was gravel and potholed. The mountainous scenery made up for our lurching. We passed a large grove of trees, scored for the collection of latex. The bus stopped so that passengers could examine the process up close. The ones who could not resist touching the sticky white fluid returned to the bus rueful at their inquisitiveness when they found they could not remove it.

Quiriguá was a surprise, different from any of the other Mayan ruins I have seen. It was a lovely, grassy national park with Maya stelae, sculptures, and altars set apart from each other, each attractively protected by its own tall palapa. Low, grassy mounds edging the park promised unexcavated Mayan buildings. At the far end, a low set of steps stretched the entire width of the court, with excavated rooms almost out of sight at the back of the platform topping the stairs.

We drove back another route, passing a banana plantation where, again, passengers were allowed to stop and explore briefly. We paused to visit an incredibly smelly small factory that processed latex into rubber. Several passengers turned back, looking slightly ill as they passed the vats where the small half-balls of latex first are washed in acid. Even though there were no sides to the factory, and the wind blew through, it was not a place one wanted to linger. We all quick-stepped through the process, which led to piles of rough rectangles of yellow-brown rubber looking like frozen, heavy foam.



It was a relief to return to our air-conditioned bus and, soon, to board our ship. By mid-afternoon, the *Caribbean Prince* was on her return trip through the green glory of the Río Dulce. We anchored for the night in the stream at Livingston.

A group of ten Garifuna dancers came aboard after dinner to entertain. The Garifuna are descendants of Arawaks of the island of St. Vincent, Caribs of mainland South America, and Africans who survived the wreck of slave ships off St. Vincent. They were exiled to the island of Roatán in the Bay of Honduras and from there made their way to the coast of Central American.

The dancers were completely authentic and highly professional in their variety of wailing songs and jerky dances. At the end of the program, they motioned passengers to join them. Luther was the first. He shuffled happily with a slim young woman whose hips flung themselves from side



to side as if half-unhinged from her body. When he returned from his exertions, he remarked wryly, “She asked me for ten dollars!”

### **Saturday, 8 January**

At daybreak the vessel departed Livingston for Punta Gorda, where the ship had to go through the formalities of entering Belize.

I was in the cabin when Emilie arrived urging me to hurry below to the dining room where “there’s some man who hasn’t seen you for four years.” I went down to find one of my favorite Immigration Officers, Mr. Leslie. He was transferred from Belize City to Punta Gorda four years earlier. He said he happened on my passport while making the routine passenger check.

“It’s Mrs. Scotty,” he exclaimed.

Mr. Leslie is a tall, attractive young man with beautiful manners and an uninhibited smile. We visited enthusiastically for five or ten minutes, trading news about ourselves and mutual friends, while Mike (Captain Snyder) and the other boarding officers listened with amusement.



Plans for more island-hopping, swimming, and snorkeling were quashed by increasingly heavy weather and the first rain of the cruise. Mike sailed directly for Placencia.

Our lunch group was fun, as usual. We had Luther; the travel writer and old Belize hand, Jack Woods; and Anna and Del Girard, the Mississippi River pilot. The Chef produced a special dessert of make-your-own-sundaes in compensation for the disappointing change in the weather.



After lunch, passengers took turns at a table of materials for making costume accessories for the evening’s Pirate Party. Emilie asked our photographer / artist, Seymour, to cut her out a pirate’s hat. He made a

superb, three-dimensional one of heavy yellow construction paper in moments, then sketched a skull and crossbones on the front.

Emily made herself an eye patch of black construction paper on a long band of white crepe paper. She decided she needed a parrot perched on her shoulder. Emily hedged her bets by wheedling Seymour into making one for her and, at the same time, asked the Captain if she might borrow his life-size cloth Macaw.

Seymour cut a huge parrot from the same stiff yellow construction paper. Later, as we were dressing, Mike knocked at the door of our cabin and presented his gorgeous Macaw to Emilie, promising death and destruction if she didn't return it in pristine condition.

Emilie dressed in tan slacks with a horizontally-stripped brown and white long-sleeved T-shirt. She fixed the eye patch in place then crossed the ties over the top of her head and down around her neck, ending in an improbable bow under her chin. On top went the handsome yellow pirate captain's hat. She finished off her costume by slipping a bent coat hanger up under her sleeve, pulling the sleeve down over her hand and letting the hook extend beyond it. The Captain's Macaw perched garishly and unsteadily on her shoulder, held by her good hand.

My own costume was a dismal failure. I decided to go as a pirate's moll. Shortening slacks to approximate knee pants was a plus, as were the gold chains and a headband of aqua crepe paper. The lovely scarf María gave me for Christmas made a sash that held the "jewel-studded dagger" I had made that afternoon from cardboard, foil, and dots of colored construction paper. I went back to my high school theater make-up tricks, creating a fine black eye and vicious scar down one cheek. I used "Cover Mark" to remove the color from my lips. The only problem was that my glasses hid my black eye, my scar was snorkeling livid enough, and my pale lips made me look like a corpse. I resembled a tomboy Cinderella more than a pirate's abused consort. It was too late to worry about it so I went down and had a good time.

Some of the costumes were incredibly ingenious. Emily and I were amazed at how many people participated enthusiastically. First activity of the evening was a limbo contest, hardly pirate-like, but who was complaining? The indefatigable Teresa led out. Our 24-year-old passenger John won the contest easily. Next came the Pirate Parade in a long conga line of swinging bottoms. Finally costumes were judged. To my absolute delight, Emilie won Third Place. Everyone cheered and clapped as she swaggered out, balancing tippy hat and tippier Macaw, waving her handleless hook.



After dinner, one of the passengers showed his video of the Quiriguá tour, the limbo contest, and the costume parade from the Pirate Party. Everyone enjoyed it, of course, but we all were spellbound at the end when the photographer apparently set his camera down, not realizing it still was running. It photographed a succession of familiar pelvises, ending with the lower half of a man happily scratching himself in a tender area with both hands through the pocket of his shorts.

### **Sunday, 9 January**

The sun came out. Despite a good wind and less-than-calm seas, skiff-load after skiff-load of passengers went ashore at Laughing Bird Caye. Most simply strolled around the picture-book-pretty little island, while a few hearty souls snorkeled in the well roiled waters.

Passengers spent the afternoon taking turns with the gift paper, wrapping their donations for the Yankee Swap.

The evening was a huge success. In a Yankee Swap, everyone is given a number. Number 1 selects and unwraps a present. Number 2 does the same, then has the option of trading his gift for the gift that Number 1 has. Each successive person may keep his gift of swap for one of the earlier ones. No one may refuse to trade.

Certain gifts proved to be favorites and circulated all evening long. One was a charming, colorful cloth Toucan about six inches high, and the other was a coconut carrying a card promising the recipient a video of the cruise.

I had a high number. When my turn came, I unhesitatingly exchanged my gift of a colorful Guatemalan billfold for a little woven book mark with Mayan motifs.

### **Monday, 10 January**

The end of the cruise. Emilie and I spent the morning packing. The ship stopped at Goff's Caye, where a few stalwart swimmers chilled themselves thoroughly.

We docked back at the Fort George pier around 3:30 PM. Alex was on the dock waving greetings, accompanied by the requested carpenter—a wonderful elderly Belizean of portly build with a white mustache against his dark skin and a beautiful Panama hat on his snowy head. Bruce Bowen also was there to meet his mother. Alex vanished aloft with his carpenter and both captains. Bruce and Emilie dropped me and my luggage home.

Luther invited Alex and María for the Captain's dinner. We all met Emilie back aboard. I was able to let Alex meet and talk to both of my marine friends: Del of the Mississippi and Whit of the racing sailboats. At dinner time, we congregated at our traditional table with our established group: Luther, Jack, Emily, and me, joined by María and Alex. Chef Hank outdid himself with perfectly prepared prime ribs and Baked Alaska.

After dinner, with as few goodbyes as possible, we eased ourselves off the ship and down the dock, chattering about the fun we had and saying our silent adieus to a glorious cruise.

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## Agents' Meeting in Costa Rica

March 1994

Things started well for this year's Air France agent's meeting with a free agent's ticket from TACA at the insistence of Johnny Searle, the Belize TACA agent. There was a mistake in my original reservations, so not only was there not space for me to spend a final day in Guatemala en route home, but I could not even get out of San José on the Saturday to spend the extra day in Salvador.



The trip south was pleasant enough. In Salvador, where we had to change planes, TACA put us on one aircraft, then marched us off and onto another. No problem. If something's wrong with the plane, I applaud the conservative decision.

It was nearly 8:00 PM when we reached San José. The Migración\* officer lectured me on the idiocy of getting a tourist card, which I did not need when I had a passport. It was too much trouble to explain to him that the TACA agent in Salvador had insisted that they would not let me into Costa Rica without one as she happily collected my US\$2.

Customs waved me through without looking at my luggage. As I was looking for a taxi, a familiar woman called to me, and the driver with her waved a sign at me with my name on it. Air France had sent a car for Rosario Sánchez of Honduras and me on our early arrival for the conference. Rosario, I soon learned, spoke no English. Good practice for me.



The Hotel Herradura was a low, sprawling building in pretty grounds. Neither Rosario nor I was prepared to be told that we had to share a room.

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\* *Migración* is Spanish for *Immigration*.

She protested in Spanish, and I in English. The smiling reservations clerk explained that they did not have another room in the house. He promised that we could have separate rooms the next day.

Rosario and I decided to be extra polite to each other to overcome any impression of dissatisfaction. The room was pleasant enough. Rosario had been given a handsome arrangement of fruit when we checked in. This should have alerted me to the fact that I was the interloper, but that didn't occur till the next day. We both were tired, so took turns bathing and went to bed.



The next morning I awoke at my usual 5:00 AM. Rosario was still asleep. I lay quietly, not even dozing, for two hours, thinking of the coffee I did not dare make for fear of waking my room companion. The telephone finally saved me at 7:00, when someone rang for Rosario. She cheerfully told me to go on and make my coffee while she went back to sleep. The day looked slightly better.

Neither of us wanted breakfast. Instead, we took off to see the craft shops. We thought. Both of us had read the big book about Costa Rica that was in our room. Rosario thought we should head for the principal market. En route the driver explained that we would find only vegetables, flowers, and meat there. We offered an alternative destination, but he still drove us into the center of town past the market so he could show us.

The center of San José is a place I disliked on my first trip to the city and learned to loathe on this one. Traffic moves so slowly that it takes two or three changes of traffic lights to traverse one short block.

Our driver finally emerged from el centro<sup>\*</sup> and spun us rapidly through a maze of streets to a charming mall. He got out to inquire and came back to report sadly that it had no craft shops.

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\* *El centro* is Spanish for *downtown*.

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To our horror, we discovered that we were returning to el centro. If anything, the traffic was worse. After another half hour, our exuberant driver parked with a flourish and ushered us from the car. We were at a plaza filled with kiosks. Handcrafts, yes, but of the tackiest sort; stall after stall of junk. The plaza gave onto a street lined with more kiosks, closed off temporarily as a pedestrian mall.

At the driver's repeated queries about what we were looking for, when we really were only looking *at*, I responded that I needed a basket. He rushed us from one basket display to another, sadly realizing that I was not going to buy a basket decorated in pink and lavender with a garish *Costa Rica* embroidered on it to demonstrate provenance.


Suddenly we found ourselves in front of a stall with handsome straw and reed work, quite different from everything else we had seen. I saw exactly the size and style basket I wanted. The pleasant Oriental young woman in charge explained that it was for display. I was taken aback until I looked around carefully and realized that we were in an exhibition from Mainland China.

Ultimately we reached a shop in which I spotted a plain basket of something similar to what I wanted. The driver was ecstatic. He leaped about taking down bag after bag, grabbing from me the one I was examining to point out a flaw. He finally selected the one I wanted (?) and was gracious enough to let me pay for it.



By the time we returned to the hotel, the Air France group had arrived from Mexico City. The front desk sent me off with a bellman to move my things from Rosario's room. It was a quick process, and I soon found myself in an identical room in another wing. A fruit arrangement with card bearing my name welcomed me.


It was a joy to find myself surrounded by silence, able to unpack and settle into my temporary abode. The small bug climbing a wall in the dressing area didn't worry me.



We joined the gathering Air France group for lunch at a long table in a charming open-air restaurant. The buffet was varied and slightly better than ordinary in quality.


Our first session began mid-afternoon. I settled down to a few hours of speeches in Spanish, which I understood to a slightly less than complete degree. The information given was interesting and it was fun to be back with old friends.

We broke up around 6:00 PM and were told that it was an open evening. My young friend Tom Kenna from Panama had his wife and children with him and suggested that we meet for dinner around 8:30.



I went up to my room to relax and dress for dinner. To my horror, the bathroom floor was black with what looked like large black ants. I called Housekeeping. Literally moments later a very worried woman and a steely-eyed man brandishing a tin of Raid appeared at my door. They stalked in, apologizing as they went. A great fog of Raid demolished every moving thing, almost including the three humans. As they turned to leave, the man assured me that the bugs would not bite.


I wiped the dead bugs off the floor with toilet paper; wiped up newly defunct ones that, in foolhardy fashion, emerged from cracks around the door frame onto the oily floor; and somehow managed to bathe and dress for dinner.



At about 8:00 I went down, thinking that I might find some of the group in the bar. I did, but Rosario stopped me at the entrance saying that she had been asking for me. She explained that “the young people” had gone off to a movie as she led me back to the same restaurant. We had a pleasant dinner by ourselves, then separated for an early evening.



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Congratulating myself on my private room and leisure to enjoy it before bedtime, I walked into a reinfested bathroom. The “ants” were everywhere, black against the floor and walls. I sprayed them with the Raid, which I had insisted on keeping. The horde expired in satisfactory fashion.


I undressed and retired to bed to read. It was impossible to concentrate. The air was almost unbreathable from insecticide. Looking up, I saw to my horror that by ones and twos, the ants were moving across the carpet toward my bed.

I called the front desk, explained the situation, and asked if any of the other three rooms in our little area of the corridor was vacant. I was prepared to pack up and move in my night clothes, if necessary. Unfortunately, all rooms were occupied.

Furious, I wiped up dead bugs, which by now I was sure were wingless termites, sprayed vigorously, and pulled the covers over my head as useless protection against the fumes. It was not a restful night.


Waking early on Friday morning became a delight when I found only a few dead bugs and no live ones. It was even more pleasant because I could fix my coffee and return to my warm bed to enjoy repeated cups along with the new Dick Francis novel I was reading.

I luxuriated in a leisurely bubble bath, then dressed in my best executive style for the new session.



It was a full day of Spanish, except for the few moments when I gave my brief report in English. Fortunately, most of the group spoke excellent English, so I could relax during informal periods. Tom sat next to me and made sure that I caught important points during the session. Usually I had, but sometimes I had missed or misunderstood something.

Tom laughed about the night before. He and Charlotte had not gone out, as Rosario thought; friends had hurried them into an early supper with their two young children.




The conference ended with a formal dinner in the hotel's main dining room. Our long table, with starched pink damask napery and the most exquisite arrangements of pink and white roses I ever have seen, was set with a lavish array of rose-patterned china and sufficient silver to promise several courses.

The senior delegate from Costa Rica firmly led me to a seat next to our charming regional manager, M. Richard. He is an attractive young Frenchman with an amusingly informal manner. On the other side was a bright young man from Guatemalan whom I had met before.

And across the table was the head of the Air France cargo service in Mexico City. I had spent a fascinating half-day with M. Brettoniere when I was there for training a couple of years ago. I was getting dizzy studying the complications of calculating fares and writing airline tickets. It was a relief to have the guided tour through the cargo area, because I understood everything he pointed out.

M. Brettoniere is being transferred to India soon to sort out Air France's growing cargo operation there. I enjoyed having one more chance to visit with him before he leaves our side of the world.



Saturday I was on my own. Most of the Air France group left early. I hired a taxi again to go shopping, this time returning to Moravia, a town at the edge of San José that has a street lined with craft and souvenir shops. It was familiar from my first trip to San José. I picked up uninspired small gifts, saw nothing of particular interest, and wasted a lot of time and money, half of it on taxi fare.

The one thing that caught my attention was a particular shop's display of realistically painted snakes made of small discs of wood. The snakes ranged in size from 6-foot "pythons" to lethal-looking slimmer, life-size "coral snakes." A bushel basket full of intertwined snakes greeted one at the entrance to the shop. Eerie. The articulation made their movement shockingly realistic. I know because I picked one up.

My instantaneous thought was to buy one for my grandnephew Will Bryan, who will be spending a week with us over the Easter holiday. Then I remembered that his mother, Marcia, was so terrified of snakes that she would not even permit the word in her presence. On the very rare occasions when snakes had to be discussed during the time Marcia and Alex Bryan lived in Belize, she referred to them as S's (pronounced *ESS-es*). Marcia would kill me, either before or after her heart attack, if I gave one to Will.

Everywhere I went in the shop, I found a snake nestled among or appearing to protect more innocuous goods. Although I pride myself on tolerating snakes quite nicely, they finally unnerved me so that I fled to the next store.

It was a relief to return to my hotel room and order a beer and chef's salad to be enjoyed in privacy.



Sunday morning my alarm rang at 3:15 AM. I had time to enjoy my coffee before dressing and closing suitcases for departure. By 5:00, I was at the airport. So were a minimum of 75 people, determined to get on the same plane. The single TACA agent processed passengers at an excruciatingly slow rate. I toyed with the possibility of my being bumped from the flight because of my agent's ticket.

To my amusement, I got royal treatment instead when I finally reached the desk. The young man looked at my ticket, raised his eyebrows, and breathed, "You're TACA!" I smiled and said nothing. Later it occurred to me that given my age and my tailored suit, in contrast to the T-shirts

around me, he probably assumed that not only was I TACA, but I might be Really High Brass.



Standing endlessly in line, a handsome, tall, blond young man started talking to me. It developed that he was stationed in Belize with the soon-to-depart British Army. We awaited our plane together, and I learned that Dan was returning from a short holiday. He hadn't had time to see the countryside, but had found plenty of beautiful Costa Rican girls to help pass the time. One, he confided, he intended to write to later.

The flight from San José to Salvador was uneventful. I was amused to receive a good breakfast, knowing that somewhere in the back of the plane Dan, was devouring his. He had been up all night ("No point trying to go to bed for an hour") and had admitted that he was starving.

Dan joined me again when we settled in the Salvador airport awaiting our flight to Belize. The plane was there, but so were some men crawling in and out of one of the engines. Delays were announced. Dan settled down with a Walkman and earphones, and promptly fell asleep.

He awoke about 10:00, two hours after our scheduled departure time. I asked if he would like me to buy him a beer. We wandered together down the long corridor to the snack bar. I had a slight boggle thinking I did not have enough U.S. money left after having paid taxi fare the day before, but found a \$10 bill I had overlooked. We sat down to enjoy our beers and watch a soccer match on TV. After a bit, I left Dan to his soccer and returned to the departure lounge.

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## Five In France

### September – October 1994

A year ago, my Mexico travel companions, Muriel and Don Stauffer, wrote asking if I would be interested in going to Provence with them and another couple, Mary and Ernie Tyson. The year of planning gave me time to extract what help I could from four French language tapes. To my surprise, I felt quite comfortable speaking French; less so understanding it. When vocabulary failed, I unconsciously inserted the Spanish word, then wondered at the bewildered looks I received.

Fantasies of French food filled pre-trip dreams. Rarely were they shattered by reality. With a few exceptions, our meals, no matter how simple, ranged from good to superb. In retrospect, my rule seemed to have been: If it isn't high cholesterol, don't order it.

I learned shortly before the trip that what I expected as a discounted travel-agent's ticket was actually a free Air France ticket with upgrade to Le Club, an annual gift to the company's General Sales Agents. With this happy news, my standard pre-packing collapse was averted.

#### **Saturday, 24 September**

I flew from Belize to Miami then, when I checked in with Air France, learned that their flight from Paris was late. Passengers were parceled out to various hotels. As a club-class passenger, I was lodged conveniently at the Hotel MIA in the airport itself.

#### **Sunday, 25 September**

Up at 3:00 AM; aboard at 5:45. My seat-mate was a pleasant mid-age Frenchwoman. She startled me by saying a gracious *Bon soir* as she settled herself. In my first attempt to use the French I had been studying for a year, I managed to ask her with acceptable grammar and pronunciation at what time it became *Bon jour*. Her reply was, "6:00 AM." Logical. To the French it is night until daylight.

The flight was long but pleasant. I blessed the chance that had given me a day trip instead of the unpleasant nighttime one I had dreaded. The taxi ride into mid-Paris around 9:00 PM was slowed by the horde of returning weekenders. The taxi driver charged more than I had been told to expect. At my hotel door in the midst of bumper-to-bumper traffic I did not feel I could discuss the matter beyond a firm complaint. Besides, the driver had possession of my luggage.

As I struggled through the double glass doors of the Hôtel Tilsitt Étoile, the young man at the reception desk spoke to me by name and whisked bags and me to the elevator without bothering with registration.

The elevator stopped at the second floor. I pulled my luggage out into the narrow corridor. The elevator door closed. The hall was in Stygian darkness. I left my baggage at the elevator door and felt my way along the short corridor to locate my room by braille.

Touch also identified the keyhole at one side of the doorknob. Neither key on my ring fitted it. I stood in the darkness turning keys, rattling the door, and becoming increasingly frustrated.

Finally I gave up and leaving my suitcases as hazards in the dark corridor, took the elevator back down to the lobby. My gallant greeter of thirty minutes earlier was less happy to have me return. He carefully locked the glass front doors of the hotel, then accompanied me back to the second floor. Magically light appeared. He fussed at the keyhole for a moment, flung the door open, and left. Darkness returned. I pulled my suitcases into the room. In locking the door behind me I discovered that I had performed most of my futile unlocking efforts earlier with the key to my mini-bar.

Next day I learned that in many French hotels, hall lights are left off until someone needs them. There are lighted plates at convenient places along the walls that switch lights on at a touch. Illumination remains just long enough for guests to get into their rooms (providing they use the right key).

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## Monday, 26 September

I arrived in Paris a couple of days earlier than the rest of our party for business reasons. One of our best shipping customers flew over from London. I met him at Charles de Gaulle Airport, and we taxied to the new CGM offices in the suburb of Suresnes. We spent the morning at CGM discussing their increasing freight requirements.

Christiane Spitaels, director of the branch of CGM that serves Belize and an old friend, took us to lunch in a charming small family restaurant. Away from the noisy thoroughfare that passes the front of the CGM building, Suresnes was an inviting series of narrow streets, small plazas, trees, and sidewalk planters brilliant with flowers.

It was after 6:00 PM before I settled gratefully into a cab for the ride back to the Tilsitt Étoile. The pleasant young woman driver with untidy hair proceeded to veer back and forth through rush-hour traffic speaking rapidly into a telephone she held clamped to one ear. By the time I reached my room, I was exhausted. I puttered around for a while, then gave up and slept for a dreamless ten hours.

## Tuesday, 27 September

The Stauffers and Tysons were due at the hotel around 8:30 AM. I settled myself in the lobby with a good book waiting for them. I watched for a taxi. They arrived on foot, dragging enormous pieces of luggage. Don had directed their trip from airport to hotel by Metro. The little band were breathless from their laden walk from station to hotel, but surprisingly unresentful.

Despite their long overnight flight, all four were ready to tackle Paris. Our first destination was a bank. En route, it was decided that some of the group had sufficient Francs for aperitifs and lunch. We stopped for a light meal. The salads presented to us could have served whole families.

That evening we gathered at 6:00 PM in Mary and Ernie's large ground-floor room. French doors opened onto a garden court. After a celebratory Scotch, we walked a few blocks to Les Gourmets des Ternes, a brasserie


Don and Muriel recommended. We all had delicious meals; dessert was memorable. Mary's mousse and mine arrived accompanied by a pitcher of *crème fraîche* (clotted cream). We both ate as much as we dared and grieved because we could not take the rest home with us.

### **Wednesday, 28 September**

In Paris, we saw all the key sights because the Mary and Ernie never had been to France. Don guided us masterfully through the maze of the Metro. We emerged across the Seine from the Eiffel Tower. We crossed the bridge, admired the famous structure, then boarded one of the sightseeing boats moored nearby for an introduction-to-Paris cruise. We missed most of the guide's commentaries because of the excited teenage German girls behind us who chattered loudly through all announcements except those in their own language. It did not dampen our pleasure.

At the end of the cruise we took the Metro to the Place de la Concorde and strolled through the Tuileries. We stopped for lunch at one of the outdoor cafés. To our companions' horror, Ernie and I decided to try the goat's cheese. Despite Muriel's warning that it would be rank, we found it delicious, served hot on grilled bread points on a bed of shredded lettuce, generously sprinkled with walnuts. The others ordered ham crepes and found an unexpected poached egg tucked inside along with meat, cheese and tomatoes. The French, we were to find, adored poached eggs and presented them in peculiar places to unsuspecting diners.

We continued through the Tuileries on vast sandy paths, passing great pools surrounded by sun-worshippers splayed out in green chairs. At either side of the park were lawns, serried trees, and large beds of a particular golden marigold whose color offended Ernie but delighted me.



*Offended* was a mild word to describe Muriel's loathing of M.E. Pei's glass *pyramide* entry to the Louvre. Muttering, she joined us, as we passed through it to spend hours in the museum's lavish galleries.



We thrilled to the *Winged Victory* thrusting forward exultantly at the top of a wide marble staircase. We circled the *Venus de Milo* (I, rapturously). We found ourselves equally underwhelmed by the *Mona Lisa*, though we appreciated Muriel's explanation that the painting was the bridge between two eras of painting. We continued through one gallery after another, enjoying what we saw and realizing that we were barely tapping the treasures of the museum.

Exhausted, we stumbled back up through Mr. Pei's offensive pyramid into the courtyard of the Louvre. We crossed gratefully to an outdoor café and rested battered feet as we enjoyed the enormous palace surrounding us.

We returned to the hotel, where I had some hot coffee and a hotter bubble bath.



We met again in Mary and Ernie's room, then proceeded by Metro to another favorite brasserie of Muriel and Don's. It was intimate, with tiny tables and banquettes that put patrons literally shoulder-to-knee next to each other. Mary, who knew no French, already had memorized our order for aperitifs: *Cinq Kir* (five Kirs; *Kir* is a pleasant combination of white wine with a little Crème de Cassis). From then on, ordering them was her responsibility each night. The food in our restaurant was very good but the sound level, incredibly high. We returned to the hotel by foot, which proved shorter in both time and walking distance than our earlier subway ride.

### **Thursday, 29 September**

We went first to Notre Dame Cathedral. When I thought no one was looking, I knelt at the altar on icy stones. I got back up with all the grace of a reluctant camel.

We walked back across one of Paris' beloved bridges to see the book stalls that line the left bank of the Seine. Most still were closed, but the

two open ones near the end of the line gave the Tysons a show of the typical display of old books, maps, sketches and postcards.

We returned to the Île de la Cité to visit my favorite, Sainte Chapelle. As we entered the cheerful servants' chapel, Mary was distraught to learn that Ernie had left his fanny pack containing vital glasses on the security conveyor at the entrance. Ernie galloped back and returned a few moments later with a broad smile and the missing pack. The security guard wordlessly had opened a drawer, pulled out the pack, and handed it to Ernie even before he had time to ask.

To my delight, the Stauffers and Tysons were as spellbound as I at the exquisite chapel built by King Louis IX. To me, Sainte Chapelle is the Hallelujah Chorus in stone arches and stained glass.



The Metro whisked us to Montmartre, where we took the Funicular to the top. We admired the exterior of the Basilica of Sacre Coeur, but did not go inside.

We walked gingerly down a steep street and found an outdoor café. Long tables laid with red napery stretched row after row under red marquees. Mary, Ernie, and I had our first *Croque Monsieur*, the ubiquitous French hot ham sandwich. Mine, I confess, was a *Croque Madame*, with a poached egg atop the puffy cheese.

My French language books all described the Croque Monsieur as a ham-and-cheese sandwich. Basically, it was, but with a French flair. The bread was richer than the usual sliced bread. Whether or not there was some sort of spread along with the ham, I never figured out. The cheese, probably Emmenthaler, appeared to have been grated, possibly combined with a bit of something, and spread thickly over the top of the sandwich. When put under the broiler, the cheese puffed up slightly, thick and creamy. We all had these two or three different times, but our first Croque Monsieurs were the best.



After lunch, we returned to the Tuileries to see the Monet *Water Lilies* in L'Orangerie. The dozens of famous pieces were newly displayed as continuous paintings in two large oval rooms. The carpeted rooms with nothing but circular padded benches in their centers contributed physical quiet to the peacefulness of acres of blended blues and greens, broken only by the cryptic strokes that created the softer blooms.

Reluctantly leaving L'Orangerie, we headed on aching feet to the Gare d'Orsay. Unfortunately, the bridge shown on Don's map did not exist. Already tired from a day of walking, we proceeded the long way 'round along one bank of the Seine, across a bridge that was gracious enough to be in its proper location, and back along the other side of the river to the extreme far end of the d'Orsay.

We strolled amid 19th-Century art on the first floor. Don was determined to show us his favorite, *Dejeuner Sur l'Herbe* by Manet. It was not in its accustomed place and could not be found. He also wanted us to see the original Whistler's *Mother* but it, too, had disappeared. We presumed they had gone with a substantial collection on loan to the United States.

We completed our tour of the first floor rooms and took an up escalator at the far end of the building. It deposited us on a small landing with another up escalator, and that took us to another, and that took us to... There was no escape. The little landings gave access to nothing. The fourth escalator took us close enough to the vaulting grilled ceiling of the famous Gare for us to admire the metal rosettes decorating walls and ceiling. A metal grilled walkway led us back to ramps, stairways, and eventually, exhibits.

Almost the first thing we saw was Don's picnic painting. We understood immediately why he considered it the ideal outdoor lunchtime. Two elegantly clad gentlemen lounged in a glade near a handkerchief-size picnic cloth. Their companions were two unabashedly unclad females.

Whistler's *Mother* showed up on the main wall of an adjacent room, but was dismissed by Don with a casual, "So that's where the old gal got herself to!"



By late afternoon we all decided we could not walk another inch through an art museum, no matter what glories lay ahead. I thought longingly of a taxi, but there was no way five adults could fit into a Paris cab. We hobbled toward the closest Metro station. Suddenly Muriel spotted an empty bus parked by the curb. Don checked the route with the driver, then gleefully motioned us inside. The cost was slightly more than the Metro; the comfort considerably greater at a time when ease outweighed Francs. We enjoyed a scenic drive up the Champs-Élysées and alighted, rested, within a few yards of our Metro exit.

The sound of a band overrode the noise of traffic. Musicians in sparkling white uniforms were ranked at one side of the entrance to L'Arc de Triomphe. We joined the crowd of watchers at the edge of the roundabout. It was apparent that there was some sort of ceremony at the Eternal Flame. Suddenly a young man leaped into the rush-hour traffic in the roundabout, doing a gawky dance, arms windmilling, skillfully dodging disconcerted drivers, and reaching the safety of the far sidewalk to the relief of his awed audience.

### **Friday, 30 September**

We packed for an early departure from Paris. Don picked up our Chrysler Voyager, a 7-passenger van, from the nearby Hertz office. The vehicle blocked our narrow street as the men in our party tried frantically to get our mountain of luggage into the slim space behind the back seat or onto the two spare rear seats.irate French car horns joined the cacophony of voices offering suggestions about storage. Five faintly frazzled people finally fitted themselves into the vehicle. Our tour began.

My "nest" on the rearmost seat was far more comfortable than I had dared hope. The open space just in front of me, at the end of the two-passenger

middle seat, held my suitcase on edge. Cushioned by the inflatable foot rest Carli and Tom gave me, it provided a stable leg-and-foot rest at seat height. To my amazement, all the Stauffers and Tysons saw was poor Kate wedged into a tiny space alongside a mountain of luggage. I never was able to convince them fully that my nest was divinely comfortable and my view of passing scenery, perfect.

We drove to Versailles, explored the lavishly decorated palace for two hours, then took the little *tren* to the Petite Trianon, Marie Antoinette's "modest" country retreat. It would be a minor mansion to most people. We followed a gravel path to the luckless queen's "hamlet," a fairy-tale assemblage of rustic thatched cottages with improbable stairways and roofs and chimneys, and geraniums looming in window boxes.



By the time we were back in the car and headed for Chartres, the sun was a flaming ball in the western sky. Being used to short tropical twilights I could not believe that it would light us almost to Chartres.

Our concern was finding The Manoir de Palomino. Muriel drove through Chartres, out the highway, back to Chartres, and out another highway. Finally, we stopped, and I was sent out to ask directions. Between my French and a gracious young man's few words of English, I returned with instructions and the information that the hotel's name had been changed to Le Manoir de Pre du Roy.

It was 8:00 PM when we pulled up in front of a graceful old building well outside of town. As I began explaining at the reception desk in my best French that we had reservations for five, the clerk nodded over and over in happy acknowledgement. He probably had thought he was faced with five no-shows. Without asking us to register, he helped us carry luggage up to our rooms.

## Saturday, 1 October

When we repacked the car next morning, we utilized all sorts of stowage spaces we had not found during our hasty mid-street loading the previous day. We were off to visit the famous Cathedral of Chartres, older than Notre Dame and far larger.

By great good fortune, we arrived just in time for a special service. We stood quietly aside from the worshipers to watch. The organ's opening chords reverberated among the vast stone arches as music filled the enormous space with almost physical power. The processional was a parade of prelates: priests, monks, monsignors, bishops, an archbishop, and in glorious scarlet with exquisite lace emerging from his sleeves, a stately cardinal. One of the lesser dignitaries was so crippled he barely could mount the three steps onto the altar platform, but he warded off hands held out to help him. An usher gave us programs. We interpreted the French wording to say that the service was to propose someone for beatification.

Returning to the car, we drove to Châteaudun, where we stopped for lunch. The five of us crowded around a minute little table like the ones in an ice cream parlor. The simple café served only sandwiches. I had forgotten that in France, sandwiches come on long rolls, crusty and delicious, with fillings of ham or pâté.



We continued to Blois. The château was built at different periods by different monarchs. Each king built his own wing in his own style. The view from the large inner courtyard is of four radically different buildings somehow fastened each to the other to form an interesting, but vaguely inharmonious, whole.

During my year-long study of French before the trip, one of the words I encountered and knew I never would need was *porcupine*. I could not guess that in Blois I would find the glorious golden *porc-épic* that was the emblem of Louis XII.

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We drove from Blois to Villandry, where we spent the night at the delightful Cheval Rouge, just outside town. I huddled happily in my soft bed with its quilted cover, French windows thrown wide open, during the coldest night of our trip.

### **Sunday, 2 October**

We left the hotel and walked a short way alongside the highway to the Château of Villandry, which I had missed on my first trip to France. I was overwhelmed by its forty-odd acres of impeccable formal gardens. Justifiably famous, they displayed decorative vegetables outlined by short, clipped “frames” of boxwood; herb gardens nestled low in the interstices of geometrically patterned boxwood hedges; yew, perhaps a hundred years old, clipped into rigid sentinels at each boxwood corner; flower beds of all colors and sizes outlined by hedges. We strolled through the lower gardens, gasping with admiration, then took steps and ramps up to a higher spot to get an overview of the gardens. Muriel stopped at a lower level to sketch the château itself.

Leaving again on our way, our first stop was Azey-le-Rideau, called “the perfect château.” Smaller and less ornate than many others, it was a gem of proportion and design, half surrounded by a small lake. It looked as a castle is supposed to look.



We began a trip-long tradition: as often as the weather and locale made them possible, we had picnics at lunchtime. Shopping was blissfully French. We bought yard-long baguettes at the boulangerie.\* The charcuterie\*\* provided salads, quiches, and a variety of pâtés, from the coarsest of country pâté that Muriel loved to the smooth ones that were all I knew. They had huge hams that they sliced thin as a leaf or man-size thick. Dozens of different cheeses in different shapes could be bought whole or by the slice.

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\* *Boulangerie* is French for *bakery*.

\*\* *A charcuterie* is a delicatessen-style shop.

As for slicing, we had a communications gap. Both Muriel and I, on different days in different shops, asked in correct and intelligible French if the shop owner would be kind enough to slice the cheese we had bought. On both occasions she did—into wedges. The idea of slicing it into flat slices suitable for a sandwich apparently was completely foreign to the French. No matter; the cheese was unfailingly delicious in wedges even though it was lumpy in sandwiches. But then, sandwiches made with crusty slices of a baguette are so deliciously unmanageable that it didn't matter.

Twice we indulged ourselves in visits to the *pâtisserie*.\* We each selected our own dessert tarts or Napoleons from the luscious array.

French shops close promptly at 12:00 noon so that their owners can go home and fix beautiful meals for their families. Many of our shopping expeditions were made under enormous pressure of time.

On this day, stores were closing when we returned to the town. Mary and I both froze with culture shock on our first exposure to the frantic purchase of food for a picnic. Muriel asked us to choose what we wanted, but we were so overwhelmed by the variety of choices that we could not move. Muriel hastily purchased *pâté*, *quiche*, and wine from the *charcuterie*, then dashed across the street to the *boulangerie* before it closed.

A few miles down the highway we found a picnic table and enjoyed our first French outdoor lunch. The bread was a special sort of baguette in which small rolls were shaped, then fixed one against the other to form a long zig-zag loaf, easy to break into serving bits.



Our final *château* was the queen of them all, Chenonceaux. For all its size, it appeared almost ethereal, balanced on slim arches over the river.

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\* A *pâtisserie* is a pasty shop.



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We left Chenonceaux somewhat later than pre-trip plans allowed, with a five-hour drive ahead of us. By 9:00 PM we were settled in the Hôtel Les Grands Crus in Gevrey-Chambertin, in heart of Burgundy. It was next morning before I realized that my room overlooked vineyards and a nearby hill set with neat, small houses. I had to tip-toe to see out my small French windows under the eaves because of the high profusion of red blooms in its window box.

### **Monday, 3 October**

We had our first lazy morning. Rain prevented a stroll through the narrow, winding streets of our village. We did our sightseeing by car. Our hotel was literally in the midst of a series of large and small vineyards. Quaint, tidy villages of vintners, each more picturesque than the last, lay two or three kilometers apart along the twisting road. Throughout the area, walls alongside the vineyards and buildings in the villages were beige limestone. Homes and walls ranged in color from cream to pale taupe. Textures added variety. Splashes of lush greens and reds in planters and ivy-like vines, turning to fall colors, precluded monotony.

We drove into nearby Dijon looking for a laundromat. Thanks to instructions from the Tourist Bureau and Muriel and Don's aptitude for negotiating the one-way streets of unfamiliar cities, we actually found one. Fortunately, there was a simple pub at the end of the block for our morning *bière*.<sup>\*</sup> When laundry finally was dried, folded, and stored in the car, we adjourned to a convenient brasserie for lunch.

Time was with us. We were back in the car before the heavy rains began. Don drove us to see the fascinating old Dijon barge canal and locks. We continued back toward our hotel through miles of luxuriant vineyards and a succession of villages, each more crowded and quaint than the last.



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\* *Bière* is French for *beer*.

When we reached Gevrey-Chambertin, we began a search for a restaurant for dinner. Most of the ones mentioned in Don's Guide Michelin were closed Mondays. Le Clos Bostin was open, looked pleasant, and was recommended by the hotel receptionist. We returned for the worst meal of our trip.

To make up for our disappointment, I invited the party back to our hotel for liqueurs, and that was our second major mistake. The list was limited. Don and I opted for a Marc de Bourgogne, the liqueur of the region. I had drunk smoother moonshine. What little taste the Marc had beyond the raw alcohol was not a pleasant one. Don was as appalled as I. It was a relief to leave my glass half full as we climbed the stairs to our rooms.

## **Tuesday, 4 October**

Off to Provence. We followed the Route des Grands Crus, through the area of the most choice of Burgundy's wines. Stone walls along the way were darker tones due to the damp. Grape vines were beginning to turn gold following the final harvest.

We stopped at Le Château du Clos de Vougeot. Constructed by Cistercian monks in the 12th Century, it now is famous as the seat of Burgundy's elite company of wine lovers, the Confrérie des Chevaliers du Tastevin. The group gathers each November for a three-day festival. I was impressed by pictures of their scarlet medieval robes, but not by the menu of one of their classic banquets. It ended with a dessert of snails and ice cream with pears.

Soon after leaving the Clos, Don stopped at the Cave de Lugny. We explored their *cave*\* (wine cellar) then settled at a small brass-bound table to taste wines we might enjoy on future picnics. We left with two nice bottles of red and two of white wine. We were sorry that the weather that day was far too raw for outdoor lunching and the immediate sampling of our purchases.

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\* The French word *cave* is pronounced *cahv*.

We left the captivating wine country for the highway to Beaune. Don jammed on the brakes unexpectedly. The suitcase on which I propped my legs slid forward, carrying me with it until I was almost horizontal. Poor Mary, sitting in the seat ahead, grabbed my feet, trying to impede my progress. I wasn't going anywhere; the back of the front seat halted my skid. I waited in horror for the crunch of metal I expected, before struggling back to sitting position and realizing that it was an unexpected red light that had caused our precipitate stop. Without commenting on my lapse, I buckled the seat belt I had not secured soon enough.



We drove to the center of the ancient walled city of Beaune. Narrow cobbled streets curved between high walls. Don, by a miracle, found a convenient parking space, and we strolled to the Hôtel-Dieu, a medieval hospital.

The hospital was beautifully restored and imaginatively displayed. Running down each side of a long gallery were curtained cubicles containing beds, each with a simple wooden night stand and single straight chair beside it. Another chamber had somewhat more luxurious accommodations for the rich. Figureless forms of nursing nuns, portrayed by their stiffened habits alone, suggested their presence in hospital and kitchens.

While we toured the hospital, Muriel sat on a stone bench in the plaza and sketched an amenable organ grinder and his ancient instrument.



The drive south on the autoroute\* was smooth and rapid. High mountains were visible in the distance on our left. Later a range of low, velvety ridges of hills moved closer and closer to the highway, enclosing us in gently rolling country. The scent of the lavender growing in extensive fields on either side perfumed our car.

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\* *Autoroute* is French for *highway*.

We reached Carpentras and drove through to the road toward Avignon, where the Hôtel Safari was supposed to be located. As usual, to no one's dismay but my own, dark had descended. A few luckless kilometers beyond the city limits, we turned around and retraced our route to the center of the city. Another search; another failure.

We drove to the nearby town of Monteux because Don was sure the hotel was between that and Carpentras. In Monteux, Don got out to ask directions. From the car, we watched a strange and wonderful dance. Arms were flung this way and that, Don's far less exuberantly than those of his enthusiastic would-be guide. The *pas-de-deux*\* ended with sweeping circling of the French arm, nodding of the American head, and Don's return to the car. We drove an unerring course directly to the Hôtel Safari and realized that we had passed it on our first drive through town.

### **Wednesday, 5 October**

We arrived in Avignon at about 10:00 AM. So did the Mistral, a biting wind that roars down from the north and rampages for 3, 6, or 9 days.

We explored the wonderful great old stone Palais du Papes, seat of the Papacy for about a hundred years during the schism. The view from its parapets over the river was glorious, though the Mistral threatened to make us all airborne. We were not sorry to forsake picturesque but icy stonework for the plastic warmth of a small café at the top of a tower.

When we emerged into the freezing, windswept plaza, Muriel and I spotted a large carousel. A few instants of should-we-shouldn't-we, then we dashed to grab gallant white steeds. Muriel, fortunately, had worn slacks for the first time. I, on the other hand, had forsaken mine for a skirt that day. The carousel man helped as I clambered awkwardly to seat myself sidesaddle. The horse surged up in a remembered graceful leap. The calliope played. Past and present merged as we circled.

We strolled through ancient cobbled, winding streets, hugging our coats around us, then left for the Fontaine-de-Vaucluse, the picturesque start of

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\* *Pas-de-deux* means *dance for two people*.

the river Sorgue. We climbed a rocky trail alongside an emerald and white foam stream tumbling over an increasingly tumultuous series of runs, rapids, and falls to its start in a small, utterly still emerald pool. Here water flowed up from an underground cavern at a rate that was said to reach almost 33,000 gallons per second at its mid-year peak.

We drove back to the Safari through countryside lush with vineyards and vegetables. Lombardy poplars or junipers planted close together outlined fields, forming high windbreaks. We understood why.



We decided on a recommended restaurant, the Orangerie, for dinner. Dressed in our finest, we began a frustrating drive up one street and down the other. Our progress was hampered by an almost total lack of street signs and an overabundance of one-way streets. We pulled into a parking lot. Muriel got out and approached two men to ask directions. Neither admitted even having heard of the Orangerie. One asked Muriel in French, “Are you sure you are in the right city?”

Moments later we located the restaurant one short block away. It was shuttered, closed, moved. After a hurried conference, we adjourned to a brightly lit Thai-Indonesian-Chinese restaurant nearby for an excellent change from our French meals. Although I never have been adept with chopsticks, Carli would have been proud of my performance.

### **Thursday, 6 October**

We left for Orange on a cloudless, sunny day that bathed the countryside in the special Provence light we had read about. The Mistral had ended or we had left its area. The homes we passed in countryside and town still were shades of beige, usually with brown doors and window frames. One brave soul was adventurous enough to paint his home a tawny peach. Roofing tiles appeared paler in color than the ones in Burgundy.

We emerged from our low-ceilinged, cave-like parking garage to find a flourishing market. Muriel and I, dedicated market-goers, eyed each other

alertly. There were blocks of stands. Many were large, expensive vehicles whose sides opened out into display tables and bins. There were counters colorful with ripe fruit, cases filed with an array of fresh fish and seafood, stands with dozens of varieties of olives, rack after rack of clothing of all kinds. Muriel bought some preserved ginger, and we all munched happily as we prowled.

We left reluctantly to resume sightseeing at the ruins of an ancient Roman theater. All that remained was a single massive, magnificent towering wall. Birds flew in and out of holes in the facade where they had set up housekeeping, happily going about their private activities. A wooden stage replaced the original stone one and tiers of seats had been built in a semi-circle facing the wall. The annual opera festival held there must have been starkly impressive.

By the time we left the theater it was midday and market vendors had left or were packing up their things. With my conversational assistance, Ernie bought a few each of a dozen or more varieties of olives. The market woman was not happy. Each little bag had to be weighed and priced separately. I insisted that Ernie tip her for her extra work. He happily gave her 5 Francs (US\$1), which she accepted with reluctant delight.

We had to walk quite a way to find a suitable brasserie for lunch. The trouble was worth it. We found a bright, charming 1930's style restaurant specializing in Provençal cuisine.

As Don was ordering wine for lunch, he remarked that the old recommendation was: "Buy the second cheapest wine on the menu. That's the one the proprietor buys for himself."

"One caution," he added. "The wine is no better than the house serving it."



We took the magnificent scenic drive to the top of Mont Ventoux, a huge mountain looming incongruously above the surrounding plains. As we approached its 6,000-foot summit, vegetation became increasingly scanty,

with only a few stubborn junipers clinging pitifully to a moonscape of wind-scoured gravel. The Col des Tempêtes (Pass of Storms) provided glorious views of the valleys below and mountains beyond. We had just a few moments to enjoy the vista before clouds billowed their way up the slope, blanketing everything.

We started down the mountain by the other, steeper, shorter route. Soon we spotted a quaint little château / restaurant and stopped. We enjoyed steaming cappuccino in front of a welcoming fire. A minute gray hairless Chihuahua shivered in characteristic terror at the entry of strangers.

Although our downward route carried repeated warnings, *Caution—Goats Crossing*, we saw no leaping, or even strolling, animals.

### **Friday, 7 October**

We packed the car with suitcases and departed for Aix-en-Provence. Our first stop was the Village des Bories. We wound up a steep and twisted little road. High stone walls on either side enclosed a track barely wide enough for one car. We saw a tour bus parked at the bottom and soon realized that there was no way it could have negotiated the turns.

The *bories* were small, drystone, windowless, beehive-shaped stone dwellings. The flat stones overlapped to form a false vaulting of the ceiling. The little village was a cluster of stone huts and low stone walls. Their precursors were built in the New Stone Age. The huts still were being built and used in Provence into the early 20th Century.



We walked back down the winding ramp to the parking area where we had left the car, halting in disbelief as we saw that the large window in the sliding side door had disappeared completely. Pebbles of safety glass littered the gravel outside and the floor and seats within the car.

“Katy’s suitcase is gone,” several voices exclaimed in disbelief. I peered through the empty window and saw the even emptier space under it where my suitcase had performed as a leg rest during our travels.

Muriel raced back up the steep drive to the entrance building to report the theft. One of the women on duty immediately telephoned the Gendarmerie in nearby Gordes. I was too stunned to enjoy the quaint village when we drove into it a short time later.

The Gendarme who took my statement was properly tall, dark, handsome, and calm. His English was noticeably more rudimentary than my French. With Muriel's help, I ended up with a reasonably accurate police report.

It was late for lunch when we finally left the Gendarmerie in our violated vehicle. We stopped at a charming hotel and restaurant. They were complet\* with a Canadian tour, but Don brought solacing beers out to the car for all of us. They had directed Don to The Gare in the next town. It was a simple restaurant in an abandoned railway station, most recently noted for having been mentioned by Peter Mahle in his popular book, *A Year In Provence*.



After lunch, we drove directly to our next hotel in Aix-en-Provence, skipping the lovely Luberon area we had planned to explore. In Aix, things began falling into place. I began coping with lost travelers' checks, airline tickets, and medication, while my four traveling companions drove to the nearby Marseilles airport to get another vehicle from Hertz.

That was not as simple as they expected. The airport Hertz personne\*\* assured them that no van was available. Muriel and Mary pointed to three on the lot. "Reserved," was the reply. Diligence and doggedness won. They drove back with a brand new, luminous, teal-colored Peugeot 806 7-passenger van.

Every few minutes either Muriel or Mary arrived at my door offering some vital garment or object on loan. When we all settled together for what wasn't a very Happy Hour, I told everyone that they could stop worrying about me: I was fine, but their sorrowful looks of compassion,

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\* *Complet* is French for *full*.

\*\* In this context, *personne* means *employee*.



though gratefully received, had begun to make me think I just had died, and no one wanted to tell me.

The most important loss was two new pairs of custom-fitted surgical stockings. The most aggravating loss was my costume jewelry. The most painful loss was the pearls Bucher gave me on our Pearl Anniversary.

Only gradually did I realize what and how many diverse things had gone. I remarked sadly, “My first roll of finished film was in my suitcase.”

Muriel replied, “Is that any worse than your taking pictures for days on our last trip to Mexico with no film in your camera?”

### **Saturday, 8 October**

It was a morning of projects; as I sorted out my problems, Ernie exchanged money, and Don mailed an embarrassing key back to a former hotel.

Hard and shocking as the theft was, it all worked out. American Express replaced my stolen travelers’ checks. I arranged for new airline tickets. A petite and pretty English-speaking doctor, who looked at least seventeen years old, provided necessary prescriptions. The weather even cooperated by letting my single set of unmentionables dry each night. The bright side of losing my costume jewelry was that it gave me a wonderful excuse for buying replacements that I otherwise would not have considered.

Our errands took us to the famed, wide, tree-shaded Cours Mirabeau. When we gathered after our various errands, we settled at a sidewalk café for a morning *bière* and some people-watching. Later we strolled back to the hotel through busy, narrow streets, picking up picnic food from *boulangerie*, *pâtisserie*, and *charcuterie* as we passed.

We settled into our new vehicle for a drive into the country, enjoying the area Cezanne painted decades earlier. We failed to find a picnic area with the tables that Don considered a prime requisite, but finally pulled into an open area sufficiently far from a nearby house for privacy. Cezanne’s

immortalized Mont Sainte-Victoire, pale with the blue shadows he loved, loomed above us.

Muriel carefully spread her plastic ground sheet (i.e., painter's dropcloth) and we laid out our baguettes, Camembert, and pâté. We had finished them and were starting our individually selected pastries when a car drove up and parked at the nearby house.

A pleasant woman approached. In French she said, "You realize that this is private property, don't you?"

We replied with protests and apologies in English and French.

She added, "Please pick up before you leave," and at our unanimous avowal of decency and ecological awareness, left.

Don remarked, "This area obviously *doesn't* belong to that house. Otherwise, she would have been much more adamant about driving us away."

We packed our things up meticulously. Discardables were bundled together in a plastic sack and deposited in a convenient bin across the road. Only our memories knew we had been there.



We drove back into Aix to visit the studio of Paul Cezanne. The entrance fee was high and the display, minimal. We enjoyed seeing the painter's studio with its array of "things" we all remembered from various paintings. We ambled through the overgrown woods (hardly gardens) surrounding the house. We all felt we had been ripped off for the first time.

Still, when we returned to the car, we paused to look up at the mountains in the distance. Ernie remarked, "This is the view Cezanne had from his studio. The buildings weren't here and the trees were not tall enough then to block out the landscape."

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## Sunday, 9 October

We took the autoroute from Aix-en-Provence to the Riviera. Ridge after ridge of abrupt hills and mountains paralleled the Mediterranean. We headed for Grasse. The perfume center was a short northward detour from Cannes. On hillsides, homes now were of Mediterranean design, but were almost universal in their warm beige tones and tile roofs.


Signs in Grasse directed us to the Fragonard perfumery. We missed the guided tour, but wandered through the manufacturing display. Don explained much of the process to us. We ended up, naturally, in an enormous sales room.



We made the mistake of buying picnic food when we were to be in a built-up area without picnic facilities. We searched fruitlessly for a suitable spot, dispositions deteriorating as we went. In desperation, we settled on a public park, deserted during midday by the carnival proprietors whose locked amusement vehicles were lined up much of its length. Muriel found two benches at right angles to each other with a low wall behind them. It wasn't our idea of a scenic spot, it wasn't Don's idea of a picnic table, it served. We laid our food out on the doubled and redoubled plastic, poured wine, and picnicked in public.

A slim French woman swaddled in a heavy wrap tottered past on stiletto heels, looking at us disapprovingly and muttering aloud. At the far end of the park she stopped to talk to a man in a conversation involving much head-shaking and pointing in our direction. We ate and drank happily, ignoring the few passers-by. Our critic reappeared. As she passed, she twirled an energetic finger alongside her head in the universal sign for *crazy*.

After lunch, we visited Galimard, the only other perfumery we could find open and offering free tours on a Sunday. Our guide was a charming French girl with a clever patter, who led us through the technical areas unerringly to the sales display.



We returned to Cannes, then took the Basse Corniche along the coast of the Mediterranean. The road wound between high walls. Homes half hidden by luxuriant planting studded the hillsides. We felt at constant risk from small cars determined to pass on curves just as another equally headstrong car came into sight.

The Riviera looked exactly as I expected, with its wide promenade along the sea, acres of boats side-by-side in marinas, shops and restaurants on one side of the road, gravel beach on the other. The Russian cruise ship *Odessa*, which had called at Belize, dwarfed nearby boats.

Our hotel, the Comté de Nice, was in Beaulieu-Sur-Mer, one of the series of small towns beyond Nice. The hotel was pleasant. Its garage, to our newly paranoid delight, had a degree of security a federal prison would envy.

That night we walked a few blocks to an excellent restaurant for dinner. Mary performed her part with aplomb, ordering our *cinq Kir*. Afterwards we strolled down to the *quai*\* before returning to our hotel.

### **Monday, 10 October**

Off to Eze, a medieval fortress town perched on a high mountain overlooking the Mediterranean. Our curving road, built by the Romans, wound between grilled fences on the seaward side and high walls overgrown with vines on the other. To the South we could see Cap Ferrat. Beige houses, tile-roofed, large and small, covered the mountains like blond raisins in a cake.

Just below Eze, traffic on the Moyenne Corniche was halted by highway construction. Two lanes of cars stretched ahead of us as far as we could see. Ribs of mountains on either side of the highway folded together in such a way that they displayed a blue triangle of the Mediterranean at

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\* *Quai* is French for *wharf*.

their junction like the light at the end of a tunnel. For nearly an hour we barely crept along.

Ultimately Eze appeared, impossibly high and unapproachable. We were able to park reasonably close, then climbed a few hundred steps to the town itself. I told Don that he never saw a stairway he didn't want us all to climb.

Eze is a picture-book town of winding paths, sudden steps, unexpected doorways, homes and shops, all made of the same gray stone. Lush planters, brightly flowering bushes, and geranium-filled boxes softened the grimness.

We found a high terrace outside the finest restaurant and stopped for a refreshing drink, spellbound by the vistas of the sea and nearby mountains. One of the group termed it “a perfect photo op.”

We ambled up one narrow pathway after another. While many of the shops had only tourist schlock, an equal number, run by artists, offered individually designed pieces of jewelry, paintings, fabrics, and scarves. I was not as much sightseeing as searching each promising shop for replacements for the jewelry I had lost. Eventually I found the right artist.



Muriel, Kate, Ernie & Mary Tsyon, and Don in France, 1994

I left with a handsome, simple gold necklace and starburst-design earrings. I resisted the matching handsome pendant and have regretted it ever since.

Near the top of the village was the Exotic Garden, a hillside rock garden of cacti, succulents, and tropical trees. Ernie was entranced; I, momentarily homesick.



We lunched in one of Eze's picturesque restaurants, then headed for Monaco. By the time we reached there, a light rain had begun. We drove through unfamiliar streets, searching for the Jacques Cousteau Oceanographic Museum. Don stopped to ask directions and was told he already was there. We were, but at the wrong end of the parking garage. We secured the car then dashed through the rain to the Museum.

We took our time exploring the aquarium, a scientific exhibit, and Prince Albert's collection of shells and sea memorabilia. An eerie recording of whale sounds accompanied an exhibition of whale skeletons.

Don was determined that we must see the Casino. However, by the time we emerged from the museum it was almost dark and still raining. All we wanted was to get back to our hotel. I did not feel I had missed anything essential to my greater good. Besides, when I entered the Monte Carlo casino, I wanted to be wearing a breathtaking evening gown, diamonds, long white gloves, and be many decades younger.

## **Tuesday, 11 October**

When we left for Nîmes, we decided to detour around Cap d'Antibes. The inland end of the peninsula was disappointingly modern, but the old city near the point was charming. We passed streets of beautiful homes guarded by iron gates or high walls of stone or shrubbery. Despite the cool day, we spotted a topless swimmer on the beach. A top-heavy cruise ship, awkward with its high superstructure, was anchored in the harbor south of the cape.

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For once we were settled in our hotel before dark, my chosen prerequisite, rarely achieved. Don's well used Michelin guide led us to one of our favorite restaurants of the trip.

Usually in French restaurants, the most reasonable way to order is to take the "menu at so many Francs." This offers an appetizer and/or salad, a meat that usually comes with potatoes and vegetables, cheese, and dessert. The portions normally are gracious without being overwhelming.

Muriel and I ordered the menu at 85 Francs with chicken. When our plates arrived we looked at our meat in amazement, looked at each other, tasted, then agreed that we didn't know what it was, but poultry it certainly wasn't. It was delicious. We finally identified our dinners as braised lamb shanks in a red wine sauce. We decided that the kitchen must have run out of chicken and substituted the lamb from their more expensive menu. We did not complain.

For dessert we both ordered the white cheese with crème fraîche. Muriel termed hers "stiff yogurt" and proceeded to sprinkle it generously with sugar. I found mine an interesting texture, halfway between soft cheese and stiff gelatin. The cream, of course, I loved without reservation.

### **Wednesday, 12 October**

Packing and unpacking had become a bore for all of us. After cutting Carcassonne out of our itinerary because of its location well off our route, we had two unscheduled days. All of us had loved our stay in Burgundy. We decided four days among the Beaujolais vineyards would be a pleasant rest for us all. I faxed ahead to our hotel asking if we might arrive two days early. A prompt telephone call in reply assured me that we all were welcome.

Our first tour destination from Nîmes was Les Baux-de-Provence. We drove through an unexpected haze of smog blanketing most of our way. Large factories in the relatively charmless town of Beaucaire undoubtedly were part of the source. We crossed a canal choked with boats in the stretch above the locks. Don said it reminded him of Belgium.

We passed two statues of bulls. Ernie commented, “It’s always pleasant to see statues that are something besides war monuments. I like to see statues that reflect the interests of the people.” We weren’t sure whether the immortalization reflected the bull fighting enjoyed in the area or the district’s substantial industry of bull semen.

Throughout Provence, long stretches of road were lined on each side by sycamores, their branches enlaced overhead to form green tunnels. In places, all high vegetation bent over slightly in the same direction at the same angle due to the heavy winds of the Mistral.

We stopped in the delightful old town of St. Remy. We parked and walked through diminishing misty rain past a market in the central plaza. We relaxed briefly on the raised terrace of a nearby café, watching villagers and market vendors. Then, delighted at having a mission, we launched ourselves into the market to buy picnic supplies. I detoured into a tiny jewelry shop to replace the costume earring I somehow had flipped off while putting on my coat outside the hotel as we left. After having had to wear the same earrings day after day since the theft, I was not unduly distressed. Or perhaps I had developed an uncharacteristic “so what” attitude toward things since losing so much.



We drove toward Les Baux. Muriel turned off the pavement onto a gravel road. To my mounting dismay, she proceeded along the rough track, around curves, up a hill, and around boulders, until we emerged in the most glorious of spots. A high cliff of sheer white slabs soared above us. The ground was gravel bestrewn with boulders. Across the rocks in one direction was a fertile valley under high green hills. We carried our picnic things up a slight rocky rise. Feast and friends were settled on convenient boulders. Food was more savory and company, wittier, in our spectacular surroundings.

Enormous rocks like the ones we just had left overhung the road as we approached Les Baux-de-Provence. It was another medieval town and



ruins, perched on the same rocks of which it was built, overlooking a countryside of vines, olive trees, and quarries.

Bauxite (aluminum ore) was discovered there in the mid Eighteen Hundreds. Far below Les Baux on one side was a narrow valley under white, sheer rock walls. On the other side, the mountain holding the tiny settlement eased down into a broad valley. The town itself was much like Eze and equally fun to explore.

We drove back to Arles and wandered the old walled city with its narrow, crooked streets, sheer walls of houses, and window boxes in Christmas colors. The restored ruins of an early Roman amphitheater entranced us all. Don and Ernie prowled up and around the farthest, highest tiers of seats. Mary and Muriel explored. I preferred to sit quietly looking at the old stonework and trying to feel the presence of those who had built and peopled it.

We strolled through ancient streets, then climbed the wall that borders the wide River Rhône. The view was lovely; the smell, unacceptable.



We returned to Nîmes through the same haze of smog. By unanimous decision we returned to our restaurant of the preceding night. This time we ordered à la carte to avoid the enormous amounts of food on the multi-course menu. Muriel and I ordered Pavé du Boeuf, not realizing that *pavé* can be defined as *slab*. Our meat, an inch and a half thick, literally covered our dinner plates. Muriel ate about a quarter of hers. Mine, with its perfect green pepper sauce, kept me occupied until my plate was cleaned. I should have been embarrassed, but enjoyed it too much to care.

### **Thursday, 13 October**

We set out to see Nîmes' famous Roman ruins before starting our drive to the Beaujolais. Don promptly was frustrated by a maze of one-way streets complicated by regular diversions for street repairs.

Finally I asked Don, “Has it occurred to you that we may be destined never to leave Nîmes?”

Don replied fervently, “Indeed it has!”

We continued our circular route through lovely, twisting, narrow streets, enjoyed by everyone except our driver. At one corner, Muriel had to jump out of the car to direct Don through an impossibly tight turn.

Don drove past the same side of the famous Jardins de la Fontaine for a third frustrating time, still blocked from proceeding to the far side. He told us, “You’d better enjoy that fountain, because it is the only one you’re going to see.”

We took a now-familiar two-lane street to the Temple of Diana, said to be the best preserved one in the world. As we walked down the wide steps to the temple’s sunken plaza, we were approached by three teenage girls, Gypsies, Algerians, what-have-you. They thrust tattered sheets from a colored tabloid at us, asking for money. One pawed Mary’s shoulder pleading for “food for the baby” as she stared down into the pocketbook Mary just had zipped. Ernie called out a warning that this was a purse-snatching team. In three languages we ordered the girls to go away. They stuck like flies in a summer rain. Muriel, Mary, and I clutched pocketbooks to heaving bosoms, twisting to get away from the girls.

To our delight, suddenly they left. To our dismay they surrounded Don, down the street videoing the temple. Ernie called to warn him as one of the girls thrust a hand inside his jacket. Yelling, arms flailing, Ernie ran down the street and chased the girls away. My memory is a little hazy, but I don’t remember that the incident deterred even momentarily Don’s dedicated photographing.

The trio left Don and returned to attack us again with their whines and inept eyeing of our tightly protected valuables. Muriel yelled that she was calling the police. I just yelled, bellowing in my best back-seat-of-the-theater voice. A passing man said something brief and sharp to the girls. They left, looking back viciously at us over their shoulders.

Shaking from the onslaught, Muriel, Mary, and I returned to the car in racing walks and locked ourselves gratefully behind its steel walls. As we began to relax, Muriel laughed that the girls had no chance of robbing Don. “Don has a Scotch wallet. He has trouble getting it out of his pocket himself.”

We drove next to the famous Roman amphitheater, enormous and amazingly intact. Muriel said she would stay with the car. Mary and I were not about to leave our shelter. The men made a quick visit to the amphitheater. When they returned, they said our threesome of would-be thieves just was arriving, assumedly looking for less wary tourists.



We all were relieved to leave Nîmes behind. We paused at the first convenient café on the highway. Its parking lot held trucks and a bus. The terrace tables were almost full with pleasant young men in their early twenties. Gradually we realized that it was a driving school for truck and bus drivers. We watched as novices guided massive rigs backwards through an obstacle course.

Don videoed a group of the young people on the terrace. They giggled with delight. I wondered how beer mixed with driver training.

We stopped in a small town for picnic food, using three separate shops in the French way. The line of lunchtime customers at the boulangerie stretched out onto the sidewalk. Muriel lined up with the rest and nearly fainted from the heat in the tiny shop before emerging with her yard-long baguette. We stopped at a pleasant picnic ground alongside the autoroute. It was not as dramatic as some, but it had a table for Don.



The rest of the drive was uneventful. At the comfortable daylight hour of 5:00 PM we reached the captivating Les Maritannes in the village of Romanèche-Thorins, in the heart of The Beaujolais.

My first impression was of walls covered with green vines turning red, of tall trees, and of lace-curtained French windows under a wood-beamed walkway. We were welcomed warmly by the attractive young woman who had telephoned me in Nîmes. Again we were led quickly to our rooms, unregistered.

Our rooms were fresh and invitingly French-Country style. The hotel's public rooms were homey-with-taste. The breakfast-room-cum-bar held tables covered with lace cloths, a mantel displaying pewter pieces, and several inviting overstuffed arm chairs.

That night we decided to have dinner in the hotel's one-star restaurant, even though it was a bit more expensive than we normally chose. It was a happy experience. Excellent food was beautifully served. I ordered one of the things on my be-sure-to-eat-in-France list: *Grenouilles* (frog's legs, a favorite from my Michigan childhood). They were delicious, though awkward to eat. As I finished, my plate was whisked away, and to my horror, another full serving was set smoothly in front of me. My protests were smiled away. I obediently set in to demolish the little darlings as my companions laughed and enjoyed their wine. Muriel said she had run into the double-serving in the Netherlands. She learned that refusal of the second helping was considered an insult.

### **Friday, October 14**

A cold fog obscured the countryside for a short time as we set out on our explorations. Don drove to Macon, where we hit the bank for what we all hoped would be the last time we'd need to cash travelers' checks.

Massed flowers of every possible kind and color edged the street into town. Muriel and Ernie agreed that the unseemly mixture of blooms should have looked terrible, but that somehow they didn't. The conversation reminded Muriel of a friend who met life's treacheries with the motto: "Think Pretty Colors."

The Beaujolais appeared to be a prosperous area. There were many substantial newish houses, but all were of designs and beige colors that

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blended with the older stone buildings. Tangerine-colored dahlias made blocks of color against limestone walls.

Here low hedges outlined fields, sometimes set with large trees, graciously spaced. The Beaujolais did not need the windbreaks of the Mistral country. A patchwork of vineyards covered hills, each one its own shade of greeny-gold or copper. Vines in the Beaujolais were planted on hillsides, with rows running up and down to facilitate drainage. Throughout the wine country, all was neatness. The sense of community and pride of the vintners showed everywhere.

We drove past pastures full of cream-colored Charolais cattle and through woods that could have been North Georgia. Like Bourgogne, the Beaujolais area is a series of small villages, each producing its own wine.

We stopped for lunch in Cluny at a modest sidewalk café. Mary and Ernie were delighted to find a vegetable plate. I joined Muriel and Don in attacking an enormous bowl of mussels cooked with onions in wine. We ladled them into soup bowls. Don showed me how to open the shells and extract the meat. We used bits of crusty rolls to sop up the broth. The meal was messy but delicious.



We continued to the village of Vergisson. Don and Muriel had met a small vintner named André Forest there years earlier and more recently encouraged a friend of theirs to import M. Forest's Pouilly-Fuissé to the Philadelphia area. Both M. and Mme. Forest were at home, relaxed at the end of the harvest with their new wine safe in oak kegs. When Muriel and Don introduced themselves, they invited us to see their *cave* and sample their wines.

We went into a small wine cellar with a dirt floor and long line of wine kegs. It had a wonderful earthy smell, which Muriel and Mary described as "musty" and Ernie called "yeasty." We continued into another room lined with racks of bottles. A large keg had been cut off and upended to make a rough wooden table. We sat on small uneven benches as M. Forest

produced some Pouilly-Fuissé that he said had been in the bottle for only six months. He filled our glasses generously. The wine was good, but even I could tell that it was green. It would be excellent in another year and a half, we were told.

M. Forest, obviously proud of his small winery and his increasingly recognized wines, told us something about their background. He spoke no English. Muriel, Don, and I cooperated in translating and communicating with varying degrees of success. The business had been handed down from father to son since 1750. M. Forest had fifteen hectares of vineyards (about twelve acres). Most of his vines were 50 years old and still bearing strongly. M. Forest said that his hillside soil was stony and about eight inches deep above solid rock.

Ernie had many questions about viticulture. We did our best to translate back and forth. Mme. Forest, a delightful person, obviously was frustrated at not being able to talk freely with the visitors she made so welcome.

M. Forest, over our protests, opened a second bottle, Pouilly-Fuissé 1992, at the peak of aging. It was delicious. Don bought two bottles, which we enjoyed later, one on a picnic and the other during Happy Hour after our supply of Scotch was exhausted.

We left reluctantly and continued our drive through the endless vineyards and pretty towns of the area.



That evening we drove to nearby Juliéna for dinner at the delightful Coq Au Vin. To begin our meal, several of us ordered Salade Lyonnaise de la Maison. We all were taken aback to be served beautiful plates of beds of lettuce surrounded by long, square strips of raw herring, onion curls, and atop all, a poached egg.

Several of us had superb calves liver. The Fromage au Crème Fraîche was a smooth glory. The Crème Brûlée was the best we had anywhere, the custard creamy and the sugar topping brown and brittle.

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## Saturday, 15 October

It was a perfect fogless day. Four of our group agreed that we were “wined out” and would be just as happy not to have another degustation.\*

We drove to the famous windmill that gives wines of the immediate area the name “Moulin-à-Vent.” From the hill on which the moulin\*\* stood, we had a panoramic view of vineyards and rolling hills beset with scattered homes and villages.

We continued to Chénas. Don bought a bottle of its wine, recommended by experts as underrated. In Fleurie, which produces the most flowery of the Beaujolais wines, we found a market and gift shops in the central square. We took advantage of both. We left with gifts for home and lunch fixings of bread, pâté, cheese, and tinned asparagus.

Don drove up a long, winding road to the top of the highest of the surrounding mountains and pulled into the parking area of a small restaurant. It was closed for the season, as Don hoped. We appropriated one of their picnic tables and enjoyed our lunch in beautiful surroundings.



After lunch, we returned to the hotel and separated. Muriel went off to paint, unsuccessfully, as she reported later. Mary and Ernie napped. I joined Don for a visit to the nearby George Duboeuf winery. We paid for an unguided tour and found ourselves in a vast museum of viticulture. We were spellbound at the array of pictures, maps, charts, artifacts; an engaging automated stage show of the entire growing and picking process; displays of bottles, glass-making, cork, and the growing, reaping, and production of corks for wine bottles. It was a sophisticated museum, stretching through sixteen rooms of former winery and cellars.

During our explorations, we happened on a TV crew photographing one of the younger Duboeufs giving an introduction to what obviously would be a special about the wine museum. The tour ended in a wonderful

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\* *Degustation* is French for *tasting*; here it means *wine tasting*.

\*\* *Moulin* is French for *mill*; *Moulin-à-Vent* means *windmill*.

old-fashioned barroom, gleaming with polished wood and brass. We enjoyed our glasses of wine to the overly loud but nostalgic accompaniment of a calliope.

### **Sunday, 16 October**

The morning again was foggy. After Don's and my enthusiastic description of the Duboeuf wine museum, Muriel, Mary, and Ernie decided to visit it early. At 10:00, when shops in France opened, Don and I went in search of picnic food. We returned to the Duboeuf sales room to wait for our group. They were held up by locked doors in the middle of their tour, so Don and I spent an hour in the sales room, under the suspicious eye of the sole woman on duty that Sunday morning.

We walked slowly along the displays of wine bordering the room, discussing each one. Listening to Don, I added another layer to my minor understanding of wines. After having inspected everything several times, I broke off to buy a postcard map of the Beaujolais. The clerk, who obviously anticipated an interesting sale from our lengthy study of her wares, gasped in astonishment, "*C'est tout?*" (That's all?)

When our group finally emerged, we drove to nearby Morgon and picnicked in a wooded park adjacent to a winery. We strolled past cages of deer and several colorful varieties of birds to reach an isolated table. Ernie estimated that some of the massive pines towering over us were 300 to 350 years old.

We toured the winery's *cave* briefly. Its rooms had been freshened and turned into a picturesque bar, restaurant, and farther on, a great open area for parties and weddings, where formerly oak kegs held aging wines. Only the elegant stained-glass windows depicting steps in wine-making were of real interest.





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We returned to the hotel to pack, then met at a sunny table on the terrace for a four o'clock *Seize Cent Soixante Quatre*,\* our beer of choice during our travels.

It was Muriel and Don's 46th wedding anniversary. The Tysons and I bought the best available bottle of Pouilly-Fuissé from Duboeuf for Happy Hour that evening. We again ate in the one-star hotel dining room.

Although we ordered only a main course and, as a farewell gesture, dessert, we were served several *braata*:\*\*

- With our aperitif Kirs, minute savory pastries
- As an appetizer, a small dish of sweetbreads in a light sauce with seasoned vegetable bits
- After dessert, astonishingly, two plates of an assortment of bite-size tarts, cream puffs, and other delectables

Don and Muriel invited us for liqueurs in the informal room where we breakfasted daily. Don and I were able to resist ordering Marc de Bourgogne.

## Monday, 17 October

We all arose early and met for breakfast before the staff had finished setting tables. The car was stowed with baggage for our trip to Paris. We were under way at 8:55 and on the autoroute fifteen minutes later.

A plateau of vineyards, then pastures, were our first landscapes. Fields and foliage had reddened noticeable since our southward drive three weeks earlier.

Muriel took the wheel as we approached Paris. Don directed her, the huge road atlas of France on his lap open to the proper Paris page. We passed Orly Airport and continued through tidy suburbs. Thick woods lined the throughway in places. Sooner than I would have imagined possible, we

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\* The beer's brand, *Seize Cent Soixante Quatre*, means 1664.

\*\* *Braata* is Belize Creole for something extra that a merchant adds to a purchase as a free bonus.

were off the throughway and into mid-Paris traffic. Muriel skillfully circled the Arc de Triomphe, dodging determined drivers and changing lanes as Don directed. In moments we were at the curb in front of our delightful Hôtel Tilsitt Étoile.

As soon as we had deposited baggage in our rooms, we left to walk to the Air France office, not far down the Champs-Élysées. The foursome adjourned to a nearby outdoor café for a Kir, while I went to replace my stolen ticket. It was a time-consuming, but ultimately successful, exercise. By the time I left the Air France office, Don was about to enter it. “I thought the Gendarmes had you for trying to use a stolen ticket,” he said.

Our tour group once more complete, we left on one of Don’s brilliantly choreographed pas-de-cinq\* through the Metro. We emerged in Montmartre. Don was determined that the Tysons should have that classic Paris adventure, an aperitif at Les Deux Magots, where generations of writers relaxed between inspirations.

A classic Scottie, gallantly trying with stubby legs to keep up with his long-limbed owner, reminded me how much dogs were a part of the scene in France. It seemed that for each five French citizens, there were two dogs. We saw beautifully groomed, well trained dogs of every breed throughout France: on the streets, at historical sites, in hotels, in restaurants, in baskets on bicycles, and in boxes on market stands.

We left Montmartre, and Don guided us to an alternate route back to our hotel. It took us on an elevated line, past apartment buildings and across the Seine for the last time.



We returned for dinner to the nearby Les Gourmets des Ternes, where we had eaten the first night of our trip. Mary wanted another chance at their Boeuf Bourguignon, and we both wanted the pitcher of crème fraîche served with our desserts.

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\* *Pas-de-cinq* means *dance for five people*.

To our surprise, soon after we were seated, the son of the proprietor came over to our table with a warm welcome. He said he remembered us and even knew what appetizers we had the first time and wanted to repeat. Don remarked after he left, “It’s wonderful that we haven’t gained so much weight that he couldn’t recognize us.” Dinner was as delicious as we all remembered and expected.

We said a reluctant good night as we parted on our last night in Paris.

## **Tuesday, 18 October**

We breakfasted together early. As we finished, Muriel said that they could spend their pre-flight time at Charles de Gaulle Airport looking for the gift T-shirts they never had found. “They’ll probably say *I love New York*,” she added dryly as we left the table.

Twenty minutes later the Stauffers and Tysons were checked out, baggage loaded into the van for the last time, and on their way to the airport. I had that almost teary feeling as I watched friends and travel companions drive off.



A couple of hours later, I left the hotel, taxied to Charles de Gaulle, and checked in with Air France. I prowled the shops with nothing special in mind, finding exactly that. It occurred to me that if the United Airlines departure area was like the Air France one, Don probably did not find his T-shirts.

I found a comfortable seat in the departure lounge and settled down with a good book. Glancing up, I noticed a handsome, tailored light-gold dress in the window of an expensive shop. I knew I could not afford it, but wandered over to study it closer anyway. The dress was accessorized with a beautiful gold chain and pendant with a price tag in my range. I went into the shop and emerged a few minutes later with a wonderful addition to my depleted store of costume jewelry, stripped from the model as I watched.

The Air France flight was on time. Club class was addictively comfortable. By sundown, I was in my room in the Miami airport hotel.

### **Wednesday, 19 October**

My TACA flight was uneventful and on time. I debouched into the friendly humidity of Belize. The Customs officer waved me through, garment bag untouched, when he learned of my loss in France.

To my delight, Alex was waiting for me as I emerged from the terminal. Somehow between my arrival in the terminal and my exit, the heavens had opened up. I extracted the umbrella that had accompanied me day after day through the suns of Provence and handed it to my son so he could retrieve his truck without drowning.

Much as I loved my tour of France, it was wonderful to be back in Belize.

### **Epilogue, 26 November**

The end of the trip was made less painful by an invitation to join Don and Muriel next year in Spain.\* Don has to be there for a conference on September 10th. They plan to visit the Basque country (which I always have wanted to do) and also Morocco (which I never considered).

Assuming I can pay American Express and Visa for this trip, and assuming that I can keep from falling down and breaking something vital, I'll be back on the plane to Europe next fall.

Now I'll have to get out my Spanish books and tapes. My new daughter-in-law, María, confided that her mother remarked that my Spanish is pretty good, but that I have the strangest accent she ever has heard. Furthermore, I will have to keep my French brushed up. I think that's the lingua franca in Morocco. I'm thinking of trying to learn a few phrases in Arabic, but that may be pushing things.

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\* "France – Morocco – Spain with Muriel & Don" on page 9 in Book 4: *Travels, 1995 – 2007*

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## Editor's Notes

These notes are by no means necessary for understanding and enjoying my Mom's accounts. Rather, they contain additional bits of information, as I might relate to a friend who had just read the relevant chapters.

— *Carli Scott*

### 1. Quintana Roo

Mom's description of the trip she and my Dad took to Mérida in 1971 (page 48) states:

Quintana Roo, adjacent to the B.H. border, is a territory of Mexico, not a state...

Quintana Roo, along with Baja California Sur, were granted statehood in October of 1974, making them the two most recent of the United Mexican States.

### 2. Report of Trip to England

On her trips, Mom spent any free time in an evening making notes of the day's highlights in her travel journal. Back at home, she referred to her hand-written notes and photographs from the trip, and filled in details from her memory as she typed up a full report to send to family and friends.

Mom's report of her trip to England in 1974 was only partially finished. I found two copies of a typed, detailed description of the first six days of the trip, plus her hand-written notes for the entire trip. The corresponding chapter in this book (page 59) consists of her typed report for June 12th through 17th, followed by briefer descriptions of June 18th through 28th, based on notes in her journal.

### 3. Kate's Stockings

In Mom's report of her trip to Mérida with my Aunt Becky in 1986 (page 94), she wrote:

There was no hot water; there was no stopper in the sink; and they did not give me the plastic basin I requested for washing my stockings.

Mom was hospitalized for thrombophlebitis in 1975 while visiting cousins in Saginaw. Thereafter, she had to wear custom-fit elastic compression stockings to assist blood circulation.

When Mom traveled, washing her stockings at the end of each day could pose a challenge. She needed:

- A basin with stopper (or alternative container), where she could soak, wash, and rinse the stockings
- An extra towel in which to wrap the wet stockings to absorb the excess water
- A place to hang the damp stockings, in hopes that they would dry overnight

### 4. Wildebeest Painting

In Mom's report of her trip to Africa in 1988, she wrote of the National Museum in Nairobi (page 134):

The museum had excellent displays of...current art (including a large impressionistic painting of wildebeest migrating, which I would have bought in a moment had the price not been in four digits—U.S. currency).

Because Mom could not take the painting with her, she took a photograph of it.

Back home in Belize, when Mom showed Alex and María the photos from her trip, she told them how taken she had been with the painting. Unbeknownst to her, Alex then took her photo to local artist Stella Jefferies, who painted a copy. When Mom opened her present from Alex

that Christmas morning, she was astonished, delighted, and overwhelmed to discover the painting by Jefferies.

Mom's beloved wildebeest painting graced her living-room wall for the remainder of her life.







**Kate V. Scott was a journalist, a wife and mother, a private pilot, a bookkeeper, a shipping agent, an airline agent, a dog lover, a bridge player, a traveler, and a tireless correspondent with a uniquely engaging writing style.**

**This is the third of four books in a posthumous autobiography that her daughter, Carli Scott, assembled from Kate's letters, reports, and other writing. In it, Kate details her adventures traveling for business and pleasure—initially close to her home in Belize, later to far-off continents.**



Kate with husband Bucher in England, 1974