

1955 MY FIRST TRIP ABROAD

In our family we call travel the family disease. My grandmother had gone to Australia and New Zealand on her honeymoon in 1900. Her husband died when only fifty-two. Grannie spent the rest of her life traveling with my Mother my sister or me. She taught us all the love of travel.

Grannie loved ships and she wanted to book a roundtrip to Athens on the SS Olympia. However she couldn't get the return passage. As she put it, "I am going to be stuck on the continent for two weeks." First she called my Mother and asked her to go with her. Mother declined, telling Grannie she was too old and not well enough to make the trip. Since Mother traveled until she was ninety, this is humorous.

With four children under the age of six, you can imagine my surprise when Grannie invited me to go with her. I thought she was kidding until she started telling me how to get a passport! She also said she would pay for someone to take care of my busy household!

Thursday, August 11, 1955, my husband and I traveled to New York to join her. My sister and her husband came in from their home in Morristown, NJ. We had a gala dinner at the Copley Plaza and then went to see 'Fanny'. Following this we went to the Latin Quarter for the midnight show.

August 12 we sailed from Pier 88 at eleven thirty in the morning, about a half hour late. Ev was on the pier to catch the streamers. It was such a thrill to sail past the Statue of Liberty and put out to sea.

The weather was rough and many people got seasick but Grannie and I only had to cope with keeping our balance. We met the Warners, friends of Grannie's good friend, Mrs. DuPont.

August 13. At sea. Our tablemates are Mr. Richmond, the Information Officer, the Warners and Miss Butler, a Greek woman who is on her way home after ten months in the USA and Canada. Among other things she taught for a time at Purdue.

I sampled retsina, a Greek wine that tastes like turpentine. We also started to learn a little Greek. 'Yazzou' is hygienic shortness for 'to your health.' Also we learned to say hello and goodbye in Greek.

After some very good Turkish coffee, we had a tour of the bridge. This was followed by lifeboat drill. In the evening we had more Turkish coffee and played Bingo.

Lost an hour on the clock.

August 14, 1955. At sea. I had a swim and slept all afternoon. The Captain's cocktail party was canceled because of fog. We had dog races and I saw the movie "Ninotchka" with Greta Garbo. It was very good.

August 15. At sea. The Captain's cocktail party was a great success as everyone was relaxed and we made friends with one another.

We lost another hour.

August 16. At sea. I saw a travelogue on Greece in the morning. Then I had a swim and saw another travelogue on Athens and another one on Greece. I tried to see the Greek dancing without success, so I played horseracing. Saw the movie, 'The Great Caruso.'

Lost another hour.

August 17. At Sea. Saw the movie 'Lavender Hill Mob.' I also went down to the tourist pavilion with the Withols and saw some Greek dancing. We can go down to Tourist but they can't come up to First. I had my hair done very well.

Lost another hour.

August 18. We arrived in Lisbon at 3:00 PM. They wouldn't let us off the boat for lack of time. Grannie was so annoyed! She had never been to Europe before (had been saving it for her old age) and wanted to see our first port of call.

We did see the westernmost point of Europe and went up the Tagus River. We stood at the rail while they lightered off debarking passengers and freight. It looks like a lovely port but we had to content ourselves shopping at the bazaar on Promenade deck. I bought some hats from Madeira

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and dolls for the children at 50 cents a throw. Grannie bought me a lovely tablecloth with dancers on it. We sailed at 7:00 PM.
In the evening there was horseracing and I saw 'Father of the Bride'.

Friday, August 19. It was hazy but I got up early to see Gibraltar and a foggy view of the Atlas Mountains. The Strait is very narrow. The 'Rock' was in haze and to my way of thinking not as impressive as the Atlas Mountains. We had hazy views of land all day, which is fun after so many days at sea. I saw Henrietta's Holiday, a not so good French movie.
A new passenger has joined our table. He is the Marquis de Funchal. He is the headman of Madeira, but lives in Lisbon. He is on his way to Africa to see his son who is working there. He's very pleasant but had never played Bingo before.

Saturday, August 20. After a slide lecture on Greece, we were honored to sit with the Captain for lunch. He is very affable, but was disturbed at our displeasure to not be allowed to disembark at Lisbon. He invited us to come to bridge to watch us pas through the Straits of Messina. We had another lecture on the port of Piraeus in the afternoon.
Tonight was the Captain's dinner with all the tables decorated with balloons and streamers. We passed by Sardinia during dinner. Then there was a talent show and dancing. The Marquis sat and danced with me until midnight when I called Ev. It is his birthday and I had to wait until he got home from work. There was a lot of static but it was so nice to hear his voice.

Sunday, August 21. I was on deck to see Naples but Vesuvius wasn't smoking! The town looks fascinating. We said goodbye to Colonel and Mrs. Karl Withol and their son. They are from Red Bank New Jersey.

I was able to swim since my finger is better. Then I stood on deck to see Capri and the Sorrento Peninsula, as well as the rocks that are the legendary Sirens. Then I saw 'The Little Kidnapper', a very touching movie.

Then we came to Stromboli. It is unbelievable, a real smoky and angry volcano forming an island in the sea!

We got to the Straits of Messina at 7:24 PM but they wouldn't let us through. All night long we moved in endless five-mile circles to kill time. It would be 2009 more miles to go around Sicily, so it was better to wait until morning.

The Warners had some awful Germans at their table, so they now sit with us.

Monday, August 22. I got up at 6:30 AM to see us go under the low power line, which closes the Straits of Messina at night. We passed the whirlpools. The Straits of Messina are only two or three miles wide with an unbelievable current. We could see Mount Etna off in the haze.
I spent the day packing and relaxing.

Tuesday, August 23. Athens! We came in through a narrow breakwater to a tight harbor. We docked at 8:00 AM amidst bands playing and flags flying.

Mr. Castes from Giomano Travel met us and efficiently got us collected and through customs. Then it was off to the Grande Bretagne. Grannie handed out dollar bills to all who helped us and soon the whole hotel knew we were big tippers. We had wonderful service. I don't know if she ever tipped again.

The first thing we did was to go to see the Acropolis. It is so beautiful with the heavenly blue of the sky and the white marble that it can't be described. How did they ever build the Parthenon in 12 years, dragging the stones up the steep hill? Originally the building was painted and ornately decorated with statues, mostly of Athena. However, an explosion has wrecked it and the statues were stolen, broken or burned. It is still magnificent!

The Greeks are strongly patriotic and resent all the raiders from the Romans on.

Originally the temples were made of wood and they copied the straight silhouettes of trees to form the Doric columns. There is still evidence of dowel rods in the carvings. The Ionic style was more elaborate. The Roman style was even more elaborate with their Corinthian columns.

The Acropolis can be seen from wherever you go in Athens and it fascinated me. Mrs. Himora, our nice guide, then took us to see the Temple of Zeus near Hadrian's Arch. The former was

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huge and a lot of it was carried off to Genoa. The arch divided the old city from the new. Then we went to the stadium, a reproduction built in 1894 when they restarted having the Olympic Games. The stadium was very narrow. In Greece, the emphasis was on style, not distance and speed. Everything but the foot races was done to music. There is a charming bronze statue of a discus thrower across from the stadium.

Last we went to the palace to see the guards in their white-skirted uniforms and red caps. We had lunch at the Grande Bretagne with the Warners. Then we set off again but we found that Athens siestas from one-thirty to four! The old Cathedral was closed though we walked through the royal gardens and watched the changing of the guard.

Then we went to the Greek Theater of Dionysus and sat on the stone seats where the priests sat through four trilogies a day. The seats were equipped with built-in urinals!

Next we went to the Theseum Temple, named for ancient King Theseus that overlooks the Agora. The Agora is being restored with Rockefeller money.

After supper, we went to a taverna in Constitution Square and had some coffee. We also tried the national drink, Ouzo, which tastes like mineral oil. At last it was back to our antiseptic room for the night.

Wednesday, August 24. Athens. After a continental breakfast, Mrs. Butler met us and took us shopping in the Plaka or old section. I bought some interesting goat's wool bags for 25 drachmas each. There are 30 drachmas to the dollar. I bought some shoes for Peggy and Evans and found a lovely pair of enamel and gold earrings that are part of the national costume of Corfu for \$50. Grannie gave me some matching bridge sets. It was a fabulous street!

We then went to an eleventh century Byzantine influenced Orthodox Church and also went to the museum, which had some lovely costumes.

We had cocktails with Mrs. Butler. Then, since all the shops were closed Wednesday afternoon, we had a siesta before leaving for the airport. We met Pearl Mesta in the lobby as we were leaving.

Grannie had suggested we go "set foot in Asia", and so we caught a plane to Yesilkay, Turkey. The plane was late and then we found we needed a visa for Turkey. This delayed us even more since someone had to come from Istanbul to grant them. Late that night we finally got into a taxi with our agent and two Turkish men and headed for the city of Istanbul. We had a flat tire and I felt as if we had been caught in some sort of exotic mystery,

The Hilton Hotel is fabulous although we aren't on the Bosphorus side,

Thursday, August 23. Istanbul. We took a ferry across the Bosphorus to Asia! We saw the hospital where Florence Nightingale worked. We also saw the largest cemetery in the world, which had Cyprus trees and interesting headstones.

Men were wearing fezzes. We stopped at a native Market near the dock and bought some olives and a string bag.

Then we crossed the Galatea Bridge that more people cross in a day than anywhere else in the world. We went over the Golden Horn to the old city to see the Church of San Sophia. At first it was an Orthodox Church. In the fourteenth century it was turned into a mosque. Since Mustafa Kemal Ataturk became Turkey's first president, the church has been a museum. There were lovely gold mosaics, now being restored. They were covered with lime during its days as a mosque. There is a weeping pillar that was built on a reservoir to guard against earthquakes.

Nearby was the Blue Mosque with its spectacular blue mosaics. We had to wear slippers over our shoes to go in over the oriental rugs. We heard the muezzin go up on his minaret to call the people to prayer. In the afternoon we went to the Grand Bazaar, an enormous beehive of arcades with fabulous shops. I bought some meerschaum pipes (two for 50 lira or \$18). I bought a backgammon board for \$15 and also some Italian earrings for \$25,

Grannie went into a small jewelry shop and found a gold brooch with a huge amethyst surrounded by diamonds and rubies. It looked like some crown jewel. She dickered with the proprietor and finally got him down to \$900. He then suggested that if she gave him her personal check he would knock another \$200 off the price. We then were sure the pin was a fake, but Grannie gave him her check and we left with the pin. Much later as we came through customs in New York, Grannie declared and wore the pin. The custom man never even gave it a second

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look. Then we knew it was a fake. Grannie gave it to me for a souvenir. I had it appraised and it was worth much more than she had paid. Her check took months to clear and when it did, it cleared through a bank in Switzerland. The man had wanted to get some hard money out of Turkey. He would not have been allowed to take lira.

We were tired and went to bed early.

Friday, August 26. Istanbul to Cannes. We took one last look at the minarets and flew to Nice, France, with a stop at Rome. It was a lovely flight although long. I ran into Jimmy Biddle, a friend of Charlie Dodge, in the Rome Airport while I was checking on our bags.

In Nice, our driver, Paul, met us and a 1955 black and blue Dodge. He insisted on showing us the sights and went out of the way to drive around Cap d'Antibes on the way to the Majestic Hotel in Cannes.

We had dinner in a lovely open-air restaurant of the hotel overlooking the street. It's so nice in Cannes for the entire waterfront is a park so everyone can enjoy the view. Cannes reminds me of Florida.

We have a fascinating bedroom with silk draw curtains around each bed!

Saturday, August 27. Cannes. We drove up into the foothills of the Maritime Alps to Grasse, where essences of perfume are made. We saw tile roofed cottages and every square inch of the hillsides were terraced and planted with olives, oranges and lots of flowers.

We had lunch at the Gorge du Loup, a lovely little village in the hills. A mountain stream was trapped on the open-air terrace with trout and an eel swimming in it. We saw signs of bombing in the remains of an old railroad bridge.

I went shopping by myself after lunch and bought a dear dress for Mary for \$6 and a doll for \$3. It was not a cheap spot, even at 340 francs to the dollar.

In the evening we went to Monaco, about an hour's drive along the water the whole way. We had dinner that night at the Beaulieu a very ritzy hotel, right on the water. Monte Carlo was very ornate. I had a conversation with one of the croupiers. He understood no English but he told me in French how to play Roulette. It was an expensive table (500f) but I bought one chip (\$1.50) and promptly lost it. I had more fun on the 20f slot machine. The casino was quite crowded with serious gamblers and their systems.

Sunday, August 28. Just before we left we had a grandstand seat from our window of a powerboat blowing up while getting gas! It sank at once, but the gas burned and burned.

Our drive took us over the Grande Corniche, a road Caesar built. It is quite spectacular over the mountains. We crossed the St Luis Bridge at the frontier with no trouble at all, but shortly after we developed car trouble so we only got to San Remo for lunch at the Royal Hotel. All around the light fixtures and all the walls were decorated with butterflies and birds in pastel Venetian glass.

Italy feels immediately different from France. All the roads are planted in bougainvillea, even over the railroad bridges. The houses are elaborate and when they can't afford the cost of cornices etc, they paint it quite realistically, on the walls. Every mile or so is a little harbor, full of boats, big sailboats, fabulous yachts. Our navy is also here in full force.

We finally came to Genoa, which is a huge port. In the old city are narrow little streets, practically one-way pedestrian streets. An hour away, nestled in the mountains on the sea is Santa Margherita and the Miramar Hotel. It was quite a drive, nine hours, and we were dead tired.

Gratefully went to bed early.

Monday, August 29. I walked all over the town in the morning. Found a wonderful market in a narrow square with fascinating displays of vegetables. The exchange rate is 650 to 1, so everything seems fabulously expensive. Bought a raffia bag for \$3

We drove to Portofino for lunch, a lovely spot. We had to walk in for our full-sized American car can't navigate the streets! We saw intricate lace being made into pillows. We had lunch at the Nationale, an open-air restaurant with cats running around underfoot. I bought a lovely handkerchief for \$1.50 and Grannie bought me a lovely skirt and blouse with shells on it for about \$20.

I took a swim at the Hotel's lido. We had dinner at the hotel.

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Tuesday, August 30. We drove to Florence. We had lunch at a nice restaurant outside of La Spezzia. The Linechi Restaurant was open-air out over the beach. I tried the mussels.

We saw the Square of Miracles at Pisa. The church has a beautiful altar. I climbed to the top of the famous Campanile, a dizzying experience for you go down while you are going up. There is a lovely view of the walled town from the top.

We took the autostrada to Florence. Again we had car trouble and had to take a taxi to the Villa La Masa right on the River Arno.

Wednesday, August 31. We went to Santa Croce where Michelangelo, Dante, etc are buried. There was beautiful leather made by the monks. I shopped like crazy. Then we went to the Ponte Vecchio, the only bridge not bombed during the war. There are junky shops on the bridge but it was interesting.

Then I set out on foot to explore on my own and got caught in the first rainstorm they have had since March. A nice man, who couldn't speak English, drove me around until we found a taxi, and I went back to the Villa for lunch.

We set out again and saw the Medici Chapel. Gorgeous marble! Then we saw the "new" chapel Michelangelo designed. His famous "Thinker" is there on one of the tombs. Then it was on to the Palace of the Medici. There was fabulous art and a collection of old maps. When we got to the Pitti Palace, it was closing, as it was so late. I bought some handmade dresses for Peggy and Martha. Then I set out to find the sandals Betty Lyn had asked me to find for Lyndi and Dian, without success. I finally bought some she won't like and vowed never again to take orders on my trips.

I got caught in the rain again as I walked to the Villa d'Este.

Thursday, September 1. We drove to Rome via Agua Pendant and went to the Milano Hotel where we drank EST EST EST, a delicious white wine. The countryside is quite barren and mountainous, with old castles and monasteries on every peak. You could picture the Medici going from one to another.

The Hassler Hotel is very nice but not extraordinary. It was rainy so we ate downstairs instead of on the roof.

Friday, September 2. We went to St Peters, huge but in such good proportion. We saw Michelangelo's Pietá and the statue of St Peter with the toe kissed off by the Catholics. We saw marvelous mosaics and tombs of the Popes.

Lunch was at Alfredos, made interesting by bald fat Alfredo with handlebar mustaches. Oh, the gestures he used making the fettuccini.

I left Grannie at the hotel. She is not feeling well and refuses to see an "Italian" doctor. Went sightseeing with Paul who had been told "Don't go to the Sistine Chapel, because I want you to save it for me until I am better".

Rome is a city of fountains, one on every corner, and Catholic Churches everywhere. We saw Mussolini's balcony, which wasn't a bit impressive, the Venetian Monument, Coliseum and Michelangelo's Moses, which is a massive figure surrounded by the works of minor artists.

I shopped and spend about \$50 on a lovely silk bathrobe for Ev. I climbed the Spanish Steps to the hotel and had dinner with Grannie at the roof garden.

Saturday, September 3. Rome. We went to the Sistine Chapel, reached by a very long walk through the Vatican Museum, which was interesting but not worth the walk. It was very hard on Grannie who is still not feeling well. The Sistine Chapel was magnificent with Michelangelo's fresco of the Roof of Judgment. We had the chapel almost to ourselves. There were only two nuns there. I was able to lie on a bench to really study the ceiling.

We had lunch at Al Pesseto. It was all right but nothing special. Grannie went back to the hotel and Paul took me to see the Capuchin Cemetery. They have collected the bones of the monks and fashioned them into lamps and other decorations. Ugh!

Talked to Ev, which was grand. I could hear him perfectly although he claimed I was cutting in and out.

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Sunday, September 4. Rome. We drove to Tivoli, the Villa d'Este, with its indescribably beautiful fountains, 500 of them, each lovelier than the last. We had lunch at the [Sirene?] restaurant under the shadow of a lovely old temple. Nearby were waterfalls where the town women were doing their laundry. It was delightful, and reached only by walking, on a street through the old section. The street was dirty but still interesting.
We came back to the hotel exhausted by so much walking.

Monday, September 5. We drove to Naples. We saw the old aqueduct on the way, and the swamps Mussolini drained. We stopped to see Sulfatara, an old volcanic crater near Naples with its boiling mud.
Paul wanted us to stop at a coral shop, which we did, and I bought a pin that I think can easily be turned into a pendant.
Checked into the Excelsior Hotel, which is air-conditioned! Took a buggy ride around and looked at the decorations for a festival that is going on.

Tuesday, September 6. Mary's first birthday and I am missing it. We drove to Pompeii via a cameo factory. Pompeii is a very interesting place. It seems alive. There are beautiful frescos in houses, which seem to be recently vacated. In the museum are castings of the people who died in agony.
We drove part of the Amalfi drive and came home via a fabulous copper shop. Copperware is sold by the pound regardless of the craftsmanship.

Wednesday, September 7. With this my journal ends so I must rely on 50-year memories to finish this.

I remember a trip up Mt Vesuvius, where I found a pinecone ready to give birth. Grannie had said that she wanted a Mediterranean pine, to add to her collection of pines so I collected a cone.
At last we boarded the sleek Italian liner the Cristoforo Colombo, bound for New York. As soon as we got on board, I asked the ship's doctor to examine Grannie, over her protests. He treated her for three days without success. I asked him why he couldn't cure her bladder problems and he said, "Mrs. Scott hasn't told me where she hurts!" She had cystitis. After he treated her for that, she started to get better. But she still wasn't 100% when we reached New York. They came on board to clear us through customs. Usually, when Grannie wanted to bring a plant into the US she hid it under her formidable hat. However, she was still too sick to think about that and I put the pregnant pinecone in a pocket of her suitcase. I will never know how the Customs officer knew to open that one bag of our many. He put the cone in his pocket and waved us on through without saying a word.

Six months later, Grannie went back to Italy to see what she had missed. My mother went with her that time.

I remember that trip like being in a wonderful dream. I never again saw the world with such wide-eyed innocence. I also never did as much shopping.

I came home to a disaster. In my absence my sister-in-law had remarried and her two year old had been put in my house with the baby sitter. Of course, I had to let the sitter go and then had a strenuous week trying to keep Martha and Barbara from killing each other. Martha was jealous to share her toys. Barbara didn't know where her mommy was. One day they even climbed out of the bedroom window.