

# AROUND THE WORLD IN 80 YEARS

My Journey Through Life

by Susan Capps









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My Journey Through Life



My stories and poems are but a glimpse of a life  
well lived, and I have many more miles to go!

Compiled February 2017

by daughters Deborah, Sarah and Lucy who are  
forever grateful to have such an adventurous, bold  
loving woman as their Mum and role-model/friend  
for their children and grand-children.

Dedicated to: my Sisters; love-of-my-life, John;  
Children; Grand and Great-grandchildren; and of  
course the other half of the Intrepid Twins,  
Patricia Delaney

Someone asked me the other day: “Of all the countries in which you have lived, worked or traveled, which did you like the best?”

That, of course, turned out to be an impossible question to answer, not only because of the enormously long passage of time, but also because of the unique qualities of each country.

It did start me thinking though, that I should record the strongest memories and impressions of at least some of the places I have been, if only to remind myself in future years when my memory may fail me.

There is no doubt that the two places closest to my heart are England, the land of my birth and childhood, and Newfoundland, the place I have lived longer than anywhere else, and where I have greeted my two sons-in-law, five grandchildren, a granddaughter-in-law and now a great-granddaughter Bailey. I expect I'll be blessed with more additions to our family.

England has bred in me a great admiration for old architecture and history, while Newfoundland's awesome and majestic rock formations, hiding charming little coastal towns and villages, have inspired me to try to paint them.



# EARLY CHILDHOOD THE PRE-WAR YEARS

Written February 1996



I, Susan Rosemary Leslie, was born to Doris Beattie (nee' Gunner) and Leslie Harcourt Melville on August the ninth 1928 in Stockton Heath, Cheshire. Weight unknown, but a bouncing baby with blue eyes and lots of unruly dark hair. I am sure I was a rude shock to my sister Ann Caroline Leslie who was born thirteen months earlier. I was subsequently christened, and at some point before I was three, we moved to "Four Corners", Higher Whitley, near Norwich Cheshire. Here is where my first memories emerge. Most memories are fleeting and some of course are reinforced by photographs. It would be interesting to see if my sisters have similar memories and how distorted mine have become with the passage of so long a time.

I very quickly caught up to my sister Ann in size and we were then treated very much as twins. This was not a happy situation as far as I was concerned, I soon developed an inferiority complex from trying to keep up with my livelier and one year older sister. In fact, as young children we played well together and the resentment I felt was towards my parents rather than my sister.

My parents were a charming and popular couple who, like many of their middle class contemporaries of that era, did some entertaining on a modest scale. Money was scarce but appearances had to be kept up, and also it was the time of the Great Depression when my parents gave a home and jobs to two, and sometimes three, evacuees. They were caring but undemonstrative parents, both products of a strict Victorian upbringing within the shadows of the Church of England. The

only time I ever remember my mother telling me she loved me, as a child, was once when, asked why I was crying in the bath, I said it was because nobody loved me.

We had a nanny who we called “Nen-nen” of whom we were very fond. She seemed old to us but I think she was really very young and inexperienced. She was quite strict, but this may have been at our parents insistence. I do remember that once she smacked me and left a handprint on my thigh, for which she was severely reprimanded. We were always made to eat all our food and I can remember sitting for hours with a dish of prunes or sago pudding in front of me, and then sometimes throwing up in the lavatory later. If we suffered from constipation we were given cabbage water to drink, and regardless of the state of our bowels were given a dose of syrup of figs every Friday night. Friday night was also bath night, hair-washing and nail-cutting night - not a night to be remembered with pleasure.

Punishment consisted of being sent to bed or put in the corner. Being sent to bed usually seemed to occur if both of us had been naughty and we didn't mind it a bit because we played great make-believe games. We had two little square green chairs which we put in front of knee-hole dressing table and pretended it was a fireplace and we were two ladies talking and having tea. At the sound of anyone coming upstairs we would leap into bed and pretend to be asleep. Our beds had solid shiny brown backs to them and while playing school in bed one day we, or maybe I, scratched some letters on them with a hair-clip, known as “Kirby grips”. I think that is when I had my thigh smacked. Sometimes in

bed either at rest time or at night I would tell Ann stories which I “read” from my pretend “Dream Book” from under my pillow. If the punishment was being put in the corner, it was the corner of the Nursery, and to while away the time I would peel off strips of wallpaper. To this day the smell of wallpaper paste takes me back to that Nursery.

Before I was four we had another sister named Elizabeth June Leslie born on the first of June. As she was rather small, dark, and wrinkled, my father said Elizabeth was too grand a name for her so she was called June. I have very few memories of much interaction with her at this time in our lives. Not long after she was born my father had a car accident with Ann and myself in the car. Ann had a nasty head wound but I just suffered from shock and for some reason was put in June’s cot from which the bottom fell out - more shock.

Another early and not entirely happy memory of my father being in hospital in Manchester to have a kidney removed. We went on the train to visit him and the train traveled some of the way across “The Viaduct”, a track built on high brick arches over a valley. I was absolutely terrified and was convinced that the train would fall off. My father said that the most painful part of his time in hospital was having the plaster (adhesive bandage) taken off his hairy back.

Two less-than pleasant memories concerned dogs. One was being out for a walk with Nen-nen, June in the pram, Ann, myself and our dog, a springer spaniel. The dog ran across the road and was run over by a bus. The bus driver was very upset and I think we screamed all the way home. I can’t

imagine how Nen-nen felt.

The other episode was also to do with a Springer spaniel, this one belonging to a friend who was staying with us to go on “the shoot” with my father. We were told very firmly to keep away from the dog and to leave him alone as he was not used to children. No-one actually told me he would bite so I thought I would go and make friends with him. He was sitting on a chair on one side of the fireplace in the Nursery so I went and sat opposite him. I talked to him and he just looked at me so I went over to stroke him, at which he lept up and grabbed my face in his teeth, I screamed and his owner and my father rushed in. At a command from his master the dog let go and someone picked me up. I didn’t make a fuss as I knew I had been disobedient, and I didn’t get much sympathy either. Fortunately the puncture wounds were not too serious and only left a small permanent scar.

There were many happy memories of Higher Whitley too. I remember “George and the ladies”, a bantam rooster and five bantam hens, who somehow always managed to escape from their pen and instead of supplying us with fresh eggs everyday would disappear and return a few weeks later with an adorable brood of tiny yellow chicks.

Then was Belinda the lamb, orphaned at birth and hand raised by us. She was very devoted and loving and we were devastated when the farmer reclaimed her.

The garden at Higher Whitley was probably not very big but we spent many pleasurable hours playing in it. We played school using the slates left over from roofing the house, which could be written on with different coloured stones. We also



“cooked”, making mud pies and decorating them with chopped up green caterpillars.

Another ingredient that we used, which fills me with amazement today that we were never poisoned, was laburnum seed pods that we shelled and used as peas.

Our house was immediately adjacent to a farm. Perhaps it had been the original farmhouse, and was now separated from us by a high brick wall. One day my father said that we were not to go round to the farm as they were killing the pigs. We didn't actually go round while the farmer was doing the killing but we were in time to see the pigs being shaved after being hung up and having boiling water poured over them. It is a sight and smell that has stayed in my memory to this day.

At the back of our house there was a little separate apartment where the farmer's mother lived. She was always known to us as Granny Burrows and seemed to us to be very old. She was always pleased to see us and would invite us in to have a “jam buttie” which was a thick slice of home-made white bread liberally spread with home-made jam.

Another person I remember from those days was Mr Isherwood who was the man who came each week to take the order for the grocery store. Mr Isherwood was short and stocky, again considered to be old by us, and rode a bicycle. He would come into the kitchen and be offered a cup of tea and then he would sit down and take off his bicycle clips which prevented his trousers from getting caught in the wheels. Next he would take out his pencil and order book, lick the tip of the pencil and say “Right Mrs Melville, what would you like today?” After completing the order he would depart with a

cheerful farewell and wave as he pedaled off. The groceries would arrive next day, always correct.

Finally, another person in our lives before we went to school, was our Governess, Marna. I think she was probably a High School graduate, perhaps earning a little money to go to college. She was certainly young and full of life. Marna was just supposed to teach Ann who was turning five, but of course I joined in everything I could. I did learn to read before I was five, but I can't say I ever became more than average in math skills. Marna taught us all sorts of counting games so half the time learning was fun, and never thought of as lessons. She stayed with us till we were deemed old enough to go on the local bus to school.

And that was a whole new era in our lives.

## CHRISTMAS'S PAST

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Christmas's in my early childhood, before the Second World War, are a blur of many happy and serene years. Every year was basically the same. Christmas eve we lit the lights on the tree and hung our stockings on the mantelpiece above the open fire place. Every Christmas we woke, early, to find our stockings filled at the end of our beds. There was always a tangerine or orange in the toe, and a Christmas cracker in the top. After breakfast, we drove to the village where my grandfather was the vicar of the church. I always enjoyed it because we sang lots of the carols that we knew, also the church had a beautiful Nativity scene. Later we would have Christmas dinner with my grandparents and afterwards a gift exchange.

Sadly, the war put an end to those peaceful, easygoing days, though that is not to say they weren't just as happily celebrated.

The first Christmas of the war was memorable. My father was an officer in the army and in camp. We were invited to spend Christmas day with him and asked to help with Christmas dinner for all the troops. My mother, and us three girls stayed at a bed and breakfast which was originally built as a mill house with stone floors. It was so cold that the water froze in the pipes and in the glasses in our bedroom!

When we arrived at the camp we were taken to the dining room where all the soldiers were sitting down with a beer and a small gift, waiting for their Christmas dinners. The officers carved the meat, pork and goose I think, while we carried the plates to another table where Mum and lots of other ladies dished the vegetables; then we all carried them to the tables. There was much merriment and chatter. The men, (all men in that unit) thought it was great that the officers waited on them that day. They also were enjoying talking to the children and women who were there for Christmas. In those days, senior officers were allowed to have their dogs at camp so my dad had his beloved yellow lab there. She really enjoyed the lunch and the socializing afterwards. Of course, the men all fed her and someone must have given her beer because she appeared drunk and tried to stand on her head in an armchair, much to the soldiers' amusement, but Dad's horror.

War time Christmas's were very much a time when "home-made" was the motto. Home-made toys and hand knitted socks and gloves were popular. It is amazing how people managed to give their children the semblance of a peaceful time. I like to imagine that families on both sides of the war were trying to do the same.

One other wartime Christmas was memorable. We had a baby sister! She was actually born in the early spring so was old enough to enjoy the pretty lights and the fun on Christmas

morning. She also made it more meaningful for us, as we competed with each other to find or make her the best present. I think my older sister knitted her some mittens, I sewed her a bib, and my younger sister drew and coloured her a picture.

I do remember one Christmas when I was a teenager and my boyfriend offered to get us a Christmas tree from the woods. Unfortunately, he didn't know that a Larch tree is deciduous and after a few days in the house all of it's needles fell off. We didn't have the heart to tell him but went back to the woods ourselves and found a same sized Fir tree.

Of course, there are many lovely memories of Christmas in my adult years, particularly with my own children, but they seem like a whole new world, and a whole new story.

Happy Christmas.



# PERU



The memories of my two years working in Lima, Peru, are rather vague, considering it was over 60 years ago. However, I do remember the trip out there by boat, which took more than three weeks. We went through the Panama Canal which I still think today is an incredible piece of Engineering, joining the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. I have never understood why we went down in the locks. Are the two oceans at different levels?

Lima, in those days anyway, was an old and beautiful city built originally by the Spanish. It has a magnificent cathedral which had an altar covered completely in gold, that I believe was stolen and replaced with silver.

As I was a young working girl earning a very modest salary, I was not able to travel to the amazing Manchu Picchu ruins in the Andes. Built by the ancient Incas, I believe at the same time as the pyramids in Egypt, they are one of the marvels of history.

I did manage to take a trip to an oasis where there was a thermal pool containing Sulfur. It smelled disgusting, but it made your skin and hair feel like silk. While we were there, there was an earthquake, the only one of any consequence that I have experienced in my life. There was a sound as if a train was coming, and then everyone leapt out of the hotel windows shouting “el tremblor”. By the time we were all assembled outside, the earthquake was over and we went back inside. There was a little damage to the hotel, and where

I had been sitting there was a large chunk of concrete.  
Enough said!

I did learn to speak Spanish while I was there but most of it is forgotten by now. There is one phrase I still for some reason remember. It was the name of our favorite restaurant “El Hueco en la Pared” or “The Hole in the Wall”!





# IRAN



My next destination in my journey round the world was Iran.

Perhaps I should have explained, I was a college-trained Nanny or child care giver in modern jargon. This enabled me to travel overseas with a family, and is what infected me with wanderlust.

We traveled first to Switzerland and stayed for several weeks in Gstaad. This is a skiing center in winter, but in the summer, is a charming quiet town to wander around.

This was the first time I had slept in a feather bed - mattress, pillows and eiderdown spread. I wanted to hibernate! There was also a little iron wood-burning stove in the room. I tell you, no luxurious hotel bedroom has ever topped that memory. I was in charge of a six-month-old boy and a two-year-old girl, and they too slept like logs in that room.

Our next stop was Tehran, the capital of Iran. The British Embassy was a walled enclosure in the center of the city, which contained gardens with a swimming pool, several large houses and buildings which contained offices and apartments. I remember the beautiful garden, particularly the clematis growing up the walls and over fences. My charges were able to play there and meet other children. There were other Embassy families and also British families who were working in or around Tehran. Among the visitors to the pool was a group of young engineers from Britain who were building roads and bridges in Iran. In this group there was one young man who I noticed in particular. He looked about nineteen and had blond, curly hair and a big smile.

After discreet inquiries I discovered that his name was John Capps; he was about my age, was living in Tehran and was in charge of the testing laboratory for the road building. So to cut a long story short we became “an item.”

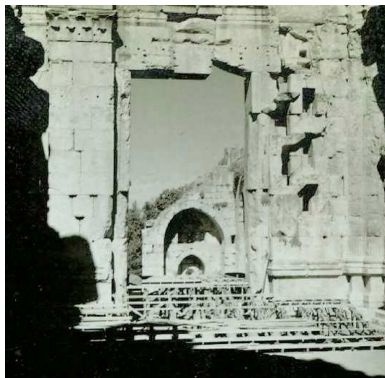
After a few months of all too few meetings, sometimes with all the other young people and sometimes alone, we became engaged and announced it at my birthday party.

John proposed to me in a beautiful Persian garden. What could be more romantic than that?

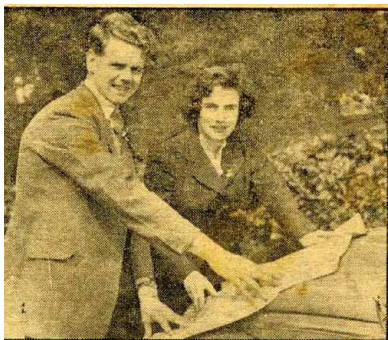
Fifty-three years after that proposal I asked my eldest grandson, who was about to propose to his girlfriend, if he would like to give her my engagement ring, and he said yes. Later that week they came round to tell me that he had proposed to her in the Botanical Gardens while sitting on the seat dedicated to John. “It was the nearest I could get to a Persian garden” Daniel said.

The next few months were spent in planning when we could get leave together to fly home to get married and then come back to Tehran again.

Next our cross-Europe car journey back to Iran, and a bit more of our travels in that lovely country.



# JOURNEY BACK TO IRAN



**P**ointing out part of the route across Europe that they will be taking on their honeymoon drive are Mr. John Frederick Capps and his bride-to-be, Miss Susan Rosemary Melville.

## They plan a 4,000-mile honeymoon drive

**T**O DRIVE the 4,000 or so miles across Europe from Britain to Persia is not everybody's cup of tea—but it is certainly an adventure, particularly when the trip represents part of a honeymoon!



In May of 1957 my fiancé and I flew home from Iran to get married. We were home in just enough time to have the Banns read in the Church of England for the obligatory number of weeks before we married. How my mother managed to organize a wedding in only a few weeks, I will never know. You couldn't do it these days.

After a blissful couple of weeks in the Channel Island of Jersey we returned to England and purchased a Volkswagen Beetle for our journey across Europe to Iran.

We had one of those old steamer trunks which we packed with many of our wedding presents and then strapped it on the roof. The china and glass were in boxes on the back seat. In spite of all that extra weight that little Beetle behaved perfectly, even through the rocky, unsurfaced roads in the Turkish mountains.

As you can imagine, after fifty- five years my memory is a little cloudy, but a few events were memorable.

Of course, to get to France we had to go on a ferry as there was no Chunnel in those days. After a restful night on the ship we set off early on our drive across France. John's idea was always to drive until darkness set in. This proved to be a bad idea as it made finding a B & B more difficult. One night

we stopped at dusk in a small town and inquired at a local B & B if they had a room. (John's French was much better than mine, thankfully). After some hesitation the owner said yes, so we paid for one night in advance because (yes, you have guessed) John wanted to leave early. The owner gave us a key and then disappeared.

We found our room and fell quickly into bed. John told me next morning that he thought the bed was still warm and had been slept in when we got in! We got up early the next morning and went in search of the bathroom. There did not appear to be one, nor could we find another human being. Needless to say our departure to the nearest wood was faster than even John had anticipated.

We did drive through Paris so that we were able to see the Eiffel Tower, and the rest of the drive through France was lovely and uneventful.

Switzerland was spectacular. Great mountains and lake scenery, the incredible tunnels through the mountains, the good roads and the clean B & B's were memorable.

Northern Italy is remembered for their good roads and some vineyards; though I think most of them are further south.

The next part of our trip was through what was then Yugoslavia and which is now Bosnia, Serbia, Macedonia and more! The lasting memory of that area was the air of austerity and lack of life, even twelve years after the end of the war. Both in Zagreb and Sarajevo there were hardly any cars and very few people in the streets. Even the beautiful architecture of the old cities looked drab and neglected.

When we reached the border to Greece we encountered the first difficulty with Customs. The guards wanted us to take the trunk down off the roof of the car. As it had taken four people and some hard work to get it up there John indicated with signs that if they wanted it down they would have to do it themselves. Impasse! I then remembered that someone had supplied us with a quantity of high quality English cigarettes “for bribes” he said. It worked! After a lot of loud talk and gesturing we were on our way.

Another situation awaited us at the Turkish border. Dusk again! John never learned! This time it was the Military who said (in English) that as we were going through a military zone we would need an escort, one in our car and one in a land rover. I did NOT like the idea of driving off in the dark with a strange, tough looking Turk. That is when my theatrical streak came into play. I pretended to be the pathetic, clingy

new bride who wept and cried for her husband. To my surprise it worked and the tough guy relented and said I could ride with John. He even offered to find us a room in the nearest town, as everywhere was full due to a military exercise in the area.

We were escorted into this tiny room with a single iron bed and nothing else. It was very stuffy so John flung open the window only to find that it opened into another room in which one very large man was sleeping. Needless to say we only stayed till daylight, but even so it was enough time for John to have been bitten by bedbugs. That day he drove, naked from the waist up, while I sat and dabbed him with calamine lotion.

We then reached the bridge over to Istanbul which is the end of Europe and the beginning of Asia. It is a great city with splendid mosques but still with a European feel.

The rest of the journey across Turkey was interesting but uneventful. We stayed a night in the capital Ankara and drank some of the famed Turkish coffee which was very expensive – they said because it was all supposed to be exported.

We were interested to see houses being built, mostly in wood as in Canada, but new to us who only knew brick and stone. After the city of Erzurum the roads were mostly unsurfaced



and pretty rough going through the mountains. We saw Mount Ararat, the alleged resting place of Noah and the Ark. It made us wonder if the flood was the rising of the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea, or were they what was left when the flood subsided?

Finally we reached the border with Iran. No trouble with the border guards. They seemed surprised to see us. Not many private cars came that way.

The first city we came to in Iran was Tabriz and again the outstanding feature was the mosque.

John eventually made an album of photographs, black and white of course, of mosques in several cities in Iran. They are spectacular, particularly in Tehran.

A day or two later we finally reached our destination Tehran and settled in to our little flat, where the first thing we did was have a long hot bath, and John cleaned his teeth. This was because a day or two earlier while in a desert area we had run out of drinking water, so John decided to use Coca-Cola instead. I felt that was defeating the purpose of cleaning his teeth!

I find it interesting that after more than half a century the memories of an epic journey are more about the human contact than the actual journey.



# CHRISTMAS IN NIGERIA



Our children were three and five years old when we lived in Maiduguri, Northern Nigeria. An interesting recollection of that time was the Christmas service we held. There was no church or vicar, so all the English-speaking people got together and held a non-denominational service in an old court house.

Someone read the lessons, someone else led the prayers. someone played the piano and we all sang carols. It still lives in my memory as one of the most meaningful church services I have ever been to.

A year later we moved to Kaduna, a little further south, where there was a Church of England church. I remember one time my husband refused to come to church with us because “we looked like an orphanage.” For economy's sake I had made my three daughters and myself dresses out of the same material. I thought we looked elegant, but I had to concede that in a group it did look a bit like a uniform.

Finding a Christmas tree was a bit of a challenge. We would go to the local Nursery Garden in the autumn and choose a sapling of a tree similar to a larch, which loses its needles. We would label it and pay for it and then near Christmas day would pick it up already potted. With luck the tree had grown and was capable of holding some decorations.

I still made and decorated the Christmas cake and made puddings which we lit with brandy at the table on Christmas day. Most years we had roast pork, but one year we had wild

turkey, the taste of which I do not remember.

Deborah, our eldest daughter, remembers waking in the night and thinking that the sound of the fan was the distant sound of Father Christmases sleigh and bells. She also remembers getting her first grown-up bike, which she learned to ride in a few hours.

The twins, Lucy and Sarah, remember the lovely little doll's house that their Dad made them. It really was a labour of love because John was not skilled in carpentry.

I put handles on the pretty rectangular baskets that you could buy in the market, and made them into carry-cots for their dolls. I also made blankets for them and new clothes for the dolls.

These simple toys and a few books were supplemented by the few small surprises in their Christmas stockings, and I think gave them as much pleasure as the more lavish fare in later years.

These Christmases were often shared with expatriates who were there with no family. One of these friends, Bernadette, taught school in Kaduna and both she and John had horses which they rode together, which was great because I prefer my horses to be on the other side of a stable door. We visited the horses, and Deborah's recalcitrant pony, on Christmas eve to give them treats.

An interesting side note - we discovered, when Bernadette came to my birthday celebrations here in Newfoundland in 2008, that she and my dear friend here, Pat Wright, had gone to school together in England. They won't say how long ago! Talk about a small world.

Christmas in Kaduna must include our parrot Cuthy and our little dachshund Katy.

Cuthy, whose name was Cuthbert when she came to us, subsequently laid some eggs thus proving her femininity. She was not impressed with not being allowed on the Christmas tree because she would have destroyed the decorations.

Katy loved nothing better than snuggling down the bed with the children, so on Christmas morning she was delighted to help to open their stockings.

Last but not least I must mention Ahmed, our house boy, loving and loved by the children. Ahmed cheerfully helped with the Christmas festivities and anything else that was asked of him

I once was embarrassed to see the twins kneeling either side of him on his prayer mat and mimicking him chanting his prayers. I apologized to him but he was actually pleased to have them and said they could go anytime.

There are certainly some very fond memories of life in Kaduna in the sixties, and particularly Christmas there.



# EMIGRATING TO CANADA



After five years in Northern Nigeria our tour was ended abruptly by the civil war that erupted there.

We beat a hasty retreat back to England to consider our options. Finally, the decision was made to emigrate to Canada. John was offered a job in Toronto so off he went to establish himself and find us accommodation. This left me with finalizing the sale of our house, packing it up and bringing myself, three young children and a parrot to Toronto, single-handed. Travel must have been easier then than it is now, fifty years later.

Flying into Toronto the view brought the phrase “concrete jungle” to mind, and I wondered how we would adapt to a cold city from a warm country. On arrival at the airport our luggage seemed a long time coming, and we discovered it was due to our parrot who was entertaining the baggage handlers!

We had a town house in North York which in those days was close to the countryside, and the children were able to walk to school. The school was open-plan which suited the rambunctious twins very well but was much harder on our more organized older daughter.

The drawback to a town house without a fenced garden was that I couldn't leave the parrot, Cuthy, by herself outside in her cage. One warm day I was sitting in the sun outside our house with Cuthy who was sitting with her head out of the little window of her cage, which made her

think she was free. Out of the corner of my eye I saw this large tom cat slinking up to the cage and about to pounce. Before I had time to react Cuthy said “hello” in a loud clear voice, at which the cat jumped a foot in the air and fled.

After a year in Toronto we were on the move again – this time not very far, just to the Southernmost tip of Canada – Windsor, Ontario, known as Canada’s banana belt.

This time we did have a garden with a fence, and so Cuthy and our newly acquired dog were able to stay out alone. Cuthy, of course, learned two new tricks. She learned to whistle the dog who, fortunately for him, learned to ignore her, but our neighbours’ dog came trotting obediently up the road whenever he heard the whistle.

Our garden backed on to an area that the local school used to play basketball. That of course meant a referee with a whistle. You guessed it! Cuthy learned to referee, causing great consternation until the teacher figured it out.

And so, our life in Canada continued, with trips to the United States, Bermuda, Britain and across Canada. In the meantime, John, had acquired a sailboat in which we spent many holidays on the Great Lakes. This inspired in him dreams of acquiring a large sailboat and going across oceans to see other worlds, after retirement.

After ten years in Windsor another bit of the world was going to be revealed to us – but that’s another story.





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Our next venture into parts unknown was a tour of Saudi Arabia. John was being hired by the American Army Corps of Engineers for the building of a port on the Persian Gulf. Once again this meant finding a new home for our dog, and this time, a temporary home for the parrot. Fortunately, a dear friend in Windsor was more than pleased to have her, and in fact was very loath to give her back when we returned.

One of the little details I remember when packing up for the trip, was being told to remove from everything we might be taking, labels with the names "Marks and Spencer" on them. This was because neither Jewish people nor anything produced by them was acceptable in Saudi at that time. I found that quite astonishing. Ourselves as Christians were accepted as long as we abided by their rules, for example, not drinking alcohol. Women were not allowed to drive, and we had to have our elbows and knees covered in public. Another fact about driving: if you hired a taxi and it was involved in an accident, the passengers were blamed! The rationale was that if you hadn't hired the taxi it wouldn't have had that particular accident.

Our destination was a small guarded encampment, hardly a village, of twelve prefabricated structures housing ten American and two Canadian families, including ourselves. The houses were spread out along the sand by the Gulf and were somewhat cooled by the dry salty air, though they were also air-conditioned. Water was produced in a desalination plant and was fairly disgusting to drink. It also played havoc

with the washing machines, causing them to rust, so that when we finally left Saudi, our whites were no longer white, but a pale rust colour.

The new port that was being built was called Ras Al Mishab. We did actually see it on a map during the Gulf War, years later. Many of the workers on the site were also come-from-aways, being mostly Pakistani or Filipino, I think. It seems that the Saudis were the management. In fact, we, at least the women, had very little contact with the Saudi population except on our shopping expeditions, with a driver.

My impression was that the more educated the women were, the less heavily they were veiled. In the American-style food stores different sections would be separated, with women only serving in, say, the bakery, and men only in the butcher's section. There were beautiful jewelry stores which sold high quality gold at reasonable prices, and many of the Saudi women wore a lot of it. I think that most of us bought at least one little piece of something.

Although we could not buy alcohol we could buy large boxes of grapes from which we made wine of a quite passable quality and flavour. If, as once happened, the religious police visited our site we would have to dispose of the wine quickly down the drain. It didn't happen while I was there.

We once went north to Kuwait where we were told they imported a variety of fresh fruit. The little town on the border

there was mostly made up of tin shacks, but every shack had a television set and, sure enough, they had peaches and plums and other fresh fruit.

Our daughters, who were then in their final years at high school, were with us for the summer. Deborah, our eldest, used to do some cooking, such as hors d'oeuvres, for parties on the base. She also contributed recipes for a little book that the families put together and eventually had printed under the title "Recipes from Ras Al Mishab".

Lucy and Sarah volunteered to teach the other young children on the base to swim. This turned out to be quite an easy job because the water of the Gulf is so salty it is almost impossible to sink. I often wonder if the children got a shock when they tried swimming in a pool back in the United States!

Another little story I remember from that tour was of our next-door neighbour's dog. She was a beautiful Doberman called Gretchen. When they went off on a tour, they asked me if I would have her, and as John was also away at that time, I was more than happy to agree. She was very well trained and always slept at night on the mat inside the front door.

One night I felt John gliding quietly into bed beside me and turned over to say "Why didn't Gretchen bark when you came in?". Then I realized it was Gretchen in bed with me, not John! I never told her owners that she slept with me every night after that!

The year in the desert passed quickly and uneventfully and was an interesting glimpse into a world very different from our own in Canada and America. It was one more star on my world map.



## MOVING TO NEWFOUNDLAND



When we returned from Saudi Arabia, it was only to find that we were on the move again.

This time, surprise, surprise, it was to Newfoundland. Once again, we sell the house, hitch the boat to one of the cars and load the other one up with lots of luggage, including the parrot in her big cage. John, Deborah and I took turns driving the long trek from Windsor, Ontario, to St. John's. Lucy and Sarah refused to come with us as they did not want to leave their friends. They agreed to come once the school year had finished, and of course once they arrived and got involved with activities here they soon made new friends.

Once we arrived in St. John's we rented a house on Waterford Bridge Road and I immediately began to feel more at home here than I ever had in Ontario. The hills, lakes and old buildings in the city reminded me of my North Country life in England.

As soon as we were all settled we acquired a Newfoundland puppy and of course she became a much-loved member of the family. Soon after that, a pretty little grey tabby cat decided to adopt us, in the spite of the large rambunctious puppy. The cat soon learned to stay clear of the parrot's cage. The parrot, Cuthy, never learned to call the cat's name, George, but she did meow occasionally. As Molly the dog rarely barked, Cuthy did not acquire that skill.

As the girls all enrolled at Memorial University, we bought a house within walking distance, only for them to decide to go on to Toronto a year later.

At this point, not only in this journey around the world, but in our lives, there was a hiatus. This chapter therefore is

not about travel, but about our time here in Newfoundland and our life's journey for the next decade. That journey, like most journeys included the wonderful things and the not so good.

The first great thing was that all three daughters graduated and returned to work in St. John's. Deborah followed in my footsteps and entered the Early Childhood field. Sarah is a speech pathologist and Lucy an occupational therapist. I, myself, being one of only a few early childhood educators in Newfoundland at that time, was privileged to be part of the team who ran the first Early Childhood Training Centre at Community Services Council.

The not so good thing that happened during that time was that John was diagnosed with leukemia. He was incredibly stoic during the ten years that he battled it, but as you can appreciate, it cast a shadow on our lives, as well as limiting his ability to travel.

Good things also happened during this time of course. Lucy married Jim and while we were house hunting with them we fell in love with a house in Flatrock, to which we subsequently moved with, of course, Cuthy and Molly the Newfoundland dog. The front of the house was all glass so we bought a tree to put in the entrance hall where there was enough room for Cuthy's big cage. She loved it there. I think she thought she was back in the jungle.

Grandchildren were the next good things. Lucy and Jim had a son Daniel and less than two years later Deborah also had one, Nicholas. In the same year Lucy and Jim had a daughter, Jamie so our lives were full.

One lovely memory I have is of the grandchildren



having turns riding Grandpa's ride-on lawn mower, and going off to Canadian Tire with him to buy all sorts of mysterious things.

Next was Sarah's marriage to David. Not only was it a beautiful wedding, there was also an amusing incident that happened. The two little cousins, Daniel and Nicholas were to be ring bearers, and were to walk up the aisle carrying a decorated cushion each with a ring on it. However, Nicholas, who was only two, decided that he wanted the cushion with the blue ribbons, but Daniel wasn't giving it up. One small boy was subsequently removed, bellowing, while the other walked up the aisle with his head buried in the cushion.

We were also happy to have some of our family from England with us at this wedding, particularly John's sisters as he was becoming very frail at this stage and they were able to spend some time with him.

Less than a year later, Sarah and David's son Devon was born, another good thing that helped us through John's death a month later. Despite loving the house in Flatrock it now seemed empty and lonely so I decided to move back to St. John's. That is when the final good thing in this saga came about. I found the perfect house to share with Deborah and Nicholas, me upstairs at ground level, and them downstairs at garden level.

After a year or two, my anger that John had died in the prime of his life without fulfilling his dream of travel began to change into the idea that I would do it anyway. This made me feel better and gave me something new to think about and plan.



# CHINA THAILAND SINGAPORE



After I retired in 1994 I decided that the country I most wanted to visit was China. Its history and culture had always fascinated me. So, without more ado, I planned my first solo adventure.

I chose a small tour group of mature adults, and the lady who shared my hotel room was from Montreal. We were very compatible and have remained friends ever since.

Our first destination was Hong Kong, after a twelve-hour flight. The plane goes down closer to high rise buildings than one thinks is possible; it is awe inspiring. The journey from the airport into the city goes through areas with shabby tenement buildings, factories and incredibly high end luxury apartments.

I remember our luxury hotel was the first one we had stayed in that had cards and a door panel instead of keys to gain entrance to our room.

The first day of our tour we went to “The Peak”, the highest point in Hong Kong which is reached by cable car going up almost vertically. You get a panoramic view of the whole of Hong Kong and the sea around it from there. In 1994 Hong Kong was still a British possession and prided itself on being more sophisticated than mainland China. Certainly, it seemed more Westernized than the places we visited on the mainland. Many of the residents spoke English. There were incredibly beautiful jewelry stores and both Yolande (or Yo, as she liked to be called) and I bought some jade and gold pieces.

I asked one young Chinese man who spoke with a beautiful North Country English accent, whether he was

looking forward to Hong Kong returning to China. He replied by saying, "I hope to have a job in the west by then." In other words, "No comment." After a day exploring the city we went on a dinner cruise round the harbour, which was lovely.

Before I start describing the "real" China, let me say that it is extremely difficult to describe all the fascinating things we saw in just a few pages.

Our next destination after Hong Kong was Shanghai. The contrast between the two large cities was dramatic. There were very few high rises in Shanghai: our hotel, the Sheraton, stuck out like a sore thumb. There were far fewer cars and far more bicycles. In fact, one delightful scene the next morning was the view from our window of hundreds of cyclists dressed in brightly coloured rain coats or coloured umbrellas peddling rapidly through the streets. Another early morning scene was of dozens of people doing Tai-chi down in the car park of our hotel.

Shanghai was once divided into Concessions administered by the British, French, and Americans that ended with the Second World War. You can see the various styles of architecture each left, which were later added to by the Russians. One of their buildings supports a gold star which is said to weigh a ton. We visited a temple which had two huge white jade Buddhas weighing several tons.

Later we walked along the Bund which is the waterfront where the two rivers meet. We saw dozens of school children sitting on sidewalks eating their lunch. They looked and sounded very happy and healthy.

Shanghai was memorable for its factories which made

carpets of fine silk and wool, and pictures embroidered with human hair. There were also exquisite carriages of jade and other stones.

The next day we were off to Beijing, the capital of China, known in the past as Peking. The air trip was only about two hours, but can you believe it, we were delayed by fog.

When we did finally arrive, we were taken straight to Tienanmen Square, which you may remember was the setting for a huge student demonstration and massacre. Our guide Chin did not mention anything about that at the time, but later in the tour when he knew us better, he did tell us that he wasn't there but lost several friends there.

The next day was the pinnacle of our trip, The Great Wall of China. Someone said it is the only man-made thing that can be seen from space. I am not sure I believe that but it is certainly awe inspiring both in size and structure. Like the pyramids in Egypt, it is amazing to think it was built without any mechanical means.

Other places we visited included a factory for making cloisonné which is enamel work on copper and is exquisitely beautiful. I bought a dragon which I treasure as the perfect reminder of China. We went to the Summer Palace which is vast, has miles of walking, and was filmed in the movie "The Last Emperor". Finally, we went to the Forbidden City, also vast. Unfortunately, we did not see as much as we wanted to because the Japanese Ambassador was visiting and tourists were restricted. It was known as the Forbidden City because none but the Emperors and their entourages were allowed to

enter.

I remember that Beijing was very dry and dusty when we were there, as it hadn't rained for fifteen months.

Our first stop on the second half of our tour in China was to a village which was really a museum that houses the remains of a village considered to be of the Neolithic age, around a million years ago. They made and decorated pottery, they did types of weaving and sewing, they had tools, and they grew things from seeds.

I've wondered why such a sophisticated early civilization could have been in what was considered, in the early twentieth century, to be a third world country.

Our next stop was Xian a city now famous for the Terra Cotta Warriors. These figures were found buried in the sand in 1975 where they had been since 200 BC. They are life size warriors and their horses, and each man has distinctive features, uniforms and weapons. To make it more stunning is the fact that there were more than 6000 of them, most of whom had been originally coloured.

After the mind boggling experience of the warriors we went to a hot spring in a picturesque and serene spot which used to be a spa for one of the Emperors. In the garden, there was a pomegranate tree reputed to be 1300 years old. Our final day in Xian consisted of a tour around the city wall which is wider and almost as tall as the Great Wall and gives marvelous

views of the city and country-side for miles around. In the afternoon, we visited a farming village or commune. There an elderly couple invited us into their home and offered us little glasses of tea. After that we visited a Kindergarten and played with the children. Finally, we just strolled around the village streets before going back to the city for supper and an early night before going on to Guilin the next morning.

The trip from Xian to Guilin was what you might call interesting. It was in a large old Russian plane with a lot of rusty metal showing, and was very uncomfortable and bumpy. The main reason for the trip to Guilin was to go on a river cruise to see the unique scenery in the area. The spectacular mountain scenery has been made famous by paintings by many visiting artists. The mountains were under the sea in a previous millennium and as they are made of limestone they have worn away into a series of rounded bumps which are covered in greenery. In fact, when we returned to St. John's, I went to a Chinese restaurant and saw a painting of the mountains on one wall. I asked the proprietor if it was Guilin, and she was so delighted that I knew where it was that she embraced me. The river on which we cruised was wide, fast running and twists between the mountains, farms, orchards and paddy fields, where farmers were planting rice, ploughing with their water buffalo. We also saw lots of ducks being cared for by small boys, which reminded me of the children's book called "Ping".

While in Guilin we were invited to visit a clinic for Chinese

medicine where we were offered acupressure with electricity. Two of our party who had back problems took the treatment and both said they had great temporary relief. Next day we visited The Caves, which are huge and dramatic with the stalactites and stalagmites looking like animals, people and plants. The coloured lighting added to the dramatic effect. Later that day we visited a smaller cave which had carvings done about six hundred years ago, and poems written into the rock by ancient poets. It was a sort of shrine.

We spent a leisurely afternoon at a park with a huge rock called the elephant rock for the obvious reason that it looks like an elephant bending down with its trunk in the water forming an arch. I think Guilin was my favourite of the places we visited in China. The scenery is dramatic but serene and seems to be a blend of the ancient and modern China.

This trip was taken eighteen years ago, and I know that China has changed a great deal in that time, I hope not to the detriment of those wonderful places we visited. We left Guilin for Hong Kong on our last leg of this trip, on to Thailand and Singapore.

We arrived in Bangkok around lunch time, to high temperatures and humidity, so we retired to our luxurious hotel for a rest before any exploring began.

Bangkok is the capital of Thailand, or as it used to be, Siam. You may remember the movie, “Anna and the King of Siam”, or “the King and I”, which were filmed at some of the



palaces here.

My first impression of Thailand was that the country and the people seemed very different from the Chinese. More people were dressed in traditional eastern clothes and somehow the pace of life seemed a little slower. There were fewer bicycles and more cars with more overpasses and better roads.

The view from our hotel gave a birds-eye view of Bangkok. Closer to the hotel were pleasant streets of elegant houses, and further afield little houses on stilts built along the numerous canals.

The first evening of our stay we went for dinner at a traditional Thai restaurant. You take off your shoes at the door, and then sit on long carpeted benches at long low tables. At this restaurant, there was a stage where musicians played Thai musical instruments for traditional dances performed by beautiful young women in gorgeous costumes.

The next day we went to visit the famous Buddhist temples; they are magnificent. They look as though they are encrusted with jewels and ceramic tiles, but in fact it is glass and paint, or in some cases pottery and china. This was originally sent from China as tableware but a lot got broken so the Thais made it into the shapes of flowers and covered the temples with it. Most of the Buddhas are covered with gold leaf or gold paint, but there is one that weighs several tons and is made of solid gold. On one of our explorations we, of course, went to jewelry and fabric stores. The jewels were exquisite, and the silks were such wonderful colours I had a hard time choosing a dress length for myself and my three

daughters.

While we were in Thailand it was the monsoon season in May, so we were dodging thunderstorms and heavy rain on many days. One day we went to the floating markets. They are a system of narrow canals which go for miles among the swamps and jungle undergrowth and converge on an open market area. People in narrow flat bottomed boats sell everything from tiger balm to boots. The boats that we were taken to the market in were motorized and sped along and around corners at alarming speeds, spraying us with disgusting waters. It was quite an experience. On our way to the market we stopped to watch people collecting sea salt from fields that looked like rice paddies, but were actually man-made salt flats. The crops grown here seem to be tapioca, sugar, and coconuts. At one place, we saw workers making coconut sugar; it is rather like maple sugar. Another interesting place we visited was a factory where teak wood was being made into tables and doors. They were being hand carved by people sitting on the ground to work. While traveling along the road one day we were held up by a procession which was accompanying four Buddhists who were going to be ordained. Later we were able to watch an ordination ceremony.

The final stretch of our journey in Thailand was to a resort town called Pattaya where we had hoped to visit a coral island, but unfortunately it was too stormy. However, we did have a couple of relatively relaxing days swimming in the hotel's beautiful pool and walking around the neighbourhood. Walking in the evening we would hear the bull frogs making

loud booming noises in the ditches, as well as cicadas chirping. Unlike in China, there are a lot of roaming dogs and cats in Thailand. To my surprise none of the cats looked like the Siamese cats that I have known.

And so, to the last stage of our journey Singapore, for a couple of days before returning to Canada. After an early start, and a two-hour flight, we landed at Changi Airport. Back then I thought it was the quietest, most well organized and attractive airport I had ever seen. Today my opinion has not changed. Singapore Island was a British possession until the 1950's. It is now independent, though connected by a man-made causeway to the island of Malaysia.

It is a beautiful, clean sophisticated island. From remarks our guide made, I think they regard themselves as superior to their poorer neighbours to the North. Most of that day we spent wandering the tree-lined streets and looking at the exclusive shops that sold everything from Gucci to Wedgewood. In the evening, we went by Tri-shaws (bicycle rickshaws) to the famous Raffles Hotel written about by Rudyard Kipling and Somerset Maugham and had one of their famous Singapore Slings.

After another day walking, eating Hagen Daaz ice cream and talking to people, most of whom seemed to speak English, it was time to go. As we crossed time zones we had two Friday the thirteenth. However, all was well and we arrived safely back in Vancouver. Daughter Lucy and her family were living in Vancouver then so it was lovely to be able to stay with them for a few days. Lucy's twin sister Sarah was expecting a baby, due, or actually overdue, while I was on holiday. I had phoned

from the hotel in both Beijing and Shanghai to see if the baby had arrived yet. Of course I fully expected to hear of its arrival when I landed in Vancouver, but no!. However, that night she arrived, a lovely granddaughter who they called Kathleen. What a great welcome home for me after a spectacular trip.



# AUSTRALIA



Australia is a huge and fascinating country, or rather continent. Although I was there for less than a month, I saw more than I could describe in these few pages.

I arrived in Sydney on the south-east coast in the early morning after more than twenty-six hours of flying and countless hours waiting in airports. In our case, on arrival, we were whisked off in a white stretch limousine to our hotel. After a long a luxurious shower and a rest with my feet up, I was ready to explore.

I booked a boat tour which included a short bus tour of the city afterwards. The highlight of the boat tour was the view of Sydney's magnificent Opera House which is built to look like sails on the waterfront. The harbour itself is beautiful with lots of bays, and it reminded me of Vancouver. The next day we boarded the tour coach, which, mercifully, was air conditioned. I met my room partner for the tour, a New Zealander who lived and worked in Sydney. Glen and I were very compatible, and still keep in touch after more than 20 years.

The tour of the city included, "Homebush" the home of the 2000 Olympics, a whole village built specifically for the occasion. We also went to the famous Bondi Beach, a long and beautiful beach very near the city.

The guide told us the history of some of the older buildings in Sydney which were designed by an ex-convict who was an architect. They are over 200 years old, and are terrace houses with elaborate wrought iron balconies reminiscent of New Orleans I am told. They were brought as ballast from England in the old days.

There are many handsome modern buildings as well of

course, and in many places there were gorgeous jacaranda trees in full bloom.

Our journey took us south and then west through green country side with farming, gardens, and small towns such as Goulburn, Yass and Gundagai. Gundagai is famous for a statue of the Dog on the Tucker Box honouring all the working dogs of Australia. We stopped for lunch and to take pictures of the dog. After that we went to Wagga Wagga and finally to Narrandara for the night. We saw our first wild kangaroo, galahs (parrots), white crested cockatoos and many other birds. We also saw road signs warning of wombats and kangaroos.

The bright yellow wattle trees were blooming everywhere, and we saw fields covered with a lovely purple flower called Patterson's curse as it is such a menace.

From Narrandara we drove through miles and miles of citrus groves, wineries, grain crops and rice paddies. We saw sheep, cattle, and lots of emus grazing, and some cowboys galloping past on their big Broncos. We stopped at a lovely little old town called Hay and wished we could stay longer, it looked so interesting. Koolibah trees were pointed out to us. The most prevalent trees are the many varieties of Eucalyptus.

On again to the town of Bairnald for lunch, then on to our destination for this day, Mildura, a town with a lovely park by the Murray River. There is a lock which was raising a pleasure paddle steamer when we arrived. This is a relic of the old days when river traffic was the main form of transport; now it is rail and roads. You cross the river on what they call a punt, which is really a very small ferry which barely holds our

coach. We have just left the state of New South Wales and are now in Victoria. We had earlier passed Lake Bonney where Donald Campbell first broke the water speed record.

Going through the rolling hills of the Flinders Range, we went through the beautifully restored ex-copper mining, National Trust town, of Burra. It was earlier settled by miners from Wales. Some of them lived in caves dug out of the hillsides, which have been preserved.

We now head to Port Augusta on the south coast which is in the state of South Australia. After taking our breath there, we will be starting a long trek north up the center of Australia, with Alice Springs as a distant focus.

We start off early from Port Augusta for our next overnight destination Coober Pedy. The land we drive through this day is incredibly flat and arid, and has the “huge spreads” that one hears about. They are, however, covered with blue and salt bush, both about a foot high, which is a great sheep fodder. We passed Lakes Torreas and Gairdener which are mostly dried up salt lakes on which people do land sailing. It looked such fun so we stopped to take photos. The coach passed through Woomera, a bleak town on the edge of the rocket range, catering mostly to the forces that are stationed there. The lunch stop was at a nice little town called Glendambo, where a man showed us his collection of snakes and lizards. I had a photograph taken of me with a three-metre-long python draped around my neck and a dragon lizard sitting on my hat. Finally, that evening, we reached Coober Pedy, the strange opal mining town where many people live underground to



cope with the heat. Our beautiful hotel was partly underground, including our bedroom. I was a little leery of sleeping underground, it was so dark, but it was the best night's sleep I had on my trip because it was so cool.

Of course, there were gift shops that sold opals. I bought a tiny little opal duck to add to my collection of ducks from around the world. The landscape here was dotted with piles of white dust where people had been mining on their opal claims.

There also miles of half buried wire netting fences to keep the dingoes from attacking the cattle. We saw a dingo later on, and also unfortunately a number of dead kangaroos being eaten by hawks and carrion crows. They get hit by the huge triple trucks roaring up the highway.

The evening before we left Coober Pedy I had kangaroo steak for dinner for the first time; it was actually very good.

At one o' clock the next day we entered Northern Territory and to a little town named Finke; it is the exact center of Australia.

To while away the time on the long barren stretches of road we would make a bet each day on different things and the winner got half the takings while the rest went to the Flying Doctor Service of Australia.

Our next destination will be Ayers Rock or Uluru as the Aboriginal people call it. We rise at 5 am next morning to be at the rock for sunrise. Although we had seen many mountain ranges, Uluru is unique. It is this massive pink, smooth looking sandstone mass rising out of flat land. Someone called it the "outie belly button" of Australia. When the sun rises it glows with a golden light. People are allowed to climb it on one area only as it is sacred to the Aboriginal people, and I can

understand why. After that we went to the interpretation centre where the Aboriginals explain some of their lore and way of life.

On our way to King's Canyon next day we stopped at a cattle station where they catch, train and sell camels which were introduced to Australia as transport many years ago. I and a number of others had a camel ride. WOW, they are tall! At King's Canyon we saw beautiful birds, green parrots and flocks of galahs, grey and pink parrots. Also, to my surprise, there were trees with large bunches of mistletoe growing on them.

Next day we traveled on a dirt road for five hours through outback totally devoid of human habitation and only saw five vehicles. However, we did see wild horses, camels, and hordes of wild donkeys. We also passed a range of mountains in a circle with a huge hole in the middle which was formed by a meteorite a very long time ago. Another stop was at some ochre pits where the Aboriginals get different coloured ochre to decorate their bodies.

And so to Alice Springs, a destination I had been so looking forward to because of what I had read. In 1950 the well known author Neville Shute wrote 'A Town called Alice', and in 1956 it was made into a movie. Does anyone remember them?

The part of the book that first caught my interest was about the young Australian soldier who endured torture and killing marches through the Chinese jungle imposed by his Japanese captors in the Second World War. This was similar to my brother-in-law's experience after he was captured by the Japanese. In the story, the young soldier dreams of getting

back to Australia and living in a town like Alice.

This last part of the journey will include the A.B.C.'s! That is – Alice Springs, Ballooning, and Crocodiles. Alice is actually built about twenty miles from the springs, where it was too rocky, and was surrounded by hills. Our lovely hotel included a pool built in the shape of Australia. The days' activities included an Aboriginal interpretive centre, and a visit to Simpson's Gap, an interesting break in two mountains where we saw little rock wallabies and dragon lizards. Later we went to Dr. Flynn's memorial, one of the Devil's marbles which are enormous round stones found in the area. Dr. Flynn was the man who started the flying doctor service, and is regarded as almost a saint here. We visited the Flying Doctor Service headquarters where we saw a film about the service and its history.

Next came the ballooning; we rose at 3:15 am to board the bus. The actual site to start is chosen by releasing ordinary party balloons to gauge the strength and direction of the wind. We then all helped to get the basket in which we traveled off the trailer and the pilot fixed in onto the balloon. Fourteen of us got in and off we went. By this time, it was about 4:45 am and we saw the sunrise. It was magical! We floated sometimes just above the treetops, and sometimes above low clouds. At one point we were floating above an old abandoned prison compound so we all made up stories up about how we could lower ropes down and help prisoners to escape. It was so peaceful I didn't want it to end. I thought of Winnie the Pooh

singing “I’m a little cloud floating in the blue”. We landed with hardly a jolt and then helped to get all the air out of the balloon to pack it into the basket again. We then all had a champagne breakfast with the occupants of the other two balloons which had been up at the same time. A memorable experience indeed.

We then crossed the Tropic of Capricorn and it was getting hotter. There were flame and frangipani trees in bloom, a sure sign we were in the tropics. We drove through the Banka-Banka cattle station, what a great name. We swam in the thermal pool at Matakana Springs which in spite of being hot was refreshing. That night we stayed at a little town called Katherine. Next day we went on a boat ride up Katherine Gorge. We saw wild figs, plums, and mangoes growing out of the rocks with roots going down about 30 feet to the water. And next came the Crocodiles.! We were now in the Northern Territory which is tropical and we traveled to Cacadu National Park and the Crocodile Hotel. It is so named because it is built (vaguely) in the shape of a crocodile.

Some of the bird life we saw included sea eagles, which have huge nests, azure kingfishers, storks, herons, magpie geese, and the Jesus bird. It is so called because it appears to be walking on water. In fact, it walks on submerged lily leaves. Another interesting thing we found was the nest of a bower bird. A male bird builds the nest for courting, and he fills it with bright things such as white stones, rings off pop bottles and shells to attract a mate.

To see the crocodiles close up we went on a boat cruise down

the yellow waters billabong, or wet lands. We saw five or six crocs including a big one who swam obligingly high in the muddy water so that we could see how big he was. Later we visited a place called Humpty Doo, and saw the place where the movie “Crocodile Dundee” was made, and the crocodile who starred in it.

When we left the park we went on to Darwin, the capital city of the northern territory and a lovely modern city completely rebuilt after a cyclone destroyed the old one in 1974.

Many of our group were finishing their trip there and flying back to Sydney, but the rest of us flew on to Cairns, a beautiful northern coastal city near the mountains.

This was our last stop before, what to some people is the piece de resistance, the Great Barrier Reef. This is a coral reef which stretches down the East Coast of Australia. We went out on boats to a large floating dock where you could be equipped for either snorkeling or scuba diving. I snorkeled and it gave me the same feeling as I had when ballooning, of being in another world. The colours and variety of fish were breathtaking. The water was as clear as glass, and the creatures took no notice of blundering humans in their space. Again- magical.

These are only the highlights of a trip exploring just a small bit of the amazing country, Australia.



# NEW ZEALAND



On leaving Australia, my next port of call was New Zealand. The journey of more than two thousand Tasman Sea and the plane flies into Auckland, the main city on the North Island. This trip was more of a personal one than the tour of Australia. I was here to be re-united with friends who lived in St. John's many years ago, and now live in a place with the charming name of Silverstream.

A relative of these friends met me in Auckland, a large spread-out city with two harbours. I was driven to a look-out point in a park, which really reminded me of Signal Hill. One can see the city, both harbours, and for miles around, both out to sea and across the country side.

I quickly realized that New Zealand is very different from Australia. Comparing size alone, New Zealand would fit into just one of Australia's seven territories. Both the north and south islands are about 500 miles long, I think. The climate is more moderate, and it is on the whole, closer to the Antarctic, so there are vast green pastures and forests still covering a great part of the country. The indigenous people are also very different from the Australian Aborigines who originally came from Asia, while the New Zealanders are of Maori or Polynesian ancestry. Even the English accent is different. While the Australian accent is strongly reminiscent of London Cockney, that is not so in New Zealand.

My journey down from Auckland to Wellington, the capital on the southern tip of the north island, was an all-day trip by train. It was a great way to see the scenery and the vast numbers of cattle, then sheep, as we got further south. There were also deer which are raised for venison. In many places the

embankments were covered by nasturtiums in bloom, escapees from gardens I imagine. There were also yellow bush lupines and foxgloves. Everywhere there were gorse bushes in bloom which look lovely but have become a menace. They were introduced from Britain to make hedges to keep the sheep in the pastures. Even the sheep didn't like the prickles, and now they have spread everywhere.

I noticed with delight that we passed through a town called Marton, named by Captain Cook after the town of his birth in Yorkshire England. My late husband was proud to claim the same place of origin.

Another interesting view was of Mount Tongariro, which had erupted that year and spoiled the skiing. It was still smoking, but there was snow on it. At the end of this long but very pleasant train journey I was met by friends in Wellington which was a few miles from their home. The next day they took me on a tour of Wellington and the surrounding area. It is a very attractive city surrounded by beautiful hills from where you get wonderful views of both the harbour and city. For lunch that day we ate at a rather unique cafe. It had been built out of what was once a huge storage tank. After lunch, we went up the mountain in a cable car to another part of the city.

The next day was very hot, (early December), so we spent it in their lovely garden. I sat under a sunshade and tried to paint a picture of the beautiful blue Himalayan poppies.

The following day was cooler so my friend Priscilla and I set off on a trip down the South Island. I had to keep reminding myself that it would be getting colder as we went further south! The South Island is reached by ferry like ours across to Nova

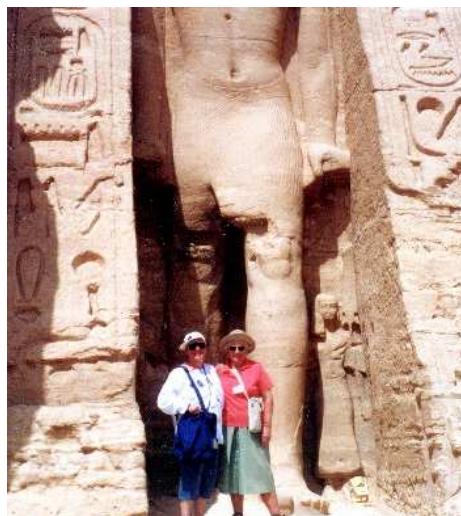


Scotia. It takes about 3 ½ hours from Wellington to Picton on the other side. You can then walk to the station and catch the train south.

My enduring memory of this part of the country was the beauty of the mountains and forests and the incredible waterfalls crashing down hundreds of feet to lakes below. There at least a dozen National Parks in New Zealand so many of these beautiful areas are nurtured and pristine. One place we visited, there was white water rafting and bungee jumping. To this day, I regret not bungee jumping. I think if I did it today I would have a heart attack.

One of the fascinating things, to me anyway, about New Zealand are the place names. Every one is either a Maori name or the name of a place in Britain. We stayed a night in Dunedin (Scottish), and I looked out of the hotel window and said, “The next landfall- Antarctica!!”

Another lovely city, (are they all lovely?), is Christchurch (English) which we spent a day exploring. We did also visit the biggest sheep spread in New Zealand where they told us that there were more sheep than people in the whole country. That didn't surprise me. Then back to Wellington and Silverstream and a fond farewell to my friends after an all too short stay in their lovely country New Zealand.

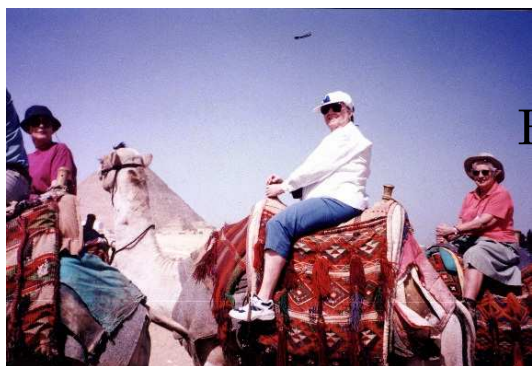


# CONTINENTAL DRIFT

As printed in

“The Telegram”

February 19, 2003



Each circle and star on the map that is pinned to the wall of Susan Capps' home represents a land she has traversed. The circles are places she has lived; the stars places she has visited.

In Germany, a star where she stood at the Brandenburg Gate next to the remnants of the Berlin Wall. In Peru, a circle where she made her first jaunt away from home, over a half a century ago. In Poland, a star where she saw the death camp at Auschwitz- "that sort of brings you down to earth, you know". In Iran, a circle, where she met her late husband so many years ago. In Antarctica, a star, where she slept on a glacier in 24-hour sunlight, disembarking from a nearby ship twice a day to truly experience that remote and frozen land.

That last trip, just completed, to Antarctica, signaled a milestone for the 74-year-old Capps. It was the final piece in a unique puzzle- the last of the seven continents she has visited in her lifetime. "I guess you are born with this travel bug, wanting to know about other people and other places" she says. "I think my big thing is curiosity. I am very curious."

As a young woman, Capps began to work as a nanny in her native England. She worked with people at the British Embassy- work that, at the age of 21, would lead her to Peru. It was her first time away from home, but it wouldn't be her last. She lived in South America from 1949 to 1952 and then returned to the U.K. In 1955 she left for Iran. While working there she met the man who would become her husband. John Capps was a British engineer working on road construction projects in the Middle East. They returned to the U.K. to get married, then jumped in a newly acquired Volkswagen Beetle

and drove back- across Europe, through Turkey, then Iraq to Iran.

In 1958 the duo returned to Britain. But it didn't mark the end of their travels abroad for work. Five years later, they would move to Nigeria; they lived in Africa until 1968. After returning home from Nigeria, the Capps' decided to emigrate to Canada. They settled in Ontario. In the late 1970's they moved to Saudi Arabia for a two-year stint. Soon after their return to Canada, the words "Newfoundland" and "oil" began to be uttered in the same sentence. Senior engineers at her husband's company decided to open an office down east; he volunteered to move, and off they went. "for us it was a good move," Capps says.

In the 1980's, however, her husband fell ill, and their travels together ended. He died after a long illness.

After his death, Susan Capps made a decision; she would hit the road, and go traveling again. "China was one of the places I had always wanted to go to and he never had. So, I thought that would be a good place to start."

Capps went to China in 1993. Two years later, it was on to Australia. Both times she went solo, albeit as part of an organized tour.

In 1999, she was in the planning stage for her next trip, to India, when she asked a friend from the Mall Walkers Club if she would be interested in coming along. That friend, Patricia Delaney, said yes. Delaney has been with Capps on every trip since- five in total. (On their last trip, to Antarctica, they were jokingly dubbed "the intrepid twins" says Capps).

Their first trip together, to India, was remarkable, Capps

recalls. The streets were teeming with people, and she was being touched and jostled all the time. "That's part of the life there" she notes. "You can't walk along the street without stepping over somebody's house", she says. At first she thought the tarpaulin covered sidewalks signified areas under repair, until she saw utensils and washing strung up inside them. Despite the abject Third-World standards of living she found on her travels, Capps was buoyed by the strength of spirit she encountered. "What's so hard for us to understand is that (the people) are happy," she says. "You see children running around and playing, playing games with an empty tin and things like that, with absolutely nothing. And yet they seem so cheerful... When we came back from India, we said to each other, we should live simple lives. We live in the lap of luxury." After India, Capps quickened the pace of her travels. She made three trips between 1993 and 1999. Since then she's traveled once a year. In 2000, it was Eastern Europe. In 2001, Russia. The next Egypt.

It was never a conscious goal to visit every continent, but when somebody pointed out to her after she returned from Africa in 2002, the idea planted a seed. She catalogued her travels, and realized she only needed Antarctica to complete the cycle. So, in 2003, Antarctica it would be.

The travels haven't always been easy. She survived an earthquake in Peru. She traveled through Egypt in the edgy time just months after 9/11. She was in Nigeria when a civil war started, bringing with it menacing young soldiers and their bayonets at makeshift checkpoints. But she's survived it all, no worse for the wear.

Capps says. “Just wanting to get the atmosphere of a country- the smells, the flowers, the plants, the people and how they live. People are all the same, and yet they live in such incredibly different ways from us, yet they’re still the same sort of people underneath. “

Capps has had to change her travel habits somewhat. She now goes on package tours- something she didn’t need to do when she traveled with her husband. (She) has three daughters and five grandchildren, all of whom live in St. John’s. “I am one of the very lucky families who have all my three daughters still here.”

And what do her children and grandchildren think about all this travel? “I’m a cool granny” she says with a laugh.

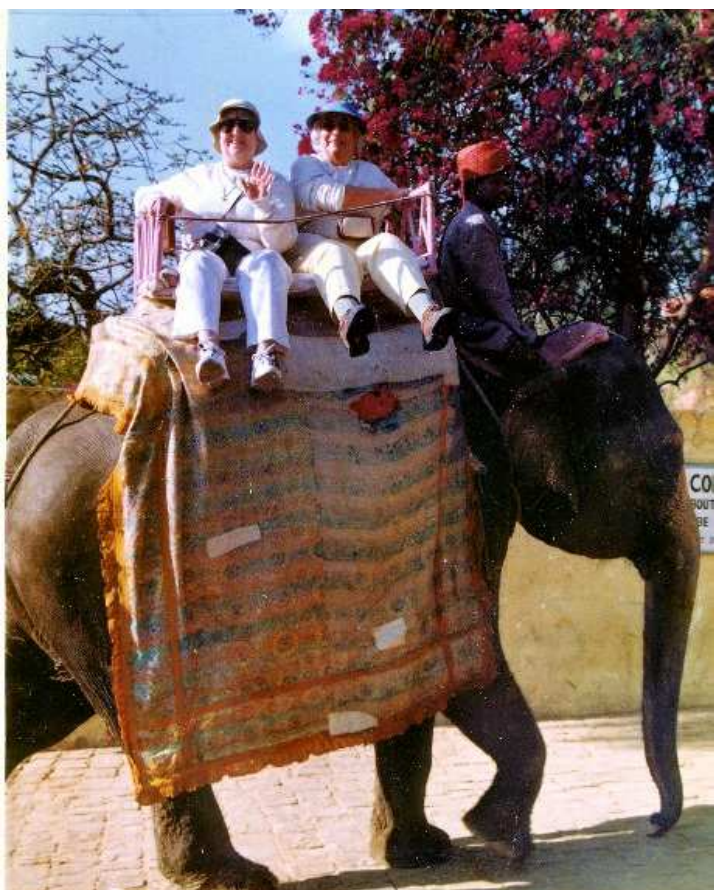
Capps is now thinking about returning to Australia. Her traveling companion wants to go there. It’s a vast continent and there are many places she still wants to see.

But there are other places, other journeys, she would like to embark upon.

China still fascinates her. And then there’s Peru, where her travels began more than half a century ago, when a 21-year-old nanny left home for the first time. There are ancient ruins there that she’d like to explore. She’s been to Egypt and thinks there is some connection between the ruins in both places: they were built around the same time, built with the same sort of precision.

She feels “lucky and so blessed” that she has been able to travel so widely. And she has advice for those thinking of traveling themselves; don’t put off until a faraway tomorrow what you can do today.





# I N D I A

Before I set out on this next step around the world, something delightful happened. I found someone who was to become my travel companion for this trip and all further trips. Needless to say, she has also become a very dear friend. Nowadays our trips consist of a walk around the pond, sometimes reminiscing about all the places we have been together.

I met my friend at the Mall Walker's Club and many of you know that she is none other than our own Patricia Delaney. So, exactly fourteen years ago, Patricia and I joined a group tour to Northern India and what a journey it was.

After a long tiring journey via Frankfurt Germany, we arrived in New Delhi at 1 am. There we met the rest of our group and got in the bus for the Vikram Hotel; and straight to bed. On waking, we saw that we had a very nice room and the view from our window was of beautiful trees full of green parakeets, ring doves and pigeons.

After breakfast, there was an information session for the group which included the information that we would be given two bottles of water per person, per day! Then we had a coffee break, after which the rest of the morning was a session all about Indian music by a famous Indian musician and author. She not only explained the differences between Indian and Western music, she demonstrated some of the musical instruments and singing. For me, who is totally non-musical, was very interesting, but for those who were musical like Patricia, it was fascinating, even magical.

Our first walk in the neighbourhood gave us a good idea of life in an Indian city. The buildings vary from beautiful architectural buildings, to little shacks made of plastic or tin built basically



on the sidewalks. The traffic consisted of three wheeled cars, small English cars, bicycles, and motor bikes all driving at speed on the left. Intermingled with that are thousands of people- and cows. At one point, I was almost run over by a cow which was being chased (herded?) by two men on a motorbike.

Our next cultural session was about Indian dance, again very different from Western. Each dance tells a story, and every movement and part of the body is used, from the fingertips to the toes. Our dancer, who was dressed in a gorgeous red sari with rows of bells on each leg, told us what each dance was about. We could then follow the story quite easily. For example, the fluttering fingers were rain, or at one point, flying birds.

After the dance session, there was one the land and people of Northern India. Again, it was very well presented and extremely interesting, given by a university professor. The north is somewhat divided from the south by mountain ranges which affects the climate a little and before modern transport restricted human interaction. The professor told us that rivers are very important to his people. They are considered sacred and mysterious so people go to them to marry, give birth, and die. Rivers are called the destiny makers of the people.

I mention these cultural sessions we had, because we were so impressed by the education, and the love of it, that Indian people seem to have. Our young tour guide himself was university educated and enjoyed working with people from other cultures during his vacations. The sessions also gave us some understanding of all the interesting people and places

we would be seeing once we traveled across the continent. While in Delhi, we of course visited many interesting places. We went to the Red Fort which seemed to consist of a number of castles built for different purposes. There was one for bath houses, one for public gatherings, one for pleasure, and yet another for a mogul who was afraid to go outside. We also visited the Raj Ghat where the body of Gandhi was.

Everywhere we went there were beggars trying to sell us everything from peacock feather fans to parasols. We also saw a fakir playing his pipe to his snake, and a man with a dancing monkey.

I tell you, we saw so much in those few days in and around Delhi, our minds were boggled. There is such beauty interspersed with such squalor and misery, it is hard to take it all in.

We had a final talk before we left Delhi and started on our travels. It was about the family system, the Caste systems, and religions. All the lecturers we had seemed to illustrate their talks with stories or myths explaining the reasons behind their beliefs. It made it very interesting.

And so to bed before moving on the next day.

Most of our travel in India was done by coach, a hair-raising experience. As we entered the coach we were told that we would change seats each day so that everyone would get a chance to sit at the front. Guess what? Patricia and I were given the front seats on the first day. We kept ducking and cringing as the traffic bore down upon us, and we swore that the coach drew in its breath as squeezed past.

We were now on our way to Nawalgarh. To our amusement,

we noticed that on some of the STOP signs the word “relax” was written, and on others, “Drunken people will be carried away”. The pit stops on this section of the trip were indescribably disgusting, but the place we stopped for lunch was beautiful and pristine. While eating, we were entertained by a family with singing, dancing and percussion.

Our destination, and where we were staying, turned out to be a real palace, the Roop Niwas Palace, still owned and operated by the Maharajah and his family. When we arrived, we were met on the steps by servants in coloured tunics and turbans. As we mounted the red carpeted steps we were sprinkled with attar of roses and showered with rose petals. At the top we were draped with fresh flower leis and served little glasses of fruit drinks. Our room was off a courtyard full of beautiful trees, flowers, marble benches and birds, including peacocks. The beds were challenging, a thin mattress on a concrete block, but surprisingly we slept well.

The next morning we went to the city of Nawalgarh where there are buildings completely covered with paintings with religious or mythical themes. In the afternoon, we had a demonstration on safa tying. Safa is the word for turban. The material is nine yards long and they “use the whole nine yards”. Colours and methods of tying vary according to area, caste and religion.

After this we had a mehendi application to our hands. This is a kind of red dye with which a lady used to give us each a different design on our hands that lasts about two weeks. In the evening we dressed for dinner. We then gathered on the steps and had veils (turbans for the men), arranged on our

heads. We were then escorted by torch bearers and a marching band to an area where we were ceremoniously and royally entertained. Two horses and two camels were also in attendance. There was amazing dancing, one woman dancing with SEVEN pots of water on her head. A man danced while running fire up his arms and legs and puffing great puffs of fire from his mouth. While this was going on we were being served all sorts of hors d'oeuvres. When it ended, we were escorted into an inner courtyard where we had a great dinner with music. What an amazing day. How could they top that?

The next day the younger prince Singhji gave an interesting talk on Maharajahs and their history, including the affect of British rule on their system! After that there were camel rides for those who were interested. Patricia went, and I think enjoyed it, but I didn't because I had already ridden one in Australia. Besides, I wanted to see more of the amazing art and antiques in the palace.

After lunch, we were off to Jaipur, our next destination. We arrived in the evening after the usual hair-raising but uneventful bus trip. We were greeted with leis and a dot for our third eye- worn on the forehead. After a late dinner, we went to bed exhausted.

The next day we had a very interesting talk entitled, "The Women of India". We learned about the practice of Sadi where the wife dies on the husband's funeral pyre. It was abolished in 1829 but it still occurs. Our lecturer told us about the struggles of women to prove that they are as good as men and should have the same rights. She said the struggle must

continue as girl-child infanticide and girl-child abortion are still practiced.

The following morning, we were off to Fort Ambar where perhaps one of the most exciting episodes of our trip occurred. Our destination today is Fort Ambar, which is a short trip up a low mountain. It had been decided that this trip was to be taken by elephant. So- we waited while a string of elephants was led in front of us. Each elephant has a seat on its back which seats four, two facing left and two the right, back to back. By the time it came to our turn to mount, by way of a platform, we found we were to be on our own, just the two of us. So off we started up the hill accompanied by people, cars, bikes and carts. The slow, swaying line of elephants gave us a great view of all our surroundings, and was very pleasant. However, our elephant, who was quite young, decided it was boring and started to trot, or perhaps a better word would be to lumber. His driver did not seem to be able to control him and so we wove in and out the surging traffic at a brisk pace, (for an elephant). No one seemed to be panicking, so we hung on with our stiff smiles on our faces till we got to our destination, where our mount decided to stop. We then nonchalantly descended as if we did it every day. The fort was worth the adventurous journey. The frescoes painted hundred of years ago, are still bright, and inside there is a hall of mirrors, disconcerting but beautiful. The gardens are also beautiful, as are the surrounding mountains. We spent some time in the huge and very crowded market where I bought earrings for my daughters- a tradition on my travels. By the time we got back to our hotel we were exhausted so I decided on a leisurely

swim, and Patricia had a massage booked. And thereby hangs another funny story. The massage parlour consisted of two rooms. The first room had a barber's chair and the second one a table. Patricia was taken into the second room, divided only by a curtain. There, the massage lady told her to take all her clothing off and lie on the table. She complied and the massage lady began. Meanwhile a man entered the first room for a haircut. Their conversation was sometimes interrupted by the slaps on Patricia's bare skin. She did concede that it was an excellent massage even though she did feel a tad exposed. Our next destination was to the state of Uttar Pradesh where we would see the Taj Mahal, for many the highlight of the trip. We waited till the next morning, when we rose at 5 am so that we could see the mosque at sun rise. We felt awed, reverent and totally absorbed by the magnificence of this place which took more than twenty years to build and was finished in 1653. It was built by the 5th Mogul as a tomb for his wife who died in childbirth. To me it is certainly one of the Seven Wonders of the World. Awe inspiring!

The next few days were spent traveling to, and exploring, other wonderful sites including castles, temples, museums and beautiful gardens. One of the temples we visited was adorned both inside and out by carvings of the 69 positions as described in the Kama Sutra, because this is such an important part of life. All these visits were leading up to another awesome experience, a visit to the Ganges River, or Ganga as Indian people call it. To reach the river we had to leave the bus and walk a distance of about quarter of a mile. This was challenging as we had to compete against bikes,

rickshaws, people, dogs and cows, not to mention cow dung. We finally made it down stone steps where we stepped into a dory like boat rowed by two men who took us up and down the Ganga, the holy river, for well nigh two hours. We passed many Ghats, or landing places, where EVERYTHING goes on. People are washing themselves, their clothes and their children. They are drinking the water and swimming in it. Many are praying, amid goats, sheep, monkeys and birds. As Patricia so succinctly put it, the beauty and the squalor are as day and night- they belong together- they are life partners. Cremations also take place on the Ghats. To be cremated here is to gain salvation and release from reincarnation. Ashes go into the river as well as the bodies of young children who are not cremated. There are water purifying plants that supply the local cities now, I am glad to say. We were amused when our guide Shaleen told us that his mother had made him promise to bathe in the waters of the Ganges. He kept his promise by showering in the hotel with the purified water from the river.

Well, this is just a glimpse of our trip across a small piece of this fascinating and beautiful country. I hope, in this modern world of technology, that the people of India can preserve their ancient history and culture.



# ACROSS EUROPE to OBERAMMERGAU





In the year 2000, my friend Patricia and I decided to go to see the Passion Play in Oberammergau, Germany. This play is performed every ten years, on the tens. As many of you may know, the play is to honour a promise made by the people of Oberammergau in 1603 during the Bubonic Plague. They promised God that if he spared them, they would perform this story of the death and resurrection of Christ every ten years for ever. They were spared and they **have** kept their promise. When we decided to take this trip, we did not realize that it was going to be the trip of such epic proportions. Not only did we visit five countries, containing wonderful cities with exciting places to explore, but we visited two other unforgettable venues which I will explain when we get there.

So, we set off, via Halifax and Montreal, to Frankfurt Germany. There we were driven to our hotel from the airport, and to our surprise when looking out of our hotel window, we had a beautiful view of fields, scarlet with poppies, so near the city. Next morning, we set off early for Berlin via the city of Weimar. The scenery on the way is beautiful rolling farmlands and forests of tall, tall pine trees between neat towns with white stucco houses and red tiled roofs. We went through checkpoint A into East Germany where we saw the remains of the huge observation towers used to keep watch on people trying to escape to the West. Creepy!!

When we arrived in Weimar we went into the central square where there is a statue of Goethe. Weimar was also home to Liszt and Schiller. It is a lovely old city, beautifully restored after the war. The scenery on from Weimar to Berlin was also lovely, with many windmills, the old-fashioned kind. We

crossed the river Elbe and went through Checkpoint B before reaching Berlin.

Our tour of Berlin started early the next day. We had a local guide who was very knowledgeable about the city and its history during and after the Second World War. Small stretches of “The Berlin Wall” have been left as a reminder of those years of division. It gave one an eerie feeling of how awful it must have been for relatives who couldn’t cross from East to West or they would be shot. Our guide described what happened when the wall came down. The Easterners rushed to the West because they were hungry and penniless. He said this cooled off the Westerners. “When money is between, then friendship is over”. His quote. McDonalds was pointed out as “The American Embassy” while the post war Russian area was the “Russian Vodka” district, and the British area the “British Whiskey” district.

We, of course, saw the Brandenburg Gate which is the main entrance to the city, and incidentally where all tourists including us, have their pictures taken! Our journey continued to see the Sans Souci (no worry), Castle built for Frederick the Great in 1747. He seems to have been an eccentric who wanted to be buried with his eleven dogs, not in a royal grave. Frederick built his castle right next to a miller’s windmill which interfered with the windmill’s operation so the miller sued him but lost. It was said that Frederick, “took the wind out of the miller’s sails.”

Next morning, we are off to Poland and our next scheduled stay in Warsaw. We do however have a planned stop in Posnam, famous for being the home of the Pope, Lech

Valesa, Madam Curie and Chopin. This is also where Casimir the Great invited the Jews to come to settle after the Spanish kicked them out.

The countryside here is rolling farmland, mountains, and lakes. People sell crafts on the side of the road.

Especially popular with the Germans are garden gnomes. Apparently at one point some people got together and formed the “Liberate the Gnomes” movement and went around stealing them. On our arrival in Warsaw we spent a quite pleasant evening exploring before an early bed, for an early start the next day. This will include the unforgettable venue that I mentioned at the beginning.

Warsaw is a beautiful city with a long and interesting history. Our first stop was at Chopin’s monument which is surrounded by hundreds of rose bushes, all in full bloom, and a pond with ducks serenely swimming around. We then saw Paderewski’s monument and the Botanical Gardens. We saw all the area that was destroyed during the war but was rebuilt by the Poles (30 million of whom live in America), exactly as they had been before. It has to be seen to be believed. Close to that is the Holocaust Memorial at which a museum is being built. Among other interesting places we visited were included the smallest house (only a door width wide!), and the “Palace of Culture”, built by Stalin as a “gift” in 1955. It is half empty because it has no windows in much of the building. It is round and called, sarcastically, by the Poles, “The Birthday Cake Palace”, and they hate it.

Patricia and I took a lunch break here and went to a ZAPPI

KANKI, (a hot dog stand) where we had a very good hot dog. Before going to a wonderful Chopin concert in the evening, we saw the Jewish Ghetto area built by the Nazis, which they subsequently destroyed in 1943 and killed all the Jews. Fortunately, the concert was fantastic; the star was renowned Iwona Klimaszewska who signed our program for us. Later that night some of us went to the Polish Folk Lore evening and dance, a very lively affair. The men do that incredible dance where they squat right down and then spring up again while dancing.

Next morning, we went to Jasna Gora, to the monastery where the Black Madonna is kept.

Among many other artifacts, we saw Lech Walenza's medals and honours from all over the world, and 600 crucifixes from destroyed churches. On the way to our next destination we passed through an industrial area known as the Black Hole because people seem to die at a young age, often from lung problems.

Our destination for that day was none other than the infamous place of Auschwitz or Oswiecim Prison Camp. The entrance bears the motto "Work brings Freedom", but indeed it brought death. The outside was built to look like an ordinary work camp, but the inside had distinct areas. There were the cells where political prisoners were left to die of starvation or lack of air. There were quarters for the workers who cooperated and worked in the camp. The Jews who survived the train trip were sorted upon arrival. The very young, the old, the sick and infirm were taken immediately to the gas chamber. There were rooms where they were stripped naked and told they would be

given showers and fresh clothes before going to their quarters. Little did they know that that meant the gas chamber. The camp workers then removed hair and gold fillings. These, with all their possessions were sent to Germany while the bodies were cremated and the ashes either put in the sea or used as fertilizer.

We saw rooms full of clothes, household effects and even children's toys. These were found by the Russians when they captured the camp in 1945. The Nazis hadn't had time to ship them to Germany before they lost the war.

Fortunately, after that gruesome and unforgettable experience we drove on to Krakow, another of those beautiful old Polish cities. Both the university and the cathedral have clocks which strike the hour at which point the appropriate number of figures march out and back again.

The next morning, we went on a visit to a place in stark contrast to our last one. This was the Wieliczka Salt Mine. On the lowest level of the mine (about 400 feet down) the miners carved an incredible chapel- entirely out of salt. Just as yesterday's experience had been indescribable, so was this day's, for entirely different reasons. From the magnificent chandeliers to the scene of the birth in the stable, everything was acquisitively carved in salt. There were statues of Mary, Jesus, the crucifixion and Pope John Paul II to name a few. All this was softly lit to show the sparkling beauty of the salt. Of course, this is now a museum and is certainly a reassurance of the innate goodness of humankind. The next day we were off to the border, and of course to another stretch of my journey around the world.

On a beautiful morning, we drove through beautiful rolling countryside with farms, picturesque villages, and lovely old towns. By mid-morning we reached the border and crossed from Poland into Hungary. First, we arrived in Pest, and then crossed the Danube River into Buda, twin towns that now make up the city of Budapest. Oh, I forgot, to mention that we crossed a corner of Slovakia during the course of the trip; three countries in one morning!

While in Budapest I hoped to find and meet an old friend from our days in Nigeria thirty years earlier. When settled in our hotel, I found his name in the phone book, and low and behold he lived practically next door to the hotel. We talked and talked, and he was able to tell me how good it had been for him and his family to escape from the Nazi and then Communist atmosphere, and work in Nigeria.

One of the highlights of our short stay in Budapest was going to a Gypsy restaurant in the woods. When we arrived, we were greeted by violin music and an apricot drink in a souvenir bottle which one had to toss back and drink, and then yell Hungarian cheers! We were entertained during dinner with gypsy music, dancing and singing- a lively evening.

Next day, on again. This time over the Czech border and on to Prague, travelling through beautiful fields of blue flax- a glorious sight in the sunshine. We all agreed that Prague is the most beautiful of all the cities we had seen on this trip. It is truly magnificent. One of the places we visited was Loretta Church which has one memorial which includes angels and saints all built of solid silver. It also includes the tomb of St. Stanislaw in a great room with precious stones covering the

wall. Truly resplendent.

The next morning a friend of my daughter Sarah came to have an early breakfast before work. It is small world isn't it, that you can connect with old friends and acquaintances thousands of miles from home.

The next day was a quiet one due to our coach having broken down and it rained heavily. We left the following morning for the German border and into Bavaria which is a free state of Germany. Our final night before reaching Oberammergau was spent in Munich. This is a city that was virtually destroyed during the war and has been rebuilt as it was pre-war. A truly remarkable achievement. On thinking back about the many beautiful cities we have visited, all too briefly on our trip across Europe, I am awed! Not only are the cities themselves awe inspiring, but so are the people who rebuilt them when they were razed to the ground.

We stopped in Unterammergau to find out which family we would be staying with here. Then the next day we would go by bus to the play in Oberammergau. Patricia and I had a lovely room with a peaked roof and exposed wooden beams. We realized we were now in an alpine area, and this was like a Swiss chalet.

Next morning after a continental breakfast we set off to see "the Play" which began at 9:30 am. The theatre itself is built on a hillside and the stage is open air with the hill side meadows as the backdrop. An occasional cow wandered by! The seating for the audience is covered and will seat 4000. An amazing venue. The play, which includes beautiful music, singing, and dancing, is in two long acts, morning and afternoon, with a

break for lunch in between.

In spite of the fact that the narration and dialogue is of course all in German, the story was not difficult to follow. After all, it is the story of Christ from his birth this resurrection. We did also have a booklet in English which described each episode. Even for someone unfamiliar with the Christian story it was still unbelievable moving. The episode where Jesus and the two thieves were raised on the cross was heart-stopping and incredibly real. Even after fifteen years I still remember the play with admiration and respect for the people whose faith has helped them keep a promise made so long ago.

This was a fitting climax to a journey through beautiful countryside and impressive cities, some of which have been lovingly restored to their former beauty. It was a journey that crossed many borders and included dramatic stories. I know I have not been able to do justice to it in just a few pages, but hope that it has made at least one person wish they could do the same.





RUSSIA

Russia of course, is a huge country, in fact is the biggest country in the world. That being said, I have only seen a tiny corner of it, a little section of the western part of the country. It is a bit like someone who has traveled from St. John's to Toronto saying they have seen Canada. However, in fifteen days we did see some fascinating and interesting places and things and met some friendly people.

Our journey there was via Amsterdam, Holland and then on to St. Petersburg Russia. St. Petersburg was originally called Petrograd, and then in the communist era was known as Leningrad, and finally St. Petersburg. It is an old city founded in 1703 by Peter the Great and has many large and imposing buildings. Our journey was to be entirely on a river boat, a great way to travel as you are not continually packing up and moving to another hotel. The trip took us through rivers, canals, and lakes which connect St. Petersburg to Moscow. The canals and locks were built by prisoner laborers at the beginning of the twentieth century. They made an important means of transport between those two cities at that time. St. Petersburg itself is on the Neva river and has thirty-two bridges in the city alone. Many of the streets are lined with poplar trees and we were interested to hear that they were being cut down and replaced with linden trees. The reason, we understood, was because poplar causes allergies!

We were taken by bus from the airport to where our river boat was moored and we were told that the next day we would be exploring St. Petersburg by bus. The morning was spent going to the bank to acquire rubles and admiring beautiful old buildings, including churches which were often used as

storage places during the communist era but some of which were now being restored.

In the afternoon, we went to the world-famous Hermitage museum. It is vast and is reputed to hold two and a half million exhibits which would take years to view. We managed to view a few rooms which were awe-inspiring. There were paintings by famous artists (including the Mona Lisa on loan from the Louvre in Paris), and exquisite silverware used by the Czars in earlier days.

After breakfast the next morning on our boat/hotel, we went on a longer bus tour through some farmland where there were miles of green houses for growing such produce as tomatoes and cucumbers. The farms themselves are rented from land owners and are not much more than shacks.

Our destination was Pushkin named after the Russian poet. He was killed in a duel with one of his beautiful wife's lovers. There we visited Peter and Paul fortress, a magnificent stone edifice, and St. Isaac's cathedral. While we were there we heard small men's choir singing superbly.

Our next visit was to Peterhaff, Peter the Great's summer palace, known for its collection of fountains, some hundred and fifty of them. Later that afternoon we went on a canal boat ride around the city. It was fascinating. We went under some of the thirty-two bridges which are very low and as we approached them we were ordered to "duck". I have forgotten what the Russian word for duck is!

The following day, July 4th was spent on board. We went through the first of the locks on the canal and through lovely countryside with big, elegant houses and gardens. Our boat

docked at Mandrogi, a model village where the houses were decorated with carvings and there were totem poles near them. The buildings were devoted to folk arts, weaving, pottery, wood carving etc. While we were there we had a shish kebob picnic lunch, and were entertained by singers and musicians. Back on the boat we had an afternoon of history and geography of Russia, and a lesson in the Russian language.

Next morning, we found we had docked in Petrozavodsk (try pronouncing that!). We had a bus tour of the city. First stop is the Wish Tree. It is a plastic tree at which you whisper a wish and if it is granted a bell rings. The city is known as the “younger brother of St. Petersburg”. Lenin Square still has Lenin’s statue, one of twelve thousand that were erected in Russia in Lenin’s time. This one is known as the Lenin of three heads. His first head was knocked off and replaced with one wearing a hat. Unfortunately, he had his hat tucked underneath his arm so they knocked this one off and replaced it with a hatless one. More Russian humour to come next time. There is also an Eternal Flame burning in the square for those who died in German concentration camps. The city was occupied by the Finns who were German allies in the war. Russian humour was mentioned in my last chapter. Another example of it was told to us in Petrozavodsk. “The summers here are short. This year it was last Thursday and I missed it because I was out of town”. Could have been said to a Newfoundlander!

After a bit more exploring and shopping here we went back to the ship for lunch and then on to the town of Kitzhi. There we

had a walking tour of the open-air Museum of wooden architecture which included beautiful churches, houses, and a bell tower. Next morning, we had a Russian history lesson on board. Considering that people had only had freedom of speech for the last two years they were touchingly honest and out-spoken about their recent history. During the war troops who were captured by the Germans were expected to commit suicide rather than go to a prison camp. Those who did not, at the end of the war, were sent to Siberia for ten years as traitors.

Next morning, a beautiful one, we watched as a lovely vista floated past us, green fields, splendid forests, and attractive villages. At one of these we stopped for a Russian tea-drinking ceremony. Again, an example of Russian humour, a large man was dressed as a woman and a tiny woman as a man. As we were given samples of teas to drink and dainties to eat the whole ceremony was described to us with great humour by our interpreter.

Next stop on our journey was Irma where there were stalls set up along the wharf. We went ashore and strolled around to look at them and were invited in to tea by some of the local residents. None of them spoke English but they seemed interested that we were Canadians, "No Americans?" Of course, to confuse them, there were many Americans in our group!

In the afternoon, we had another Russian language lesson, voluntary of course. I am ashamed to say that I do not remember a single word they taught us.

The next stop along the canal was Chereporess a highly-

industrialized area. One of the bridges that we went under is called the October Bridge so named to celebrate the defeat of the Germans in October 1945.

The following day we were back into the countryside again with large dairy farms and fields of grain. Our news broadcaster on the ship had some jokes for us after the news. "What do grizzly bears call mountain bikers? Answer, meals on wheels." "What do they call joggers? Fast food"

Later that day we visited Ipatyev Monastery in the city of Kostroma. It is magnificent. The walls and ceilings inside are covered in icons and incredible paintings, some of them done in 1652. We also went to the Nunnery there and were shown round by a nun who spoke very good English. I asked her where she had learnt it and she replied, "Secret BBC radio."

In the evening, we were entertained on board by dancers, children and adults from Kostroma. They did a variety of dances, some from folk dances, jazz, ballet, waltzes and others. There were wonderful and very talented.

Our stop next morning was in Yaroslav, an ancient and beautiful city built in 1010. It is a busy prosperous looking place with a population of 650,000 people. We wandered through streets with old, old houses, churches, convents and lovely gardens with flowers arranged in patterns. In the evening, we went to see the Concert of Skoromoshina Folk Ensemble. A truly splendid finish to our day.

Actually, we stayed p to watch as we went through the lock of the Volga-Moscow canal, and saw "Mother Volga", as they call the river. There is also a statue here that marks the entrance into the Rybinsk reservoir.

So now we have left the canal and this will be the final stretch, through the reservoir and river to Moscow, our final destination.

And so, to the final few days of our lovely journey through an interesting corner of Western Russia. The grand finale is of course visiting Moscow, a capital city that we wonder whether will be as we imagined- cold and forbidding.

In the morning, we went on a walking tour of a place called Uglich where we were also able to window shop some craft stores. I found a lovely little owl etched in glass for Patricia who was not feeling well that day. In the evening, we had the “Captain’s Dinner” and afterwards a talent show. This would be the last evening we would have time to have a leisurely evening with the captain.

The following morning, we were out on deck by 9:30 as we went through several locks and we thought we might be getting towards the suburbs of Moscow. There were lots of houses, some big like mansions, made of red brick or wood. The trees around this area were big and beautiful but we could see through them beach areas and yacht marinas. Finally, we were going through an area of high rises and apartment buildings. Sure enough, this was Moscow with enough time for a bus tour for some interesting places in the city. The city center would be a major tour the next day.

The morning started the long day with a visit to Zagorsk, the ‘Jerusalem’ of the Russian Orthodox Church. Again, we had a nun as a guide, with whom we visited three magnificent churches. The third church was unique. It had a large body with no inside pillars, designed specially to be self-supporting.

After this we went by bus, while eating our packed lunch, to Red Square, the main focus of the visit for most people. When we got off the bus we went through an underpass and came out in the square, an impressive sight.

We saw the beautiful church of Saint Basil, huge stores which were once Government department stores, Lenin's tomb, another tiny church, many unidentified buildings, and of course the Kremlin. Then back to the boat for dinner and a rest before doing 'Moscow by Night.' This was a wonderful trip. We wandered among lots of people in a pedestrian's only area, and saw sidewalk entertainment, vendor and admittedly some beggars. Then we were driven to the highest point overlooking the city which we saw at sunset at approximately 11 pm!

Magnificent! We were home by midnight and off to bed for an early start next morning.

Our first visit was to the Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts. As well as art by Gauguin, Monet, and Van Gogh, there were rooms full of Egyptian art, and great statuary. I am sure we only saw a minute part of it, and then we were off to the Kremlin. There we went into the Armory Museum. There we saw antique clothes, jewelry, carriages and items belonging to royalty.

Most interesting though were all the precious items from the churches such as icons, patens, and priests garments. We also visited the cathedral where all the Czars were crowned. After that we saw the building in which Mr. Putin has his office. It faces the Kremlin (which means fortification). Thinking of translations, and how they are sometimes misleading. The more correct translation for Ivan the Terrible should, more accurately be, Ivan the Awesome. Another thing we did that



day was to try out the Russian underground system. It is very deep with lots of stairs, and some fast escalators. The trains are also very crowded but seemed efficient.

That evening, our last in Russia, we appropriately went to the ballet, which was “The Corsair” and was superb. The theatre was packed. Well, there are eleven million people in Moscow. Our final morning in the city we went first to the Tretyakov Museum known, I think, for its magnificent story-telling murals. Last but not least we went to Lenin’s tomb. He lies in a lighted glass coffin and at one time there would always be people round it paying respects. Now I think there is talk of having him buried. It was an interesting finale to a fascinating journey. Oleg, our news/weather man had a final joke on the morning of departure. “A weatherman had become a laughingstock because his forecasts were always wrong; he asked for a change of post, because the climate didn’t agree with him”. Our journey home took us via Amsterdam, and we were able to spend a day at a hotel in the village of Volendam. The hotel seemed luxurious after our small cabin, and I love Holland with its clean streets and beautiful flowers. It was a lovely wind down to a great and busy trip.



# THE GALAPAGOS ISLANDS



The Galapagos Islands are a group of Pacific Islands on the equator and are a part of Ecuador. They were made famous by Charles Darwin who visited and explored them in the 1800's, and subsequently wrote his autobiographical book on the Origin of Species. The name Galapagos was given to the islands by a Spanish explorer many years before that and was in reference to the giant tortoises that are found there. I went to the Galapagos with a small group, including of course, my friend Patricia. Our guide was a young man called Ken, whose interest was flora and fauna, (particularly lichens and mosses I happen to remember!). Consequently, we were shown many of the unusual plants, which differed slightly from island to island. We flew to Quito, Ecuador's capital, and the highest capital in the world I believe. We spent the afternoon there we went to the park in which there is a large circle of bricks laid in the ground. Across the center of the circle there is a straight line of different coloured bricks. If you stand with a foot on either side of this line you are standing on both sides of the equator!

After dinner at a very elegant restaurant we went to our first-class hotel for the night. Next morning after our early breakfast we went down to the docks to get on the boat for the exciting part of our trip.

The boat would be our hotel for the next twelve days as we visited five or six of the islands. Our cabin was nice though not spacious, with a bathroom shared with the next cabin. The boat I think accommodated about thirty people. Meals were mostly buffet style and excellent.

The islands are entirely volcanic so consist of mostly black

volcanic rock, lava, and in some places mud. First sight of them is disappointing, they have very sparse vegetation and in some of them black mud predominately. It is only when you get on land and can look more closely that one can see the fascinating flora and fauna. What makes it so interesting is, to begin with, the amazing number of creatures on what seems a very sparse food supplies. Another intriguing thing is the differences of the creatures on each island. The islands are only a few hundred miles from the mainland, and less than a hundred miles apart, yet the birds, for instance, have different shaped beaks on each island, although they may be recognizable as finches. That is what caught Darwin's attention! The thing that most delighted me was seeing the penguins. They are the only penguins to live naturally in the northern hemisphere, just north of the equator. They have certainly adapted to their environment. It is believed that the original ones must have been brought up from Antarctica by the strong current that flows all the way up from there. On the Galapagos, the penguins are quite small and live in the caves at sea level. Despite being on the Equator the climate is not exceptionally hot because the ocean is quite cold. Of course, there is no ice for the penguins to live on so they found the next best thing, sea-cooled caves.

The creature that the Galapagos are known for is, of course, the giant tortoise. We saw several which, when walking, were about the height of our knees. Neither the birds nor animals were in the least afraid of us humans- they had no reason to be. Other remarkable creatures included large bright red crabs which one saw scuttling across the black rocks- very

photogenic.

There is an extraordinary variety of lizards and iguanas, some of incredible size. One variety of Iguana is black with a yellow head and is about four feet long. The lizards are almost as big and some are very colourful. They made me think of dragons. Or guide Ken made a point of finding us a giant spider reputed to be deadly poisonous. We did not wait to find out! He also pointed out the scorpions which are also poisonous but not necessarily fatal.

Ken was very good at telling us about the different plants which grow on volcanic surfaces. They tended to be low growing or tall and wispy. I recognized a few of the flowers as ones I had seen in other tropical places, but I was surprised to see one that looked like a primrose.

The birds, which I mentioned earlier, are like many seen on our continent. On one island, we were lucky enough to see huge bald eagles. The birds in general seemed completely fearless of us and sometimes you would look down and see one hopping along right near your feet.

One disappointment we had was not being able to visit the Research Station, which is named the Darwin Research Station. It is where they study the flora and fauna of the islands, and the differences between them. The station was closed because the staff were on strike to voice their objection to Ecuador's intention of allowing large fishing vessels to go around the islands to fish/ I wished we could have registered a vote to support them.

We did quite a lot of walking on each island we visited and there were so many things to see (and photograph), that time

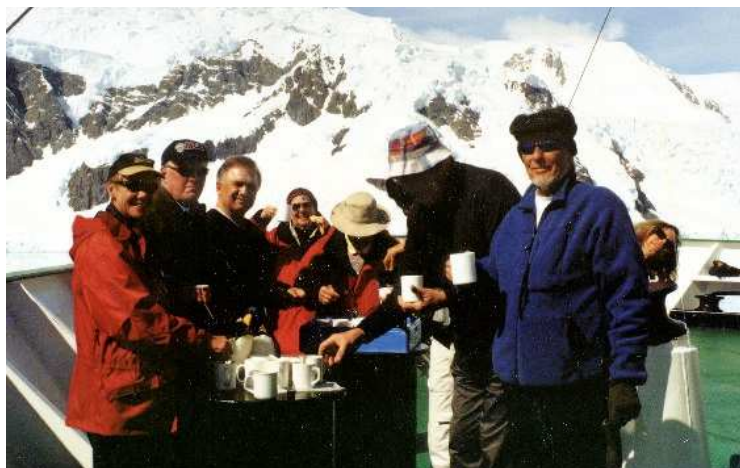
passed too quickly. Before we knew it the twelve days were up and it was time to go back to the mainland, and thence back home.

I must say it is an extraordinary trip, where one concentrates so much on the many and unusual creatures, and not so much on the land or the few people we saw. A memorable place to visit.

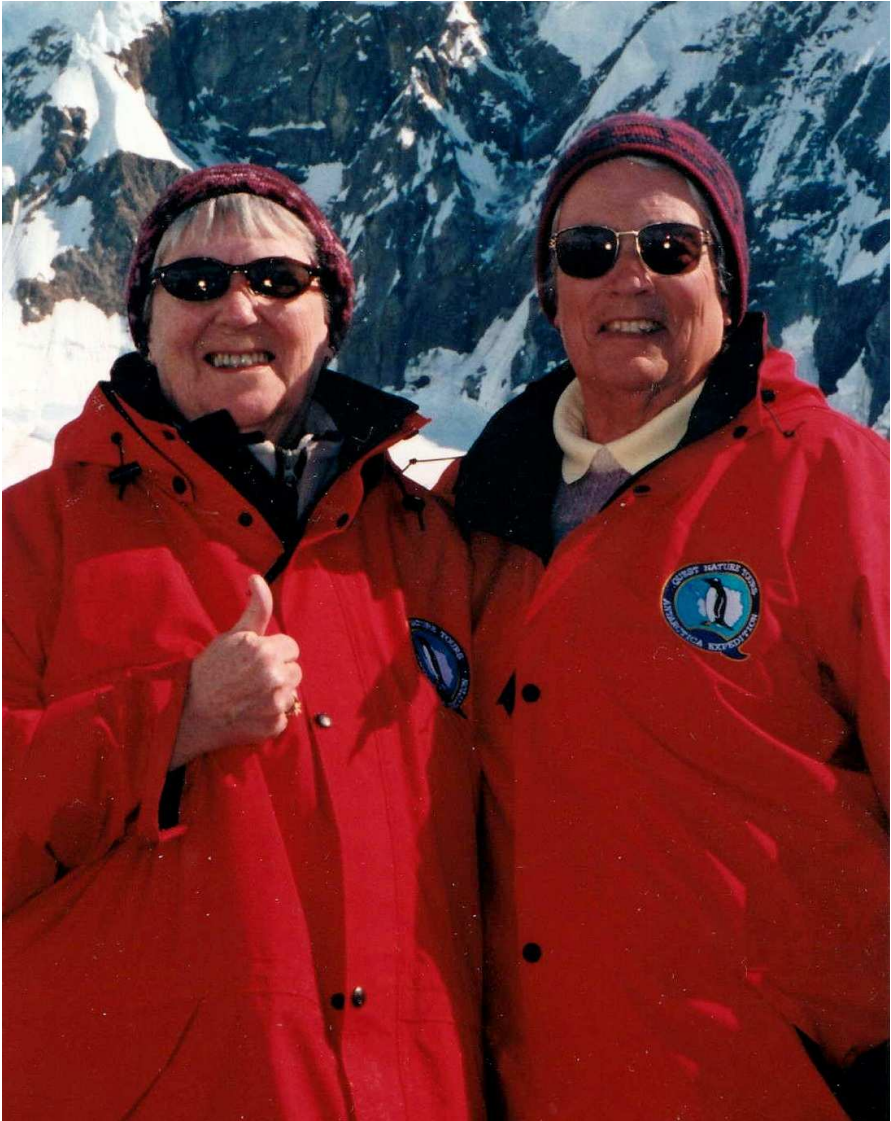




# ANTARCTICA









People sometimes ask me which country has impressed me the most, and after some consideration I have to say “Antarctica”. The hesitation is due, in part, to the first impression of “nothingness”, if there is such a word. Further pause is caused by my difficulty in describing exactly what it is that is so fascinating. I hope by the end I have been able to convey at least a little of the mystery to you.

Of course, the journey to the “bottom of the world”, was a long one, taking more than three days, we left home in the middle of January and arrived at our destination in summer! We flew from St. John’s to Toronto, Toronto to Miami, and then Miami to Buenos Aires. We did have a day to explore in Buenos Aires, some of which is beautiful with magnificent buildings. There is a large modern area with many overpasses and bridges taking traffic in and out of the city. Unfortunately, these overpasses have become home to some of the six million people who have moved to the city in hopes of finding work. In the course of our exploring we were waiting to cross a street at a pedestrian crossing, when we saw a picture of a man walking we assumed that it was an indication that we too could walk. Wrong assumption! Unfortunately, Patricia was hit by a bus! Thankfully the bus had only just started up so she was more shocked than hurt, but it was a frightening experience for her so we returned to the hotel.

Later she felt well enough to go on a bus tour and was able to enjoy some of the coloured houses with wrought iron railings and balconies. We also saw the Pink Palace painted that colour to indicate that the war between the red and the white factor was over! Another building of interest is the Casa

Rosada where the president works, and was the one-time home of Eva Peron.

Near there, is a huge carving of a lotus flower. It is silver and designed to close its petals over the stamens at night. I am not sure of its significance.

We had to get up in the wee hours to catch our flight to Ushuaia the next morning. Ushuaia is the southernmost city in the world and where we would board our ship to Antarctica. As we drove to the airport we saw people strolling in the brilliant moonlight enjoying the reflection of the moon on the river Plata, the widest river in the world. The flight was of about three hours' duration so we arrived in the early morning and saw the snow-capped mountains of the Andes, at the foot of which the city of Ushuaia nestles. We arrive at the lovely modern airport and immediately see that it is summertime. There were lupines of every colour imaginable wherever we looked as well as roses, and in the fields, clover and dandelions.

The town was originally primitively settled by a nomadic tribe of people known as Jamana in around 1830. The first white settlement was started in 1869 by an Anglican Mission. As the Argentineans found it difficult to encourage people to live in such a remote place they decided to build a penal colony for dangerous criminals! The prison is now partly a museum. Incentives were also given to encourage industries and fishing etc. Ushuaia is now a thriving and attractive city of more than 38,000 people. Many of the streets leading into town have houses with gardens (full of lupines). There are also row houses, reminiscent of St. John's. Some of the interesting

buildings we saw included part of the prison which has now been made into a hospital, an attractive Nautical Club, the Centre of Scientific Research, and a beautiful Catholic Church. A naval base was established here in the 1800's which is quite a busy place now with increasing voyages to the Antarctic. In 1930 a ship named the St. Christopher was shipwrecked here, with 1200 people on board, all of whom were rescued. They waited in a town of 600 people for six days- shades of 9/11! We later went up to the ski area where a chair lift was running. The ride was thrilling with fascinating and breath taking scenery; someone said better than Whistler B. C. When we were dropped off after the ski area they took us to the shopping area. I imagine this was the popular tourist areas there were many craft shops and beautiful hand-crafted products such as knitting, carving, and paintings. Finally, it was time for our bus down to our ship. When we went on board we were introduced to our tour staff, and some of the crew. After dinner, we went on board and watched the pilot being dropped off, and then we went off to bed. Tonight, we will be at sea and encounter the Drake Passage. Our real Antarctic experience begins as we enter the Drake Passage which is where the Pacific Ocean meets the Atlantic Ocean. I had imagined that there might be turbulent seas, but in fact we had a reasonably quiet night and were able to sleep and wake to sunny skies and a calm day. The day was spent watching the Albatross and Petrels and listening to a talk on the birds of the Antarctic. We were told that the Skua bird is a predator of the penguins. It descends by the baby penguins and as the mother ejects the krill from

her throat to the baby's, the Skua pushes it aside and gets the krill instead. Krill, by the way, is small shrimp-like planktonic crustaceans of the open seas. There was also another talk on Shackleton and other early explorers.

We explored the ship for a while, and decided that our cabin was on the Poop deck. This was because in the passage, just outside our cabin was a large picture of some petrels sitting on a large rock which was white with their excrement! Hence the identification! Before we went to bed we were told that we would be within the Antarctic Circle by early morning. There was a good deal of excitement among the crew about this. Our Captain has been on this voyage many times, and had never been across the Circle because of ice. We could see an iceberg and what looked like land on the distant horizon. We are ready for bed, it is nearly ten thirty and we are writing our notes by sunlight! The sun will presently dip below the horizon and then very soon pop up again to start a new day.

The new day is bright and sunny (of course), and we can see ice and snow covered land. Champagne is served at breakfast to celebrate being in the Antarctic Circle. We see our first penguin marching across a flat piece of floating ice. After breakfast, it is time for our first Zodiac trip. By the end of the voyage Patricia had decided that getting up and down into and out of Zodiacs was a little less onerous than getting on and off a camel!

We went by Zodiac to DeTaille Island, an abandoned British research station. There are a few signs that there was human habitation there a long time ago, such as a huge rusty water tank, and bits of what could have been a building. There, we

also saw thousands of penguins. We were told not to approach the penguins, but I don't think the penguins were told not to approach us. They kept walking towards us, some with their heads on one side as if studying us.

On our return to the ship for lunch we find a barbeque lunch on deck, with the Peregrine's crew all wearing hats, some of which were shaped like bananas and pineapples. Some of the male crew were also wearing grass skirts! All this to celebrate being in the Antarctic Circle.

Later we go for another Zodiac cruise and this is where the enchantment begins. We are cruising among bergs and bergie bits, seals and penguins, with distant views of glaciers and mountains, both ice and snow covered. All this is in brilliant sunshine glistening on the ice and snow. Where is the colour coming from? There is every shade of blue and green on the surface of the incredible natural ice sculptures that float by us. We saw shapes that looked like churches and trees, people and animals, and even one like the Sphinx! Perhaps the shades of green are a reflection of the yellow in the sun mixed with the blue of the sky? However, it works, it gives more shape to the sculptures and yet makes them more than otherworldly.

When we get back to the ship we are told that the next night we will be camping out and sleeping on the ice. Needless to say, we were up early the next day to hear about the camping trip, and then of course another exploration by Zodiac. This day we went to Peterman Island, a.k.a. Circumcision Island, because the explorer discovered and arrived on it on the Feast of Circumcision. We walked about with thousands of

penguins, mostly Adelies and Gentoo's, which caused a cacophony of noise calling between young and parents. We also saw a Leopard Seal which are reputed to be nasty natured but seemed completely indifferent to us. After lunch on the ship we were off again in our Zodiacs and cruised around Vernadsky. There is based the only research station, (or any other occupied habitation for that matter), that we saw in Antarctica. This was established by Britain in 1957 and recently sold to Ukraine for one pound. The Ukrainians have people there doing research, (on what I don't know), and even have a little shop where they sell, among other things postcards and stamps. You can buy and stamp a postcard on which they will put an official "Antarctica" stamp and promise to take it with them when they go home and mail it. We received ours a year later!

We later explored a much older abandoned station almost like an old wooden cottage. There were packets of food on the shelves that had been there for a hundred years in a permanently frozen state. There was also a visitor's book that we signed, which made us members of a very select group.

Before returning to the ship for supper, we climbed, with some difficulty, a glacier, on which we were told we were going to sleep that night! Our sleeping gear and other necessities were all packaged and ready to go as soon as we finished our meal. Then off to the Zodiacs for a big adventure!

The final great adventure was about to begin! We got to our camping spot on the glacier. Patricia and I selected our spots close to each other. First we had to tamp down the crystalline snow for a space to put our mats and sleeping bags. We then

had to undress and put on our P.J.'s, without freezing to death! We were told we had to change, the reason for which I am not clear. It was not easy as there is no shelter to hide behind. Our "toilet" was an oil drum with a plastic lining and toilet seat, half hidden behind a large lump of ice. To use it, you walk towards it yelling, "I'm coming, is anyone there, and then used it as quickly as humanly possible. We got into our sleeping bags alright, pulled the hoods over our heads, and surprisingly in the "day" light slept pretty well until woken by birds which we prayed would not poop on our heads as they flew overhead.

We were up at five a.m. and getting out of one's sleeping bags and getting trousers and boots on again seemed even more difficult than taking them off. Once achieved, we then had to get our bedding rolled up and into their bags and then brush the snow surface to fill in our sleeping holes so that no one could tell we had been there. Even the "toilet" was taken back to the ship and emptied in the sewage tank.

Finally, we trudged back to the zodiac with our equipment, no mean feat in the sand textured snow. As we were being checked in, always a ritual going on and off the boat, Patricia commented to the checker, "I am twenty years younger than I was yesterday." "Oh you feel younger do you?" asked the checker. "Yes, because no-one my age could have done what I have just done." First thing back in the cabin - hot showers, and then a snooze. On deck, later we are told there would be "spectacular" scenes. We wondered if that was possible after all the "spectacular" we have already seen! It turned out it was. The ship is going through the impressive LeMaire Channel.

The scenery is breathtaking. There are big mountains covered in ice and snow which are completely reflected in the calm waters. There were whales lazily swimming back and forth, penguins leaping and diving and of course the dramatically shaped icebergs and bergie bits. We enter Paradise Channel. We will have the Mainland on starboard and Paradise on port. When we get in the zodiacs we are then taken and landed on the Antarctic Peninsula, the mainland- this huge continent nearly as big as Canada hidden under all this ice and snow! Here we see many Adelie penguins and one Emperor, which caused great excitement as they are quite rare in this area.

There we also saw some snow leopard seals and a Weddell seal which was a big fellow. While we were there Patricia and I waded in the Antarctic Ocean!

Next day we were off on another zodiac expedition to Couverville Island where we saw some Gentoo penguins. There were also thousands of Chinstrap penguins as well. Of all the thousands of penguins we saw only one Marconi penguin easily recognized by little tufts on its head, just like little bits of spaghetti. We also saw another whale swimming quite close to us with her calf; an amazing sight.

After breakfast the following morning we go on deck to witness the passing into Neptune's Bellows. The ship had to pass over an active volcano. We anchored off Deception Island. The Bellows is the basin of an active volcano, the entrance of which was red rock mountains which reminded Patricia of Bell Island. Here there were the remains of an old whaling station from the days when the British were allowed to pursue the whaling trade. The area has a beach of volcanic ash and hot



springs. The crew dug a little pool for those brave enough to put on bathing suits and immerse themselves. I took up the challenge with a few other people and it was great, just like being in a hot tub. I did not follow one of the men who then swam in the ocean. Instead Patricia and I climbed up to Neptune's Window where there is a spectacular view for miles in the clear air. The climbing up and down is onerous in the loose volcanic rock and lava, but it was worth it.

After lunch, back on the ship we pass Hanna Point and the sea was much rougher. We were warned that the zodiac trip might be exciting, hitting huge waves and getting covered in spray. Once landed, we set off for a penguin rookery. We were surrounded by penguins, many with young, which were feeding on the krill brought by the two parents. Afterwards, the digested krill is literally shot out of their back passages making the ground all around pink.

We saw a colony of Elephant seals, the females weighing about a tone and the males four tons. The males are not friendly towards each other, but do stay together during molting season to rub against each other. They stink and loudly pass gas to add to the stink. Fortunately, we were upwind of them in a fairly high wind! We also saw some birds called Giant Petrels who also smell; they have smelly "spit" which they shoot into their young's beaks. Apparently if this gets on your clothes you might as well burn them it is so difficult to get rid of.

There were one or two lichen-like plants on the rocks; I think the first we had seen, and the only species on Antarctica. The trip back on the zodiac was not quite so rough. Once the ship

got going again we were into rough weather in the Drake Passage.

We had been unusually lucky with seven days and nights of brilliant sunshine and calm seas. These rough seas and high winds are what are expected. Our next point of interest was Cape Horn. Unfortunately, we didn't see the horn as the weather was too rough. Even a slide show proved impossible as the chairs kept sliding across the cabin floor.

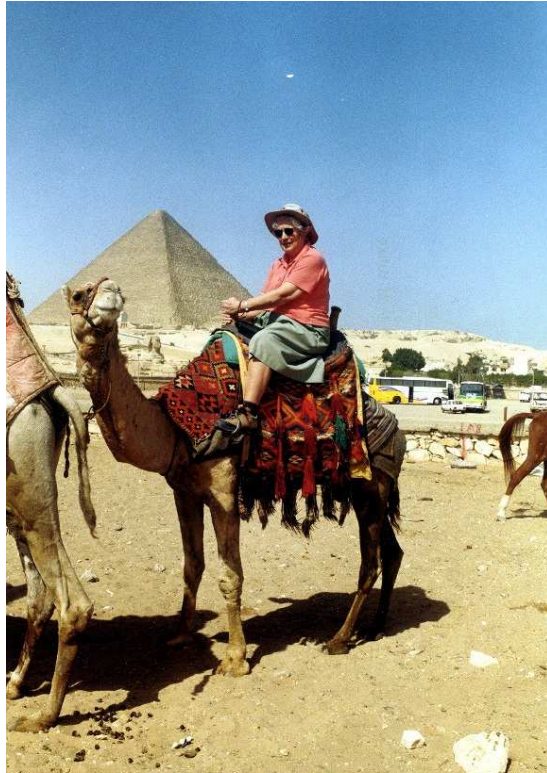
So, then we wakened to our last day but one on board.

Business first. We get our luggage from a central area where it had been stored, and then go to the bar to pay our dues and get our certificate. We get our certificate to say we have visited Antarctica and another one saying we camped on a glacier on Antarctica.

We go for a final slide show, this one all about the Albatross. After lunch, we did packing. By the time we had finished that the sea had calmed and the sun came out. We went out on deck in our shirt sleeves and were able to see Cape Horn and say farewell to it. We then did a tour of the ship's decks.

Of course, the final evening included the Captain's Dinner, which was very convivial. We sat with several Australians who after dinner sang their national anthem, and gave a rousing rendition of Waltzing Matilda!

On the last morning we had an early breakfast and disembarked at 9 am. We went off for a tour of Ushuaia before we set off to the airport to fly to Buenos Aires. Long wait for flight to Miami, and even longer one for Toronto, but then fairly quickly off to St. John's with a 3 am arrival. A long haul from 9 am Monday to 3 am Wednesday, but WOW was it worth it!



# EGYPT



Egypt is a fascinating country, both for its geography and its history. It is the country that connects the two continents, Africa and Asia and since the building of the Suez Canal, connects two seas, the Mediterranean and the Red Sea.

Egypt's history of course is known about all over the world because so much of it can still be seen and studied after thousands of years. What can be seen is so remarkable that it is almost impossible to believe that it was built without the aid of any modern technology or machinery.

I am lucky enough to have visited Egypt twice in my life, once, over thirty years ago, and again about ten years ago.

My first visit was a social one. My husband and I were invited to a friend's house in Cairo for a week. The friend was a fellow engineer working in Saudi Arabia with John, and they both had a week's leave at the same time. It was interesting to see that life in Cairo, for the middle class, was much the same as life in many other big cities around the world. The large food stores were much the same, and had a cosmopolitan selection of food stuffs. The thing that was different for us was the TRAFFIC! The streets were often four lane which sometimes became five lane in the rush. There were no top signs and a number of roundabouts, and the cars were going FAST. There also did not appear to be pedestrian crossings and yet people were crossing all the time. I was amazed that I never saw anyone hit by a car. Of course we did see some of the pyramids and other ancient artifacts with our friends, but also saw some of the modern side of Cairo, and Alexandria on the Nile Delta and the Mediterranean Sea.

Alexandria is Egypt's second largest city, known as "the Pearl of the Mediterranean", and has lovely sandy beaches much sought after by people cruising from one end of the sea to the other. On my

second visit to Egypt I was with a small group and shared a room, as usual, with my friend Patricia. On our first night in the city of Cairo we stayed at the Sheraton Hotel and the next morning, after meeting our guide, we were off on a bus tour. Our guide was a young mother of two who lived in Cairo. She spoke excellent English and was not only very knowledgeable about her country, but obviously loved what she did.

Our first destination was Memphis which was Egypt's first capital and was where we saw the simply huge statue of Ramses II. I forget who he was, but I think he lived about four thousand years ago! One had to be constantly reminding oneself that all these huge constructions of stone were carried or built not hundreds, but thousands of years ago to honour the Gods or various deities. A little further on at Sakkara we saw our first Pyramid. It was called the step pyramid for obvious reasons- it was built like steps. After that we saw the Great Pyramid of Cheops. The biggest of them all, with a smaller one for his son Cephron, and three more close by. An awe inspiring sight. Also at this site is the Sphinx which guards Cephron's tomb. The Sphinx has a human head, ostensibly that of Cephron, and the body of a lion. The human head is to indicate wisdom and intelligence, and the lion's body indicates strength and power.

The next day we went on a short flight to see the colossal temples of Abu Simbel dedicated to none other than Ramses II whose huge statue we had seen the previous day. They were built over 3000 years ago, but the fascinating thing about them is that they were moved. When the Egyptians wanted to build a huge dam across the Nile River they realized that the temples would be flooded so they cut them into 2000 pieces, each weighing about 40,000 tons, and moved them about 90 feet higher up. We went on from there by air

to Aswan where the dam was built. It was completed about fifty years ago and created a huge lake, about 300 miles long. We went to stay at the deluxe Old Cataract Hotel which overlooks the Nile and the city. This hotel is fascinating. Both Winston Churchill and Agatha Christie have stayed there and suites are maintained in their names. It also has the most beautiful gardens and grounds to walk in with masses of flowers and lots of birds. The movie, "Death on the Nile" was actually filmed here. We were reluctant to leave this beautiful spot but the next day we were going aboard ship, and going on to more exciting things.

We went from the idyllic garden of the Old Cataract Hotel to our deluxe ship, "Sonesta Sun Goddess", which we called home for the next four nights. In the afternoon we all went on a sailboat or "felucca" and spent a couple of hours sailing round Elephantine Island, very cool and relaxing. We then went back to our ship for afternoon tea while we watched the sun set and listened to the call to prayer.

After our evening meal we were entertained by a Nubian Folkloric show. They played great percussion, sang and then were joined by a belly dancer who persuaded our group leader Jim to dance with her, much to our entertainment. I was once asked if it ever got boring seeing so many ruins, tombs, and carvings. I denied that it did. Each ruin etc. has a story, often shown in pictures or hieroglyphics. Some were made 4000 years ago and some maybe only 1000 years. It makes one wonder what we will have left to tell our story 4000 years from now. The next morning was spent visiting a temple, the Temple of Philae, and then two Gods, the Crocodile God and Haroeris the winged God. I think the early Egyptians had a

god for everything.

Our next adventure was to go on a camel ride. The camels kneel down for you to mount them, with stirrups, much like mounting a horse. We then had a lesson on how to lean right back and forward when the camel gets up, back legs first, then front. Wow it is high up. The actual riding is quite smooth; the camels are in no hurry. Patricia had a little trouble with her camel; it decided to stand up again when he was supposed to be lying for her to dismount. This left her dangling for a moment before safely slipping off. That day was ended with the Captain's Welcome Dinner Party.

By the next morning we had arrived in Edfir where we went to visit the Temple of Horus which was built in recent years, 237 B.C. The whole history of the period is carved and/or painted on the interior walls. The colours are still bright and it is amazing to realize that people felt it was important to record their story 2000 years ago. This was one of the places where we went to the local market. Some of our group really enjoyed bargaining with the locals, many of whom spoke some English.

Our next stop down the Nile was the city of Luxor/ancient Thebes which is the final resting place for most of the rulers of ancient Egypt. The next day we took buses from Luxor and went through some of the country-side which abounds on either side of the Nile. We passed through sugar cane fields, and saw many banana and date palm trees. The landscape is lush and green with lots of farm animals and people around. We spent the day in what is known as the Valley of the Kings, the Necropolis of Thebes. We crossed to the West Bank

where we saw a number of balloons hovering over the valley. We learned that you can visit the valley in this way for \$300!! It was interesting to see the modern way of life in the Nile Valley. The majority of Egyptians live within a short distance of the river and its estuaries, the rest of the country being desert. Our next day was one for visiting a number of tombs. It was extremely interesting to see and learn about what went into the tombs to ensure that the dead would have every comfort and advantage in the next life. The hieroglyphics and pictures were awesome; I am glad I have a pen to write my life story. We visited probably the best preserved tomb in all of Egypt, that of Ramses VI, and also that of Ramses III with its particularly fine paintings.

In the afternoon we visited and explored the Temples of Luxor and Karnack with their massive courtyards, rows of immense columns, and marvelous obelisks of the ancient Pharaohs. Their size is awe inspiring and makes one wonder, again, how and why small humans built such vast edifices.

The last day with our lovely ship we had a restful evening before going off on a journey to a different part of Egypt with a rather different piece of history.

After leaving the ship we flew to Sharm El Sheikh which is a deluxe resort on the southern tip of the Sinai Peninsula on the Red Sea. Outside the resort is desert but inside there are beautiful gardens with masses of flowers and birds singing everywhere. There are also several swimming pools which I swam in a few times. We were able to rent a glass bottomed boat to go out on the Red Sea, exploring the coral and the many species of coloured fish.



One whole day was given over to a long bus journey into the Sinai Desert. We were off to visit St. Catherines, an ancient Monastery built in the sixth century by Emperor Justin at the base of Mount Sinai. We had the opportunity to climb the cut steps, (over 3000 of them), up Mount Sinai, but we all decided not to take this optional excursion. We saw the main chapel of the Monastery with its beautiful mosaics and icons. We also saw the Burning Bush, still alive, after all this time and transplanted to the Monastery for protection.

On our journey of over 100 kilometres we saw many Bedouin, some offering items or camel rides for sale. On our way home we stopped in at a Bedouin village and we were offered bottles of water. After a relaxing day just enjoying the resort we were off back to Cairo. Our activities that day included a visit to the Egyptian Museum, a history lesson in itself, and then to the famous Khan El Khalili Bazaars. There Patricia got what sounded like two proposals of marriage, 'if she would just come and look.'

Our last day we visited the Christian Quarter of Old Cairo where we saw several Coptic Churches including Abu Serga Church built on the site where Mary, Joseph and Jesus were believed to have stayed.

Among MANY other artifacts we saw that day was a replica of King Tut's Tomb with all its' treasures. In my journey around the world, Egypt must be one of the most fascinating places to explore for anyone interested in History.

An artistic painting of an Arctic scene. In the foreground, a yellow polar bear stands on a patch of white snow and green moss. In the middle ground, a brown walrus with white tusks is partially submerged in the water. The background features a blue sea and distant, layered mountains in shades of blue, white, and brown. The title 'THE ARCTIC EXPEDITION' is written in a large, black, serif font across the center of the image.

# THE ARCTIC EXPEDITION

The first leg of our journey to the Arctic,(where we hoped to cross the Arctic Circle), was by air. The first leg was to Halifax and then on to Ottawa. We stayed the night there before catching a very early flight to Iqaluit en route to Kangerlussuaq Greenland. In fact we never did land at Iqaluit, it was too foggy so we landed at Goose Bay instead, and then on to Greenland.

While at the hotel in Ottawa we had a meeting with the staff and other members of our group. We were also all given a jacket with the travel groups name and insignia, a polar bear, on it.

We rose very early the next morning and had breakfast before leaving in time for the flight to Greenland. While waiting at the airport I phoned my daughter Deborah in St. John's to wish her a Happy Birthday. We usually have a joint celebration as my birthday is very close, and this year we couldn't even fit in one celebration.

While on the flight we were politely asked to use the bathroom before we landed, because we were being transferred immediately to a bus for a tour! Sure enough on arrival in Kangerlussuaq we got off the plane and onto a safari bus on a search for Musk Ox. We did eventually see some in the distance after having walked what seemed like miles in boggy terrain, into which Patricia and Erika (another group member), went up to their ankles! A lot of the terrain seemed boggy; I suppose it is due to the melting ice cap that still covers a large part of Greenland. We then sailed down the longest Fjord in the world, Sondrestom, which is eighty four kilometres long. In the evening we boarded our tour ship where we had an

information session before dinner and then went on deck as the ship got underway. We saw some small, slow moving glaciers and schist rock mountains with black horizontal stripes flowing through, which are called “intrusions” that were formed millions of years ago. The rocks are often smoothed and rounded by the action of the glaciers which leave scars down them. I found them very beautiful.

The next morning after breakfast we went in a Zodiac to the beach and this time we put on boots. Our Zodiac driver was John Johnson from Scotland, AKA “Shrek” We saw tracks of musk ox and foxes, but no animals. The wild flowers consisted of at least four kinds of lichen, dwarf fireweed and star chickweed to name a few. Their common denominator is that they are compact and grow close to the ground. We had a choice of walking on the beach, climbing the low mountains, or going on a short Zodiac trip all before lunch. We chose the Zodiac trip.

Back at the ship after lunch I went to an art lesson given by Sharon, a fabulous painter. In the afternoon we also had a talk and slide show on ice and icebergs, and another on where we would be going the next day. The day ended with us watching a glorious sunset and pink sky from our cabin porthole.

After breakfast the next morning the time was taken up by another art lesson for some of us, and then later a talk by Steven, one of the staff, on the ice field at Ilulissat where we were going after an early lunch. This looked as if it would be the pattern of our activities for a while.

Ilulissat, from the sea, is charming and looks like a small version of St. John’s with its rows of coloured houses. We find

the tourist centre where we buy picture postcards and stamps, which we immediately write and mail. We explore here on foot while waiting for the Zodiacs. The highlight of the day is going to be a trip to the ice field at the end of the largest and fastest moving glacier in the world. It calves all the icebergs that we see in Newfoundland. They are HUGE when they leave here and float north on the Greenland Current before turning south on the Labrador Current. It may take 60 years for some of them to get from here to there!.

In the evening there was a barbeque dinner on deck and, although chilly, it was another beautiful evening to end another day full of fascinating things to do and see.

Next morning starts much the same- another talk, this one about the geography and people of Greenland. Then there was an old film about Alfred Wagener who was an astronomer and the first person to put forward the theory of Continental Drift. He died on an expedition to the Greenland icecap to prove his theory.

After lunch we went to Uummannaq, another delightful fishing town with a charming stone church and a small museum which holds some of the sled etc. from Alfred Wagener's expedition. There was also a little gift shop called Santa's where I bought a lovely poster of Native art which I have hanging at home. In the evening we went to an old Innu burial ground not far from Uummannaq. There is not much to see there but it is somehow very impressive.

We board the ship again and are on our way to Canada, which takes eighteen hours I believe.

We were now in Canadian waters when we woke next morning. After breakfast I got another art class, and Patricia went to a talk on, "Adapting to Ice." We then hear a talk on all the birds that we might see. This included the snowy owl, also known as the Ookpik, the Arctic Tern, Rock Ptarmigan, and auks or dovebies, of which there are said to be twelve million pairs. There were also the black guillemots with sexy red legs who encourage their young to jump off the high cliffs into the sea in order to teach them to fly. In the afternoon, we had a talk with pictures about the Franklin Expedition. We hoped to see the remains of their camp next morning. We also expect to see the first sea ice and hopefully polar bears. That evening we did see hundreds of dovebies swimming and diving on the high rocks. We woke next morning to the sight of our first sea ice from our window. During the morning, we had a very interesting science lesson. The highlight of the morning came at midday with the first sighting of a Polar Bear. We saw a second one mid-afternoon swimming and posing on the ice. We did see a third in the distance. Another interesting sight was a flock of Ivory gulls, of which there are only 2500 left in the world, according to our bird expert.

Later we had a briefing about safety on land where there might be polar bears. Our escorts would have firearms and we were told how to respond if alerted to the presence of a bear! Early next morning we finally saw the coast of Canada at Gibb Fiord and Clark Fiord. The terrain was bog and rock with lots of lichens and moss. There were a number of familiar wild flowers, but in smaller versions, as well as blueberries and crowberries. There is a tiny species of willow tree that only

grows about three or four inches high! The only wild life we saw that morning was an American Pipit, a black spider, and walking mosquito. The thing that we studied was POOP! We saw fresh polar bear poop, lemming poop, snow goose poop, arctic hare poop, fox poop, and musk ox poop! The guides do this of course to find out what and where these various animals have been in the area. In the afternoon, I went to another art class where I tried my hand at painting ice scenes, very difficult but interesting. The class was cut short by the sea getting a bit too rough.

We had blueberry muffins for tea, using the local blueberries that one of the staff had picked that morning. Afterwards we watched a very interesting video all about the Arctic.

We had a visit from some of the crew from one of the Coast Guard ships which was taking scientists to the ice to study the impact of shipping to Voisey's Bay. What a surprise to meet a friend from Torbay who is a wildlife officer doing research there too! Next morning, we anchored at Pond Inlet. We went to the Interpretation Centre where we watched local dancers and athletes who did amazing dances and high kicks. There were also two young singers who did throat signing; it was amazing. They asked for volunteers to try it and one of our group did but with no success. She ended in helpless laughter. We had a very exciting time back to the ship in the zodiac as the sea had become very rough. In the evening, there was an interesting debate put on by five staff members. They each had to try to convince us who was the best explorer between Eric the Red, Knud Rasmussen, Roald Emerson, someone Nanson, and St. Brendan the Navigator. By a vote, Roald

Emerson won. Very entertaining.

As you have probably realized by now, quite a lot of the time on the tour was spent on the ship, and there were always interesting things on the go, such as the video shows and lectures. Of course, there were also interesting things to see overboard as well, and when the sea was not rough we did quite a bit of walking on deck. It is of great concern to scientists that there is far less sea ice than there was even two decades ago. Our ship had no difficulty in navigating through it in August.

The final installment of this trip will cover more of the history of events in the area, as well as the flora and fauna.

On this last phase of our Arctic expedition we are in the Arctic Circle and beyond what is known as the tree line. It is actually the area where the trees have got smaller and smaller due to the climate and are virtually non-existent. We woke to brilliant sunshine for our visit to Devon Island where we anchored in Dundas Harbour. One of the first things I did when we got to the beach was to find an unusual stone to give to my grandson Devon. Further along the beach there were sparkling reddish patches which turned out to be garnet crystals. The only living wildlife we saw was a gyrfalcon and a rather unusual spider! Many of the wildflowers were similar to our area here though smaller. For example, there were bladder campion, mountain avens, saxifrage and thrift. Before returning to the ship for lunch we visited the remains of an old R.C.M.P. outpost and graveyard. There were just three gravestones in this desolate spot- very somber. No one seemed to know why the officers



died, but for whatever reason, it must have been tough. After lunch, we displayed our art in the dining room! We also paid a visit to the ship's gift shop. Suddenly there was great excitement at the first view of a walrus. Immediately, the zodiacs were lowered and we went off to get a closer look at him/her. When we got close we kept very quiet and turned off the engines, and the walrus seemed totally oblivious to us. I must say they are remarkable creatures with those long tusks, which don't appear to have any practical use.

We later saw another polar bear, a bearded seal, and a hooded seal. A bird we saw near the cliffs was a long-tailed Jaeger, also known as the pirate of the sea because it steals food from other birds when they are taking it to their chicks. We rode very close to the end of the huge glacier which hangs over the sea, like the ones in Greenland, and like them, bits were always breaking off into HUGE icebergs. Our next morning started at 5:45 am so that we could go in the Zodiacs, to see the bird colonies on the cliffs of Prince Leopold Island. There are thousands of thick billed Murres, Kittiwakes, and Guillemots. It is amazing to see so many birds all living in such close proximity. There was also a polar bear sitting on the beach below. Was he hoping for a lunch of bird? There was some excitement caused by a landslide of moraine rushing into the sea with the noise of an airplane and spray as high as the ship. It did not cause a tsunami I am glad to say.

These expeditions in the last few days were quite exciting due to the winds and high seas. Next morning was no exception. We set off for Beachy Island where three of Franklin's sailors were buried, or maybe four as there is an unmarked grave

there too. We had intended to walk to Cumberland House which was built as a centre for people later searching for the expedition. As you can imagine I am pretty excited to hear that one of Franklin's ships was recently found! Unfortunately, it was so windy that even our trusty tough guy Shrek could not walk so that part of the expedition had to be abandoned.

That night was our last night on board ship so of course we had the Captain's Dinner which was very convivial, and there were lots of "Thank you's" on both sides, AND a sinful selection of delectable cakes and pastries for dessert.

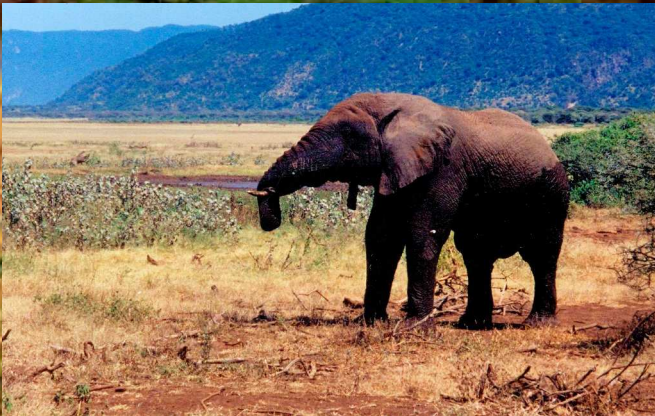
In the morning, we put our luggage out by 7 am, and then had to don wet suits for the Zodiac ride in to Resolute Bay. Just off the beach we were met by an orange school bus, vintage 1976 driven by a man from Burin. The drive was first over beach stones, and then over hard packed sandstone to the Narwhal Hotel where we stopped for refreshments and coffee. The driver then took us to a Thule (pronounced toolee), site abandoned years ago. There were several remains of dwellings, very small, made of flat stones in the side of a hill with arched whale bones over which they (Inuit?) stretched the skins for the roof.

There is also a memorial in the same area to a Japanese man who died on the way back from skiing from Japan to the North Pole. Finally, we board the plane in Resolute to fly down the length of Baffin Island to Iqaluit. As we flew from Iqaluit to Ottawa we realized we had left the Arctic and I felt quite sad. It had been an all too short but interesting exploration of a tough world seen by relatively few people. After a good night's sleep Patricia and I had a leisurely shower at our hotel, without

having to worry about getting the toilet paper or towels wet, which happened sometimes in our ship's bathroom. We had time after breakfast to wander around Ottawa and enjoy its charms. It seemed so lush and fertile after the sparse vegetation of the North. After lunch, we headed to the airport where we had lots of time to explore the shops before heading to security. Needless to say, I had my legs fondled again. Entirely due to metal knee replacements!! There was another wait in Halifax of course, but we finally arrived home after what seemed an incredibly long journey. I am happy to say we were met at the airport by Deborah and grandson Nicholas. It was good to be home.



# EAST AFRICAN SAFARI



Our trip to East Africa had a discouraging start. The plane from home to Toronto was cancelled due to stormy weather. This meant we missed our connection to Nairobi and therefore missed our pick up by the tour coach there. However, our luck changed once we got there. The tour guide sent a jeep with a driver to take us to where the tour had already spent a day and waited for us before moving on.

Nairobi is an attractive modern city but, like many big cities round the world, had a sprawling, area of poor primitive dwellings lived in by the millions of people who flock to the city looking for work.

The drive down to our first camp, in Tanzania was through flat, fairly unspectacular country. I remember someone saying that Hell was the terrible roads between Nairobi and our Safari conservation area!

We visited a Masai village one day where I bought some of the interesting, locally made jewelry. There was a very fine local school there which our guide told us, with great delight, was built by Canadians.

Our camp in the conservation area was under canvas but was obviously semi-permanent as there were showers, electricity and other amenities, and a guard at night. Someone said the guard was actually to keep the hippos from knocking down the tents.

This part of East Africa is very interesting geographically. A lot of the area is volcanic and one of those places is the Ngorongoro Crater. It was formed millions of years ago, by various eruptions and subsequent collapse of ground in areas close to them. Kilimanjaro Mountain range, includes the

highest mountain in Africa; it was a distant view on one of our drives. Of course, the main interest of the tour for me, was the animals. Our first encounter with elephants was when we met a mother and baby. Mother told the bus to keep away from her baby by standing in front of it with her ears spread wide and trumpeting. We all had to sit quietly in the bus until she had calmed down and decided we were no threat.

Another day we were stopped on the road and were taking photos through the open roof of the bus when a pride of lions came to lie in the shade of the bus. They lay close to each other, some with front legs draped over each other, obviously enjoying the cool. Again, we just sit quietly and watched them till some hyenas in the distance attracted their attention and they crept quietly off. As my family knows well, my favourite animal is the giraffe, so it made my day when we stopped in a low lying area with a narrow river and lots of tall trees. There, wandering through the trees, was a herd of giraffes! I know why they have such long necks and legs, but they still seem out of this world to me. Even their colouring with the sort of jig saw puzzle design is perfect for where they live. They blend in perfectly with the trees. I wish that, on the one hand, we had more time to explore geographically and, on the other hand, that I could remember more of what we did.

Maybe someone who reads this will be inspired to explore further!





# GREAT BRITAIN



The eighty years ("***Around the world in 80 years***" was the original title of these travel journals) was fast approaching and enthusiasm for distant travel was waning somewhat. However, when my friend Patricia mentioned that she had always wanted to go on a tour of Britain, I agreed. Although Britain is the land of my birth, travel was not part of our lives when I was a child, due partly to the years of the Depression, and then the Second World War. As an adult I was going, Around the World etc. etc.

A coach tour of some of the highlights of England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales sounded like a delightful and not too onerous an undertaking. So that is what we did, a two-week coach tour starting in London.

## **England**

The first day, was of course taken up by plane travel from St. John's. It was a comfortable, relaxed trip with good food and spare seats to stretch out in. On arrival at Heathrow we had about an hour's drive to our hotel and I realized that the trip would be interesting in an unexpected way for me. As we traveled, I could see that there had been huge changes since I had last been in England, but on the other hand, it all seemed familiar and what I expected. To Patricia however it was all new. She found the size of London amazing, for instance, and was delighted to see how many bridges we could see at one point when we crossed the Thames. She and I seemed to notice different aspects of our environment, and I think this is what has made us such compatible partners over our many journeys together.

The next day we took it easy after the plane journey. On our



wandering we saw an imposing building with a large green dome and made inquiries about it. It was apparently a Starbucks, but it wasn't clear what its origin was! We walked for a while in Hyde Park, and then had a pub lunch. The afternoon was taken up with some more local exploring. The parks and gardens were glorious in July with all the flowers and trees. We were to have a fairly early dinner so that we could go to bed at a reasonable time before our early start out of London in the morning. We realized that we would be covering a lot of ground and seeing many sights in just over twelve days.

Sure enough, next morning after that early start, we were soon out in the countryside and among amazingly large trees (to our Newfoundland eyes), and green fields with cows and sheep. When you think that the size of England itself is only slightly bigger than Newfoundland, it is astonishing to realize how much is packed into it. There are large and small towns and cities, roads and motorways, rivers, hills, and miles of fields and farms. There is still beautiful countryside in spite of the huge population.

Our first stop was Stratford-upon-Avon, where we visited William Shakespeare's cottage. It was a beautiful little country house surrounded by a beautiful garden awash with blooms. Did Shakespeare sit out here to write any of his plays I wonder? Off again, during the afternoon we would be getting to Yorkshire, and I was starting to feel excited as it was more familiar ground to me and from where my husband and his family came. The city of York is a lovely old city, many of the buildings of which are built of stone. We visited York Minister

the beautiful Cathedral there, and then we went to the Shambles which is one of the oldest original streets of shops in Britain. The street is narrow, cobbled, and for pedestrians only, so we were able to wander along and explore the little specialty stores. I went into the Rugby store and bought a World Series Rugby ball for one of my grandsons! There was a young man on the street corner with an easel who, for a small fee, would draw a caricature picture of you. Patricia and I both had one done. I didn't think he had captured anything of me but we both agreed that Patricia's was clever. Later that day we drove through beautiful scenery, though a little more rugged than further south, more like Newfoundland. Some of the meadows were divided by stone walls which are built without mortar.

We drove to the outskirts of the industrial city of Leeds where we spent the night. As usual it was a nice hotel with good food. We sat with different people from our tour at each meal. This dinner we sat with an American couple and two from Australia. Next morning, we were off to the Lake District in the county of Westmorland there, as the name suggests, there are many lakes, or ponds as Patricia called them. There were also mountains separating the lakes. We first go to Windermere, which is the largest lake, and board ship for a cruise from the town of the same name. The views from deck are interesting and beautiful. Between the lake and the hills are splendid houses, almost like castles, with big gardens and woods behind them. There were also a number of sailboats going back and forth. We disembarked at Brownness and board the coach for the next town, Ambleside. This brought back great

memories for me. It was where I spent nearly two very happy years at middle school during the Second World War. It was also where the famous children's author Beatrix Potter lived and wrote all the Peter Rabbit books. I was honored to meet her when my Girl Guide troop visited her home. Then we drove on to Grasmere, another lake with its own town of the same name. It was very emotional for me to see the little house that we lived in more than sixty- five years ago! At the end of today's driving we would be leaving England for a while and entering Scotland, and then on to Wales and Ireland before our last few days in England again at the end of our tour.

### **Scotland**

Today we are on to Scotland, of which we will only see some of the Southern cities and moors etc., but enough I hope, to get the feeling of a more rugged land and people.

Our first stop is Gretna Green of historical repute. In the eighteen hundreds, the English churches changed the laws so that couples under twenty-one could not marry without the consent of their parents, and they must be married in a church. Gretna Green was on the direct main route from London, and so many young couples came up and crossed the border to be married. It is reputed that many were even married in the blacksmith's shed. Having seen some of the Solway Firth on our West as we left Gretna, we head north to Glasgow and have a view of the sea for a while. We drive through hills covered in heather which unfortunately was not in bloom. Some of the countryside and small towns were certainly reminiscent of Newfoundland. Arriving in Glasgow, I

was pleasantly surprised. I had always thought of it as a big industrial city, (which it is) and therefore dirty with factory like buildings. No doubt there is some of that, but the part we saw was of lovely old stone buildings, some built in a curve and forming a curved terrace. We also saw several fine statues, one being of the poet Robert Burns. After dinner that evening, Patricia and I went on an exploratory walk from our hotel. We crossed the river on several bridges, one of which was Bells Bridge and another was Millennium Bridge opened by Princess Ann in 2000.

Next morning, we were off to Edinburgh the capital of Scotland; it is on the Firth of Forth with direct ferries to the Scandinavian countries. Before we get into Edinburgh we go to a place known as Shale Bings which is where the first oil was extracted 200 years ago. It lasted for sixty years, and left man-made mountains jokingly called the Edinburgh Alps. In the old days, Edinburgh was very smoky and was affectionately called old Reeky. It was built on two levels round a volcanic tail, and you can still see the extinct volcano. Like Glasgow, it is built of stone with lovely curved terraces of houses. Some of the great buildings include the Parliament buildings and the museum. We unfortunately just missed the Queen's visit to open the Scottish Parliament. We did visit the museum and the National Gallery of Scotland.

Next morning, we were going to back east again to get the ferry to Northern Ireland where we visited Belfast. It was a lovely drive across the to the sea-side town of Troon where the ferry goes to Belfast. We went along winding narrow roads in some places, which our driver managed with aplomb. We

saw lots of sheep in the meadows; sadly, the lambs were almost grown up. When we got to Troon and see the ferry we are amazed at the size of it; It makes the Bell Island ferry look like a dory. It was loaded in short order, and at the other end Patricia timed the off-loading as nine minutes. Amazing when you saw all the cars and people!

Just off the coast of Scotland there is a tiny little island, (of course there are hundreds of islands off the coast), called Ailsa Craig or Paddy's Milestone by the Irish, although we don't know why. All there is on it is a castle ruin and a couple of other signs of human habitation. The significance of this island is that it is a bit of volcano, and it is reputed to be the best source of stone for curling rocks in the world; I believe it is!

The crossing was calm and it didn't take long before we left the scenes of little towns right on the Scottish shoreline to similar ones on the Northern Irish sea shore.

## **Ireland**

So, we disembark in no time off the huge ferry, and drive into the center of Belfast, the capital of Northern Ireland. The city was established in 1888 by Queen Victoria, and it still has some examples of fine Victorian buildings. One of Belfast's claims to fame is that the ship Titanic was built here. Because of all its ship building it was the third most bombed city in the Second World War. In one square, there is a huge fish sculpture, a reminder of the reliance on the food fishery here I imagine. In another square, there is what is proudly called the Leaning Tower (of Pisa), but is actually a clock tower leaning at a precarious angle due to the soft ground it was built on. We

wander around this charming, not very large city before driving through wonderfully green countryside on our way to the border with the Republic of Ireland and its capital Dublin. I think it is only about a hundred miles between the two cities. Dublin, these days is a booming city, particularly now that it has direct flights to the North American continent.

The morning after our arrival we were off on a tour. There are two cathedrals in the city, one inside and one outside the city walls. One church was once a pub where Catholics used to celebrate Mass when Catholicism was forbidden.

We saw the statue of Molly Malone, (of the well-known song). Someone rather crudely called her, “the tart with the cart”, and said she was celibate (sell a bit here, sell a bit there)! Another fine building, I remember is Trinity College. Of course, there are some fine pubs, where some of us had a Guinness! We did some exploring on foot and saw shops and pubs with familiar names to us Newfoundlanders, like O’Grady and O’Brien.

Off in the morning to Kilkenny through some small towns but lots of pasture with sheep, horses and cattle grazing. Horse racing is very popular in this area. When we arrived in Kilkenny we stopped at the fine castle there. The stabling area has all been very tastefully turned into small shops and a restaurant. I wished I could remember the children’s rhyme about the cats of Kilkenny. While on the bus and driving near the county of Limerick, our guide asked us if we knew what a limerick was. Both Patricia and I knew because Patricia is a talented poet, and I frequently make up limericks for myself or family. We decided to write one for our guide, a delightful and

knowledgeable young man. When I read it to him over the bus intercom next day he was tickled pink and said no one had done that before.

Our next stop was Waterford, a 1000-year-old city, world renowned, for its Waterford glass, quality tableware made for hundreds of years. Waterford was a big Viking stronghold situated on a v between two rivers. We did some exploring on foot and saw what we were told was a Viking tower. The next morning, we went off to catch the ferry to South Wales, again a huge ship with six decks. While in dock we saw the replica of what was known as the Dunbrody ship? One of the first of these ships was used to convey prisoners to Australia; subsequent ones took immigrants to Canada and the United States during the potato famine. They were also known as coffin ships due to so many people dying on the trip due to famine and disease. The ferry trip took about three hours to Fishguard in south Wales, and then we took the bus to Cardiff, capital of Wales.

The story goes that when the French came there to attack the English all the Welsh women came out to see them. The French were not only outnumbered but thought they were a big English army and fled. There is a statue to one woman who captured fourteen Frenchmen on her own! Wales is, or was, a conservative nation, many are Methodists. Wesley came to preach there, always out of doors. Singing is also part of their pride and culture, for which they are renowned. "Land of My Fathers" is their national song. Since the downsizing of coal mining, the mainstay of Welsh prosperity in its heyday, many are now emigrating, Wales' loss and the New World's

gain. Not a lot of sight-seeing was done in Cardiff or adjoining countryside owing to heavy rain! We did see Richard Burton's Love House for Liz.

Next morning, we set off for England again, by crossing the Severn Bridge, one of three bridges that cross the Severn River which separates Wales and England in that area. The West Country scenery was so lush, with wild flowers everywhere and lovely gardens round all the houses. At one point, we crossed the river Avon and were driving the Avon Valley.

Finally, we reached Bath, a fine Georgian city built round the Roman baths- hence the name! We visited Georgian Crescent, a curved row of curved houses with gorgeous gardens in front. We had a group photograph taken in front of them! Among the other places we visited was the Jane Austin Centre, a sort of museum, of course named after the authoress Jane Austin, who we were told hated Bath. We saw the impressive university and Bath Abbey which is the cathedral. Naturally we visited the baths built by the Roman conquerors over a thousand years ago. Not all the buildings are still standing, but several of the circular baths still contain water, in which we tossed coins for good luck.

Then we were off to Salisbury, another beautiful old city, through rolling hills, gorgeous estates with magnificent mansions and farms. On a distant hillside, we saw "The White Horse", a huge horse carved out of the green hillside exposing the chalk. In Salisbury, we visited the English gothic cathedral, an awesome edifice which took thirty-eight years to build.

They apparently had trouble with the spine which is 104 feet



high. The first one fell due to the foundations only being four feet deep.

Our final visit to the “old world” was our visit to Stonehenge. Stonehenge is on Salisbury Plain and is an arrangement of huge stones, known as prehistoric megaliths I believe, and was probably built in Neolithic times. They inspired in me the same awe that I felt on seeing the pyramids in Egypt. How did primitive people cut out and build these structures with their bare hands and no tools?

On our last touring day, we made our way back to a part of London called Islington and spent the night at a hotel there. Of course, we had a farewell dinner with everyone and said a fond farewell to our guide, Don. Patricia and I took another couple of days before returning home like the rest of the group. We were picked up by car by my daughters and driven down to Maidstone in Kent which is southeast of London. We stayed with my sister who has a beautiful garden where both the flowers and vegetables seemed to grow in profusion. It was very pleasant to just be able to sit in the garden and even have our meals out there. We did go on an expedition to Leeds Castle which is a museum which you can explore. There were also fine grounds with an aviary of unusual birds. Also, there is a dog collar museum! Not to mention swans swimming on a lake, and peacocks showing off on the lawn. Quite an afternoon’s entertainment.

Patricia and I both felt that staying in a country home was the perfect end to the holiday and set off happily the next morning feeling that this was another great trip.

# NEWFOUNDLAND BY SEA



One cannot talk about going around the world without talking about the final destination-in this case HOME.

In September 2009, my friend Patricia and I cruised on the “Polar Star” round Newfoundland, touching on Labrador, St. Pierre and Nova Scotia. I have to say that it is the ideal way to see the island, from the sea. Much to our surprise we were the only two passengers from Newfoundland. As the ships started from St. John’s, it was great fun to just be able to walk on to the dock, hand someone your suitcase, and then climb up the steps on to the deck. There, our passports were checked, we were given a key for our cabin, and we were all set.

The ship left port around four pm and members of our family were there to wave us off. It is impressive watching a big ship going through the narrows, and ours was by no means a passenger liner. Even in our smallish ship the Narrows look-well, narrow!

We were entertained during the evening by our own local musicians Jim Payne and Fergus O’Byrne. Fergus left the ship that night, but Jim stayed for the whole trip. He not only played and sang, but told stories about Newfoundland. Also during the evening there was a lifeboat drill, and a short lecture about the trip and what to expect. After all this, and supper of course, we were ready for bed. The cabin was small but had a window, sorry porthole, and an adjoining bathroom shared with the cabin on the other side of it. Our first night on board was reasonably calm and I think we both slept quite well. Day two started fairly early. We both tried out the shower which flooded the whole bathroom floor and drained in the middle. It was actually quite efficient and not as messy as it

sounds. It was a lovely day and we saw “la Buena Vista” or “beautiful view” of Bonavista from our portholes. That is where we were to be going by Zodiac after breakfast. Bonavista was a charming little town with a fishing harbour in which the Matthew, or rather its replica, was anchored. As you may know, the original Matthew was built in Bristol England, as was the replica. It sailed across the Atlantic by Giovanni Caboto, known as John Cabot, in the late 1400’s. The replica was sailed to Bonavista to commemorate the 500-year anniversary. We got a gentle Zodiac ride into Bonavista where we ride a bus to the lighthouse. The views from there were superb. Back in town we go to the Ryan Premises, old buildings made into stores and restaurants etc. We bought a few souvenirs and then walked back down to the dock. On the way, we saw fish strung on clothes lines to dry. We also met a man who was picking rose hips from the bushes along the side of the road. When I asked him if he made rosehip jelly with them, he looked slightly shocked and said, “no my dear, I make wine.”

On arrival back at the harbour we paid a visit to the Matthew and were allowed to climb on board. It was an awe inspiring feeling to stand on this replica of an ancient vessel and think of crossing the Atlantic.

So back to our ship by Zodiac again, where we had lunch before our next activity. There seemed like a lot of activity on the Observation Deck, so we went up and saw a number of whales spouting and breaching; this was timely as we were on our way to a lecture on whales.

Later Patricia and I went back to the Observation Deck and



were lucky enough to see a number of dolphins playing round the ship. The rest of the day included dinner of course, and entertainment by Jim Payne, and a video and lecture on the Vikings; very interesting.

We agree that it was a beautiful and very interesting day.

Next morning after breakfast we were heading for L'Anse Aux Meadows and St. Anthony. We boarded a bus to the Interpretation Centre at L'Anse Aux Meadows where we had a talk on what we would see at the Viking Settlement replicas. We then walked, quite a distance, down to the replica village where we saw the buildings, low constructions of sod and clay. We were met by two "Vikings" in costume who invited us into their dwellings. They also showed us how they cooked, with wood in the fireplaces made of clay. They slept on areas raised from the ground, with animal skins as bedding. We then ate a picnic lunch on the bus as we went on to Norstead, an area illustrating the Viking era.

The next stop was at the Grenfell Mission House and Hospital. Dr. Grenfell came from Britain and over the years he and his wife did incredible work over a large area. Not only did he build a hospital, but he visited over vast areas by sleigh or boats treating the sick and wounded. It is an incredible story. That evening we were entertained by Jim Payne again. As well as songs and music, he told us about the French Shore, called that because France has fishing rights along that shore originally. We also had an interesting talk on Newfoundland birds by Tony from Branch.

We have found that all the trips have been very interesting and well presented so far. Of course, for us non-Newfoundlanders,

it is a great way to learn its geography and history.

And so ends yet another great day. What's on for tomorrow?

Next stop "The Big Land", as Labrador is affectionately known in these parts.

Having crossed the Straits of Belle Isle during the night by way of the stretch of ocean where the Atlantic blends with the Labrador Sea, we now anchor off the Labrador coast. Our destination this morning is Battle Harbour. Some of the more important buildings are being restored in the mostly abandoned area. We went to the salt building, in which one half million tons of salt was stored. This is where explorer Robert Peary proclaimed to the media that he had reached the North Pole! There is a free-standing image of him standing at the front door. After seeing one or two other buildings with histories of their own, we went to a lovely church; Jim Payne sang to us there. He sang, "save us from the Perils of the Sea" and "Amazing Grace"; it was beautiful. Incidentally I have just learned that Battle Harbour and Lighthouse Picnics have received awards from Hospitality Newfoundland and Labrador for their innovative programs encouraging tourism.

At the end of this trip we find that the wind has come up so we face a rough Zodiac crossing back to the ship, and a challenge getting back on board because the sea was so rough. Once on board, the ship takes off and progresses down into the Strait of Belle Isle where they expected it to be calmer. In the meantime, we had a short lecture before lunch and another on Geology in the afternoon, both very interesting. Next adventure is a Zodiac trip to Red Bay, which is sheltered so we had an easy ride in. There we went to the National Historic

Site, well known for its history of whaling. We had a talk and very interesting video on Basque Whaling after which we went to the Interpretation Centre to see a whaling boat and hear a talk about it. Finally, we went to the Whaling Museum to see a fabulous reconstructed skeleton of a whale; they are huge! On getting back to the Zodiac we realized the fog was so thick that we couldn't see the ship so they put all the lights on for us!

A highlight of my day was that I was invited onto the bridge where I was allowed to phone my grandson Nicholas to wish him a Happy Birthday. The evening was spent being royally entertained by Jim Payne. He told Newfoundland stories, sang and danced; fantastic!

During the night the ship had been sailing down the Strait of Belle Isle and back towards the Newfoundland side. After breakfast we were off in the Zodiac to Woody Point. This is in Bonne Bay and is included in Gros Morne National Park, a world heritage park of incredible beauty. There we took a bus into their splendid Information Centre. First we watched a movie of all the area, then we looked at the art displayed there. Most of us went to the "Tuckamore" and bought "stuff" before going out on their lovely deck and eating lunch while taking in the glorious views of the mountains all around.

Before going into the centre we went for a tableland walk with a French Micmac guide who told us a lot about the geography and flora and fauna of the area. We learned that the looming mountains were once under Africa. Plates moved, we broke off from Africa taking the Avalon Peninsula with it. Our guide also described some of the rocks and formations we saw. It

was an extremely interesting. On the Zodiac ride back to the ship our guide Tony, asked us if we would like to go on a bit of a tour. Of course we said, “Yes”, and were all so caught up with the shoreline scenery that we lost count of time and so had an exciting 60 mph ride back to the ship. Rather bumpy! To end the day, we were listening to a whale expert talking about his experiences with whales when he was interrupted by cries of “whales on starboard”! We all rushed up to see them. The talk was abruptly ended by the whales themselves.

Next stop tomorrow the Codroy Valley, which meant we would be nearly at the South West tip of Newfoundland, and then would be going along the South Coast. After a smooth sail overnight we also have a smooth Zodiac trip to land where we make a beach landing. Here we were met by “Livyers” waiting for us with their cars. We, by which I mean Patricia, myself, and two other women were assigned to a car driven by Pauline, who was extremely friendly, helpful and humorous. Pauline took us to visit around the area. We went to special scenic spots, though to our minds it was all scenic! Visits included lovely churches and the golf club which has gorgeous views from all around. Of course our trip included the Interpretation Centre where there was an area where we could sit and eat our boxed lunches and were also provided with extra goodies. After that we went to the Wildlife Sanctuary where we met Charlie the Moose. Among the wildlife, there were also little goats who cried plaintively, and Canada geese. Our final treat that day was to go to the Community Square where we were royally entertained by singers and players of many instruments. Our driver Pauline was one of the singers,



with a beautiful voice. The local people were totally and happily engaged with us for our whole visit and they even gave us a little gift as we departed. What a memorable day! As we sat at breakfast next morning we heard that it was too rough for us to visit the little island of Ramea, so instead we had the choice of a talk on our ancestry 10 million years ago to our present day Innu and Inuit, or a talk on Vikings. We could see the windmills milling, (or whatever they do), on the island as we sailed past in the distance.

Our next stop was now Francois, pronounced Fransway by the locals. It is nestled into an inlet so it was a long gentle trip by Zodiac surrounded by mountains of colourful rock and lots of greenery. There are no real roads in the community, just walking paths. We visited the local store which sold absolutely everything, and we just sat in the sun and admired the scenery and serenity. A calm leisurely trip back to the ship got us back there in time for a fabulous on deck barbeque. Later in the evening the Zodiac took us back for a soiree in the village. That was fun and we were made very welcome.

Sunday we were off to foreign parts!

Before setting off for the trip to the French islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon we had to change our clocks ahead half an hour for their time. In fact, we did only visit the smaller island of St. Pierre. St. Pierre is also the name of the main town where there is a port from which ferries and boats connect with Newfoundland. There is also a small airport with flights to our island.

We disembarked soon after breakfast and found everywhere very quiet. We had forgotten that it was Sunday. However, it

did mean that we could walk around and admire the gardens which everyone seemed to have, often with a variety of vegetables. Later in the morning we went on a bus tour of the island and as it was such a lovely day we saw it at its charming best, most enjoyable.

Later in the evening we set off for mainland Canada, Nova Scotia to be precise. We now had to put our clocks one hour back, what a carryon! After an early breakfast we went through Canadian Customs, (on the ship), and then got ready for a very wet Zodiac ride to Louisbourg. Unfortunately, the lovely weather had forsaken us and it was pouring with rain. On shore we took a bus for a guided tour of Louisbourg National Historic site, cited as the best known historical reconstruction in Canada. The original buildings were built in the 1700's, were a French fortress. It was a most interesting site. We went around and into a number of the buildings for which our guide described their original uses and users. There was an exciting, and rather dramatic Zodiac back to a sensational ascent from Zodiac to ship. We had to strip to the buff and put all our soaking clothes to the laundry before drying off and dressing for lunch. Later, in our cabin we watched the huge whitecaps as we rolled about in the ship. This was to be the last day on the ship so we spent the afternoon dealing with such mundane things as paying bills and packing. The evening was to be the Captain's Dinner, for which we all dressed up. Before hand we met all the crew officially and had a glass of champagne. During this time Jim Payne played and sang, and we could also watch a C.D. of the trip. It was a sumptuous dinner, ending in a memorable dessert, a swan on chocolate!

As usual after a trip there was a little bit of nostalgia as we prepared to say goodbye to new acquaintances, but certainly were in agreement that it was a good trip.

Next morning, we docked in Halifax, picked up our luggage and a taxi, and headed for the airport. There we settled in for a few hours wait for our plane to St. John's.

While sitting there, a last little humorous episode occurred. Jim Payne and Tony from the ship's crew went past on their way to check-out and waved to us. A few minutes later they came dashing back wanting to know if we were interested in two bottles of wine! They had forgotten to put it into their luggage and did not want it turfed out at security. I was delighted because I had wanted to get some wine in St. Pierre, but the shops were closed because it was Sunday.

The plane trip was uneventful, and arrived on time, 7:30 pm. As she was so often, Deborah was there to meet us. Home again after another great trip.

And that completes the saga of "Around the World in Eighty Years"! I hope you have enjoyed reading it as much as I have enjoyed writing it. I would be amiss if I didn't mention that much of this narrative would have been impossible without the copious notes of my friend and travel partner Patricia Delaney. Even for this most recent trip she has been my memory. For this, and many other reasons, I am eternally grateful, and dedicate this story to, us, "The Intrepid Twins."



# STORIES AND POEMS



## **A Great Grandma's story of a life with Pets**

A long time ago when I was a little girl, I lived in the country with my Mum, Dad and two sisters. We always had a dog and a cat, but sometimes we had some different pets as well. I am going to tell you about some of them.

One day a farmer came to ask us if we would look after a new-born lamb who had lost her mum. We had to feed her milk with a baby's bottle and keep her warm. We called her Belinda Baa Lamb, Belinda for short, and she followed us everywhere, just like a dog. Belinda grew into a big woolly sheep and got to be too messy to have in the house so then she went back to the farm to be with the other sheep, so we were told. Another pet we had was a Shetland pony. They are little horses with thick warm hair. We called our pony Pippin and I think she thought she was a dog too and wanted to follow us into the house. Of course, we couldn't let her, but she did have a nice warm stable. My sisters loved to ride her but I wasn't so keen.

Somehow I think she knew that because one day she tossed me off her back and kicked me. I was not hurt but ever since I like horses on the other side of a fence or stable door.

Yet another pet we had after Belinda went back to the farm was a goat. We just called her Nanny. Like our other pets, she loved to be with us when we played in the garden, and she would share our picnics with us. Goats will eat all sorts of things, even things like a cigarette! One summer we built a tent in the garden with some old drapes and she would come in it with us. One day we left her in the tent when we went in the house for dinner. When we had nearly finished there was a

knock on the door and it was Jack, the man who came to dig our vegetable garden. He said to my Dad, "There is a kid in the garden." So my Dad said, "Well tell him to go away, he shouldn't be in our garden." Then Jack said, "But he is in the tent with Nanny." It was then that Dad realized that Jack was talking about a baby goat. Sure enough Nanny had a darling little baby. We called it Jack after Jack the gardener and it was very lively. If we didn't watch him he would get in the house and leap on the table or up the stairs. We thought that was very funny, but our Mum was not too pleased.

At one time we had a family of little hens called bantams. They are just like ordinary hens and roosters, but much smaller. We had five hens and one rooster. They were always called George and the ladies. The reason the ladies, didn't have names was that they all looked exactly alike, and we didn't know which was which. The hens were supposed to stay in the hen house and lay eggs for us to eat for breakfast, but George had other ideas. He would show them how to fly over the fence and then he would lead them off into the bushes and we couldn't find them. One time they were lost for quite a long time until one day we saw George leading the ladies, and behind them were five tiny little fluffy yellow chicks. Of course we didn't have our eggs for breakfast while they were gone, but when we saw the little chicks that hatched out of the eggs we didn't mind.

As I grew up we continued to have pets, usually just a cat and a dog, although we had a budgie for years. During the war we had one hen who laid an egg nearly every day for several years. After her demise the poor dear ended in a much

appreciated stew! Both the eggs and the meat were valuable additions to wartime rations.

As an adult with my own family we adopted an African Grey parrot when we lived in Nigeria. She subsequently went back to England with us, then on to Canada and finally here where she lived to a “ripe old age”. Her name was Cuthbert but as she produced a number of eggs over the years we acceded that she was female and called her Cuthy!

In my eighth decade I continue to have a dog, and wonder who will outlive who! How about you? Do you have wonderful pet memories too?





## MOTHERS DAY

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To Mother's, past, present, and future-Happy Mother's Day. As I think of the five generations of mothers that I have known in my own family, I think, not only of how lives have changed in the more than a hundred years that these lives have covered, but also how these lives have stayed the same. My maternal grandmother, wife of a minister, was serious and stern, but nevertheless nurtured three young evacuees from the slums of Manchester during the Second World War. This while a grandmother, running a large Vicarage on her own, and contending with rationing and food shortages.

My mother, the product of this strict environment was a quiet gentle and intellectual soul who, like so many British people of her day, rarely expressed her emotions. Although she also had three daughters to raise, during the time of the Recession she did have some help. We had a young Nanny whose brother also worked for the family. I suspect because jobs were very hard to come by, they both lived with us, and worked for board and lodging, and very modest wages. We also had a refrigerator! It was the first one I had ever seen! During the war my mother had another daughter, but as I was a teenager by then I was able and very willing to help with her care. Packing up a home and moving several times due to the vagaries of war, life was not easy but we all survived it and my mother was able to enjoy her senior years.

My life as a young mother was similar in one way, with the moving around bit! The new gadget in my life was a washing machine! As my eldest daughter was only 22 months when

her twin sisters were born this machine was a Godsend! Our moving around consisted of moving to Nigeria for five years, then to Ontario for nine years. After a short break of one year in Saudi Arabia, we then came to Newfoundland; praise be, we settled down! Next of course my three daughters became mothers, “and though I says it as shouldn’t”, wonderful ones at that. They have combined great careers with child care as so many do today. I think this has traded a lot of physical effort for much intellectual and emotional strain. They do have many more gadgets such as computers and cell phones to name only two. Whether they make life easier I am not sure. Now I have one more mother in my family of the next generation. My grandson’s wife is now a mother of a seven month old daughter. My granddaughter-in-law is still on maternity leave of course, but as a newly trained teacher, I am sure she is thinking of how she is going to enjoy her daughter and a career. One has to wonder what the world holds for this new generation. With all this technology will even their brains be different from ours do you think?

## **GRANDMOTHERS CAMPAIGN**

- The AIDS epidemic has left millions of children orphaned by AIDS. Without hesitation or complaint, Africa's grandmothers have stepped in to care for them. In fact, in many countries throughout southern Africa, it is estimated that between 40-60% of orphans live in grandmother-headed households. After burying their own adult children, they take on the responsibility of caring for their grieving grandchildren, often with little to no support and while coping with their own deteriorating health.

Yet through all this, African grandmothers have risen to become the linchpin of survival for their families and communities: they have become activists and advocates pushing for theirs and their grandchildren's rights and protection; they are becoming small business owners in order to earn a living for their families.

Grandmothers are now recognized as community experts and agents of change by governments and international aid agencies. They nurture, feed and put their grandchildren into school. They work to educate their grandchildren about HIV prevention care and treatment, tend to the sick in their communities, help the recently bereaved, set up support groups, harvest the crops, and advocate for women's rights.

African grandmothers are central to the life of their communities. With almost no support, they have stepped forward to care for millions of children orphaned by AIDS,

sometimes as many as ten to fifteen in one household. They display astonishing reserves of love, courage and emotional resilience, even while grieving the loss of their own adult children.

Canadians have raised more than \$24 million for African grandmothers through the Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign. Resources from the Campaign are invested directly at community level, with grassroots organizations that provide grandmothers and the children in their care with supports that include food, educational supplies, uniforms and school fees, medical care, HIV counselling and testing, adequate housing and bedding, counselling and support groups, home visits, and much more.

You can visit the website of the Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign at [\*\*grandmotherscampaign.org\*\*](http://grandmotherscampaign.org).

The Stephen Lewis Foundation launched the **Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign** in March 2006, in response to the emerging crisis faced by African grandmothers as they struggled to care for millions of children orphaned by AIDS. A decade later, the Campaign supports African community-based organizations that have developed programmes—with and for grandmothers—to transform lives and restore hope to their communities.

In ten years, more than \$25 million has been raised. It's been ten years of raising awareness in Canadian communities. Ten years of listening, learning and nurturing solidarity. Ten years of bearing witness to the expertise and resilience of African grandmothers all across sub-Saharan Africa.

## **Birdwatching – Seniors Style**

One of the greatest pleasures of this winter season for me, is sitting by my kitchen window and watching all the birds at my feeders. I have three feeders, one which holds a block of seed embedded in suet, one that holds only a fine seed, and the third that holds a mixture of fine and coarse seed like sunflower seed.

One morning recently I got up as the sun was rising in an awe-inspiring orange sky, and at the Niger seed feeder were eight pink birds. Was I seeing things or was it a reflection of the sun? I quickly got my binoculars which verified that I was indeed seeing pink birds which proved to be white winged cross bills. They have been visiting several times a day for nearly two weeks and eating me out of house and home! Today there was a red poll at the feeder, a smart little fellow with a jaunty red cap. Other colourful and frequent visitors are the northern flickers who LOVE the suet blocks which they hammer with their long sharp beaks. Mr. Flicker is distinguishable by his natty black side burns, while Mrs. Just has the little red hat and black bib. Considering how big they are, they are surprisingly cautious and rarely challenge the noisy starlings for a turn at the suet block.

The chickadees are always a delight with their cheerful calls to each other. The most numerous of all the birds are the juncos who fly rapidly round the garden chasing each other and sometimes fighting. They make quite a display with the white feathers on each side of their tail showing clearly in flight.

As well, as the occasional sparrow there are many different finches and the little pine siskins which all try to have a turn at the feeders and make an everchanging scene.

Frequent noisy visitors are the beautiful blue jays, particularly when I put out some peanuts. They swoop down and try to stuff at least three nuts in their beaks before flying off to hide them for future meals.

I have to confess that pigeons and crows are less welcome. The pigeons tend to tip up the feeders and spill all the seed on the ground. The crows frighten all the other birds away. My west highland white terrier does his best to chase them off but that gets rather noisy!

A bird that fortunately is only a rare visitor is the hawk. He is very handsome but I am sad to say has been the death of one or two of my little friends.

On the coldest day so far, I was delighted to see some robins and bohemian waxwings eating the last remaining hips of my wild rose bush. I had fully intended to cut this bush right down as it was big and suffocating other bushes, but now I shall leave it to grow as big as it likes.

For more than three decades I had owned an African grey parrot, so when she died I missed her like a member of the family. However now I have hundreds of these fascinating creatures called BIRDS to watch and listen to and they bring me great joy.

## Mary, Mary Quite Contrary

Mary, Mary quite contrary, how does your garden grow? With cockle shells and silver bells, and pretty maids all in a row. I was reminded of that rhyme the other day when someone asked me how my garden was doing. In all honesty I had to reply, “like a jungle, certainly not with silver bells.” Some of you, I am sure, still manage to maintain a garden in a pristine state. Some of you will have given up a house with a garden for an easier life style. Please tell me that I am not the only one who, through physical deterioration, has let their garden go to pot as they say.

Twenty-three years ago this was a new garden, built up and levelled off on the side of a hill. There was a good wooden fence around it; to my surprise and pleasure it is still standing. There were flower borders all round and a lawn in the centre. In fact, a clean slate!

The joke here is that because I am originally from Britain people seem to assume that I know all about gardening! Not so. My excuse being that I have lived overseas a big part of my life.

So what do I do with the clean slate? I plant trees. Hence the jungle. Now wouldn't you would know that only some plants like shade? Again I have excuses, some of those trees were given to me. There is a big and beautiful English Ash tree given to me by a friend's garden up the shore; it is now intimately entwined with the telegraph pole and I am sure will eventually meet the wrath of the telephone company. Another beautiful tree, species unknown, was given to me by

neighbours on my 70th birthday.

One that I treasure most is a fir tree given to me as a seedling by my middle grandson when he was a little lad at his first summer camp. He is now six foot five inches tall and nearly 28. The tree, which I watch from my kitchen window, must be well over thirty feet.

The last of my gifted trees is a June berry tree given to me by June, my old friend from years living in Ontario. I remember her coming to stay soon after I moved into this house well over twenty years ago. She was aghast at the lack of greenery in the garden and rushed out to buy me plants, including this tree, which she offered to plant for me. June did not realize that digging a hole large enough for tree roots was not as easy as in her sandy soil in Windsor. She was astonished at having to dig out a rock the size of a brick.

To add to all these trees, I got a Laburnum, lilac, a Rowan or dogberry, a Hawthorn and a syringe or mock orange, all for their blossoms and berries. So, I think you get the picture. You may well ask does anything grow in all that shade?

The answer is yes, but of course weeds do it best. I am lucky to have a daughter who now mows the lawn, so on a sunny day with all the blossoms out it still does look very pretty, and the scent of lilac and syringe is wonderful.

Two great things that have survived my neglect are the rhubarb, which in its lush growth contributes to the jungle atmosphere, and the one gooseberry bush which still produces berries. There is keen competition for those berries between me and my miniature dachshund dog who seems skillful at picking them without getting pricked. She tosses



them about then rolls on them before eating them. I make jam with my share. I do see quite a few rose hips on the big wild rose bush this year so perhaps I will make rose hip syrup. A gentleman I met while touring Newfoundland told me that was a waste of good rosehips; he made wine.

A few cultivated flowers have so far survived the neglect. Needless to say lupins are one of them. There is also a splendid yellow flower which reminds me of a sunflower and grows about six feet tall, well above the weeds.

Last but not least is my quince bush which is covered with peach coloured blossom in the spring and has fruit in the Fall that I again compete with my dog to pick and make into jelly. As you can tell, I still get a great deal of pleasure from my garden, when I stifle the guilt of neglecting it so. Maybe Mother Nature is happy that I have given it back to her!

## **A Quarter of a Century of Mall Walkers**

Twenty five years ago the manager of the Avalon Mall and the Executive Director of the Senior's Resource Centre started a collaborative walking program for Seniors at the mall.

I believe there were a number of others started in Canada around the same time, and one of them came up with this rhyme. Come to think of it, was it one of our members?

### **Mall Walkers Pledge**

Mall Walkers, Mall Walkers, we're the ones.

We meet once a week, just to get it done.

We walk for miles, when Thursdays arrive.

We choose not to be lazy, our goal is to survive.

We follow our friends, up and down the aisles.

We often get tired, but leave room for smiles.

To join our club, you needn't be "weakers"

For a healthier lifestyle, just bring your sneakers.

The walk has always been on Thursdays, starting at nine o' clock with a few warm-up exercises. These were followed by the group dividing up roughly into three categories, relaxed, intermediate, and fast paced. For many years we had certificates given out once a year for the person who walked the most laps in their category. There was also a volunteer

available to walk with you if you needed them. A staff member from the Mall usually attended our annual dinner, and gave a small gift to each Mall Walker. On the twentieth anniversary, they gave us all a T-shirt with the date on it, celebrating the anniversary. We hope that the liaison with our new supporters will mean many more years of Mall Walkers. Following the walk, refreshments were always available at Fog City. We very much appreciate Fog City's hospitality over the years. Not only the venue, but tea, coffee, and even providing the snack sometimes. We did give them a plaque conveying our thanks on our twentieth anniversary, but it needs saying again, "Thank you Fog City." Since the beginning, the first Thursday of the month had always been an extra hour for shopping scheduled before transport home is arranged. The second Thursday of the month a blood pressure check with a registered nurse was often arranged. Finally, the last Thursday of the month was usually when a talk was held at Fog City with a speaker selected by the members. A couple of examples from recent years include talking about Elder Abuse, and Ryan Snodden from CBC, talking of course about the weather. Over the years we have had some great Coordinators, hired by the Senior's Resource Centre. One such Coordinator, Elizabeth Noseworthy, was one of us, a fellow Mall Walker, for many years; she has a special place in our hearts. Her subsequent death left a gap in our midst.

You may have noticed that I have written mostly in the past tense about the Mall Walkers, e.g. "we had certificates", the registered nurse "used" to come on the second Thursday. The reason is that the Senior's Resource Centre gave up the

support for the Mall Walkers and the Mall now has an agreement with the Jimmy Pratt Outreach Program. With them, our Mall Walkers executive found a lovely person, Treva, to be our new Coordinator. So now, will this be the beginning of another twenty-five years of Mall Walkers?

## WINTER

Winter,... the word that brings mixed feelings and reactions to all who hear it.

For many Seniors I know, it brings worry about how they are going to manage if the weather gets bad.

For younger people, there may be some concerns, but they are often balanced by thoughts of such pleasures as cross-country skiing.

And for the children it is really thoughts of snow for Santa Claus and his reindeer.

As I sit and listen to Frank Sinatra singing, "I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas", I can't help looking out of the window, seeing the snow still all on the trees and the ground covered with its white blanket, and enjoying the beauty of it.

Later, my daughter will have to go out and shovel the driveway again and I will feel bad that I can't help her, but for the moment Winter is lovely.

Winter on the Avalon is, of course, not just about snow. There are those magic days when the ground is bare, the sun shines and the word "spring", pops into our minds. There are times when the wind howls and the rain buckets down, and we hope we don't have to go out of the house. Many days through our winter are just dull, not a break in the cloud, no wind, and no precipitation. Those are the days that I find the most depressing, or perhaps boring!

Another example of cruel beauty that we sometimes have here is the aftermath of an ice storm. Everything is covered with ice,

trees, fences, clothes lines, not to mention steps and sidewalks. The sun comes out and everything sparkles like diamonds. Hopefully we have time to gaze out of the window and admire this Winter Wonderland before we have to go and tackle it with salt.

During the time I have been writing this article we have had snow on the ground, heavy rain, high wind, fog, freezing ice pellets and sunshine! If nothing else, we can be sure of variety here, and didn't someone say, "variety is the spice of life"? Of course, winters in many countries around the world are similar to ours, differing only in the degree to which they are affected.

Winters in the Midlands of England, at least in my childhood, were disappointingly dull in my eyes. WE prayed for snow on Christmas Eve and were rarely rewarded. Instead, my memory is of the drive to my grandparent's house frequently in thick fog. At least spring came early with its showing of flowers from bulbs in the garden and blue bells in the woods.

I know there are many areas of the world where winters are a welcome cooling off from the heat of summer, rather than a dreaded time of freezing winds. The nearer one is to the Equator the less variation there is in the climate, or at least in the temperature. There are tropical rainstorms, and tornados which we re rare here but now seem to be more prevalent. When I lived in Africa I can remember longing for a cool breeze on a number of occasions when it was particularly hot and humid.

I suppose the other areas one imagines there is not a wide variation in temperatures from winter to summer are the North

and South Poles. Do people living in the far north long for a heat wave? Do the penguins in Antarctica know what it is like to have warm feet?

Seriously though, would a world-wide vote for winter be trumped by a vote for summer?

So,... Winter, do you love it or hate it?

I think I vote on the side of “love it”, if only because it makes me appreciate even more, the coming of spring.

## **Stereotypically Old**

When I reached the Biblical age of three score and ten years, I realized that people considered me old. Please read this and judge for yourself.

How many young or middle-aged people do you know who have travelled to all seven continents, ridden an elephant, gazed on the pyramids, flown in a hot air balloon, ridden a camel, seen Stalin's body in Moscow, seen the Passion Play in Austria, seen the Blue Footed Boobie in the Galapagos Islands, slept on the ice in Antarctica, visited polar bears in the Arctic or gone on a safari in Africa?

These adventures are all ones that my travel companion and I have done since that proverbial age. Being nicknamed the "intrepid twins" has given us the incentive to explore the less-travelled parts of the world.

We believe in the statements that "you can't take it with you when you die", and that "your life savings should give you a life, so live while you can."

The year between trips is spent planning and paying off the maxed-out credit cards from the last trip. It is also a time for persuading your ancient car that it can keep going for another year, and persuading yourself that you don't need new clothes or to dye your hair anymore. What is wonderful!



There is nothing more rejuvenating than travelling to places that are so different from our own, meeting people who live such different lives and yet have such similar hopes and fears.

We are a little disappointed with the space travel people, and that they haven't got visits to the moon organized for tourists yet. I am afraid that we will be old before that happens.

I must issue a warning to young people. The travel bug is very infectious. More than three quarters ago I learned to walk and picked up the bug. Here I am still heavily infected.

## **On Getting a Bionic Knee**

First you make the decision to have this new knee. “Short term pain for long term gain” they say. Next you go to the hospital, where they tell you more than you ever wish to know about knee joint replacement, including the fact that it is one of the most painful surgeries that is done. Finally, the day comes for the operation. You are denuded, not only of your clothes, but of any shred of modesty that you may have left after 76 years.

Everyone is very kind and cheerful and talks you through every stage of the process. The most frequently used expression seems to be, “just a little pinch” as they stab you with heaven knows what.

You are laid on a gurney where they strap your legs, “just so you don’t fall off.” Right- it’s really so that you don’t skip out. The last time you will skip for a while.

After giving you a sedative, enough to keep you quiet, they give you an epidural, “just a little pinch”, into the spine, at which point you go lifeless from the waist down.

Fortunately, by this time you are also having interesting dreams and are unaware of the passage of time until disturbed by sounds of hammering and carpentry. The first thought is, “are they building while surgery is going on?” Then you realize they are working on you and you pray that the doctor is as

good a carpenter as he is a surgeon.

The next two days pass in a blur of pain, pills, and “just a little pinch.”

Then come these two-charming people known as physiotherapists, (which really means physical torturers) who try to make your motionless limb do things that you know are completely impossible. They cheerily cry, “you are doing well, yes that’s good- a little bit more” as you writhe in impossible pain while trying to bend your knee.

The said knee meanwhile looks like a large roast joint of meat held together by large metal staples (carpentry again?). No dainty stitches these days my dears.

Why wasn’t the expression, “No pain, no gain” listened to before you got this far? The physios have a far tougher job than the surgeons, inflicting pain while you are conscious. No, “just a little pinch” in their vocabulary.

Once home your worst battle is with yourself. Yes, you do need to do the sets of exercises three times a day. Instead of the tough old bird you thought you were, you have become this pathetic wimp hobbling around with a metal contraption that your dog obviously think is a weapon of mass destruction to be avoided at all costs.

Your outings are reduced to being taken to physio or other

mundane but less painful destinations.

Week three brings light at the end of the tunnel. The question, “Will I be able to play the piano again?” may be answered in the affirmative.

The dog now accepts the walker as just an excuse not to go for a real walk, and the lack of mobility can be used as an excuse not to do any Christmas shopping.

By the time, you read this your correspondent has been on a trip to the Arctic, and a safari to Africa with her splendid new knee, which is far better than the “old” one. It was DEFINITELY worth the short-term pain.

## **A Short Story By a Long Dog**

**(with no E's)**

**528 Words**

(I am an eighty seven year old great grandmother of British birth. I am now a long time Newfoundlander who has worked as an Early Childhood Educator here, and around the world. I presently write, "Around the World in Eighty Years' for the Seniors Pride magazine.

As I thought of putting this story in print, I thought of doing it with no E's. So that is what I did, just for fun, doggy humour you know.

I am a dog, a dachshund dog actually. Humans call us anything to do with hotdogs, owing to our long body contours. Most insulting I think.

My human family has a condominium in St. John's, in proximity to a hill. My story is about a trip I took up that hill. Mum's pal Buddy is into motorcycling. Both of us thought of trying it out too.

So Mum asks Buddy if that is O.K. with him. That brought a grin to his mouth, and a nod. Buddy is a man of not many words! As Buddy brings his motor to our door and climbs off it, I run out to look at this astonishing bit of fast motion. I am dumbstruck! It is only half a car, with no doors and only a front window! How can you stay on it and not blow away? I must think about this.

As Mum is putting on a suit for motorcycling I spot a knapsack that Buddy has had on his back. I quickly burrow into it and stay still as Buddy picks it up and puts in on Mum's back. Mum

now climbs on at Buddy's back, and in a tick our motor roars into action as Buddy puts his foot down. Mum shouts, "WOW" as our chariot zooms up Signal Hill, swoops round a car park, and zips back down towards our starting point again.

I stick my body half out of my sack, and watch how fast it is going. I am almost blown away. As I look around I spot my dog pals who I play with at Quidi Vidi, and I shout, "Hi. Look at us!" Naturally my shout is barking to humans so Buddy got a shock and rams down his foot to stop us. In fact it stops us so quickly that it almost tips us off. I jump down swiftly and run as fast as I can to our condo.

Buddy and Mum can't fathom out who was barking so loudly right by his hood. My pals laugh and laugh at my nifty trick, but Mum is cross about it. Naturally it was obvious it was yours truly! "It's lucky Buddy didn't crash," said Mum. I said I was sorry to Buddy, and I lick both his and Mum's hands. I vow I will only bark in our car on a trip now. Sadly that was a fast and finish to a wild trip, but boy, wasn't it a dog's day?

## Daisy's Busy Days

Daisy is a dachshund dog who lives in Africa with her family of three little girls and their mummy and daddy.

Daddy brought Daisy home tucked in the front of his shirt so that he could drive safely with both hands.

When mummy saw Daisy she was upset because she thought Daisy was too small to take care of the family when daddy was away.

Daisy became a very good guard dog and took great care of the family. She would search the garden for snakes because the little girls were scared of them. One day she caught one and the gardener took it safely away.

Daisy would chase the bush rats which ate plants in the garden. They ran very fast but sometimes she caught one. The rats could also climb trees but Daisy couldn't so they often got away.

It is very hot in Africa so the little girls had a big paddling pool. When Daisy got too hot after chasing things in the garden she would jump in the paddling pool and swim across it. Then she jumped out and shook the water over everyone who was lying in the sun to get dry.

One day a big camel came up the road and Daisy thought it was coming into the garden. She dashed out and grabbed its

back foot. Her sharp teeth must have hurt the camel so it stopped and looked at her. It was so big and she was so small but she held on until the camel turned round and went away.

Sometimes people came up the driveway on bicycles, and I am sorry to say, that Daisy chased them too and tried to bite their feet. Mummy would have to take her in and tell her it was okay for them to come, they were selling fruit!

In Africa there are sometimes flies that bite you when you are asleep, so the family slept with big nets over their beds to keep the flies away. Daisy liked to sleep under the nets too. She often slept with the little girls and loved to snuggle down under the sheets with them.

One day Daisy had a big surprise for the little girls. She gave birth to five puppies. There were three little boy puppies and two little girls. They all looked exactly like Daisy except one of them who had a kink in his tail so they called him, "Kinky." When the puppies got too big for Daisy to feed herself, the family found new homes for them with friends nearby.

Daisy's family had another pet as well as Daisy. They had a parrot who was grey with lovely red tail feathers. Pansy the parrot could talk and make all sorts of different sounds. She used to tease Daisy by calling to her in a little girl's voice or whistle for her to come, like Daddy did. Daisy was very puzzled when all she found was a parrot!



Peanuts are grown in Africa, and one of Daisy's favorite foods were made from them. Farmers chopped up the peanuts and squeezed the oil out of them. Then they made them into sausage shaped cookies, called coolie-coolies. Farmers fed these to their cows, but Daisy thought they were better than dog biscuits.

Daisy liked Christmas as much as the little girls did. She was very interested in the presents round the Christmas tree, but didn't try to tear them open. One time though the little girls had put some coolie-coolies in a box for Daisy and she did find those and open them before Christmas. No one could be cross with her because they were for her!

When the three little girls and their Mummy and Daddy had to leave Africa they found a new home for Daisy. She went to live with their friends, two little girls and their Mummy and Daddy. They were so happy to have her, ad she lived happily ever after.

## **My Bucket List**

Those of you who have seen the movie, “The Bucket List” with Morgan Freeman and Jack Nicholson as stars, will know what I mean. For those who haven’t seen the movie, it means a list of the things you want to see or do before you die, or “kick the bucket!”

I hadn’t thought of my wish list in these terms until I saw the movie, but when my husband died at much too young an age, without being able to achieve his, I decided to try to achieve some of my wishes before it was too late. I have been extremely fortunate to be able to do this with, I must confess, the aid of my dear departed’s hard earned money. I hope he would have approved!

Having lived in five countries over my lifetime, I was smitten with the travel bug a long time ago. So needless to say, visiting even more continents was high on my wish list, and top of that list was China. That trip was followed by ones to Australia and New Zealand, India, Antarctica, Russia, Tanzania, and others.

Still on the bucket list is a trip to Japan, and some other rather different ideas.

When I told my daughters that I had always wanted a ride on a motorcycle, they arranged one for my 80th birthday.

Unfortunately it rained heavily that day but I did achieve it two years later. I was driven to Portugal Cove on this luxurious two-seater bike with back support and speakers on my helmet so that I could communicate with the driver. It was a blast!!

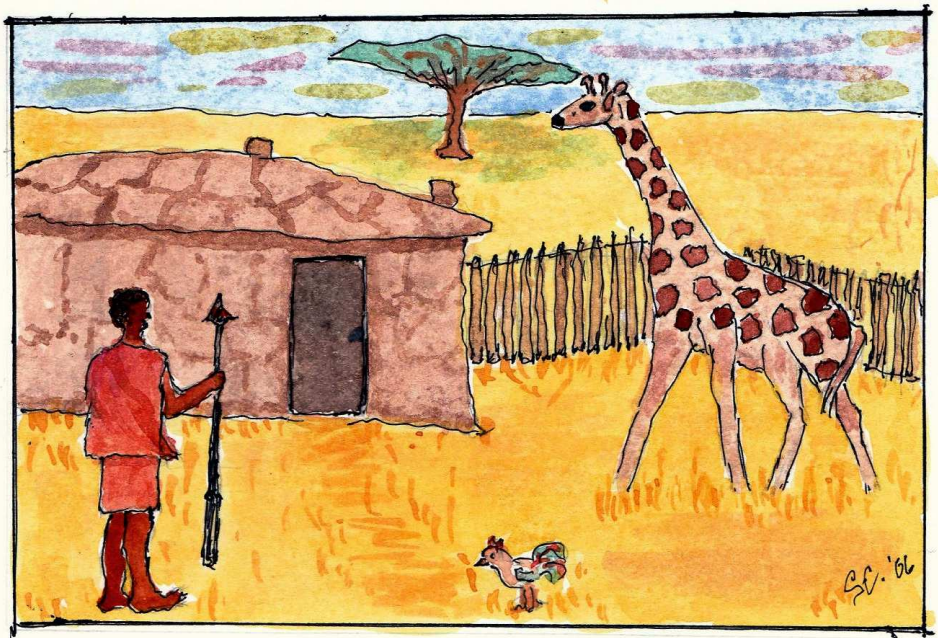
Another wish on my bucket list is to ride in a helicopter. I think

I will be very lucky if I achieve that.

There are two more things on my list that I think I may no longer be achievable. One is to descend on a parachute, but as I have two artificial knees I am not sure anyone would allow me to do it. I have been paragliding attached to a motor launch over the sea, but those are not quite the same as free floating on a parachute.

The other is to go bungee jumping, but as I have a slight heart problem that might be the last thing on my list.

I hope my example will inspire some of you to write and tell us about your bucket lists.



## A Bad Verse with Good Intentions

If you need a friend, call a Miller  
If you want a game, they'll find a thriller  
If you want a meal, Melvie will mix it  
If you need a "mend", Harold will fix it  
If you want a fire, then call a Mac  
If you want it all, there's no holding back  
For more than thirty years  
With very much laughter, (and some tears)  
You've embraced my whole clan  
'Til I'm now co-great Gran  
What more can I really say  
On this great Christmas day  
Except **THANK YOU?**

**Peter**

**August 2001**

Our cockatiel  
Grey, orange and yellow  
Was a noisy little fellow.  
He made “Westie” Fergus dance with rage  
As he scratched the bottom of his cage.  
He said he was a “Pretty Bird”,  
But would not learn another word.  
Kathleen, Devon, Nick and all  
Tried to teach him how to call-  
“Fergus”, but he would not speak.  
All he did was loudly shriek.  
Though now we miss the little guy,  
We know his soul is in the sky,- Flying Free.

## **Sheena**

One moment heavy and bumbling  
Then skittish as a kitten  
She performed the biscuit ballet  
at the promise of a Milk Bone

Fleet of foot in escape  
to fish flakes or farm yard smells,  
On walks she'd plod with pink tongue hanging  
and the air of a large black bear  
Made to act against her will.

Swimming to the rescue a` la Newfoundlander  
was not within her repertoire,  
Raisin bread and car rides were what motivated her  
- Sheena, a quiet friend who is missed.

## **Gilmore Street**

**Midday, July 28, 1998**

Washing swaying gently on the line,  
Heat rises from the greenhouse roof,  
Afar there's sounds of a lawn being mown  
And near at hand, a cheerful chirping bird.  
The sky above is a cloudless azure blue  
but in the Narrows a soft cloud of fog is rolling around  
the hills.

As we sit on the hill up here in the blazing sun  
We feel sad for those downtown in the cooling mist  
But they are saying "Ahh" for the moist cool air  
While unaware of the heat above?



## GEORGE

The small grey tabby  
Stalks down the dark hallway  
Her green eyes luminous in the gloom  
Four white feet seem disembodied  
As grey melds into grey.  
The tail, straight as a periscope  
Cuts through the blackness below.  
Suddenly she sees her prey  
And flattens to the ground,  
Her tail, now mobile,  
Writhing like an angry snake  
With a life of its own.  
A moments stillness,  
Then she springs,  
Claws and teeth bared,  
To sink into her hapless prey,  
The small stuffed bear.



## **SHOREBIRDS**

### **The Pelicans**

The pompous pelicans  
Stand in ranks along the pier  
Waiting with solemn patience  
For a catch.  
Suddenly they shuffle forward,  
A feathered flock of Charlie Chaplins  
Flat feet flopping on deck  
And old grey raincoats flapping at their sides  
The catch is in.

### **Egrets**

Exquisite small bodies  
Pure white porcelain  
Legs tall and thin  
As the reeds in which they stand  
Motionless, a timeless picture  
From an ancient Egyptian frieze

### **Terns**

White wings flapping  
Forked tail pointing skyward  
The tern hovers, goes into reverse  
Then like the Kamikaze pilot  
Plunges into the sea  
Right on target

Snow, in incredible Saharan drifts,  
A desert of white with aqua caves,  
Turns three lawns to one vast counterpane.  
Flocks of hungry birds  
Like raisins sprinkled on the quilt  
Forage freely across this huge domain.  
Predacious cats, defeated by the cold, deep mystery,  
Stay home and thank their lucky stars  
That humans giver them sustenance.

What stirs beneath this deep white eiderdown?  
Are small creatures tunneling beneath the snow?  
The warm darkness may hide Spring's bounty,  
Ripe to burst forth when rays of sun  
Penetrate the depths below.  
Snow - it turns the drabness of a winter's garden  
to a scene of brilliant purity,  
A higher plain of undulating serenity.

## Winter Trees in Flatrock

Early winter rain beats down  
Upon the grove of birch,  
that bend their slim young branches to the strong west wind.  
Each twig shines black against the cold grey sky  
while fighting to survive the rigours of the storm.

Mid-winter snow falls gently from the sky  
and tucks the little grove  
in quilts of thistledown.

It sleeps now in a world transformed to brilliant whiteness,  
sparkling with a million stars  
against a sky turned pastel green  
by winter's cold.

Late winter's ice storm now transforms the trees to silver  
wands.

Glittering and twinkling in the wind  
the magic bells sway in cruel beauty  
lit by the evening sun.

A hint of spring  
stirs the young birch twigs  
to signs of life.

And in a flaming orange sky  
They turn to gleaming copper polished by the setting sun

## The Caymans

### Poem 1

Brilliant sea with every shade of blue and green,  
turquoise and aquamarine.

Puff balls in the azure sky above  
throw fleeting shadows on bright sails below  
and breezes add the spice of life  
to the warm and vibrant scene.

### Poem 2

What can you do in the Caymans? They ask  
First you can snorkel with flippers and mask  
Then you can sail on a catamaran,  
or lie there and bake till you have a good tan.  
How about trips in a small submarine,  
on sail boards or sunfish for those really keen?  
Then there's the people who all come to dive  
to see colours of coral and fish come alive.  
And some hire a moped to buzz down the street  
to try out all the good places to eat.  
There's so much to do on this beautiful isle.  
We wish we could stay for a very long while.

## The Second Ice Age

December 29, 1997

Our world is filled with icicles  
which hang from roofs and wires  
like perfect crystal spears  
lit by the brilliance of the sun.  
Some trees bow low with their icy loads  
while some sway stiffly in the wind,  
sparkling with a thousand lights  
And playing tunes with tiny bells.  
Nature clothes the land in ice and snow,  
her “throws” of pure white eider-down,  
But the sun’s rays trim them all with gold  
while rainbows paint the icy frills.  
This cold white world weighed down with ice.  
The sun now shows in glowing technicolour.



## Final Seniors Pride Article

It is with a feeling of regret, even sadness, that I write this final piece to you in, "The Senior's Pride". I have been proud to be both a writer and part of the Editorial Board for the last number of years. I have enjoyed receiving the Senior's Pride over the last two decades, as I know a number of you have, so I would like to thank all who have been involved in its production over the years.

The compiling and putting together the magazine for a deadline took many people many hours of dedicated volunteer work. Sadly, there are fewer and fewer people able to continue doing that, so it is finally time for the magazine and the people who made it, to retire.

Thank you to the readers, some of whom have let us know how much they have enjoyed the magazine. Thank you once again to the contributors who made it so enjoyable. It would be impossible to mention them all. There have been artists, poets, cooks, doctors, and providers of jokes to name but a few.

Susan Capps

