
Italy & Greece

with Jim & Judy Schorner

August - September 1997

Prologue

We lost our camera in Florence, Italy so this journal constitutes our "pictures." We hope that you will enjoy these insights that I generally wrote in the evening after our day's activities or in the morning of the next day before going out. In preparation for this trip, I studied the Italian language by listening to two cassette tapes, "Learn Italian in the Car." I found the tapes very easy to follow and extremely valuable as Northern Italians often have German as their second language instead of English.

Without further explanation, the reader may get the impression that we were hot and tired throughout the journey. In fact, I generally wrote this journal upon return from our adventures of the day while Judy was in the bathroom showering. During this time I was hot and tired from the day's activities. The weather was quite pleasant and we were very comfortable most of the time. Please keep this in mind as you read my story.

August 7, 1997

Our flight from Orlando to New York started with a long line to check in. After a while an agent called for anyone going to New York on our flight. I raised a hand and was ushered to the front. Our bags were taken aboard by express and we walked briskly to the train and gate.

We were surprised to have been served a box lunch on a 2:30 flight and having just eaten at Denny's passed up the sandwich but ate the potato chips. We kept the nice lunch bag because it had shopping bag-type handles. As it was, we carried that little lunch bag throughout Italy and Greece with our lunch or snack because it was so convenient.

The JFK airport was crowded and there was only one men's room on this level. Rather than wait, I went down to baggage claim. On board, our flight attendants were cordial, the food was good and we took our Sominex to begin our rest. You lose six hours so there are only four or five available to sleep after the meal.

August 8, 1997

Upon arrival at 7:30 a.m. we got our Fiat at Hertz and learned about the roadways of Italy. It works out well

for Judy and me that she drives and I read the map. We must be unique to label our roads east and west. It was confusing to me that both the origin and destination were used to mark the roads. Because I didn't realize that we started at the northwest airport and thought we were southeast of Milan I thought we were going the wrong direction. We turned around to find that I had thought I was wrong but was mistaken! I asked directions in Italian and was redirected to the right path. At the first toll plaza I realized I was unprepared, not having any Italian currency. The toll was 1,700 so I gave the attendant \$1 and he said, "Okay." The next toll was more complicated. The two collectors discussed the correct exchange for \$3 and returned 1,000. (The current exchange rate is 1,823 = US\$1)

As soon as we reached a small town we stopped at the bank. I asked for a cash advance of \$500 or 1,000,000 but was told only 450,000 was available per transaction. I shrugged and said, "Bene" (Fine) and we were off for brunch at a coffee shop.

We had a pasta salad and croissants. Mine was cream filled. I had an ounce of very strong coffee, probably espresso. We continued to Sirmione at Lake Garda. There was a quaint hotel mentioned in my guide book so on we went. "A de la camera?" (Have you any rooms?) I asked. She answered that she was full. At least I knew the words. I asked if there were another hotel and she kindly made three calls to get us an inexpensive room. I was impressed by her going out of her way to accommodate us. Perhaps it was that I who was obviously American, was trying to talk in her language. At dinner time I was sure to return to her hotel for the meal.

After a siesta, we went for a walk to explore the medieval castle and cathedral that were part of this long peninsula called Sirmione, a town with spas of sulphur springs for rejuvenation and treatment of respiratory disease.

This evening we went to a restaurant on the lake. It was 6:40 p.m. and we were the first ones there. I asked, in Italian, "when do you open?" and was told that we are open now. We picked a nice table and were served a tasty meal of trout caught fresh from the lake, grilled lamb, mixed salad greens (that were segregated rather than mixed) and French green beans. I had a small bottle of the house wine that was grown and bottled near by. The food was very good, quite satisfying and nicely served. We enjoyed watching the tourists feeding the swans before we asked for the check and paid 72,000 by credit card, servizio incluso. (Service included)

After dinner we saw that they had set up chairs in the square for Canta Lago, an "Amateur Hour" type presentation of songs and comedy sponsored by a local radio station. Though it was late starting at 9:40, we enjoyed the music and the rest.

August 9, 1997

We left Sirmione for Verona to walk through the square and see cathedrals of the 16th century. We had real Italian pizza for lunch with a bottle of Coke Lite. We then traveled north to Trento where the Pope convened the Council of Trent to combat Protestantism and where the Church decided to cease the sale of indulgences. We continued to Bozono, an industrial town where German is spoken as much as Italian. As this area was part of the Austrian Empire until World War I in 1900, its Austrian heritage is prominent. We went through the town three times, seeking the road to Val d' Ega, a very narrow highway through the Dolomites.

Our searching was well worthwhile! The beautifully striking, steep mountains divided by mountain streams and lush coniferous vegetation were very beautiful. At five p.m. we spotted a German-type "Gasthaus" to

spend the night. 10,000 included breakfast. The room was incredibly clean with heavy comforters. The bath was just down the hall. Dinner was soup, meat, white asparagus, overcooked zucchini, bread and either ice cream or nectarine for dessert. The meat was roast beef and something like corned beef but it did not have the flavor of corned beef. We read for a short while and went to sleep. About three a.m. we both awakened, went to the bath and returned to sleep.

August 10, 1997

This morning we continued our trip to see the Dolomites. As we traveled the narrow mountain passes, the stark beauty of the sharp-peaked mountains opened before us. We saw hikers and many bicyclists and all motorcycles seemed to pass us. At Cortina we stopped for lunch at a hotel. From all of the up and down hills and hairpin turns my stomach was a bit queasy. I had some soup. Judy had a fruit salad. I had a fancy torte for dessert. It was good and sweet.

As we continued South, down hill all the way, I explained to Judy that there was no speed limit on the toll way unless marked. Going downhill, our little Fiat made 170 km/hr at times but Judy liked going 150 (about 90 mph). We were in the Venice area in no time.

The Hotel Augustus Terme is a four star hotel. It has two pools, one indoor and one outside. The indoor pool is filled with the hot mineral spring water. Judy liked the air conditioning and private bathroom facility with a blow dryer, soap, shampoo, etc. The receptionist said that the fitness room was not open today. Many people were sitting at the outdoor pool in the sun.

I checked with the young lady in reception about breakfast and the train schedule. She gave me one and explained that the fare is 10,000, you buy the ticket at the station.

August 11, 1997

We had an "American Breakfast" with eggs and (almost raw) bacon, bread, cheese, nectarines, cereal and caffè latté. We took enough for lunch and put it in our Sky Deli bag in the camera case. We bought train tickets, two for 17,000 andata e ritorno (round trip). I spoke with some Englishmen while waiting for the train. I wanted to be sure we were "on the right track." On the train we met a young man from Brazil and his "significant other" from Japan. They met in Germany and spoke German together. Of course he spoke Spanish and Portuguese but was reading an English book on touring Italy. I tried a "bon giorno" and asked him if he spoke Italian, German and English. We had a good little chat and invited them to join us on the vaporette from the Venice train station to St. Mark's Plaza. There we said arrivadercci and we made our way to the Plaza.

Upon entering, a tourist representative invited us on a free trip to Murano Island where the glass blowing factories were. All glass blowing, for which Venice is famous, was moved to this one island 100 years ago to prevent fires and control the smoke. We saw the master blow a piece of glass and they invited a tourist to try. The man of about our age did much better than average as his piece actually worked. Alas it was too thin and cracked quickly. We then saw the very expensive but fine works of art. I explained to our host that I would like to see pieces that cost 100,000 to 500,000 (\$50-250). They hoped we would buy much more. One lamp I liked was offered at a special price of \$700. As we were ready to leave, I asked where the bathroom was. It

was outside so I went and then proceeded to leave. The host became very upset and rude that I should ask for the bathroom and then "run away." As we were waiting for the ferry, we saw a nice set of three birds on a tree for 200,000 or \$125 and a fish in a block of glass for 10,000. I wanted to get this for our new grandchild. The man wrapped them nicely for us, charged it on the Visa and we had our special lunch and rode back to St. Marks.

At St. Mark's Plaza we saw the outside of the prison, the Bridge of Sighs, where prisoners saw their last daylight before execution. The bridge connects the Doge Palace, which is now a museum. Before, it was the home, court and place of laws when Venice was great.

Next door is St. Mark's Basilica, a beautiful church of 900 years filled with golden mosaics, statues and a very special golden altarpiece. Under the altar lies the remains of St. Mark but I doubt that after 1,900 years, there is much left. The body is said to have been stolen from Alexandria, Egypt by two men of Venice who tied it to a pole, packed it with pork and went through the streets calling, "Pork, pork!" so that people would move out of the way. (The Arabs would not touch pork so they escaped unscathed.)

After our tour we walked the streets and shops. Finally we embarked on the ultimate in Venician adventure, the Góndola ride. We wanted a pretty gondola with a gondolier who had a striped shirt. (Many wore white shirts.) Finally we saw it! For 150,000 we would get the "complete" tour. Actually I think we got "completely" taken. The "complete" was no more than the basic tour at 120,000 for 40 minutes. We traveled the Grand Canal and some passages where there were no sidewalks at all. We saw the former home of Marco Polo, now a theater.

After the gondola we went to the restaurant recommended by the Beadles, just to the right of the Marconi Hotel near the Rialto Bridge. We enjoyed the full four course Italian dinner with seafood salad, spaghetti a la Carbonara, Monk fish, tirimisu and cappuccino. A bottle of nice white wine cleared the palate between courses. I enjoyed it all though Judy was a bit too tired. I enjoyed watching a man and his two teenage children, visiting Italy from the US for the first time. I would have liked to talk with the lad but they reminded me of our trip to England with Rob & Lisa, we would have rather not been disturbed.

Finally, I checked my watch and train schedule and took the next to last train back to Terme (hot springs). I talked in Italian with a young man and his sister. Both wrote left handed though they said that neither of their parents did. I think I used every Italian expression I knew except, "How old are you?"

At last in our room, our cold 1.5 liter of water awaited us. As we knew that shorts were not accepted in churches and we wanted to be most appropriately attired for our bona-fide Italian dinner, we wore dress and long pants this day. We were very hot, very sweaty and very tired when we got home.

August 12, 1997

Happy Birthday to Rob! On to Ferrara, an hour to the South, there is a castle with a mote and drawbridge where the county offices are located. Across the way, the Central Cathedral boasts a beautiful marble fasçade and ornate statues of a St. George who fought a dragon. We ate our sandwich lunch at the front of the cathedral from our Sky Deli bags and wiped our mouths with napkins from the Hotel Augustus. (Those napkins were so nice, they seemed to be cloth. We carried them until the end of our trip in Greece.) We then continued to Florence. I checked my bed and breakfast book for a nice place, south of Florence but when we arrived they were full. A little way further along the road to Florence was a hotel with a nice garden courtyard that had a room with a bath, no air conditioning for 90,000. We may stay two nights here. I have a list of a few bridge clubs but Judy is a bit tired now.

Well this was a big mistake! Being on the main road there was traffic noise until late at night. We had crossed a plank bridge that made sounds like thunder whenever a car crossed. The room also brought back bad memories for Judy. We had a pizza and pasta in a nice pizzeria before retiring. The next day, with suitcases in hand, no explanation was necessary.

August 13, 1997

We entered Florence from the south and stopped at Michelangelo's Piasa. There is a good view of the city ahead along with another copy of the famous "David." We continue on to the city and after chasing numerous pedestrians from the plaza, find our way outside the main tourist district where we can park. As we walked into the plaza, we saw the Uffizzi Gallery and waited in line about two hours for tickets. They let a few in at a time to keep the place from being too crowded. 12,000 each for admission. We saw numerous Madonnas, crucifixions and other popular work of the Renaissance era. I liked some of the statues and appreciated the design and muscular detail of a statue of two wrestlers. There was also a sculpture of a man hanging with his arms overhead from a tree. Though he wasn't in a pleasant position, his expression was appropriate and the detail attending his position and muscles caught my attention.

We visited the Pallazio Vecchio where a little fountain made 900 years ago is in the courtyard. The walls and ceilings are frescos. As one walks through the town center one sees too many statues to count. But we are tired and head to the railway station information office to book a room for siesta and tonight. 130,000 for the Hotel Emma, not far from the center on the way to the stadium, a two star with a clean, nicely appointed room. So nice that I ask for a second night and am shown to a bigger room. There is much more to see and having found a nice place I think we'll take it easier the next day. Napping was easy with an electric fan. Unfortunately we found a defect in the car such that a moment after the car locked, it unlocked itself. We had not noticed this morning and notwithstanding all our luggage being in the car, it seems someone took Judy's knapsack including our large Coke bottle filled with water and the book she was reading. We were able to get it to lock by closing the latch in the door, very strange. As I write, Judy is reading her second book. The first will have to be completed via the library.

August 14, 1997

Today we returned to downtown Florence to see the Cathedral and the Gallery Academy. As the Cathedral was not yet open we went up to the top of the bell tower for a panoramic view of the city. At a nice photo stop I suggested that Judy take a picture. The camera was not in the camera bag! We carried the camera bag all day yesterday, empty! We retraced our steps and recalled that our last photo was at the Michelangelo Piassa. Judy had set the camera on the floor of the car as she knew she would use it later that day. No wonder the thieves had broken in to take the mostly empty back pack!

We returned to the car to check there and then to our hotel to be sure. Nevertheless, it was gone. We returned downtown to continue our sightseeing and had pizza and Coke. Coke is everywhere in Italy and has no competition in restaurants. We returned to the hotel for siesta and to do laundry. I also called home as I had promised. All is well at the office and Lisa is fine. Barbara was not in yet as she had toilet problems. Carla and Tonya did not know where the questions were. I directed Carla to send all the reading material to me in Greece so that I could be ready with the client letter when I returned.

August 15, 1997

After tea and rolls or caffè latté and rolls we left Florence having stayed one night more than expected. Having been introduced (submerged) in art, I did not want to leave the cradle of the Renaissance prematurely. Also when you find a nice place to stay, make the most of it. It was nice to be able to adjust the itinerary to meet our whims rather than being required to be on schedule. That was one of the best aspects of our tour of Italy and our plan to pick up hotels as we went.

We headed to San Gimignano, a town as Romanesque and medieval as possible. Similar to Sirmione, cars do not drive downtown, the streets are narrow and the shops predominate the view. We bought our souvenir creche made right here, a pretty painted (37,000) one and found the proprietor ready to deal in post cards. We bought 100 for 27,000 (about 15¢ each). We now have our work cut out for us. We stopped in a large, beautiful cathedral to say a prayer for our bambino. They have the candles down to a science. When you drop a coin in the slot, the electric lighted candle goes on. 100 to pray that "baby B" will wait until we get home and be born perfectly and easily for mother, Lisa.

We continued to Sienna where the semiannual horse race is to go on today. The grandstands were erected around the plaza and banners were flying for the awaited event. It would begin at 4:30 but we would be gone by then. We saw the government offices which were in a 12th century building that looked more like a stable than an office building because of the large open entrance and dirt floor of the courtyard. The town cathedral had a façade of green and white marble with multicolored marble pillars. We drink and drink as there is no humidity, the area is sunbaked dry and the temperature 88 .

Next we went to Luciano's suggested Mount Olivet Maggoria Abbey, home of the Benedictine friars. The cloisters have frescos depicting the activities of St. Benedict and the church area is small but well-adorned with frescos and statues. Our second prayer, we lit a votive candle for the bambino. After we left, we compared prayers and found our subjects similar. We had both prayed that bambino would come to know the Lord as his Savior at an early age. I prayed that he would grow strong and lead many others to Christ. It's a blessing and happiness I have experienced to share. It was an opportunity to visit a real, live monastery with white cloaked men and cloisters.

Traveling on toward Corona, we stopped for the night outside a small town called, Sinalunga at a very new hotel with a small bed. (70,000) We ate our peaches in the car not knowing what would befall us this night. The inn was very nice and we began writing our post cards. As the room was rather warm from the August sun, we went out to the terrace in the front. There they were setting up for dinner. After a while we ordered noodles and cheese and a pork steak, they were good. For dessert, a chocolate and vanilla ice cream and fruit bowl with fresh fruit, most of which we packed for the next day.

In Cortona we saw the medieval walled city, bought 26 900 postage stamps for the cards and a wash cloth to replace the one left behind.

August 16, 1997

Today we drove on to Assisi, home of St. Francis. We saw the town on the hill and the cathedral containing

his tomb. While we were there, we saw a mass, the part where the communion food is blessed. We were too tired to walk up to the castle as the road was steep. (P.S. It's good that we were there when we were, on September 26, 1997 the cathedral that we stood in was devastated by an earthquake. All of the masterpieces were destroyed and many visitors were hurt.)

We stopped for our lunch of fruit and then went on to Spello where we were to see an octagonal tower. Though we drove through the whole city, we didn't see it. We completed the day's drive to Spoleto where Luciano had suggested the Gattopone Hotel. After two cycles around the town we settled on the Hotel Charleston (145,000) instead. We were tired by now and looked forward to siesta. Afterward we went downtown to the cathedral where a wedding was in progress. We participated but did not take communion. As the bride and groom left the church they were showered with rice and were delivered by horse-drawn carriage.

Nothing else to speak of in town, we checked out the trattoria menus and selected one for a little later.

After a nice dinner of ravioli and guinea fowl, I was exhausted and slept 10 hours despite the noise and heat.

August 17, 1997

Today we have a long drive, from Spoleto past Roma and Napoli to Sorrento, the Northern edge of the Amalfi Coast. With the holiday weekend and the summer beach season the place is packed. Judy parked the car and I got out to search for a hotel. There was no information hut as we arrived. The first place I walked into was right on the coast but the wanted 300,000 so I asked if there was a list of hotels from which I could pick a two star. He said that he had no list but look on the side streets. As I went looking, a couple asked a shopkeeper a question and he kindly answered. I looked in and no one was in the shop so I asked if they could refer me to a two star hotel. The man and his assistant were very helpful. They referred to a tourist magazine and listed four in the vicinity. I offered the young lady 5,000 if she would make a reservation for me. She called each of them and found them all full. On to the three stars we went. The next call was success, a nice hotel in the vicinity with garage parking for 130,000. It had large, clean rooms and a balcony. We took a short siesta and planned the evening. When Judy awoke, I suggested that we go to Mass as it was Sunday. The big church had one at six p.m. in English. Not only did we go but I was asked to read the Old Testament scripture. The man behind me read the New Testament passage. The priest gave a short sermon about being kind to neighbors. He used the parable of the prodigal son as an illustration. Though he knew the passage well, I don't believe it dealt with loving neighbors.

He then blessed the communion materials, ate and drank and then served us. We were surprised that he offered only the bread. He left the offering basket at the front. I felt like the widow putting one of her last few lira in as we were very short of cash.

We then toured the town and saw the original city wall used to defend the town against Greeks and Turks. On our way home we had an Aurora Pizza: part pizza, part calzone. I asked for ice for the cokes, they were good and cold. Judy had strawberry pie for dessert and I had some chocolate mousse. We then walked down the steps to the "beach." The coast is very steep and there is really no beach, rather the rocks and cliff reach the water. A concrete "beach" platform with cabanas held the swimmers. The water was clear.

As we walked, we heard an American family talking. "Where are you from?" I asked. An attorney and his wife with three children had been traveling Italy about the same time we were but had come down the west coast

and were headed for Venice. They traveled by train. He was also an estate planning attorney. His wife asked me to explain to him how we could be away for six weeks when she had trouble getting him out for two. It was fun to chat and compare notes.

As I write, I am sitting on the balcony listening to the dancing music at the next hotel. They are playing, "The Greatest Love." Judy asks -) how I like Italian music. At about 10:15 the fireworks begin. We see them over the roof of the building next to us. What a terrific view we have here. Tonight is the end of the Ascension Day weekend celebrating the Holy virgin and it's the last holiday of the summer. I have asked a few Italians what aspect of the Holy virgin is being commemorated but none know. I later found out, in Greece, from our guide, that this commemorates her ascension into heaven, she did not die according to their tradition, she was just taken.

August 18, 1997

Today being Monday we hit the bank for our last cash advance in Italy. I expect that 500,000 will get us through the week. I don't want much left over as we would just make a deposit on our last room. We also went to the post office for some more stamps. We stopped at yet another baby clothes store to get a little suit for our bambino. Keeping Judy under control is difficult. She wants to do now what she could not do for our kids before. Today's adventure is a sightseeing drive as we make the narrow, hairpin turns from Sorrento to Positano. The cliffs go right to the sea with hotels perched on the edges of the cliffs. The natural beauty is striking but seeing how man has engineered his development is awesome. After we pass through Positano we visit the Emerald Grotto. We descend in a lift to small boats which take us through the small cave. A tunnel that does not enter the cave but illuminates the water is the source of the pretty hues. Our boatman is quite animated and points out that we should not forget him as he will tell us about the cave in English. He is well tipped by everyone for his dynamic performance.

Afterward we take a boat ride to Amalfi and back which allows Judy a chance to see the shores and cliffs. There are plenty of people on the little beach that forms in small areas of the rocky coast. As we approach Ravello we stop at the side of the road for our bread and cheese lunch we saved from breakfast. We leave the shore and cross the mountains on a less-traveled road. My eyes are getting tired so we stop at a mountain hotel here in the country. We get a better price outside the city and Pompeii and Mt. Vesuvius await us tomorrow. The hotel owner seems pleased to see us and to fill his last room (110,000) and to talk to us in English. He visited Miami and wants to show us the special view from his 15-day-old hotel. From the upper floors the view is indeed appealing as we look between two hills at Mt. Vesuvius and the towns below it. He informs me that he has no financial interest in either of the two restaurants on the premises. I asked him twice for his preference. The second time, he grins and motions to the one to the rear.

As we waited to be served at the restaurant, we heard a cackle of bells. The goat herd that we had seen grazing on the hill was being lead to town by the goatherder and followed by the two faithful dogs. The town was in quite a ruckus, the two carabinieri were in force, one had put on his bulletproof vest and drawn his gun. We never saw what was really going on. Someone from the restaurant told an officer that he had a phone call, he took the call and suddenly they hopped into the cars with blue lights flashing and sped off.

We had meat ravioli and spaghetti a la Carbonara for our first course. I was surprised that the red wine was served chilled. It didn't bother me, I like it that way even if it isn't right. I tried the rabbit cacciatore for a change, my second (and last) stab at bunny, the stuff is too tough for my fancy and too many bones and gristle. The dessert was one of the best (beside tirimisu) we had a light cake with a lemon sauce that was

quite sweet. we went back to the room and slept well through the night.

August 19, 1997

After an extremely simple breakfast we drove off to one of my "must see" destinations, Pompeii. The city of Pompeii was devastated by ashes from Mt. Vesuvius which erupted in 79 AD. The event was so sudden that people were caught in their daily routine and were completely covered at once, preserving them intact. The excavation began 1,600 years later in the 18th century and has systematically restored much of the town of 25,000 people. Best preserved and restored were the public bath house, the theaters and amphitheaters and a house belonging to two rich brothers. The walls were painted with pictures, and there were statues and fountains. The roof sloped inward to the middle where a hole allowed the rain to enter a small pool and drain into a cistern below. It seemed so much more efficient than our way of collecting from the sides. The kitchen had a fireplace with ovens and hearth. There was an interior courtyard as well. I think if I lived back then I would like to be wealthy and a Roman citizen. The gladiators quarters were not so plush. Temples to the various gods were prominent. The one to Jupiter (Zeus) was most well suited with the volcano in the background. Though the weather was incredibly hot and absolutely dry, I wanted to see the whole place. We had a nice lunch of macaroni, salad and fruit before leaving. We drove north toward Rome on the autostrada until we were well out of the city. We then drove through corn and tobacco country looking for a hotel. We finally came to the Park Hotel Piscina where our room and breakfast were 75,000 and the swimming pool was our first order of business. The room was generous with a queen-sized bed and fully equipped bathroom and TV. We had never tried the TV as we doubted there would be an English station. I watched a show in Italian where I tried to make out the words and watch the pictures.

August 20, 1997

After breakfast we planned for the day. We decided to visit the Monte Cassino Abbey, a Benedictine monk monastery. We found it to have the most beautiful cathedral that we had visited and we have seen many. The paintings were not so special, rather the mosaics, use of gold and the artistic use of marble were what fascinated us. I'd love to write more but I can only say that it was well worth the journey and I would recommend it. Afterward we stopped at a supermarket for some fruit, bread and cheese. The deli lady was very nice and cut the bread and inserted the cheese for us. We had Brie on rolls that was so creamy it was like butter. We had wanted to taste some purple grapes so we bought them too.

As we traveled through the mountains on the way to the coast, we selected a shady spot in a parking lot for our lunch. We then continued along the shore watching the people on the beach and in the sea. We were to meet our friend Steve in Latina, 30 miles south of Rome where his sister lives. As soon as we left the highway I stopped at a gas station to call. I hoped that I had picked an easily described spot. I had practiced the Italian phrases I had planned to use when his sister answered the phone. I was so happy when his sister had put Steve on the line as the only contact I had was the telephone number, I didn't even know his sister's name.

They said they would pick us up in about 15 minutes. They had just gotten in from the airport. Our timing was perfect. Unfortunately they did not quite have the location correct as they went two stops farther south in search of us but finally found us. It would have been very hard to follow directions without a detailed map as the roads are not clearly marked with names.

When we arrived at Steve's sister's house, we were offered Coke and ice cream. We met Vaso who is widowed and lives here in Latina, Mary, Steve's other sister who was visiting from Athens, and Sam, his brother-in-law from Athens. Sam speaks English somewhat and was quite surprised to help me when my Greek

brother-in-law from Athens. Sam spoke English very well and was quite anxious to help me plan our Greek vacation. He insisted that we visit with him while we were there. He approved of my island selection and said be sure to see a few others. He was quite adamant about having a car and ferrying it about but I am not so sure. I think I'll try it without first and then see if it is needed.

Our visit went very well. Steve and I talked stock market, estimated taxes and the penalty abatement. Judy talked with Mary about children and grandchildren. Sam said he thought we would find hotel prices in Greece to be more moderate, as in the US. (Italy's hotels are considerably more expensive than Day's Inns where we are accustomed to staying when in the US.) We had a light dinner there and some wine and received instructions on returning to the highway. While we talked, the laundry was washing in the automatic washer. We took it down from the clothesline as it began to rain. We stayed in a Eurotel (120,000) on the way to Rome, two star and small but not a bad price as these things go. Tomorrow we must get up early so that the car can be returned on time.

August 21, 1997

Happy Birthday to me. Though we had lost the rental contract, we had no problem at the Hertz counter. In addition, the hotel information office got us a very good rate at a three star just a few blocks from the station. We were able to leave our luggage with Hertz until we made the reservation and then just wheel them two blocks to the hotel. Our room was available though it was but 10 a.m. (125,000) All is going very well indeed.

We sat on the bed, reviewing the maps to plan the day. We decided today to visit the Vatican, tomorrow the city center. We took the subway 1,500 each to the Vatican station, at the end of the line and went to the museum and the Cistene Chapel. 15,000 each. The museum is well designed to herd you like sheep before the various paintings, tapestry and ceiling paintings and antiquities. By the time you get to the Cistene Chapel you are numb from the quantity of work you had seen.

We then tried to visit St. Peter's Basilica but were refused -- no shorts. I'll wear long pants tomorrow. It is very hot and shorts are quite nice. Oh well. We went on to see the National Museum which is a castle established 1,700 years ago to a saint for the end of the plague. Our book did not mention anything of interest inside and one did not have to pay 8,000 to see the outside so we admired the great work and went on to the Pantheon, the "Temple to All Gods." The Holy Church had trouble dealing with that so they made it into a church which now holds the tombs of various important Italian kings, queens and the father of the nation. Nevertheless, the original building still stands with eight of its 11 original columns and a dome as high as it is across making a perfect globe. The top is open so when it rains they clean the floor.

A few blocks further was the Trevi fountain, a rather awesome sight in that there are multiple water flows to celebrate the oceans and the seas.

A few blocks further was the Plaza of Spain where a "Boat Fountain" was attracting many in the foreground and at the top of the Spanish steps stood a church. Back to the hotel by metro to wash a few clothes, ourselves and prepare for dinner.

August 22, 1997

Day after Birthday. We went to the bank machine and I couldn't find my card. I went back to the room to check last night's shirt, not there. Must have left it at the cafe last night. Returned to bank, asked for cash advance on the other card for which I do not know PIN. No cash advances on cards except machine. Go to another bank and ask for advance, no problem. I go to put money away and find the credit card inside my dictionary, whew!

Next to get postcard stamps. Judy remembers post office in railway station so we check there and ask around. One person gives wrong direction another gives correct one. We find it. Clerk does not have enough stamps and must go to vault. Ten minutes later she returns with stamps. We stick stamps on and mail. Two hours gone. Looking for tour bus stop. Realize that bus won't come there for more than 30 minutes. Go to more distant stop for bus in 10 minutes. Map doesn't seem to have covered cross streets, ask carabinieri who says 500 meters to the right, we walk, it is not there. Take out second, more detailed map, there it is, one block further than where we asked directions, ten minutes passed, won't make bus, too far to original stop so we decide to take subway to the St. Peter's Basilica in Vatican City. We stop at seven souvenir stores seeking Christmas tree ornaments in August. No dice. Finally we find something in Vatican souvenir shop. St. Paul's is big but not as I expected. The pictures primarily commemorate the Popes rather than God except Michelangelo's pieta which is behind glass in the front.

We decided to eat lunch and as we would not take the tour we took the subway to the Pyramids. Three story pyramid was not impressive so we re-boarded the train on our unexpired ticket to go to Colosseum. There we saw the Roman ruins we had heard so much about. The Colosseum is quite large and intact. The floor was elevated but is missing, which looks weird because one sees the supporting structure without the surface. We looked over someone's shoulder to see an artist's rendering. We also saw the Roman Forum and Senate, numerous other columns and ruins before it started to rain. Judy got a cute umbrella hat (5,000) to shade her while mowing. As we had seen most of what we had planned to see I thought we might take a bus back to our room. We were rather far from the subway. I noticed on the bus stop signs that one of the four busses was destined for Termine, the train station near our hotel. Within a minute one arrived. We entered and I looked for a ticket seller, there were none. The driver was encased in glass so we sat down. Our ride was fairly short and the bus was not crowded. We had committed a mortal sin -- riding the bus without a ticket. When we arrived at the station we disembarked, we had gotten away with it!

As we approached the hotel we thought we would stop for a pastry and cappuccino. The first bar where we stopped did not have particularly good pastry so we went on to another. Looking down any street one can generally see two or three bars. The next was closed, finally a pizza bar had a nice fruit tart and a sugar covered biscuit for me. We each had a cappuccino and enjoyed.

August 23, 1997

We departed Rome without a hitch. I am glad that we packed light. Next time I am going to pack 10 pairs of underwear and 10 T shirts though. This time I had packed eight of each. The train to the airport was full but we were early so we got seats. Though our plane was delayed, we eventually left on a full airbus. Upon arrival in Greece I made my first mistake. Instead of asking the cash machine for 150,000 drachma I asked for 15,000. I then tried to correct my mistake by repeating the transaction but found myself over-limit for the day. Ultimately I got an additional 65,000 drachma. I am conscious of the \$2.50 minimum service charge on the account so I try to minimize the number of transactions. The taxi to the hotel was surprisingly low 2,000 drachma or \$7 covered our fare. Gasoline is considerably less here than Italy, \$4 per gallon in Italy, \$2.80 per gallon here. We arrived at the hotel at four p.m. and relaxed a bit in the room. I was pleased that there are

gation here. we arrived at the hotel at four p.m. and relaxed a bit in the room. I was pleased that there are several channels broadcasting in English. Some have Greek subtitles. In Italy, only Italian and German language shows are available.

We met our group for the welcome drink. There are about 25. Judy and I are the youngest traveling without our parents. The next youngest couple, Dave and Cindy look like about 55 each. They are unmarried. As they had traveled 24 hours from Colorado, they were exhausted and wanted to go to bed. We went out to dinner on our own. Maria suggested that we walk up to Victoria Square. When it didn't appear after a dozen blocks, we walked a few streets over. Though there is some traffic, the stores are closed and only young people are on the streets. We selected a small clean-looking restaurant and sat down to an excellent Greek salad of feta cheese, tomato, cucumber, peppers and onions in a vinaigrette dressing. The shish kabob (souvlaki) was just the way I'd make it, with only the meat cooked. The tomato, lettuce, carrots and onions were nicely arranged at the side. Warm pita bread as served with the wine. To our surprise some of our group, Loran, Sylvia and their daughter, Lisa, also appeared (age 60). They said they had just started exploring as we did and came back to the cleanest restaurant they found. As we were about to leave, I left the bottom of our wine with him. He shared his Amstel beer with me. They seemed really friendly.

August 24, 1997

Our first day of touring was rather long but I found our first stop the most interesting. We crossed the Corinthian Canal, completed at the end of the 19th century, dug by hand through the limestone, it is very deep so that locks are not needed. Nevertheless, the water is fairly shallow, 22 feet in depth.

Next was Corinth, we saw ruins of the Roman city where Paul preached, was accused by the Jews, stood trial and was acquitted. Thereafter he continued and established the church to whom he wrote his special letters. We saw how the center of the town was laid out from the ruins and excavations of the area. We stood right there where he would have been! The streets were paved in marble and had stores at the sides with water underneath to preserve the food and cool the premises. We also went to the Roman toilets where the men would do their business and find out the news in the area.

We visited Mycenae where the "Bee Hive" tombs of various kings and high officials were found only recently. There were excavations of the acropolis on the hill where the kings, nobles and their slaves lived. The townspeople came in for protection whenever the city was under siege. The acropolis is high on the hill so that ample warning of invading forces is provided. Nevertheless, there is always a spring within its walls.

We visited Epidaurus where the best preserved Greek theater still performs the ancient tragedies on summer evenings. The acoustics are such that a voice can readily project over the crowd of 14,200 on the seats which form a semicircle on the sides of the hill.

At lunch we tried our second Greek meal, mouslaki, an eggplant and meat concoction that seemed overcooked, roast lamb, Greek salad and mixed fruit. The evening meal was mushroom soup, Quiche Lorraine, fettuccine with tomato sauce and some roast meat and a cabbage salad with oil. I tried my first Brussels sprouts. Yech, I think they too were overcooked. There was a cake for dessert. I would have preferred to have half of the food and to add wine and coffee.

Our bus is very comfortable, our fellow passengers somewhat old. This won't be so bad when we're 20 years older. Mom would feel right at home.

August 25, 1997

Today we went to Olympia, where the ancient, Pan-Hellenic Olympics were held every four years until 397 when they were stopped because of their pagan heritage and rituals. On the site are temples to Zeus and his wife, Hermes. The collection of artifacts is well-preserved because the site was covered in dirt and rubble from an earthquake shortly after the games ended. The excavation work was done in the late 19th century by German archeologist and is now housed in a very well-done museum in the area. I thought the visit very worthwhile and the background data fascinating.

All events were viewed and participated solely by men, who were completely naked. This is appropriate for a ritual to the king of the gods. Women were forbidden from crossing the river under penalty of death.

I ate baklava today at coffee-break and at lunch. It was just like home and was good.

August 26, 1997

Today we crossed the Gulf of Corinth by ferry, an event I found fascinating. The hands worked very hard to get each vehicle in place with the minimum space. At the end there was room for two motorcycles left over. The ferry is one ended so that it backs out after the cars, trucks and busses are loaded on. The crossing only takes about 10 minutes then everyone is in a rush to get out.

We traveled to Delphi today where the sacred oracle of Apollo had her temple and stadium for the second set of Pan-Hellenic games.

The most well-preserved statue of the charioteer was there in the museum. The eyes were original and are made of enamel. The statue is very vivid. Afterward we filled our water bottles from the spring used to purify the oracle.

August 27, 1997

We drove a long way today and saw the fertile plains in the central part of Greece, produced when some lakes were drained. This also eliminated the problem with mosquitos and malaria. This expansion of agriculture allows Greece to export its products and provides the international funds to buy the manufactured products and petroleum it needs.

The high point (pardon pun) of today's adventures was the Varla'am Monastery perched high above a ravine. We crossed by foot bridge over the chasm and up 147 steps to see the Church of All Saints in which splendid frescoes depicting the last judgement and the martyrdom of the saints are depicted.

Later we went to an icon workshop where we saw a demonstration and purchased an icon of the nativity, for 25,000 drachma, (\$1=287 drachma) the closest we will come to a creche in that there are no statues in a Greek Orthodox church. I bought the Michelin tour guide for Greece and then found it had very little to say

about many of the Greek Islands I had chosen.

We had roast beef and baklava for dinner tonight, and both were quite good. We sat with the couple from Australia again and found that I had visited more their country than they seemed to have visited. Of course tourists do what natives take for granted. We split our bottle of wine, collected from the flight from Italy and had a delightful chat.

After dinner, Maria and I talked about the EEC, a subject she didn't feel comfortable talking about on the bus because she really didn't know that much about it. It appears that they get money from wealthy countries (though she did not know the source) and use it for capital projects in other countries such as bridges, airports and universities in Greece. Greece has three delegates based on its size. Since the EEC, the united countries have open borders without tariffs, work permits or currency controls but they also have price supports to avoid excess produce. They now import adequate quantities of manufactured goods at reasonable prices whereas before they were smuggled due to high duties and shortages.

Most of the countries are not in favor of the unified currency but she said Greece will accept whatever comes about in the end.

All countries Austria and west are in the EEC except Switzerland. Luxembourg and Greece are the only countries in eastern Europe that belong. There are qualifications such as national budget, rate of inflation and human rights that must be met before admission. The rate of inflation in Greece is now 5% per annum, one of the most reasonable rates in recent history.

Greece has lost its many wars not only because of its ununified position of city-states, but also because of its small population. There are more people living in the city of Constantinople (Istanbul) Turkey than in the entire country of Greece, hence the compulsory military service requirements.

August 28, 1997

Today we visited a convent on a mountain similar to yesterday's. This monastery had been repaired extensively after the second world war as it had been bombed due to its hiding members of the Greek resistance from the Nazis. Some of the paintings had been completed only last year. The rest of the day was largely spent in the return to Athens.

As we were running out of laundry, we asked for a Laundromat at the front desk. For 5,000 drachma (\$17.50) our clothes were washed, dried, folded and packaged in plastic for the next week. Nearby a travel agency offered air, boat and bus tickets. We thought we might drop in and see about schedules to save us a trip downtown. The man was quite friendly and helpful. We arranged the balance of our three weeks completely.

We will fly to Rhodes for three days, then Crete for three days, boat to Santorini for four days then boat to Ios for two days, Paros for two days and then a night ferry to Samos near Turkey. We spend one day there before going to Turkey for a tour of the Ephesus area and overnight. We then return by boat to Samos for two nights and then fly to Athens. We hope that we will see Sam and Mary for two nights before returning to US but will call them from the islands to arrange.

After picking up the laundry we stopped at a grill restaurant for our first real Gyros. The highly spiced meat is chipped on the plate and served with carrots, sliced tomato and onion. The pita is on the side and some oiled

or buttered bread is also served on the side, quite different from home but good.

August 29, 1997

On our city tour we drove past many government buildings and stopped at the Olympic stadium, the site of the first modern Olympic games in the 18th century. Greece would like to have the games in 2004 to be here in Athens again. Frankly, I don't think they have room for the people, the place is packed as it is. Nearby we saw the Presidential Palace and were fortunate to see the changing of the guard. (We saw on the news later that they were awarded the Olympics in 2004. There was a major celebration in Athens that night.)

Later we visited the Acropolis where the Parthenon stands. The Parthenon, dedicated to the goddess of the city, Athena, is in remarkably good condition. The museum had some very fine work from the top of the buildings, friezes showing the battle between Athena and Poseidon for the name of the city.

After we returned to the hotel and dispensed our tips (\$10 each) we were asked by Maria to write a recommendation in her favor to combat the complaint she expected to receive from the Peruvian man. We did this for her because I thought she was very accommodating. We also applauded our driver, Nick.

We then returned to the city center where Donna joined us for lunch at McDonald's. We parted and went on to baby shopping. On the way we stopped at a jeweler and bought a 14k gold, meander bracelet for \$246. We used our first two traveler's checks 080 & 081. The bracelet is 13.6 grams. Having spent our wad, we walked home instead of baby shopping.

August 30, 1997

Up at 3:30 a.m. for our four a.m. taxi, our flight to Rhodes leaves at 5:30. Rhodes Town is much different from mainland Greece. We quickly noticed the humidity we were accustomed to and the flora is far more flowerful. Our hotel was most accommodating to allow our seven a.m. check in and offered us breakfast to which we were not entitled. After our nap, the housemaids made up the beds as well.

After nap and breakfast we made a beeline to the Old City. Early in this century the Italians renovated the medieval walls so that a knight returning from the 16th century would even know he had been gone. Indeed this walled city is renown as the best in the world depicting the middle ages. We were tired and hot after our walk and returned to the hotel, went to the pool for an hour and then to our room. There was one English channel on the TV. We had dinner. Afterward we took a walk along the beach and to see the new town harbor. We saw a wedding in progress and waited for the bride to appear. A young boy gave me a favor of Jordan Almonds as is the tradition in Greek weddings that the witnesses get some candy as a gift.

The bride was beautiful and married a man we thought to be considerably older than she. Thereafter we walked through the shops trying to find our way home among streets with no markings.

August 31, 1997

We slept in late to catch up from yesterday and went to the Roman Catholic church. They had visitors from all over so the mass was said in Latin. We followed along in translation books. As I walked up to take communion I noticed English, German, French and Spanish books in use. The catholic church had done the mass in Latin when I was a child so that everyone from any land or background could understand. It seemed quite fitting in this cosmopolitan area to return to the roots. As most of those attending were 50+ they knew the Latin responses which we tried to follow. This time we sat in the back so that we would know when to stand, kneel and sit.

When I went to the concierge, last night he suggested that having done the new and old cities we should go to Lindos today and the butterfly valley the next day. So we rented a motor scooter for 9,000 drachma for the two days and rode off to see the Rhodes acropolis with its stadium, theater and temple to Apollo. Then we went along the very dry, Eastern coast 30 km to Lindos.

One and a half hours later we arrived, ready for a drink. We saw the panorama of the blue Mediterranean Sea and the St. Paul's Bay where tradition says he stopped on his third missionary journey. We took donkeys to the summit (2,000 drachma). Neither of us had ever ridden a donkey so this was a real treat.

At the top of the hill is a walled medieval castle and village. As they wanted 1,200 drachma each, we thought we were castled out and walked down. Along the way we stopped and bought Christmas ornaments for our friends and relatives and one for ourselves. We got a cute donkey for 2,500 drachma with bags on his side saying "Rhodes." For the other 14 we got terra cotta pitchers with a goddess on the side, similar to those in the Athens museums. We got a larger pitcher for our tree, total 10,000 drachma.

Judy got a pair of shorts for these warmer islands for 1,500 drachma. There was a small eatery which sold gyros for 350 so we each got one. These were just like those we have at home, pita filled with meat, sauce, tomatoes and onion, wrapped in paper to eat like a hot dog. We sat in the square under a tree and enjoyed them.

The ride home was an hour and $\frac{1}{4}$ and when we got back we asked directions to the hotel, as usual. We only had to drive a short way along a one way street (the wrong way) and we would see it. Now the top half of my face is red/brown and the bottom is another color. I also have a truck driver tan on my arms. Ah, the perils of scooter riding.

September 1, 1997

Happy Anniversary to us! After breakfast we set out to the Valley of the Butterflies, Petaloudes. The area is heavily touristed but very well done, the goal to keep the passages (trails) as natural as possible but accommodate thousands of visitors. There are hundreds of thousands of butterflies whose wings are orange when in flight and black with white veins (to appear as leaves) when the butterfly has lighted. In the day they try to remain quiet on cool moss or in the shade of the maple trees. I enjoyed the nature walk with the cool, shaded areas and flowing streams with small waterfalls but Judy became tired or bored. At the top of the path was a monastery, a very small one with a tiny church and cloisters for three or four monks. Refreshments were sold inside and the bathroom, which probably also served the clergy, was immaculate. We lit a candle and said a special prayer on our anniversary for "Baby B" in the small church.

After we retraced our steps down the mountain path to the restaurant, we stopped for some beef burgers and Greek salad. Judy picked out some sleeveless tops as the weather has been quite warm lately.

We drove on to Prophet Elijah mountain, the summit is 641 meters and quite cool (really cold for us). The bike labored up the hill and I tried to stay in the sun to keep warmer. We passed through and continued to cross the mountains that divide the east side of the island from the west. As we returned to the Rhodes highway we noticed greater crosswinds than yesterday.

Upon reaching Rhodes we began our search for "Baby Kingdom" that Judy saw as the taxi drove by on our way in from the airport. With eyes like those of an eagle she searches for her prey. Today's treasure was two umbrellas for the new child's stroller, one for mother and one for grandma. As she beats her breasts, figuratively, with pride, she announces with a smile, "I will take Maynard out for a walk." A little haggling brought the price down to 8,400 drachma instead of the marked price of 9,400 for the two.

We then went on to return the scooter but we had trouble navigating the one way streets. We knew how to get there from our hotel by foot but couldn't go the same way by scooter because the direction was wrong. After two attempts, we parked the scooter and set out on foot. At the corner I was to turn, Judy would wait for me. I continued to walk the route I would then travel.

Ah, there's the rub! We had not been going far enough south. The scheme worked and we showed our host where we had traveled. I asked the size of the engine, it was a 72 cc. He told me an 80 would have been better for the hills and had a more comfortable seat. With this data I am ready to "moto" Crete!

We had pizza and Greek salad for our anniversary dinner with an ice cream sundae for dessert. We talked with the proprietor about his travels to Florida and southeast US. Having plenty of time to get to the airport, we hailed a taxi and arrived early for our flight.

The arrival of our plane was delayed so our departure for Crete was delayed to 10:20. We will arrive after 11 p.m. but have plenty of time to study our guide books and to plan the next 2 ½ days we have here.

September 2, 1997

According to our guide book, one should see Knossos before going to the Archeological Museum so we checked at the front desk for a map and guidance before taking off. The bus #2 goes every 10 minutes from the square and costs 210 drachma each. On the way I stopped at the bank and got 85,000 drachma as we were getting low. A short bus ride and we were there. We bought our tickets for 1,500 drachma each and I looked for a guide. For a bit more than a one hour tour it was 1,500 drachma each but well worthwhile. Our guide, Maria, was pleasant, knowledgeable and spoke English well. She answered all questions in time. After a half hour wait, we had enough people for our tour of the Minoan Palace. She explained that the Minoan civilization began around the time of Abraham, Biblically speaking, 2,000 B.C. She showed us the sacred areas of the palace, where sacrifices were made. We saw the living quarters where the queen had the first flush toilet, the "Minoan Toilet." Water was collected from the roof through an elaborate system of channels and was also piped from a nearby mountain through ceramic pipes that fit one inside the next. There were also channels for waste water within the palace. We saw the throne rooms, storage rooms and workshops, all elaborately decorated with frescoes and columns and ventilated with air and light shafts from above.

After the tour, we reviewed the premises ourselves, following our Michelin guide book. We then had a lunch

After the tour, we reviewed the premises ourselves, following our Michelin guide book. We then had a lunch of spaghetti Bolonase and Greek salad. For dessert I tried some Kafka, a pastry served warm with a cream and honey filling. Judy had a large piece of watermelon.

Upon return to the hotel at 2:15 we took siesta.

This evening we took the "City Tour." We walked nearly to the end of the harbor fortification then up the main street. A high point was a visit to St. Titus church where the skull of Titus is contained in a golden case. In the 17th century, when the Turks took over, the Venetians took the skull with them. They did not return it until the Vatican so ordered in 1966. Now it is the most prized treasure of the city. Titus was stationed here and it was here that his letter from Paul was delivered.

The city hall was up the way, a Venetian loggia in a neoclassical building. While there, an Italian couple asked me to take their picture. Unfortunately they had me stand back so far that I doubt that anyone will recognize them.

Further along the street, the Church of St. Mark had been converted to a concert house and in front, in the plaza, a young lady was reading a sermon in between music played very loudly. We stopped to examine a fountain where water was to come from the four lions' mouths but it had been dry for quite a while.

To the left began the outside market, a street for pedestrians and motorcycles where shellac wedding cakes were sold next to fresh fruit and meat. We noticed some nice bunny for sale with its head and furry ears, fluffed tail and "unlucky" rabbit's feet were still attached. The chicken was sans head but still had the claws attached to the legs. I mused how surprised Lisa would be if she was given a drumstick like that!

At the end was a cafe where we stopped to buy Souvlaki and french fries. The aroma of coffee in the next shop controlled us so that we had to cross the street and order cappuccinos in the cafe by the headless statue fountain, also dry.

On our way home we checked out the car rentals. There must have been 15 shops with prices from 10,000 to 25,000 drachma per day. Across from our hotel we took our last stand. He offered 11,000 and when I told him we had two offers for 10,000 he asked if we would rent from him tonight if he would match it. We said yes, it would save us a walk.

Before we signed the contract, I wanted to check with the hotel desk about the practicality of driving to Chania. She said it could be done but the drive was about 3 ½ hours each way due to the secondary roads. The 150 km distance is a bit deceiving. She suggested the bus to St. Nicholas. Upon reading our guide book I was concerned that it would be too touristy so I went back to the auto man and asked his opinion.

He suggested a trip half way to Chania, stopping at Raythenon and then touring some of the mountain area and southern Crete where people are doing their Crete thing as they always had.

I took him up on it and paid the 10,000 drachma. He gave me keys, a map and advice. I hope we don't "drive ourselves crazy" but Santorini should be an easy vacation.

September 3, 1997

After breakfast we drove south, crossing the center of Crete. We saw what we had intended to see, Crete as it really is, rather than the city. We saw vineyards and fields of crops along the hills. We didn't recognize it at first, but we saw grapes drying on wires in the sun to become raisins.

Our first archeological stop was Gortys where a small church of St. Titus marks the place of his martyrdom. He is presumed to be buried there, except his skull which we saw earlier in Herakleon. Even more important are the Tablets of Gortys which set down the laws for a very early Minoan society covering inheritance, adoption, rights of slaves against cruel masters, emancipation upon attaining adulthood. The tablets read from left to right, then right to left, "as an ox plows." There is more known about the operation of this early culture than of the Roman period many years later because of these fairly complete writings. Also mentioned on the tablets was the legal principle of innocent until proven guilty, the concept which long predated the Anglo-American legal principle.

We went on the Phaistos, the second most complete Minoan palace available. The Knossos dig was criticized because the archeologist recreated the archeological finds by using current materials like substituting cement for wood. He used his imagination and intuition when facts were scarce to make a "Disneyland" presentation. Those who criticize Knossos will be pleased at Phaistos as little reconstruction was done. Fortunately, a pamphlet is available to explain and there was an English tour bus we tagged along with. I found the adaptations and culture fascinating and I am glad we went there before the Archeological Museum we have planned for tomorrow.

We continued south to Matala for lunch. The guide book said it was renowned for fish so we had that and Greek salad. Having heard of the fine wines produced in the area we had just passed through, I thought I'd try a glass of white. I think wine connoisseurs would turn up their noses and call it too "fruity" but I thought it went well with fish and bread.

We retraced our steps and then continued westward, stopping once to ask directions. The kind man asked us to follow him when he directed us to turn we were again in the right direction. Through the hot house area of the south we saw the breadbasket of Crete. Of course we could not see inside what was growing but there was a lot of it. The hot houses not only allow production in the cooler months but just as importantly, control moisture in this very arid area.

We continued through Timpaki to Spili with the steep mountains to our right on our way to Rethimnon, the second city of Crete.

The old city was similar to the outdoor market we saw in Heraklion but there were more tourist wares and fewer fruits and vegetables. Many restaurant blackboards touted special menu for two persons. Judy and I generally order an entree and a salad, split them both and feel quite full when done.

Lately we seem to have been eating our main meal at 1:30 or 2, the normal hour here in Greece, and just having a snack for the evening meal, after 7:30 as is the custom here.

I followed our guide book and saw the various sights, but none were overwhelming or even extraordinary. We walked back to the car and had an ice cream novelty in a cone. It was about 5:30.

I asked Judy how she was feeling and she said well, not tired. So I planned our route home, the scenic tour.

Heading east along the coastal highway, I saw that we would see nothing unusual at 65 mph. I missed the turn because the sign was not what I expected. You see, directions and highway numbers are not used here at all. Rather the next prominent city is shown on the route sign. If you don't know all of the cities between you

an. Rather the next prominent city is shown on the route sign. If you don't know any of the cities between you can miss it. In this case however, the sign read "Old Road to Heraklion." I was looking for a sign to Perama. No problem however, we took the next road to Parama, just a little further.

We continued through the northern mountains and we saw Crete as it really is. We saw villages with a young goatherd directing with his dog and motorcycle. Vroom, vroom and the goats would scurry ahead.

We also saw old men in their classic farm wear: high boots of goat leather coming halfway up the calf, to protect from snakes. (What kind of snakes are found here we haven't been told yet. Judy doesn't need the specifics.) They also wear baggy pants with narrow lower legs, to go neatly into the boots. Many people carried a crook to use for goats, to walk or just to carry. Most older women wore black babushkas, black dresses, black hose (often with runs) and a gray apron.

We passed through Agios Mamas, Lavidia and Axos before the big town of Anogia. I ask myself, why here, among the goatherds should a town in the mountains be established with a supermarket and everything. Men sit outside and play backgammon, drink and chat. Children run and play in the streets just as I did. We saw one or two pairs of teenagers walking hand in hand. These things are universal.

Occasionally, as the drive was slow, we would wave or call, "Yasou!" (Hi!) Which almost always was returned with a smile, even if astounded that we would greet them.

As night was falling, a dog darted out in front of us but Judy swerved to avoid hitting the mut. I was concerned that she was tired or couldn't see well so I asked her if she would like me to drive a bit but she said no.

As we approached the Heraklion city lights, I had my eyes peeled for signs to the bus station or museum. Both are close to our hotel and just beyond it. This was critical as many streets are one way so you must go past to come back. We picked the way flawlessly and pulled up right across from the rental office. The man checked out the car and asked if we had any problems, shook my hand and all was well.

Sam had said we should rent a car in Crete and see the island. I am glad it worked out so well.

September 4, 1997

After breakfast we went to the Archeological Museum, where all of the finds from the palaces we visited are located. It is a fairly large museum (15,000 drachma). I bought a guide book upon entering but we found at least three tours in English going on so we tagged along. My book will serve to document the exhibits as it is full of pictures (2,200 drachma).

We then walked through town and ate lunch then we returned to the hotel. While at lunch there were two seats empty at our table and it was the only one with space that wasn't in the sun. An old man with a long white beard came by and I motioned that he might join us. He asked if we spoke Greek or English and then, among other things, told us that he had postcards with his picture on them. There were postcards with six small pictures of typical Crete scenes and indeed his picture was there with him in his uniform. He was kind enough to give us one and wrote a note and autograph on it.

At the hotel, there was ½ hour before it would be time to go to the boat. We were watching CNN and were

astounded to hear of Princess Diana's accidental death. Later we made our way to the boat and took the ferry (7,000 drachma) for both) on the four-hour ride to Santorini. The quiet cabin was at the front so we sat there. Later I realized that it was for A class.

Judy enjoyed reading her book. I started mine but heard dice so I thought I'd look around. Two Greek youths were playing backgammon. I asked if I could watch, they said surely. I noticed that both played a very conservative, nonaggressive game.

After a few games I asked if I could play. They asked if I knew how, I nodded yes and one gave me his seat. I played a more aggressive game, willing to make a hit while having a blot. My opponent said I was lucky. I was a bit, I had two double 5s at good times, but I won the game by a substantial margin.

I thought the other might ask me to play him but he did not so I quit while ahead and returned to my book.

Later I asked Judy if she would like a drink. We agreed on cappuccino but there was only Nescafé (instant) and espresso. There was a large sugar doughnut so after a while, the hunger got the best of me and I bought it, for 400 drachma (\$1.45) my most expensive doughnut ever! I doubt we could afford cappuccino at that rate.

Upon arrival we saw a little supermarket but it didn't really have what we wanted and the prices were high. We took the taxi up the mountain (2,800 drachma) to our new location, took a well-needed shower and prepared for bed. There was no English TV so I watched the International Gymnastics competition. Sports and music work well without language.

September 5, 1997

I spoke with the hotelier about some problems in our room: leaking shower faucet, too hot water, rattling refrigerator, missing cup, pillow too small. He said he would fix all. I asked for advice and direction which he freely gave.

We walked up to the square and looked for a breakfast restaurant. Judy wasn't feeling well so we thought we'd keep it simple. There were none open so we stopped at the supermarket and bought cereal, bread and milk to make it for the next four days. Upon returning to the room we shared the bowl and cup and had our meal. Judy returned to bed and I looked for Fira, the main town where the motos were rented, the laundry cleaned, fruit sold and so on. I was at a loss which way or how far because the roads all go around bends. I asked a man in a store next to the bus stop expecting him to sell me a ticket but he just said to stand outside and the bus would come. I got on the first bus only to find it was bound for Oia, the other direction. The conductor said to stand on the other side of the street so I did. In only three minutes the bus came around the corner. I confirmed it was to Fira and paid the fare, 210 drachma. To my chagrin, just around the bend was a moto rental and about 30 seconds travel the "Welcome to Fira" sign appeared. I drove past the laundry, countless car and moto rental places and asked to get off. I bought some apples, banana and nectarines and checked out the laundry. Same deal as Athens, 2,500 drachma per load, the only thing self-serve was you walked in and maybe put the clothes in. The wash, soap, dry and fold was together. It didn't matter how much you wanted to participate.

Across the way was my first moto rental, 3,000 drachma per day for a 50 cc; 4,000 for a 100. As we had used a 50 (that had been souped up to a 72) in Rhodes I asked about the 100, no problem. I told the proprietor I

had some shopping to do and I would return. I thought I would check some other prices and the auto rental also. Autos were 11,000 per day. No one else would rent to me because I didn't have a motorcycle endorsement but the prices were the same. I returned to the first place who scrutinized my license carefully but gave me the scooter anyway.

Going back home with my fruit was all up hill but the moto did it easily. Judy was sleeping so I made a bread and butter sandwich, ate an apple and had some ice tea. I sat outside in the sun and completed my Greek tan.

Later we dropped off the clothes at the laundry, ate in an Italian restaurant and went back to pick up the completed laundry. I had hoped she would be feeling well enough to drive to Oia where the sunsets are incredible, but not tonight. We may get a peak from our town but that will be all.

Perhaps we will get an early start tomorrow when Judy feels better.

September 6, 1997

Judy had a sore throat so we postponed our trip to the volcano. We donned our jackets and drove off to explore the island. We drove to the southern tip past fields of grapes being harvested. We passed the archeological site to the Red Beach. The side of the mountain was red and there was some black, volcanic sand but it was far from being a beach in our eyes.

Our next stop was Perissa Beach, one recommended to us for swimming. It was more commercial and had much better beach area. If we need to, we would come back here. In our exploring this area we saw Ancient Thira, the first capital of this island. The remains were just rocks on the side of the hill so we looked but did not get off the bike. There was a foot trail to Prophet Ilias monastery but we would take the road.

Savas, our Greek travel agent, had recommended Pyrogas where the book says there are medieval castles and such that was our next stop. There was a sign to the castle and to the monastery. As the monastery would be an uphill walk, I did not think Judy would enjoy that and we had shorts on so we could not go in. Maybe we would do that Monday on our way to Ios. We looked for the castle but after climbing many steps decided that Judy wasn't quite up to that either.

On our way home I was driving slowly through Fira, you have to drive slowly, there are people everywhere. Suddenly a car pulled out in front of us and I stopped suddenly. The bike fell to the left and I instinctively held on. This operated the accelerator but because the moto was on its side, the wheel just spun. I scraped my leg a bit but Judy's leg was burned by the spinning tire. The man who pulled out was quite concerned about the trouble he had caused but I assured him that we were okay.

We continued our drive home, cleaned our wounds and took a nap.

That evening we went to Oia to see the sunset. Our guidebook dwells on how wonderful they are and the place was packed with people waiting for it. We thought it was "ho hum." Our guidebook also mentioned that the restaurant in our square in Imorvigli was particularly good so we had false meatballs, tomato pancakes that are fried and spaghetti bolonase. The spaghetti was warming as the high altitude makes it quite cool here when the sun isn't out. On the way home I held my teeth together to keep them from rattling.

That evening we watched the Miss Europe contest, Greece won.

September 7, 1997

Today was our day to visit the volcano. We selected the all day traditional boat trip including a swim in the hot springs and visit to Thirassia, the little fishing village on which not more than 250 people live. (9,200 drachma) As our guide book suggested, most travelers are a bit disappointed, there are no lava flows, pumice rocks or smoke rising. There are craters of volcanic ash, just mounds or better put, craters of ash. Judy gave the guide our garbage bag, who with one other guide picked up a bag full of plastic water bottles and pop cans on the way home.

The caldera, an underwater crater, was formed in 1750 so it is just 250 years old. No activity has been noted since the last quake in 1956. We felt somewhat safe that today would not likely be the day to blow again.

We enjoyed the trip. It is the thing to do in Santorini. On the way back Judy bought some jackets. We bargained 8,000 drachma down to 7,000 each for five jackets.

Swimming in the hot springs was fun. We jumped off the boat into the sea, swam 60 yards and then the water turned brown. It did not smell of sulphur. If it were contained, it would probably be hot but as the spring was part of the sea it was really only warm, maybe 95 - 105o. After a while I swam back. Some were covering themselves in the black mud.

This evening we rode into Fira to turn in the moto and have dinner. Having had much Greek food lately, I thought pizza might be nice so we had a bacon and cheese pizza and a tomato and cucumber salad. I had forgotten how the Greeks would say we overcook our bacon. They brush their tomato sauce on the pizza whereas we ladle it. Hence this had mostly cheese on the crust with some rare bacon pieces. It was good nevertheless. I had not had the opportunity to experience Santorini wine. My guide book said it was exceptionally good because the grape vines did not suffer from the plant lice that had affected so many vineyards elsewhere. Many vines here are more than 150 years old. I ordered some house Santorini white at 900 drachma for 750 ml and drank the whole thing. It was very pleasant, it was smooth and tasty so it was easy to drink. I thought it was "watered" but I knew when I was done that it was quite pure. Judy had to lead me to the square, but it was okay, we had turned in the scooter and were taking the bus home. We checked out a few shops on the way to the bus stop and arrived just as our bus was ready to leave. A great coincidence considering it was Sunday evening at 7:30, not a great time to expect busses.

When we got home, I lied in bed waiting for the sensation to pass and watched a documentary about the Olympics. Everything is in Greek but we look at the pictures. They show clips of the modern Olympics from 1896 forward.

September 8, 1997

We checked out of the Krokos Villas and I left a forwarding address with the hotelier. I was expecting a courier package but it had not come. Perhaps it is being sent directly to Paros, but I don't know.

We had quite an experience on the bus. As we had plenty of time to reach the ferry and little else to do, I suggested that we save 2,000 drachma and take the bus instead of a cab. When the bus arrived in Imerviglio it

was packed. Nevertheless, the conductor helped us on with our two suitcases and collected the fare. When we arrived at the main bus terminal in Fira, the bus to the port, Athenios, was right next to where our bus stopped. A line of young people with packs had formed and were ready to get on. I went to the front to get on but Judy did not follow. She had given the conductor her suitcase and was waiting on board. After a while I saw a young man from the front go around to the back and then nod for his friend. I thought I would go to the rear to find out what happened to Judy. I saw the conductor loading the packs in the back and people getting on in the rear door. As the conductor was directing passengers to the next bus I looked for Judy and then saw her on board. I explained to the conductor that she was on and he let me on. This bus too was packed and I had the suitcase between my legs as we pulled away. It isn't a long ride but it surely was more exciting than a mundane taxi. Our ferry to Ios was an hour. Upon arrival, our hotel minivan was there with a small sign board to collect us.

We are staying at Marcos Beach Hotel in Mylopotas Beach, a bit more than a mile from Ios Chora, the center of town. Our room is quite comfortable though simple in this C class hotel. There is also a pool and the price is a fraction of what we paid the day before in Santorini. We will tell the young German gentleman at the desk about the broken chair and shower sprayer. The chair will be easy to swap, the sprayer just gets everything in the bathroom wet.

We went to the beach today, a real beach with white sand, though a bit coarser than ours. It was very nice. There is a small bay on which our beach lies, in the Aegean Sea, part of the Mediterranean. The water was cool, about 78o. I went in up to my knees, I am so spoiled. I had been swimming yesterday. Fortunately I had jumped in then. This was Judy's first time in the Mediterranean. The water was clear, the sand extended into the water making it pleasant. After much acclimation, she swam a bit and then we walked on the sand from one end of the beach to the other. We were the second oldest couple. Many young ladies on the beach were topless, one young lady and her two-year-old daughter were standing on the beach in their altogether. As we approached, she walked onto the beach so that we would not gaze on her completely. One man was lying on his side without any inhibitions. I noted that we were in Europe where the culture is different and realized as we were walking back how commonplace this must seem to them. I recalled how men used to wear tank bathing suits and now it would be unheard of. I see nothing inherently wrong with topless. Nevertheless, I see bottoms as useful in keeping people separated where otherwise they might come together inappropriately.

After beaching we arranged for our scooter for tomorrow and took a nap. All went well until the people next door started to yell and slam doors. I woke up and completed my second Agatha Christie novel.

This evening we went into town by bus to see the party scene. I thought we would have dinner then visit a bar to see what Rob would do if he were here. We sat down to dinner at about 8 and finished dessert at about 9:30. We looked for Slammer's Bar but it did not open until 10. The other bar that was recommended was the Red Bull Bar. It was open and music was playing but the clientele consisted of a dozen young men sitting at various tables. It was too early for anything to be happening yet. We knew that we couldn't stay for an hour or more so we took the bus back to the hotel. We couldn't stay up for the party to begin. No one told me this was what it meant to get old!

The dinner was quite good. We ate at Pinnocio's Italian Restaurant and had tortellini with ham and cheese sauce which was very good and also scallopine with mushrooms and cream sauce, also very tasty.

When we returned to the hotel there was a message directing me to call Lisa at an unusual telephone number. It was my regular time to call the office so I called there first.

All was well at the office, we handled a few tenant matters but the news was that Lisa was having her baby!

Twenty days early but all was going well. The baby would be born within two hours of our call. I called Judy in the room to come to the office so we could call.

After a while she called back saying that she was locked in the room and I needed to return to open the door. We hurried back to the lodge area to call again. We were put through at once. I spoke briefly with Dave and then Judy spoke with Lisa. Judy was so happy and excited she cried.

While Judy packed, I called our travel agent in Athens to cancel our remaining travel arrangements and to make return flight reservations. We decided that the fastest way from Ios to Athens was to take the ferry straight to Periaus, the port in Athens. The trip is about seven hours. We will return to his office to make the ticket changes. We must also pick up our luggage at Novotel Hotel.

September 9, 1997

Today we were up early, unable to sleep with the excitement of going home to our new grandchild. Our ferry was to leave at 10:15 to take us all the way to Athens, an eight hour ride. (10,300 drachma) Judy was beside herself with anxiety, I tried to keep her calm -- no amount of worry would get the boat here any earlier. We had our tickets, we were on time, we did all we could.

Finally, the ferry arrived and we boarded. I waited patiently as everyone who had suitcases gave them to the luggage attendant. Nobody made any payment. The man ahead of me had numerous boxes along with his suitcases and he didn't pay. I wondered whether I was a sap when I tipped 500 drachma on my first trip.

Our turn came and when he had taken both suitcases he said, "You must Pay 1,000 drachma." I was astounded. The man next to him confirmed the demand. As I thought of no alternative, I paid the 1,000 drachma.

After we found our seats, I went to the reception/information area and asked the ship's representative there, "Is there a fee to carry suitcases?"

He said, "No."

I explained the demand and he asked me to wait.

Shortly, a man in white, official uniform came by and after I explained the transaction he said that it was customary to tip 500-800 drachma for two bags but it was not a fee.

I thanked him and returned to my seat.

As I continued to read my book, I became more upset about the situation, having paid on false pretenses and having paid too much. What a "mark" I was.

I returned to the desk and asked to speak to the man again. I was told that the staff captain was busy and would return after the next port. So I returned to my seat and continued to read.

After the next port I returned and was asked to wait. After a short while the steward explained that the staff captain was tied up on the bridge and would return before the next port. I told him I would return.

When I came back again, he was waiting for me. I explained my being upset and he suggested that I

withdraw my bags and request return of the money but pay for the portage from Ios to Paros.

I went down to the baggage area and asked the attendant for my suitcases but they were quite buried so I didn't press it. I went over my request for my 1,000 drachma to be returned a few times. He pretended to not understand. However when I mentioned the words, "staff captain" he became much more responsive. He offered 500 drachma and I accepted.

Later, when Judy wanted an ice cream (for which they outrageously charge 600 drachma) I realized that my baggage activities paid for most of it.

As for the boat, equipment and fare, Greek ferry service is quite good. They gouge you on the food, charging first class restaurant prices for self-service, institutional food. We did not find a nonsmoking lunge. Virtually everyone over age 16 smokes. For us this was somewhat obnoxious but what really bothers me is how many people sleep in the aisles and are sprawled out on the seats in an uncouth manner.

The family next to us took turns sleeping on the floor in a large sleeping bag in front of me. Everyone who tried to use the aisle (we were in the front row) had to climb across my legs because of them. With all the noise and commotion I couldn't understand how anyone could sleep anyway.

Most importantly, we made it to Athens. As the port is quite far from the downtown area (it is in the neighboring city) we took the Metro into town. It was a real bargain. Though not well marked, it is right across the street from the port and is but 100 drachma per person.

Upon reaching the center I had to rely on memory how far to walk and which direction however I asked people and they often could direct us. I thought we might get a cab upon arrival but we were assured it was but a 10 minute walk. Finally we got to our travel agent's office. He had made the reservation for our trip from Athens to New York and had canceled the rest of our hotel and interior air travel without a penalty. He booked a hotel for us across the street and promised to meet me in the morning to make the credit to our charge card as he did not know how to use the machine to make a credit though he tried.

September 10, 1997

The next day we had breakfast and while Judy sought dolls for Paige and Chelsea and a boat for Derrick, I went to arrange our travel credit. Strangely, we had to go to the bank to make the transaction and even that was unable to be completed. The banker said that my agent had to bring cash and they would make the credit. I asked Savas for a letter stating that he would make the credit so that if any mistake was made on my credit card I would have something. I was pleased to see that the transaction appeared on my next statement without a fluke.

At the Athens airport we were one of the last to check in though we were more than an hour early for our flight. I spoke with the agent about a reservation for our New York to Orlando flight which she made without trouble and changed the tickets. She explained that there was a penalty of \$300 for changing the two excursion tickets. I explained that this was a medical emergency and the circumstances of our new grandchild. She mentioned that she normally gets a doctor's certificate for medical emergencies. We relayed that the doctor was in the United States but I could supply the date, weight and length of the new baby for their records if they wished. She talked with her supervisor and made the adjustment without charge.

As we were waiting, we went to the duty-free store to get some wine for Mrs. Ubbing. I picked out a nice bottle of Thesonika white that I thought she might enjoy.

On board our flight attendants were more nice than average. In fact the one who attended to our side of the cabin brought us a bottle of champagne to celebrate the birth when we returned home. We read and watched the movie and played gin rummy to pass the time while our excitement grew. It would be only a few hours until we saw our new grandchild. We accumulated wine bottles to give to friends and relatives when we got home. Wine is free on international flights.

In New York customs clearance went smoothly. While waiting for our next flight to Orlando we called Lisa and she told us she had a girl and all the details. Judy asked if we could go to her house if it was not too late, to see Abbie. Judy cried with joy and excitement when she said yes. On board I sat next to a young German woman who I asked endless questions about the European Economic Community, the union of Prussia and Bavaria and the assimilation of East Germany into unified Germany. She did not seem to tire though Judy did. I took a short nap as it was like 3 a.m. to us though only 7 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time.

At the gate Elden was waiting for us. It was nice to see a familiar face again though I must admit that by and large, people throughout Europe were kind and friendly to us. We rode directly to Lisa's house, it was 10:40 p.m. and saw Abbie, our new granddaughter, the cutest little baby on earth! Judy had not slept at all on the way home. After seeing Lisa and Abbie we went home to bed. Judy woke up at 3:30 a.m. and went to the grocery.

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