
Peter & Laima Physick

The “thongs & T shirt” world trip.



**27th December 1975
to
20th December 1976**

COUNTRIES VISITED

Fiji
United States of America
Canada
England
Scotland
France
Holland
Belgium
East Germany
West Germany
Poland
Czechoslovakia
Austria
Switzerland
Italy
Spain
Andorra
Liechtenstein

BOOKS READ

Valley of the Dolls
Once is not Enough
The Fifth Estate
The Attorney
Porridge
A Stone for Danny Fisher
79 Park Avenue
The Final Diagnosis
Rich Man Poor Man
Fear of Flying
Serpico
Falling Bodies

PEOPLE MET

Hundreds and hundreds.....

Foreword

To those people who attempt to commence reading this Diary and then to anyone who successfully reaches the end, we thank you for your patience and sensitivity.

You must be a relative.

This is a Journal religiously maintained on and for each day that we were away and is written in what we hope is a humorous, informative and entertaining style, rather than as a boring narrative.

The text written in *italics* is by Peter who, sometimes under sufferance, was encouraged to get the pen out now and again and record his view of the events of the day.

Laima, as you will read, often forewent sleep and exercise to keep the journalistic juices pumping and religiously maintained the total diary.

A great vote of thanks to Elspeth (Peter's mum) who started the great tradition in the Physick family of recording her and husband Lloyd's holidays in a diary. Whether they be overseas or in Australia. Her insistence that we do so as well was evidenced by the fact that she actually bought the first Twinplex Duplicate Book of 100 pages for us to use.

So enthused did we become to record our history, that we reached the final page of 100 on the 9th March 1976.

The six books we eventually filled up452 pages of hand written text.... were used for a dual purpose. Not wanting to record the diary as well as write lengthy letters to everybody, thus repeating the exact same thing every time, we purchased books that automatically created a carbon copy which we retained whilst sending the original home by post to Lloyd.

The Advertiser Newspaper photocopier on the first floor in Adelaide came in handy for Lloyd to make multiple copies each time a letter arrived from somewhere in the world, and then distribute them to family and friends. Laima's parents Jenny and Karl particularly enjoyed them especially when our arrival in Europe meant that we were just that much closer to "home" in Latvia.

We do hope you enjoy the tales of our 12 months overseas and we encourage all readers to one day do the same, so that your horizons can be broadened as ours were at the age of 24.

**Peter & Laima Physick
December 2001.**

PS Particular thanks to Tim Physick who typed this entire book as a Xmas present for his mother Laima, in 2001.

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CHAPTER ONE

Up, up and away.....

Saturday 27th December 1975

Left Adelaide on TAA Flight 25 at 10.00am destination Sydney. Sat in front of Mr and Mrs Raven. We used electronic flash for the first time – Dad saw us (I think).

Arrived Sydney 12.15pm where Wayne Saunders and Monty met us. Encountered problem #1. My suitcase handle was broken!! TERRIFIC!! The baggage master gave us a document of reimbursement. Arrived at Wayne's place and rang to check our reservation on UTA for Sunday. Encountered problem #2. Our reservation wasn't confirmed and we were only on the standby list. We contacted our travel agent to get him to sort out the problem and he assured us that our booking was confirmed (he had written proof). All well again, so now we have the choice of UTA at 5.35pm Sunday or Qantas at 9.00pm Sunday. The choice is ours.

Had a really great time at the club on Saturday night. Lots of people there mainly to say good-bye to us. Kevin Little made a speech on the microphone and wished us all the best. Normal closing time at the club on a Saturday night is 11.30pm. The club eventually closed at 2.30am. Brian Beck drove us to the Coogee Bay Hotel where we stayed the night. A funny sort of day, a few disappointments (suitcase, change of flight times) but also a very enjoyable night spent with all our friends.

Sunday 28th December 1975

Couldn't sleep last night. NERVES!! Had a lovely breakfast with Brian (really appreciated his hospitality). We left the hotel at 1.40pm (just before the cricket started againbadly wanted to see Cosier make a century....we didn't.....but heard he did later on). Brian drove us to the airport to encounter yet another disappointment. We were still on the stand-by list on UTA. In the meantime we had cancelled our flight on Qantas. We found out that UTA had overbooked by 25 people on their flight. We got ourselves on the stand-by list for PAN AM at 5.00pm. All our friends had arrived to see us off and we still didn't know whether we were on a flight or not. At 4.30pm we were informed that there were two seats available for us (one behind the other).

I have never felt so happy in my whole life!! A friend of Pete's from work gave us a magnum of Great Western champagne so we opened it straight away and ordered 14 glasses (had to pay \$1.60 corkage charge). Got on the plane with five minutes to spare (goodbyes took quite a while). Didn't even have a chance to buy any duty free items. From the customs and immigration section we ran all the way to the departure gate. Well, we're on our way now and I hope we have left all our disappointments and mishaps in Australia.

Teatime now. We arrive in Nadi at 9.40pm.

Hi, my turn (Peter) to write something. Dad, I wonder what you would have done in my position over the plane bookings. Never again will I ever touch or have anything to do with UTA. They are just so incompetent. At the check-in counter at UTA there are TAA staff manning the bookings and they cop so much abuse from irate passengers it's not funny. In fact on Christmas Day I was told that they left behind 25 passengers because they'd over booked. When one bloke found out that he wasn't on the flight he leaned over and flattened the TAA bloke with a right cross. Gee, I was very nearly tempted to do the same to a UTA official in their office. I was in there for some time and he used every excuse in the book to stall. Never, never book on UTA. Tell every else too!!

All that was written on the plane and now it is Monday evening 5.45pm. After the plane touched down we all filed out and it was only then we realised just how big the plane was. Gigantic is the only word to use. It seats nine people across the width and there are about 50 rows in the cabin and then of course there's upstairs for the first class passengers to enjoy cocktails. After going through the immigration area it was only a short walk to our hotel, The Gateway Inn.

Checked into our room and switched on the air conditioning immediately. When we left the airport enclosure the heat was really intense. In the 500 yards or so to the hotel our clothes were as though they had just been washed and not dried yet. I put on shorts and Laima stayed as she was. We then went up to the observation lounge, which overlooks the airport runways and ordered two ice-cold beers (stubbies of Fijian Beer – 55 cents). Enjoyed them (and another) and watched our plane leave, to continue on to Hawaii and the USA. Left the bar at 11.45pm and put our bathers on and went for a swim. Magnificently warm water. Stayed there until our fingers went funny and then went to bed not yet knowing what Fiji looked like in daylight.

PS. When Laima locked the door she got the key stuck in the lock. Had to call a porter (dressed in a skirt – male) to get it out.

Monday 29th December 1975

Awoke early, enjoyed breakfast and then packed. The waiter who picked up our breakfast tray suggested we go on a half-day tour to the Fijian Highlands. He said as well that when we come back he would take us into Nadi (five miles away) for a look around and some duty free shopping. The tour was great. Had a mini bus seating only 19 people (we had the whole backseat to ourselves) and fair dinkum the driver thought he was Jack Brabham. All dirt roads here except the main road around the island – up and down hills until we eventually reached 3,500 feet above sea level. We looked out over the island from where we had come and it was really a great sight. Called in at an authentic village and saw the way they live. Laima fell head over heels out of their primitive little church when she tripped on the steps. No injuries, only damaged pride. Driving back down was an experience in itself. Sliding around corners with sheer drops on either side. However, we lived. On the way up the mountain we stopped at a little grass hut and had cucumber sandwiches, coconut cookies, orange cordial and fresh coconut milk (ugh!) (I liked it!!)

Arrived back at the hotel and then went into Nadi after a little delay when the wheel on the waiter's car who had be-friended us, nearly came off. They fixed that and off we went. Only a small town (6,000 people) and one I wouldn't want to stay in too long. We bought some film (not as cheap as I thought it would be – same as Sydney) and a radio (small) and a small set of heated rollers for Laima (which work in the USA).

We have just been summoned to tea. One of the Fijian waiters started drumming on a hollow log. Old tribal custom, similar to an intercom(?). From the balcony in our room we had a perfect view of Mt Victoria, the highest mountain surrounding Nadi. The name is pronounced NANDI but spelt NADI. The letter "D" in Fijian is pronounced "ND" (free information from the locals). Would you believe the buses have no windows and most of the resident's cars are dented all over. We leave Fiji tomorrow morning at 3.00am so no doubt it will be our first attempt at sleeping on a plane. We fly Qantas.

Tuesday 30th December 1975

Both of us are sitting at Nadi airport. We just saw the clock go over from 23.59 to 00.00.

Got on the plane OK. The Mosman Rugby Union Team was on board so we surprised them (at least the guys we knew we did) in the terminal at Nadi. Boarded the plane and enjoyed a very smooth flight to Hawaii.

CHAPTER TWO

New Year's Eve in Honolulu

Monday 29th December 1975 (USA Time)

After a long seven-hour flight to Honolulu, we touched down at the airport and were herded out like sheep into a trolley bus and taken to the immigration area to clear customs. Got through OK and then began looking for the Sheraton Hotel courtesy car which we were told would be waiting.

Disappointment # 3. No courtesy car (our agent told us there would be one) so had to catch a Grayline Bus (actually a very 'stretched' panel van) to the hotel (Sheraton Waikiki). Cost \$2.25 each. Arrived at the hotel....very plush from the outside. Walked inside and went to check in. Disappointment # 4. No booking in our name but the girl was very helpful and put us in another Sheraton Hotel, the Princess Kaiulani about a ¼ mile down the main street. Very lucky to get it. However, only for two nights. We have to find another room for New Years Eve.

This last disappointment was the final straw. When we go out, as soon as I finish writing this section, I am going to ring Bill Hollow (our agent) and get an explanation and reverse the charges. I'll let you know how we get on. At the moment we're watching colour TV (the news and details of the bomb in New York Airport.) Climate is very overcast but still quite hot. People stared at me as I walked down the street earlier this afternoon to get a US style plug for the heated rollers (I thought I must have had my fly open or something). Rollers work well and Laima did the first major wash today. Thanks Mum, for the soap.

Rang Bill Hollow re the mix-ups over bookings. He is looking into it and will let us know. Had spaghetti bolognaise for tea in a little shop in the market place. While eating it, crackers were going off everywhere. Apparently it is a tradition for fireworks to be let off at New Year. The papers advise anyone who suffers from asthma or has lung trouble to stay inside, as the air is thick with smoke from the crackers. Haven't made up our minds yet what we're going to do on New Year's Eve. Plenty of places advertising parties for \$25 / person. A little expensive for us! Bought a lei for Laima from an arcade shop. Returned to the room after watching an Hawaiian sunset over Waikiki Beach. Beautiful. Watched a basketball match on TV and fell fast asleep.

Tuesday 30th December 1975

Got up rather late. Jet lag finally caught up with us I guess. Walked around to the International Market Place. It's a mall with shops and eating places and trees. Really beautiful and so Hawaiian. We had brunch there – two hamburgers, two packets of French fries and two soft drinks - \$3.12 (inc tax and tip).

Took a picture from above the market place. Continued on down Pacific Kuhio Avenue towards Downtown Honolulu away from Waikiki and Diamond Head. Walked until we came across a Shell service station that rented cars for \$10.95 / day unlimited mileage. Seemed good and kept it in mind for tomorrow. From there we headed towards the beach and came across the huge complex that is the Hilton Hawaiian Village. Looked around there and then walked all the way back to our hotel along the beach. People everywhere. Laima bought a dress – known as a short muu. She now wears it all the time. I had a swim in the hotel pool and then Laima came down and we walked to the beach. Time was about 4.00pm. Sat on the beach and took photos and then I went for a swim. Absolutely beautiful looking at the skyline from about 100 yards (sandbar and everybody else was

there, Mum) out from the beach. Waited until the sunset and watched the famed orange and red sunset over Waikiki.

Went back to the motel and changed for tea. We had already checked out some of the prices on our previous walks. Went straight to the Surf restaurant. I had Teriyaki steak and salad and Pete had ground Sirloin steak. Mine was really delicious (typical Hawaiian dish). Pete's was hamburger mince and more expensive than mine. The meal cost \$7.85, quite reasonable over here. We went home soon after that and just sat around and watched TV (6 channels!). In this hotel you can pay three dollars and have a choice of six recent movies shown in your own room, all day long. That's okay if you want to stay home all day. Hit the sack at 12.30am (in the middle of a really good English movie).

Wednesday 31st December 1975

Pete got up at 6.15am to get a hire car from Shell. \$10.95 / day unlimited mileage plus petrol. We drove around the whole island of Oahu. The whole place is really breath taking. (We've taken slides to prove it). Most of the special parks and other spectacular places were too expensive to see, but the scenery and beaches were all free so we saw them all. The car went really well (Mazda Capella RX2). When we left Honolulu it started to rain and we were both disappointed but soon after the weather cleared up and we had a really good day. Gee it is scary driving on the wrong side of the road, I mean the right side. For the first 15mins or so, Pete and I were on the edge of our seats, it's just so different, really strange. I felt really queer sitting on the right side of the car without a steering wheel in front of me. After a while we both got the hang of it and Pete drove really well (except for the few times I had to remind him that he was on the wrong side of the road). We arrived at Pearl Harbour too late to go on the free cruise, so we just had a short look around.

The people of Honolulu are really crazy about fireworks. Being New Year's Eve they have really gone wild. Bangers are going off left, right and centre. They're even throwing them from 20 storey hotel rooms. Looks rather nice but no doubt is dangerous too. At the moment we're watching a football game on TV. The halftime entertainment is better than the actual game.

Must close now; have to get ready for New Year's Eve celebrations. Decided not to go to the hotel do (\$25 each), only goes from 9.00pm – 1.00am. Will write again next year!!

After watching the football we went into the streets about 10.30pm. Had a hamburger at the Outrigger restaurant and then walked down to Waikiki Beach where there were groups of young people letting off hordes of crackers – only bangers. The noise was unbelievable. Watched that for a while from the lifeguard's tower. Then went up to Kalakaua Avenue – the street on which all the hotels are. If I said the noise was unbelievable before, then words cannot adequately describe what was happening there.

At least 5,000 people were crowded into a portion of the street measuring about 200 yards and you can't believe how many crackers are being let off. Whole packets were just lit (say 100 bangers all strung together) and thrown on the road to cause havoc amongst everyone watching. Not just in one place on the road were they going off – you'd be watching bangers to your left and suddenly two feet to your right another hundred bangers went off. Scared the hell out of Laima (and me!). Then a fire was lit in the middle of the road and you can just imagine what happened then. When the fire was lit the circle of people standing around it had a radius of about 10 yards. Then after all the thousands of bangers that were thrown into it started going off, the radius increased to about 50 yards. Sparks, gunpowder, flaming bangers, crackers that hadn't yet gone off were all catapulted out of the fire. The biggest bonfire I've ever seen. At about 12.45am we went to bed! Amazing night.

Thursday 1st January 1976

Awoke early and I returned the rental car to the station. Cost \$10.95 hire, \$0.80 tax, \$3.00 insurance and \$6.80 petrol. Only did 170 miles yet amazingly it took 10 gallons of petrol. First time I've ever known a 1200cc that does 17 miles to the gallon. Think we were got at somehow! As I told you earlier our hotel arrangements were mucked up so the reverse charges phone call worked wonders. Our agent contacted a travel firm in Honolulu who teed up our accommodation for the third night and also arranged a limousine to take us to the airport at the travel agent's expense. It was a Cadillac – air-conditioned, huge back seat with acres of legroom.

A funny thing happened this morning. While I was at the rent-a-car place Laima somehow had to get the cases down to the lobby of the hotel. She rang for a bellboy who duly came up and helped. Before that she had separated her Australian and Fijian coins from all the American coins and put them in separate pockets. At the lobby she tipped the bellboy but because her right hand was full, she delved into her left pocket for change and gave it to him – he immediately said thanks and put it straight into his pocket without looking at it. It was only in the plane to LA that she realised she gave him the Aussie and Fijian money. Gee I laughed.

A really bumpy flight to Los Angeles. Arrived at the airport and were very lucky to catch a bus to our hotel right outside the PAN AM terminal. Travelled about 1½ miles before we got out of the airport. The biggest thing I've ever seen. \$1.70 was the fare almost right to the door. A short walk and we were at the Chancellor Hotel on West 7th Street near Wiltshire Boulevard. Not the classiest place we've seen – only a black and white TV but it's only \$18 / night. The carpet must be nylon because we keep getting electric shocks when we touch metal. Settled in and then went downtown on a bus – saw Broadway and Chinatown. Enquired from a policeman on how to get where we're going tomorrow – DISNEYLAND!!

Got back to the hotel looking forward to a good night's sleep. Tell you all about it tomorrow. The policeman said you couldn't move in Disneyland last Monday – hope it's not like that for us. While we were riding on the bus we saw three different electronic signs showing the temperature of 55 °, 52 ° and 45 ° F. A lot different from Hawaii. Laima is going to wear her fur coat tomorrow.

CHAPTER THREE

Life on the West Coast of the USA

Friday 2nd January 1976

Arrived at Disneyland at 12.00 noon on an RTD bus. We had to stand in line for about 10 minutes before we got in. Later we found out that 30,000 people had passed through the gates that day. First we took a trip around the whole place on the railway, just to get a taste of what was in store for us. We were both so excited that we went from ride to ride all over the place. After an hour or so, decided to start right from the beginning and look at everything properly.

It's really a beautiful place, so well organised and clean. All the 'Disneylanders' are very friendly and full of life. Everything seems so real and full of enchantment. Not just a place for young children. We spent 12 hours there, and thoroughly enjoyed it the whole time. Pete's favourite attraction was the "Pirates of the Caribbean" (all underground). I couldn't decide between "It's a Small World", "Submarine Voyage", "Inner Space", and plenty more. To put it simply, there was nothing we didn't enjoy. A truly magnificent world for young and old.

Following are the attractions we went on and their rating:

1. Disneyland RR Trains through Grand Canyon and Primeval World *
2. Main Street Vehicles *
3. Adventure through Inner Space **
4. America Sings ***
5. Monorail around Disneyland *
6. People Mover **
7. Skyway to Fantasyland *
8. Submarine Voyage ***
9. Alice in Wonderland *
10. It's a Small World **
11. Matterhorn Bobsleds *
12. Mr Toad's Wild Ride *
13. Snow White's Adventures *
14. Country Bear Jamboree ***
15. Mark Twain Steamboat *
16. Haunted Mansion ***
17. Pirates of the Caribbean ***
18. Jungle Cruise ***

Actually all the rides deserve 10 asterisks! Because it gets dark around 5pm here, we journeyed around the place at random and took photos in the daylight. Then when dusk arrived the flash came out of the case. Can't wait to get them back from Kodak. If we had taken a Grayline Bus tour it would have cost \$36.60 for two. But we decided against that and did our own thing for \$28 total. Which included admission, bus out there and a book of 11 coupons for rides. We did all that, plus got another book of 15 coupons, plus extra tickets at booths for rides, when we had no more coupons left. That \$28 also included two meals, which we would've had to pay for anyway on Grayline's tour. Gee we're smart! Rang our first phone number in LA yesterday to try and contact Laima's boss' cousin – but had no luck. He was up skiing in the mountains. Collapsed into bed at 1.30am for a good night's sleep.

Saturday 3rd January 1976

Went on a Grayline Bus tour of Universal Studios. Arrived at the studios at 3.00pm and only started the tour at 3.20pm. The minibus took us around to see Lucille Ball's dressing room, which was more like a cottage. Our guide, Joe was a real personality. He took us into a sound studio and explained all the techniques used. Matte painting, daylight, rain, hot sets (all in Ironside's office). He then took us to a set that had a streetcar in it (Robert Redford and Raquel Welch were the stars in this set). Then he asked for volunteers. He wanted some kids to sit in the cars, a driver, a honeymoon couple and 2 stars. WE WERE CHOSEN TO BE THE STARS!

He told us to imagine that Robert Redford was chasing the street car to catch up with Raquel Welch, the street car's brakes were to fail and RW was to scream for help and then RR was to save the day by stopping the streetcar. As soon as the action started we were bobbing up and down in the streetcar and Pete was running alongside. Suddenly the driver yells out that the brakes had failed, and then I stood up and started screaming (Save me, save me.") Pete didn't bother about the brakes; he just grabbed me and flung me over his shoulder. Everybody started laughing and cheering. The guide said it was a very authentic and different performance. Then he asked us where we were from. When we said Australia, four people in the crowd clapped and cheered (Australian's also). When we got back into the minibus we found out that they had been sitting next to us the whole time.

Then Joe took us around to see all the outside sets, the cowboy streets and the houses of people from several series (Leave it to Beaver, The Munsters, Marcus Welby). We saw the boat that was used for "Showboat", the place where McHale's Navy was filmed and the boat that was used in "Jaws". At 5.00pm, the tour finished and we were allowed to wander around the visitors' area. We went to see a stuntman show which was the only thing we really had time for.

It was freezing cold by this stage and we were glad to get back on the bus and head back to the hotel. During tea we met some more people from Australia. An elderly couple who had travelled the world quite a few times. We had rather a nice chat with them and then went up to our room and watched TV before retiring. A very cold, icy day. The Chancellor Hotel is known as the Earls Court of Los Angeles. Altogether ten people from Australia stayed at the hotel while we were there.

Sunday 4th January 1976

Left Los Angeles and headed for Santa Barbara by Greyhound Bus. The journey took about 2½ hours. We have come up here because the Mosman Rugby Union Club is due up here tomorrow. We hope to meet them for a bit of a reunion and watch their game against UCLA (Uni of Los Angeles) which is in Santa Barbara believe it or not. Booked into a hotel (Hotel De Riviera – definitely not a Riviera France type hotel @ \$12 / night). Once again are spending the night watching TV.

Monday 5th January 1976

Very Spanish little town this Santa Barbara. Walked out onto a jetty and saw the biggest seagulls we have ever seen in our life. There were a few people fishing and generally relaxing. Contacted the campus at the Uni to find out where the Mosman crowd was. Nobody knew they were even coming! Rang the coach from their football team and he told us he would keep in touch with us and let us know when and if they were arriving. Sent a telegram to Mum and Dad for their 25th Wedding Anniversary (for the 6th). Went back to the hotel and had tea at Carrows (across the road).

Tuesday 6th January 1976

Walked to the bus depot and caught a bus back to LA. Tried to contact Syd Tessler again via his secretary. Found out he was in court defending some of his clients. Left a message for him to ring us at the Chancellor Hotel. As soon as we walked in he rang. He sounded a really nice guy and apologised that he couldn't see us and take us out to dinner, but he was really busy with clients after coming back from holidays.

We decided to leave for San Francisco so walked up Wiltshire Boulevard to find a domestic airline office to make the booking. On the way we passed a crew of film people making an episode for Barnaby Jones (Buddy Ebsen from Beverley Hillbillies Show). Watched for ½ hour or so. Really exciting! Reached the TWA office and they told us that the best thing to do would be to organise everything from the airport.

We've really got the hang of the RTD buses in LA now – old hands at it. Ate tea in the hotel coffee shop – a really nice menu and staff. Most enjoyable to eat there. Returned to the room for an early night to prepare for San Francisco.

Wednesday 7th January 1976

Awoke early and caught the airport bus from the Chancellor (\$1.70) to the United Airlines Terminal for our flight to San Fran. Caught the 11.00am flight – we were a little delayed in the terminal while they re-wrote our tickets to Frisco (previously they had been LA to Vancouver).

Like a bus when we got on the plane. No seat allocation or anything. If there wasn't a seat for you, you merely caught the next flight in 60mins. Smooth trip – booked a hotel room from the airport and then caught an Airport Bus to downtown San Francisco (gee, that sounds good). From there we caught a cab the short distance to our hotel, the Travelodge at Fisherman's Wharf. Very nice room and close to the action. (First hotel, so far, that provided a kettle and coffee). Had a cup about 1.00pm and then headed out to find a cable car. Found one in Powell Street and got on it with no idea where it was going to. It was magnificent – up hills, down the other side with the brakeman desperately applying the brakes to stop it from going too fast. Ended up at Market St in the heart of the city.

Had a quick meal and then much to your jealousy I bet Dad, went for a ride on BART, the underground railway. Incredibly smooth and quiet. No ticket takers or sellers. Buy your tickets from a computer and then slide it into another computer at the entrance, which examines it, takes a note of where you get on (station) and then returns it to you. When you've finished your ride you go through the exit and once again slide your ticket into yet another computer which calculates whether your ticket and how much you paid for it, is sufficient for the length of the journey. Amazing!

We walked throughout the city up and down all the bloody hills and saw everything we wanted to see. We then caught a cable car back to Fisherman's Wharf. This was in peak hour and the cable car was full as a goog with people hanging off it everywhere. Arrived at the Wharf just as it was dark and the fishermen were beginning to sell their wares. Crabs, prawns (\$6.00/lb), fish, etc all really fresh, with the crabs still alive. Walked around all the wax museums but didn't go in any, and all the other shops that were there. Finished up eating tea in an Italian restaurant, which served German beer in the heart of an American city. Ordinarily I'd say it was a crazy mixed up place but not San Francisco – it's beautiful.

Hills, cable cars, nightlife, Fisherman's Wharf, bridges, everything except murders. Los Angeles had about eight while we were there. Laima tells me to write about all the queer people over here. Muttering, singing, talking to themselves as they walk along alone. Laima really

hangs on tightly to her bag and I keep money and travellers cheques in a buttoned down top pocket of my jacket. Back pants pockets are out now, since we saw a movie on TV in LA about a team of 'pickpocketers' that explained the techniques they use.

Flying to Seattle tomorrow to meet Rod and Adelaide. In the morning we're doing a short bus tour of San Fran.

Thursday 8th January 1976

We had a big day planned for today, so arose early accordingly. Packed and left our luggage with the owners of the motel who were very nice people. From there we walked a short distance down the road and we picked up a Grayline bus for a tour of San Francisco.

We commenced the tour by travelling over the new Oakland Bay Bridge but would you believe the whole of San Fran was enveloped in fog! The bus driver could only see about 100 feet in front of him. He assured us it would lift later and so our hopes rose. The bridge cost \$77,000,000 to build and is 7½ miles long. We only went half way to Treasure Island, the site of the 1962 World's Fair, which is now a naval base – the whole island is man-made. We turned around and went back to San Fran on the top deck of the bridge and then saw the highlights of the city where the fog wasn't too bad. Up and down city streets where points of interest were noted.

Stopped at Mission Delores the first Spanish Church in San Fran back in the 1700's. Moved on up to Twin Peaks but it was useless going there because of the fog, so the driver bypassed it unfortunately. Continued on through Golden Gate Park and around to SF's best-known beach, Seal Beach. Stopped at the place called the Cliff House, which once boasted the largest gift shop in the world. We saw the ruins of it, after fire destroyed it some seven years ago. Took a photo of it, to show Dad who would be rapt in that. One more gift we don't have to worry about.

Then went to the Golden Gate Bridge and what a magnificent sight that was. Fog on the sea, the bridge itself untouched by fog with the sun shining on it, and just the very top of the two towers covered by clouds. Travelled across the bridge, turned around and came back again – the toll on the bridge is \$0.75. The bus then took us back to Fisherman's Wharf where we boarded a boat to go on a cruise on the bay. The fog had completely gone by this stage. The cruise took us towards Golden Gate Bridge under which we sailed and then turned around and went past Alcatraz only a matter of yards from it. There are now tours that go over the Rock but we didn't have time. (Maybe on another trip in years to come!!) The cruise then went under the Oakland Bay Bridge turned around and went back to Fisherman's Wharf. Altogether there were 3½ hours on the bus and 1¼ hours on the boat.

We then picked up our luggage and made our way out to the airport. Got on our United flight 288 to Seattle. Dinner flight too, so we saved on a meal there. Arrived at the airport and rang Rod and Adelaide who kindly offered Aunt Bessie's old room to us. Arranged to meet them at the Olympic Hotel. Getting out of the terminal at Seattle to collect your baggage is amazing. We stood at the door which said "to baggage collection" expecting it to be a lift. The door opened and there in front of us was an underground train. We were astounded as it sped us to another terminal where, lo and behold, our baggage was already waiting for us. We still couldn't believe it as we boarded the bus to the Olympic Hotel.

Met Adelaide in the lobby, although neither of us knew what each other looked like, but we were ok. They took us out to their apartment and after a couple of drinks and some talk with them we collapsed into bed. They are a really nice couple, generous and good-natured. Rod has a sense of humour just like Dad, quick and sharp. Got to bed about midnight. A big day – it must have been – it took three pages to write about it. (In the hand written diary that is.)

Friday 9th January 1976

We slept in until 10.30am to find that Rod and Adelaide had already gone to work. Laima did some washing and at about 12.30pm we ventured out into the cold, cold air of Seattle. And it was raining – the first time we've seen rain since we left Australia.

Caught the bus into the Seattle Centre – the site of the 1962 World's Fair. Walked around various halls, which are still maintained for tourism, and also the infamous space needle. It costs \$1.50 to go to the top in an outside elevator. 43 seconds and we were at the top, some 731 feet above sea level. Terrific view of 360° around Seattle. Took some photos and then went to the bottom again for a trip on the monorail. In contrast to the space needle, it only cost \$0.10 to ride into the city about 1½ miles away.

Still raining so we looked around a department store where Laima bought a handbag for a dollar. It was slightly torn in one of the pockets so it was reduced. We then caught the monorail back to the Centre and walked down to catch the bus again – but lo and behold it was on the other side of the freeway and was impossible to cross. So we had to walk ½ mile to an overpass.

Arrived home and Rod and Adelaide took us out to dinner at a restaurant called "The Butcher". Food was great, service and atmosphere superb and so was our company. Rod and Adelaide have really looked after us since our arrival here in Pat Boone country. At about 9.30pm we were home again, watched an hour of TV and went to bed.

Saturday 10th January 1976

What a dreary, rainy day. Woke up about 10.00am. Had some hot cakes and sausages for breakfast. Spent most of the day watching TV and talking with Adelaide and Rod. Too miserable to go outside. Rod showed us a film of Mum and Dad's visit in 1968; he started fooling around in slow and fast motion. Had a really nice tea of chicken and went to bed after watching a great movie on their colour television. (Our first day spent indoors).

CHAPTER FOUR

How to celebrate two birthdays in Canada

Sunday 11th January 1976

Left Seattle after a very enjoyable day with Rod and Adelaide. They are really beautiful people. Arrived in Vancouver (just breezed through customs) after a 25-minute flight from Seattle. Same sort of weather (perhaps a little colder) but we haven't seen any snow yet. Checked into the Alcazar Hotel in downtown Vancouver for \$15.75 / night. Nice place, but very small rooms. Went for a walk around the downtown area but the weather wasn't very kind to us so we went back to the hotel and had some tea in the coffee shop.

Rang Jack and Eleanor McRitchie who live in Surrey, a suburb of Vancouver. Aunt Bessie is now living with them until she goes into an old people's home. They invited us out to see them and so we caught a bus to the New Westminster Bus Depot. It began to snow very heavily on the way out there. Rang them from the depot and they picked us up. A nice home, we enjoyed a comfortable night in front of a log fire watching the snowfall. Aunt Bessie is in good health although she has difficulty walking after several bad falls. You have to really raise your voice to make her hear, but sometimes I think she only hears what she wants to hear. She had a beer and a scotch with us too. At age 96. Rode the bus home for \$0.25 and it was a distance of 20 miles. Public transport is really good. Still snowing.

Monday 12th January 1976

Awoke a bit late and saw that it had stopped snowing sometime during the night. Lots of melted snow around and the roads were wet. Decided to go up to Grouse Mountain, which is a skiing resort some 15 miles away. Caught a bus from the bus depot, went through Stanley Park, across Lion's Gate bridge and got off where we had to catch another bus. Got on that bus, showed our tickets, no more money required and rode halfway up the mountain, got off, and caught another bus the rest of the way. All for \$0.25 cents.

We then caught a Sky Ride cable car to the top of the peak where all the ski runs were. Didn't ski, just had a look around. Sat in the bar for an hour or so and talked with two Canadians who told us of various places to go. Returned down the mountain via cable car, bus and finally legs to the Hotel. Sat for a while, wrote postcards and then set off for a walk to Gas town, which is a warehouse area, redecorated and reconstructed into a shopping area with lots of restaurants and posh shops. Checked out prices but all too expensive for us so we settled for Big Mac's at McDonalds. Returned to the hotel via a crazy bowling alley, which has only 5 pins and bowling balls no bigger than 5" in diameter.

Tuesday 13th January 1976

Today we decided to go to Vancouver Island and the city of Victoria. Caught a bus at the depot with our luggage and set off to the ferry. Good value. \$3.25 for the bus and ferry, which takes about 3¼ hours from point to point. Plan to stay overnight in Victoria.

Arrived at the Crystal Court Hotel (across the road from the bus depot) about 4.00pm. Not much of a day for sightseeing, so we settled in and watched our colour TV.

Wednesday 13th January 1976

Decided to stay on another day, so we hired a car (a green Chevy Vega) in an attempt to see a little of the island. We obtained a few tourist maps and began on tour #3. To make it easier for the tourist, yellow dots are painted on the roads for the driver to follow. (It saved you looking for street names.) But we spent most of our time looking for those yellow dots. Don't know how many times we backtracked with the dots seeming to disappear quite frequently. We went back to the map and found out that all the tours were marked with dots on the road. No wonder we got lost so many times.

The Island is very English orientated and has some very beautiful homes (mansions). We drove up the road to Nanaimo where the snow had really set in. Didn't know how far we should drive before the snow would stop us, so we turned back and on the way out we came across a really pretty camping ground. All the trees were covered in moss. We saw two really beautiful Red Oaks that are 500 years old. Drove around a small English Village with a replica of Anne Hathaway's house and Chaucerland. Didn't go in because we would see the originals in England. Saw two Australian lads who we had previously met in Vancouver.

For lunch today we had our first pie and sausage roll since leaving home. Price for two pies and three sausage rolls - \$1.65!! (The pie had sausage roll meat in it.) Still they were quite palatable.

Funny, we can't seem to get away from the rain now after having such good weather in Hawaii and California. Altogether we drove about 100 miles and felt sure that we had seen the island. The main points of interest anyway. We were going to have tea in an English restaurant (authentic fish & chips) but they shut at 7.00pm, so we ate unauthentic fish & chips in a Denny's restaurant.

Thursday 15th January 1976

The bus was leaving at 8.00am from the depot, so we set the alarm for 7.00am. Would you believe, it only went off at 7.15am (I wonder who gave it to us!!). We made the bus – just in time. We had a nice breakfast on the ferry and arrived at the airport just before midday for our flight at 1.30pm. We found out it was a lunch flight so we were quite pleased about that.

Flying into Calgary was the most breath taking scenery we have ever seen (so far). The Rockies were just beautiful and Calgary is set in a really flat area. As far as you looked, all you could see was snow, snow and more snow. We settled into the York Hotel (\$20 / night) in downtown Calgary. Rang Mark Pollard's mum to let him know we were there. Mark and his wife visited Australia last year and Mark worked at Faberge for 10 weeks. Real nice guy. He was out of town but was expected back either that night or the next morning. Went for a walk and came across an Aussie café, "The Aul Stray Inn" – but it was closed. Started walking back to the hotel via the 'bad' part of town and 'bumped' into Mark. What a surprise! He took us back to his house and 'told' us that we were staying at his house with his wife from tomorrow on.

Friday 16th January 1976

Mark picked us up from the hotel at 11.00am and took us to his place where we had some breakfast. After that he drove us around Calgary to all the scenic spots in his car. Went to Broadcast Hill from where we got a great view of the Rockies and downtown Calgary. We saw frozen lakes and rivers and kids throwing snowballs. Went back to the house and Laima promptly fell asleep. Mark and I went back into downtown where he took me to a really rough 'pub' called the Calgary Inn. There were an unbelievable number of Indians in there, male and female who looked as though they'd fight you at the drop of a hat. We had two drinks in there

and got out quick smart. Mark doesn't go there at all but suggested it may be a highlight of my trip to Calgary. Sure was!

Went to the Aussie café and had a genuine Aussie hamburger with fried onions and a fried egg. North Americans just haven't heard of doing that. Returned to the house and had a roast dinner and watched TV for the night. We are having beautiful weather at the moment. Calgary has got a heatwave, with the temp up to 8° today. We are in the middle of what Mark says is a 'Chinook'. A weather pattern that drops all its moisture over the Rockies and then continues as warm air over the plains – just love this place. Going skating and skiing soon and also snow-mobiling.

Saturday 17th January 1976

Mark and Carol took us to Banff today. As we drove out of Calgary proper, the snow became more abundant and the countryside was just beautiful. We followed the Bow River most of the way and the section that wasn't frozen was flowing very quickly. We didn't really know how big or wide the river was because most of it was frozen.

Banff is really pretty. We walked around the Banff Springs Hotel, looking at all the different rooms and gift shops. We walked up to Sulphur Mountain and watched the people swimming in the hot water. Then we drove to Lake Louise where there was much more snow and it was like soft powder. Many times we were knee deep in it. Pete walked out on the lake! Then Mark showed us how to do an 'angel'. We drove back to Calgary and started getting ready for a party that we were invited to. When you arrive at someone's place, the done thing is to take off your shoes just inside the door (just like in Japan). If you're first to leave you have quite a good choice.

All the houses in Calgary have basements. This one was really done up. It was sort of a rumpus room with a colour TV, a table tennis table, a bar and a huge laundry. There was also another separate room that they were going to make into a bedroom. For the time being it was used as a dart room. All the girls sat upstairs and yakked while the guys had tournaments in darts and table tennis. Pete kept going outside to collect snow to keep the drinks cold. After most of the people left we went upstairs and had a debate about the French people in Canada. We had a really good time there and arrived home at 3.45am. Carol had to bake a cake for Sunday, so Pete and Mark said they would stay up and take it out of the oven. Carol and I didn't mind. A very full and interesting day.

Sunday 18th January 1976

It was already Sunday when Mark and I were 'baking' the cake. It took an hour, so to pass the time, Mark indulged in one of his favourite habits (which is done by everyone in his group of friends). Local phone calls are free in Canada and USA, so he rang up all his friends (even those that didn't go to the party) at 4.30am in the morning. Gee it was funny to listen to their groggy (from sleep!) reactions.

In the morning (ie about 11.30am) we all went ice-skating at the Bowness Lagoon. It was crowded with Calgarians because of the weather. 8° and a clear, beautiful, cloudless sky. Laima and I got the hang of it very quickly and at the end of the day were skating freely. At about 4.00pm we went to Carol's relatives' place where we were to meet the rest of the clan. About 20 people all related. We had a really enjoyable time, just like Sunday nights in Adelaide at home. After that, Mark took us to an ice hockey game at the Calgary Corral in the Stampede Grounds. A real exciting game with plenty of blood flowing on the ice from fights between the players, who think nothing of smashing their hockey stick in another guy's face! Also in the Stampede Grounds were snow mobile races. I saw a couple of races through the fence. Almost

as exciting as the speedway as they raced around an oval track covered in snow, at about 90mph.

Monday 19th January 1976

Pete's birthday, so he was allowed to do whatever he wanted. After I ran his bath for him (!!) he soaked for an hour and a half. We drove downtown in Carol's car and looked around for some snowshoes for me. Funny buying my birthday present before Pete got his. Went to the 'Bay' (The Hudson Bay – department store) and bought a really nice pair of fur lined boots. My feet were really hot in them. We went to the 'Aul Stray Inn' for a late lunch and talked to all of the Aussie's in there. Claude, the owner, looked exactly like my boss in Sydney. Got home about 4.45pm, had tea and then Pete and Mark went to watch a handball championship. Celebrated afterwards with a few drinks and then went home – the end of Pete's birthday. While at the Aussie café, we bought five lamingtons and some candles – 'The Birthday Cake'.

Tuesday 20 January 1976

Awoke late and had another rather lazy day. I did a bit of washing and ironing and Pete did a bit of shopping to stock up the Pollard's kitchen. Carol had some night classes at the University so there were only three of us for 'supper'. I made an 'Aussie style' steak. Tonight we went to see the Ice Capades. What a beautiful sight? The costumes, lights, and the atmosphere were just great. The skating was magnificent - a truly enjoyable night. Carol's Mum and Dad paid for the tickets and we thanked them very much. Carol's Dad keeps calling us 'bloody Australians'. Both of them are really nice people. Got home about 10.30pm after a very exciting night. Snow is melting in Calgary left right and centre.

Wednesday 21st January 1976

The temperature today was 14°. Missed out by 1° as being the hottest ever January day in Calgary.

Once again awoke late, around 10.30am, and then had a leisurely breakfast. About 1.30pm we decided to go bowling, so jumped into Carol's car and off we went. For fun we stopped at Pete's Drive In Hamburger joint which last year won the award (national) for the best hamburger made in Canada. I'd certainly agree because it was beautiful.

We had three games of bowling with both of us taking a while to settle in. My best score was 175 and Laima's 141. At night we went to Carol's Mum and Dad's place for supper (tea). They have a beautiful home decorated with articles picked up from various parts of the world. They are very nice people too: Charlie's (the father) favourite saying along with "Bloody Ostraylians" is "You bet" – consequently Laima says it all the time now. They also own a farm called – Parflesh – about an hour's drive from Calgary. Mark confided in us that they were offered 1½ million dollars for it but knocked it back. (No wonder they could afford our tickets to the Ice Capades). We had a roast dinner and then angel cake, strawberries and whipped cream for dessert.

PS *Mark calls his mother in law 'Old Harfoo', after the mermaid in Copenhagen.*

Thursday 22nd January 1976 (Laima's day)

Laima's birthday and wow what a day it turned out to be. Mark and Carol went to work but were home at midday, picked us up and out we went to the farm. The main purpose in going there was to go ski-dooing, ie snow mobile riding. They are about five feet long, powered by motorbike engines and weigh about 400 pounds. They seat two but it's better fun if you ride by

yourself. The steering is by motorbike type handlebars, which are connected to skis at the front. The power is transmitted to a wide belt underneath the skidoo, which grips the snow and provides the thrust. (Included a photo taken at the snowmobile races last Sunday). Anyway, we arrived at the farm and Carol discovered (she used to live on the farm for 18 years) that her dog, Patches, (a St Bernard) had had puppies a week ago. They were beautiful little things. She had nine but only four survived. As Bob, a neighbour who was there, said, they needed the bodies of the other five for spare parts.

Mark and I got on the skidoo's and went riding over the grain fields, up hills, round corners, up and down roads, which were of course, all covered with snow. Still plenty out there although most of it was now gone in Calgary. We returned and picked up Laima who declined to drive one (we had four at our disposal) so she hopped on the back of mine and away we went with Mark, throwing snowballs at each other while racing along. Not as fast as the racing snowmobiles but still about 35 – 40 mph. Stopped for tea which we had at Bob Wheatley's who lives on another farm just down the road. After tea at about 8.00pm all the guys decided to go ski-dooing at night. I was in that like a shot. They have very powerful lights on the front that light up everything. There were four of us, Mark, Bob Wheatley, Carol's brother Murray who runs the farm and me. Bob and Murray were a lot faster having more experience of course but Mark and I weren't too far behind at all.

The weather was a clear, starry night and about -10° but I was as hot as hell as I jumped all over the machine (just like in the photo) controlling it as we hit snowdrift after snowdrift which made the skidoo change direction slightly. Countless numbers of times I was catapulted from the seat (by the way the fastest way to ride is kneeling rather than sitting on the seat) by a mogul (a ridge in the snow created by the wind) but by desperately hanging onto the handle bars and the accelerator of course, I was brought back to earth with a jolt. We were definitely travelling a lot faster than earlier in the day. They don't have brakes either, however when you take the power off they slow very quickly.

We went to a fellow farmer's house, chatted to him for a while and then returned to Bob's place via a small canyon in which we had drag races up the hill. Then it was the girl's turn. The four wives got on them. Laima got on one mainly because she didn't want to be left out. They were gone about an hour when we got a radio call from the girls who had gone to the guy's farmhouse where we had been. They wanted us to come over there, so we all piled into Bob's new pick-up truck and went over there. The time was now about midnight. We stayed there for about two hours. 11 of us and having a ball. When everyone thought it was about time to go home Laima, "Bimbo" – Bob's wife's nickname – Lyle (another of Carol's brothers who is also a farmer) and myself got onto the skidoos to take them home or so Laima and I thought. Lyle told us to follow him (there was no risk that we weren't going to because we would've gotten lost in ten yards – it was pitch black). So we followed him and followed him, belting across the snow. Laima was terrific. I could hardly keep up with her. We were in front of Bimbo who has been doing it (skidooing that is) for years. We raced along at breakneck speed for about ¾ hour.

Eventually Lyle led us to another farmhouse where at 2.45am he woke up the lady of the house (everyone knows everyone up here) and we had a coffee. At about 4.00am we left and Lyle assured us we were going home to Bob's farm. So once again with the temperature even colder, we four set off like intrepid explorers into the night. This time we were going home because through the spray of snow coming up from Laima's incredibly fast skidoo I could recognise the countryside. About ½ mile from home my machine ran out of petrol, so Lyle just took the key out and we left it there. I hopped onto the back of Laima's and she took me back to the farm and thus at 4.45am a magnificently exciting day had come to a safe end.

Never again will Laima have a better birthday

Friday 23rd January 1976

We went to sleep in a spare room at the farm as did Carol and Mark. We woke up at 8.00am and travelled back to Calgary with Murray and his wife Sonja. It had snowed in Calgary the previous night and everything was white and glistening. We went straight to sleep and awoke around 1.00pm. Watched TV all day and all night and did absolutely nothing except nurse our aching bodies. Watched 'What's up Doc' on TV. Didn't feel too good all day, but I suppose it was the best thing we could have done by resting. Heading for Toronto on Tuesday morning at 9.30am, arriving there at 3.35pm.

Saturday 24th January 1976

Two still very sore bodies climbed out of bed. Mark and Pete went to the Co-op to buy some groceries and Carol and I cleaned up the house. Mark's cousin (a policeman) and wife invited us over to his club for a few drinks. It's called the 'Cuff and Billy' and reminded us very much of our club in Sydney. We left about 5.30pm and got ready to go out to 'supper' at the 'Sukiyaki House'. One of Carol's friends has a birthday on the 29th of January, so it was sort of a 3-way birthday celebration of Pat, Peter and myself. It was a very unusual meal, but very nice. The bill was \$57.25 for 6. Then we went to two different lounges for drinks. The first place cost \$8.75 and the second place was \$12. We only had one round at each place. Got home, watched a really dumb movie, ordered a pizza and hit the sack at 3.30am.

Sunday 25th January 1976

We were all invited over to Mike and Carol's for brunch that morning, but we only got up at 11.00am so we rang to tell them we would be late. They were both very thankful because they had had a late night as well and were just getting out of bed. They have a beautiful house, full of Mike's souvenirs from all over the world. After a delicious brunch we spent most of the afternoon listening to Mike's adventures in the police force. At the moment he works with the drug squad and recently appeared on a TV interview. They had just toured England and showed us their pictures. We left their place and returned home and had a prime rib roast that Carol concocted. It was delicious. After that we watched TV again.

Monday 26th January 1976

We once again awoke late and at about 12.00 noon we set off to do some shopping for ourselves and also Carol and Mark. Went to the Aussie café again to celebrate Australia Day. He (Claude the proprietor) had a special menu. He had reduced the price of pies and pasties!! His main course today was corn beef and mashed potato. We decided only to have a hot chocolate. When we left we bade farewell to Claude and his waitress, whom we had come to know quite well, and went down to the library to read some Aussie papers. Would you believe the latest paper they had was October 15th 1975. No good for us.

Set off once again to the Chinook Shopping Centre. A huge place – the biggest in Western Canada. We bought a hanging pot plant and a bottle of posh Canadian Rye for Carol and Mark respectively. For ourselves we got a placemat of Calgary. At tea that night we gave them their gifts and lo and behold Carol produced one for us – a beaver, carved out of wood, which was grooved and then burnt on the edges. Sure was a surprise! We packed that evening and then retired for an early night.

CHAPTER FIVE

Laima, Peter and Bill in Toronto

Tuesday 27th January 1976

This morning we didn't awake late but actually got up when Mark and Carol did. Would you believe it was dark at 7.45am? Sunrise came at 8.00am. Glad we didn't get up any earlier on other days. We had a light breakfast, said goodbye to Carol, and then Mark drove us to the airport. Left on CP Air at 9.30am for Toronto. The flight stopped at Winnipeg enroute to Toronto. The weather in Calgary was perfect and we had a great view of everything as we left. But!!!

When we approached Winnipeg the weather rapidly deteriorated and the pilot told us that there were very strong winds and drifting snow with the temp at -25°. As we made our approach we got down really low to the ground and were flying over small farmhouses. Laima and I both said that the airport must be a long way from the city. Just at the moment we discussed the airport, the pilot opened up the throttle and roared into the sky. Once again (and I must point out that visibility could not have been more than 200 feet), he slowed and reduced height and made as though to land and once again he opened up the engines and took off. Sweat was forming at this stage in our palms. On his third try he located the airport runway, and in my opinion made a very skilful landing in the rotten conditions. We heard the hostesses discussing the position a few minutes later and they weren't too confident at all. One of the flight crew (pilot) came up to them and said jokingly to a hostie, "does she want to change places"? We took off with no further scares and the rest of the flight was great.

Bill was waiting for us at Toronto airport and we greeted him happily. He took us to L' Estrange Place via Kodak where I dropped off six rolls of film for developing. Can't wait to see them. We settled in and met Mrs Gerrard who was very kind in giving us a huge beautifully furnished bedroom. Read all the letters from home and boy were they welcome. Also read all the newspaper cuttings, which Dad had sent to Bill about the cricket and the 'earthquake?'. The house is enormous and so tastefully furnished. Everything is spotlessly clean and not an ornament out of place. After tea Bill took us for a look around Toronto and for a welcome drink at Black Beards, - a belly-dancing joint would you believe. After that it was to bed and a bit of unpacking.

Wednesday 28th January 1976

Finished unpacking. A bit of breakfast and then we took off downtown. We had to walk down L'Estrange Place to Baby Point Road, which led onto the main street of the area which is called Jane Street. At the bottom of Jane St is the Subway station, simply called 'Jane'. It was a half hour walk in bitterly cold weather. We could have caught a bus but we elected to walk. \$0.33 got us downtown by train and there we looked through several department stores. Walked down Yonge St where to our surprise we came across Dundonald St, which is of course Bill's old street. We wondered which house he had his apartment in? I bought a pair of sealskin boots lined with lamb's wool. My birthday present, but a bit late.

Too cold for us so we headed back home, did some shopping and Laima prepared tea. Bill has to go to a cricket meeting tonight so we are going to watch the ice hockey on TV between the Toronto Maple Leafs and the New York Islanders. Quite a rough game. We're watching it as we write letters and postcards to assorted people. Began to snow earlier tonight but has stopped

now, but more is expected. Don't know where it is all going to fit; there is so much on the ground already.

I remember Mrs. Gerrard's house from the slide that Bill showed us in Adelaide – it looks even better in true life. I have fallen in love with the houses in this area. Everyone is so beautiful, yet different. I have one house that is my favourite. I think it is a consulate of some sort because there is always a flag flying outside. I really feel like knocking on the door and asking if I can just wander through the house. I guess the snow makes them look even better. Would love to see them in fall (Autumn). When in Rome.....

Bill has a funny little stove. It only has two heating elements on the top, and so if you have meat and two vegies, you have to keep changing them. Also, if you have one element on full heat the other goes off – oh well, guess we'll manage, well, what I mean is we won't starve. Really looking forward to Toronto. Hope we can both get some part time work somewhere.

Thursday 29th January 1976

Today was a really educational day. We went to the Ontario Science Centre. We met Bill at 2.00pm in one of the subway stations near to the centre and he drove us there. It's a huge building set in a valley. We saw what a laser beam was and all about molecules etc. At all the different exhibitions there was a phone and a start button. Push the button and a voice tells you all about whatever you are looking at. My favourite was the communications centre. There were quite a few people there so we had to wait a while to use the calculators and computers. It was really fascinating.

Peter and Bill sat in the lunar docking modules and pressed and pulled buttons as they were told until they made a successful docking. Then Pete and I had a turn on the module. All very exciting. In the biology section we saw the beginnings of dentistry. All about decaying teeth that sort of made you want to go brush your teeth then and there. There was a segment on genetics and mutations in fish. We saw a model of downtown Toronto and the subway system and the sewerage system. (It wasn't the same model!!)

The centre closed at 6.00pm so we didn't have half as much time as we would have liked. Nothing like science at school because there were so many things you could operate and test your skills on. Well worth going to for \$1.50 each. We came home and had tea and then Peter and Bill went off to the Tranzac Club while I stayed home and wrote some more letters.

Friday 30th January 1976

I needed a parka desperately because I didn't want to wear my fur coat all the time, so we went to 'Honest Ed's' to buy one. Bill told us to go there, because it's very cheap and there is a fairly big choice of items. It's an old warehouse just jammed full of clothes, groceries, electrical items, etc. We found a really good parka for \$9.99. It's very thick and quite a bargain for the money. We were meant to meet Bill at the Black Swan so we headed off to find it. It's a pub owned by four New Zealand guys. By the time everyone arrived, there were about 16 of us. The bottled beer was \$0.60 a stubby and the draught was only \$0.25 a glass. You can imagine what everyone was drinking.

We spent a few hours talking to the Aussies and the Kiwis. Tom, an Aussie we met there, asked us if we had ever heard of Alex Jesaulenko because he apparently went to school with him. He also knew Paul Hogan's brother, who is over here in Toronto. He is breaking into show business as well. He flies over to Australia to do commercials with Paul. After the Black Swan we all went to the 'Bull and Bear'. This place was very crowded, and would you believe there were even more Aussies there – are there any left in Australia? We talked to a guy called Peter who

had been a snow mobile champion in Europe. A most enjoyable night listening to very familiar accents.

Saturday 31st January 1976

At 9.00am we woke up to a very pleasant surprise. A phone call from Australia from Mum and Dad Physick. Really good to hear their voices. After we hung up we thought of so many things we wanted to ask – funny how your mind goes blank. Bill took us around some of the sights of Toronto. We walked downtown through some of the shops, which stay open till 10.00pm. We got home about 6.30pm and got ready to go out for tea.

We had planned to go to 'Old Ed's Warehouse' (the same guy that owned Honest Ed's) but we couldn't get in because Pete wasn't dressed accordingly. He had on his brown trousers and purple and white jumper (sweater) and his parka. He needed a jacket and tie. We ended up going to a spaghetti place called 'Frans'. A nice meal and very reasonably priced. We had a party to go to but we decided to go home and look at our slides. Gee they brought back a lot of memories. We wrote on all of them while they were still fresh in our mind. Pete stayed up to watch 'The Blue Max', a film he wanted to see all his life (some excuse). I stayed up and read my book until about 1.00am. Fell asleep tired and happy.

Sunday 1st February 1976

A rather lazy day today where we spent most of our time talking and watching TV. Pete watched 'Those magnificent Men' for about the fifth time and then sat back and watched two sporting programs – hockey, basketball and a preview of the Winter Olympics. A very relaxing day.

Monday 2nd February 1976

Woke about 7.30am and got ready to go job hunting. We had a few places to look up, so Bill took us in his car. The driver's side hinge is frozen so we had to keep it closed with a piece of rope. Not much luck with the job hunting because January is a bad month. We were out for about two hours and we were just frozen. Eastern Canada was hit by very cold weather – storms and blizzards. A few airports were closed and a lot of people were stranded. A very, very cold day and as we heard from the weatherman, there is more cold stuff on the way. The temperature today was minus 20°C.

Tuesday 3rd February 1976

Peaking out from under the blankets and through the window, the day appeared quite warmer. Indeed it was only -2°C and the sun was shining, although that doesn't mean anything because there is no warmth in it. Laima and I decided to go to a shopping centre for a look around. Caught a bus down Annette Street to the Towers Food City. We spent some two hours there just wandering aimlessly about. Found some boots in there identical to the ones I bought but \$12 cheaper. Ripped off again! Returned with shopping bags under each arm.

Laima and I play 'football' when we have to walk either to or from L'Estrange St to where the bus runs in Jane Street. Of course as you would realise the roads are covered in snow, as is everything else around here including the footpaths that are snow ploughed each time it snows. Hence what is left is a trough frozen solid by the extreme cold. What we do is break off a piece of ice and kick it along the ground. If we miss-kick it and the piece of ice goes to one side, it merely climbs the wall and then comes down again and continues to slither along the ice inside the trough. Sounds dumb but at least it keeps our minds off how cold the rest of our body is. At

night on TV we watched the preview of the Winter Olympics beginning tomorrow in Innsbruck, Austria.

Wednesday 4th February 1976

Bill decided to leave his car with us today, so at about 8.30am I drove him to the bus stop so he could go to work. Bill asked us to do some things for him downtown so we parked the car near the subway and caught that. We picked up some tickets from the Bay for him and then we walked down to Maple Leaf Gardens, which is of course the Maple Leaf's ice hockey rink. We bought some tickets for Sunday's game against Minnesota. Climbed on board the subway again and went back to the car. We then drove right out into the country North of Toronto. By chance drove straight past Faberge's office. Stayed out for about three hours and then decided to call it quits. Arrived home to find a letter full of cuttings for Bill, so when he got home we spent some hours reading them all. At night we went to the Black Swan again because we enjoyed it so much the last time. Once again it was packed. Certainly a lucrative business this, having an Aussie style pub.

Thursday 5th February 1976

I stayed in bed until 3.00pm reading to see if I could shake off this cold that has attached itself to me. Scanned the papers for jobs again but nothing showed itself. However I'm eternally optimistic and I'm sure we'll get something. Laima and I played cards in front of the TV set until Bill came home. Laima had prepared a delicious meal of New Zealand lamb chops which we devoured ferociously. After tea we all watched the highlights of the Winter Olympics. Exciting stuff too with the downhill race being contested. Went to bed after a lazy day at about 11pm and I started reading the Rod Marsh book that we gave Bill for Christmas.

PS: Going to Niagara Falls on Saturday.

Friday 6th February 1976

Today we decided to go to the International Motor Show out near Toronto Airport. It was a long way and took us four buses to get there. It was bitterly cold and waiting for the connecting buses was agony. The show itself was really good. Even Laima enjoyed it. All the new 1976 models were on display. There were some really cheap cars there, (by Australian standards anyway) and how I would have loved to buy some and transport them home to Australia, sell them and have instant wealth...maybe. One particularly interesting display was the Toyota stand. Saw the Corolla models that aren't allowed in Australia because the engine capacity is too big.

Left the auto show around 7.00pm and then had to wait almost an hour for a bus. We were frozen through. Once on the bus we went straight to the nearest subway station and travelled all the way across town to Greenwood Station where the Roxy Theatre is. It's a really old picture theatre but it's only \$1.50 admission. We saw the Towering Inferno, a film we've both wanted to see and thoroughly enjoyed it too, despite a distinct aroma of "pot" in the air, and all the immature kids that went to see it clapping and cheering every time someone died. We arrived home at 1.50am by the last subway and bus for the night.

Saturday 7th February 1976

For the first time we saw the clock show 7.30am this morning when we got up ready for Niagara Falls. Headed off for Niagara about 9.00am and the weather was beautiful in Toronto – blue sky and moderate temperature. Drove down through Hamilton and around Lake Ontario to Niagara Falls. The weather deteriorated as we approached and became very cloudy. We all

gasped in amazement as the American Falls came into sight. We parked the Volksy directly opposite the American Falls and perved at that for a while. We then walked up the road to the Horseshoe Falls and the gift shops. Naturally all the falls were frozen and huge lumps of ice hung down from the top indicating that it had once been water cascading over the top. Not all the water freezes. Tons of it still flows flow over the tops and down onto the ice below. It then flows underneath the surface ice out to Lake Ontario, along the Niagara River.

The area underneath the Rainbow Bridge and then right back to Horseshoe Falls (where the Maid of the Mist sails in summer) was completely frozen and had formed an ice bridge. Apparently an ice bridge forms every year but because of the intense cold this winter, the ice bridge extended the furthest down the Niagara River for the last 24 years. We perused the gift shops for a while and then ventured into the scenic tunnels the price for which had been reduced to \$0.75. We soon found out why. The lower viewing level where raincoats are required was closed due to excessive ice conditions. All we could do was look at the thunderous waters from the upper deck.

We then went further down the tunnel to the portals from which you can see the inside of the waterfall, supposedly. We didn't see anything because of the ice. From the tunnels we walked around the area where all the flower displays are in summer – in winter it's covered by at least two feet of ice. The trees around the area are incredible. The spray from the Falls coats the trees and then instantly turns to ice because of the bitterly cold weather. Mum & Dad, you may remember the fence that runs around Horseshoe Falls? Well, in winter the top of that fence is just visible above the ice.

We had lunch in the Victoria Park cafeteria overlooking both waterfalls and then after lunch crossed the Rainbow Bridge into the USA. Went to the Prospect Point lookout tower above and below the American Falls, circled Goat Island and then looked around the town on the US side. About 4.00pm we headed back to Toronto.

In the evening we went to the Tranzac Club where a guy called "The London Bobby" was entertaining. Typical Pom, he played the piano and led the audience in sing-a-longs interspersed with jokes. It was a real laugh a minute night and we really enjoyed ourselves. Went home very, very tired.

Sunday 8th February 1976

Woke rather late (seems to be a recording). The cold that Bill had so kindly given Peter had now latched itself to me. I spent most of the day lying on the couch watching TV and being waited upon by two very kind gentlemen. No matter which way I lay, my back ached. Never had a cold like that before. I was full of nose drops and aspirin because we had tickets to the hockey and I was really looking forward to going. Bill made a very nice tea (one of his own recipes) and after telling myself I felt a lot better, we set off for the hockey.

Bill told us that the game started at 8.00pm, so we left about 7.00pm to give us plenty of time. We met Irene at the subway just outside the "Gardens", where the match was being played. Mrs Gerrard's son's wife had a baby on the 22nd of January (what a good day) and Irene (an English girl) is a sort of Nanny for the baby. The mother isn't very strong because she was quite ill before the birth.

When we arrived at the Gardens, we found out that the game had started at 7.00pm and the first period was already finished!! Alan, Mrs Gerrard's son had some tickets for the game and asked if we could sell them (his company provides them). There were quite a few people who wanted tickets and Bill sold them all quite easily. Boy did we get a shock when we saw the inside of the Gardens. It was just huge. We were sitting in the cheapest seats about 150 feet above the ice.

There weren't many seats that were vacant because last night the Leafs played Boston and won 11 – 4.

After the game we went for a coffee and Bill took out the money from the sale of the tickets. Somehow he had lost about \$36. He was quite upset and after coffee we all walked back to where the sales had taken place in hope of finding the money.

Went to bed feeling a little better – not much and Pete watched a war movie on TV.

Monday 9th February 1976

Bit of a nothing day today – Mondayitis I guess. Received a few letters and spent most of the day reading them and replying. Received a long awaited letter from Brenda – a very startling letter. Had tea and retired to a few television programs.

Tuesday 10th February 1976

Bill went to work in the morning and arrived home about 12.30pm to go to Buffalo to pick up his landing Visa. We decided to go along for the ride and also to see Niagara lit up at night. When we crossed the border from Canada to the USA we had to go to the Immigration office again to have some forms filled out. Boy, the questions they asked us. They even asked Pete where he worked in Australia and what he did. He also asked me, and when I said I had resigned, he wanted to know why and from where. Brother!!

It didn't take us long to pick up the papers from the Canadian Consulate. The building was really unusual; the road ran right through the middle of it. We didn't think much of Buffalo; everything was either burnt down, evacuated or very old. We drove around for a while; just to say that we had been there. Then we headed off for Niagara Falls. We arrived at the border and were ushered into the Immigration office once again.

This time it was a real session. First of all, Pete was asked to go into the office by himself. He was in there for about 10 minutes, 10 minutes too long as far as I was concerned. I was just trying to imagine what was in store for me. Bill was next and his interview lasted about 40 minutes mainly because the Immigration office had to fill in some of the forms we had picked up. When Bill came out I thought it would be my turn, but no, we were allowed to go.

We arrived at Niagara a few minutes before the lights were due to come on, so we decided to go look for a place to eat. We found a real doozy. They advertised "cold, frosty" draught beer, - well it was just room temperature, the water smelled terrible and the food took ages to be served. We walked out full but not too happy. The lights at the Falls were not as bright as we thought they would be (from the post cards we had seen) but we took a few pictures anyway. We couldn't believe the temperature that was showing on the Panasonic Tower. Would you believe +10°C? Unbelievable. Admittedly a lot of ice and snow had melted since the last time we were there, but it was still cold, probably from the wind that was blowing.

Wednesday 11th February 1976

After yesterday's adventures in Buffalo and Niagara, we decided to have a quiet day today at home. Awoke leisurely about 11am and spent the day watching TV and writing letters. Also composed a sympathy card for Randy Payne seeing as how he was getting married. Wrote a poem for him. Walked down the street about 3.30pm to post the letters and was again amazed at the temperature of +5 °C. Snow and ice was melting everywhere. In the evening we went to a pub called the "Oak Tree" in Yonge Street. The "Drifter's Club" were meeting again so we joined them.

AN ODE TO RANDY PAYNE

There was a young guy called Randy
Who came from a very fine family
Two sisters and a brother called Scott
Maureen and Stuart made up that lot

When Randy was around the age of sixteen
He discovered where he should have been
And so he had his mother in quite a tether
When Randy found a pub called the Feathers

As in every pub there was a bar
And every night Randy would sink many a jar
They had a pool table by one wall
And it was there Randy learnt how to play a ball

One evening the quality of the place picked up
When in walked Nadia hoping for a bit of luck
Young Randy looked up and sighted along his cue
And said "Hey boy this one's for you"

Their first date was at the infamous Rowley Park
It was here Randy hoped for many a shot in the dark
But he was so rapt in the racing
That Nadia gave up all hope of ever mating

Things were progressing ever so slowly
And one day Nadia was feeling very lonely
But Randy came from out of the blue
And said gee I'd like to marry you

So she arrived at the church with a smile
And grinned as she walked down the aisle
She laughed as she met him at the altar
And at the sound of the hymn she didn't falter

You're right this last verse won't be in rhyme
But Nadia had plenty of time
But all she could hear were three key words
"Aisle altar hymn".

Thursday 12th February 1976

Much the same sort of day as yesterday. TV, reading, writing. This time Laima walked down the street to post the letters, and the temperature was again +5 °C. Received a letter from Mara in Spain today. Very interesting. So a reply was written and duly posted. Bill decided not to come home to tea tonight as he was going to get the bindings on his skis fixed. Once again the TV entertained us at night. Haven't found a job yet.

Friday 13th February 1976

The day proved to be not unlucky for us as Bill gave us the use of his car for the day. At about 9am we left home and drove Bill to work. We then headed north towards Alaska, but of course didn't get that far. Drove about 70 miles to a big town called Barrie. A divided highway all the way there of course. Looked around Barrie for a while and then elected to continue on to Wasaga Beach. A beach that our Ontario guidebook told us was a snowmobiler's paradise. Really an eye-opener this place. Roads weren't bitumen – they were solid ice. If you can imagine a beach and surroundings, such as the beach houses and roads etc, that are at Victor Harbour, then you have Wasaga Beach. Except that there was no sand on the beach, only mountains of snow.

The beach houses, all deserted in winter, were smothered in snow, as were boats and cars that were parked in backyards. At one stage I decided to stop and take a photo of a car submerged in snow. We were only going at 10 mph when I gently braked, but the tyres wouldn't grip. They just locked on the ice and so we were headed straight into the bank of snow on the side of the road. No damage done but we couldn't get the car from out of the drift. Only by shovelling snow away from the front end and putting more under both back tyres did we get out.

Continued on to a place called Collingwood where we had lunch at Woolworths. Then we went to Craighleith, which is a town at the base of the Blue Mountain ski fields. Drove all around them at the base and then saw a sign to Scenic Caves. Took this road but of course the caves were closed. However, the road wound up and around to the top of all the ski lifts. Had a beautiful view over Lake Huron and all the surrounding countryside blanketed in white. Bill had kept his skis on the car after fixing them last night so I took them off and had a bit of a ski around at the top of the mountain. Headed off around 4.30pm and picked up Bill from work, had tea and watched the movie "Joe" on TV.

Saturday 14th February 1976

On weekends here we normally go out somewhere with Bill so he can tell us what we're looking at. However, today he wanted to buy an AM/FM radio cassette player for his car so I went with him to look at various models while Laima stayed home. We were out for about four hours and eventually he found the one he wanted. Home at 5pm and were treated to a roast pork dinner which Laima had prepared. In the evening we all sat down and watched the Leafs get beaten by Vancouver.

Sunday 15th February 1976

Daytona 500 day! For me anyway. Today was the day that Daytona Speedway had its big race and it was live on TV throughout the US and Canada. Needless to say I stayed at home glued to the set. Bill stayed in bed all day. He'd caught another cold! Laima watched the race with me. Incredible ending, when 200 yards from the finish Dave Pearson and Richard Petty, the two leaders, collided at 180mph. Both rammed the concrete wall and began to spin wildly. Pearson recovered first and inched his badly damaged car over the line to win. Petty pushed his. For tea

tonight we had rissoles seeing as how there had been a roast. At night we watched an Agatha Christie movie "10 Little Indians". Made in 1945 but was still good entertainment.

Monday 16th February 1976

Bill was still not feeling very well, so stayed home from work. Mrs Gerrard has the same virus as Bill, so for our own good we took Bill's car and went sightseeing. We drove around Ontario Place but it only opens in May. It's like the Adelaide Show with roller coasters, and all the usual rides. There were only workmen there, repairing things for the opening. We didn't go into any of the halls because the day was rather miserable, not cold, but overcast and raining a little. After we left there, we went to do the week's shopping. Food for a week for three - \$18.50. Decided to finish the day off properly so we had Aussie style hamburgers for tea. Complete with fried eggs and onions.

Tuesday 17th February 1976

Bill still not feeling 100% so he stayed home again. Towards midday we all decided to go out (Bill felt a lot better). Bill wanted to have his AM/FM radio with cassette player installed, so we drove out to Kromer Radio (Pete and myself had checked the place out the day before) and left the car there for them to install it. We were to pick it up again at 6.30pm. First we went to the USA Travel Centre to get some pamphlets for our Greyhound Bus Tour. We ended up getting practically every pamphlet they had. Then we went to the Australian Consulate to read up on all the newspapers they had. Pete found an Australian, New Zealand paper printed in England for Australians. Quite good reading, even had a speedway picture in it.

Still had some time to kill so we went across to the Toronto Dominion Centre and caught the lift to the 54th floor and the observation floor. It cost \$0.50 to go through the turnstile, but because it was very overcast outside and we could see a little from where we were, we decided to keep the money and come back on a better day with the camera. The floor below us had a restaurant with the same view. The drinks were very expensive with beers at \$1.30. We didn't buy any, but we got the info from some people going down in the same lift as ours.

We went to the Qantas office after that to see if they could send our slides back to Australia and that's where we saw a huge map of Sydney. The description on the bottom read as follows: "*Downtown Sydney and surrounding areas*". We all had a laugh and left a Qantas hostess with a puzzled look on her face. We had an hour to spare so we went to the King's Nag for a drink. (Decided to spend the money that we had saved at the observation floor). We didn't tip the waiter the first time, so drinks were a bit delayed in the second round. Nice looking pub though – English décor. Picked up the car and listened to the new stereo all the way home. Listened to every station on the dial. Peter read most of the pamphlets and started organising our bus trip.

Wednesday 18th February 1976

Today was the culmination of a weeklong thaw in the Toronto area. Temperatures have been way above freezing and so all the snow has melted or in the process of. Today it started raining and washing away what remained of the rest of the snow. Consequently we stayed indoors all day. Laima rang up Faberge and made an appointment to go out there on Friday, so today was another nothing day. We looked at the USA folders and partly planned our trip to begin at the end of next week.

Thursday 19th February 1976

A better day today so we set off downtown to begin a walking tour, which was outlined in a book called "Exploring Toronto" that Bill had used when he first arrived. We got off at Queen

Street Subway Station and walked up Yonge Street to the Holy Trinity Church, which is now completely surrounded by the newly developed Eaton's Department Store Centre. We then walked down numerous other streets viewing historic houses (which haven't been demolished by new buildings), churches, pawnshops, etc. We ended that tour (which wasn't a particularly long one) at the beginning of the second tour. This was at the old city hall in Queen Street. We went inside there and to our surprise it is now almost entirely used for marriages registry style. People everywhere, confetti, photographers; it's a beautiful old building, built after the result of an international competition for architecture in 1890.

We continued on then through Eaton's Bargain centre and onto the Nathan Phillips Civic Centre with its curved buildings and ice skating rink. We went to the top of the new city hall building, which is one of the curved ones and looked down over the artificially frozen rink. From there we went to Osgoode Hall where the lawns were now completely free of snow, with quite a few squirrels happily playing and looking for food. Laima was most upset that I wouldn't let her take one home. Next we went through the Four Seasons Hotel across the street from the civic centre. Quite an impressive place with huge underground malls.

From there we walked through building complexes to the Toronto Dominion Centre. Large block buildings towering into the sky. We went to the top of the Commerce Court Building to the 57th floor. The observation floor was decked out in dark blue carpet continuing up the walls. Powerful binoculars lined the windows. A dime was the cost but I have strategically discovered that slot machines, which take a dime, also accept Aussie 1 cent pieces! Similarly an Aussie 2 cent piece operates machines that accept nickels (5 cents). Also a ten-cent piece (Aussie) works slot machines that are meant for quarters. Unfortunately we've just about run out of Aussie money.

A great view of the city and suburbs. Time was marching on so we went home next – on the subway at peak hour. Thousands of people everywhere – stood up the whole bloody way home. No chance of falling over. In fact you didn't need to hang on because we were wedged between people so hard. In the evening we went to the Tranzac Club. Bill had a cricket meeting so Laima and I tagged along as well and played cards, table tennis and darts.

Friday 20th February 1976

We awoke late (I wonder why?) and at 12.30pm we set off for Faberge. We allowed ourselves 1½ hours to get there but even that wasn't enough – we were ½ hour late. However, they didn't mind and Dave the plant manager duly set off to show us the plant and the warehouse. Very interesting too. A much bigger operation than Sydney. They fill their own bottles and lotions etc from big vats in the rear of the warehouse. Just like being at Coca-Cola. After the tour, Dave took us to their local haunt (after work drinking house) and over a beer we talked about how hard it was to get a job. And surprise of surprise he offered his assistance in getting a job at Faberge. Great news – he told us to ring him on Monday. So there is a break for us.

However, Mrs Gerrard has mentioned to Bill that if we got a job we would have to move out because she lives in a non-rental area (she makes an exception for Bill for security sake) and she says that the neighbours will dob her in to the council if they see us going in and out all the time. So we've got some decisions to make if we take the jobs or not. We got home late from Faberge and Bill made us Cottage Pie, which was delicious.

Saturday 21st February 1976

Woke up to quite heavy snow falling but it was wet snow that would melt as it hit the ground because it was 4 °C. The snow turned to rain about midday and stayed that way all day and all night. Stayed indoors all day. I went out to get some fish and chips for lunch. Paid \$4.20 for

three pieces of fish and chips that would only have cost \$1.60 at the most in Australia. Laima had caught another cold yesterday so she stayed in bed all day. However, in the evening she had to get up because Bill shouted us to dinner at Honest Ed's – a huge warehouse complex that serves only roast beef with Yorkshire pudding and vegetables. Another of his warehouses (all next to each other) serves only steak – only fish – only chicken. You choose what you want to eat while you stand on the street. Once you're in – you've got no choice. Needless to say, Honest Ed is a millionaire (and a bit). After dinner we went to an Agatha Christie play – "The Unexpected Guest" – a good production and thoroughly enjoyed it especially the surprise ending. Put us in the mood to see "The Mouse Trap" in London.

Sunday 22nd February 1976

Laima was no better so I "ordered" her to stay in bed all day. Of course "in bed" for her was on the couch in front of the TV. We watched "The Superstars", a sports show in which stars of their own particular sport compete against other stars in various sports of which none is a specialist. Great viewing. Would go over well in Australia. TV day all day.

Monday 23rd February 1976

I felt a bit better today, but still didn't want to risk going outside. Came to the conclusion that it must have been the flu because my whole body ached and my eyes were very sore. The only good I got out of being sick was being waited on hand and foot. No request was too much! Pete went to the shop to get me another supply of tissues and the day was spent very quietly.

Tuesday 24th February 1976

Still sounding very nasal, but desperate for some fresh air, so we went out. First to pick up some slides from Kodak and then to High Park. What a beautiful place, full of tall old trees, birds, ducks and squirrels! Couldn't wait to spot some because we had brought a big bag of peanuts to feed them. Sat down on one of the benches and made what we thought were squirrel calls. As soon as they smelt the peanuts they were out in their dozens. They were eating from our hands and then running up the trees to eat them. Could have spent hours there, but Pete wanted to feed the ducks by the lake.

We walked up and down the slushy hills and came across the lake, still half frozen. We were well prepared; we had taken some stale bread from home and set about feeding the fat ducks. You would think everybody had the same idea as us. We threw the bread onto the ice and watched the ducks slither and slide as they fought for each morsel. Quite a funny sight. Some of them were quite tame and came right up to our feet - cheeky! Ran out of bread, so we started to feed them peanuts. Would you believe they ate them?

I felt we were depriving the squirrels of food, so we headed back (after a swing in the playground) to the squirrels. Took us a while to coax them out, but out they came. A little grey one got quite fond of us and hopped on the table and started helping himself to the bag. We figured he was the hunter because as soon as he had one, he would bury it under leaves and come back for more. He was our favourite. A very enjoyable day, only one thing wrong.....Pete wouldn't let me take one home!

Wednesday 25th February 1976

Decided to go to the Islands today. We made some sandwiches and caught the subway toward Union Station where we transferred to a bus then on to a ferry. Ten minutes later we were at Hanlan's Point. A real contrast from downtown Toronto. The island was so quiet and surrounded in trees. It's hard to imagine a place like this so close to a huge city. There were

literally hundreds of geese swimming and walking around. We walked nearly two miles and felt entitled to some lunch so we sat down on some rocks by the beach and watched the water lap the shore. The different islands are very close to one another with bridges connecting them.

We came across an amusement centre (closed unfortunately) and could just imagine what a busy place this would be in the summer. There's a separate community that lives on the islands. They have a school, a filtration plant and a farm. There were some newborn lambs frolicking around that were really cute but again Pete wouldn't let me take one home. What a spoilsport.

We then walked to the more inhabited part of the island. Many of the homes were just summer houses, but the dozen or so cats that we saw told us there were quite a few people that lived on the island permanently. We found more proof of this when the next ferry came to dock. All the workers were coming home. All in all, we walked about five miles from one end of the islands to the other – and we only saw two squirrels, very disappointing. I stuffed all those peanuts in my pockets for nothing – and Pete thought they were tissues! Caught the train home very tired but thoroughly enjoyed the day.

Thursday 26th February 1976

After the good weather we had had the previous days, we decided to go on a picnic today. Where? Feeding the squirrels again at High Park. Thermos of coffee, sandwiches, donuts and peanuts. Set off from home at 11.00am and arrived at High Park at 11.30am. Only two subway stops from where we got on and we were at a big park that has its own zoo, ice skating rink, lakes and acres of picnic areas. We selected our table again and sat down and waited for the squirrels to arrive. They did and so they ate while we did.

We had only just finished eating when the rain started – it had become overcast very quickly so we were forced to take cover in a shed. We stayed there for an hour reading the Toronto Sun (paid for with three Aussie 2-cent pieces) until it became too cold. We didn't have anything else to do so we went for a ride on the subway to as far as it goes. As we didn't get off at the end, we came back again for no extra money. We went home and prepared for tea and an early night.

Friday 27th February 1976

Awoke early and Bill took us to Horseshoe Valley for a day's skiing. Horseshoe Valley is only one of about 25 ski fields in Ontario. It's about 75 miles from Toronto straight up Highway 400 – a 6-lane freeway all the way. We had a great day. Laima and I went downhill skiing while Bill took his own skis and went for a jaunt on the cross-country trails. At about 1.15pm we met for lunch – sandwiches and thermos (but no peanuts). We then took Bill on the slopes (different skis needed for X country than those used for downhill). I gave him the skis I rented and Laima took him out on the beginner's slopes. But he couldn't grasp it straight off and fell several times. He gave up and went back to his cross-country and Laima and I went back to riding the chair lift and tows to the top of the hills.

We had a terrific time leaving there at about 5.00pm. On the way home to Toronto we counted 164 snowmobiles being towed to the snow areas behind cars. This evening we went to an Irish Tavern called the Windsor House. Had a ball there with two Irish groups singing real Irish songs. Sing – a – long type ones. Place was packed to the rafters with people waiting to get in.

Saturday 28th February 1967

Bed was too good to get out of too early today, so it was almost midday when we dragged ourselves into the fresh air. To where? Peanut land again, so Laima could feed the squirrels and the ducks and the pigeons and anything else that came along that was hungry. We met Bill

there today. He had previously left early to do something else. We walked around the zoo and saw two deer fighting each other with their horns. In the evening Graham Morrissey and his wife, Chris, came to tea. Laima made tuna mornay and Bill made some tasty prawns washed down with his home brew and some French wine. The Morrisseys were a really nice couple and we had a very enjoyable night with them.

Sunday 29th February 1976

Spent most of today lazing around and finding out details of bus departures. I don't think I mentioned it earlier but Faberge were unable to give us jobs. They were prepared to employ us without security ID numbers but their budget for February and March did not allow enough money to pay us. They were going to have to create jobs for us to do. There were no vacancies.

So we are going to commence our bus trip on Tuesday. Heading for Boston first then New York, Philadelphia, Washington, Atlanta, Miami, Fort Lauderdale, Orlando (Disneyworld), New Orleans, Santa Fe, Houston, Flagstaff (Grand Canyon), Las Vegas, Boulder, Mt Rushmore National Park and then back through the northern states to Chicago, Indianapolis and Toronto. We'll be back in Toronto on April 2nd. We then plan to stay here for several days while our slides are developed and then it's on to London. So it's going to be pretty hectic from now on. This evening we all watched "The Sound of Music" on TV. Just like it was on the screen magnificent. Wonder whether we will see the actual house in Salzburg when we are there?

Monday 1st March 1976

We spent today mainly doing odds & ends. Like sewing, washing and packing for our trip. We aren't taking our two suitcases with us, only the red bag and a smaller suitcase of Bill's. We've already learnt the lesson of taking too much with us. (We had learnt by the time we had left Fiji). So this time we're taking only the bare essentials. Of course it will be much warmer in the States than Toronto so have packed accordingly. I went for a walk to the shops and bought a bunch of flowers to give to Mrs Gerrard along with a genuine kangaroo skin purse made in South Australia.

CHAPTER SIX

The rest of the USA from inside a Greyhound Bus

Tuesday 2nd March 1976

Got up at about 8.00am to begin the next adventure of our trip. Finished packing and also finished off the cassette tape before the mailman arrived. Another package of cuttings arrived which included details of the South Australian cricketers' walk out. Really enjoyed the last chance for a month to read them. Last night there was a snowstorm and Toronto had been blanketed in snow. We all trooped out of the house to get into Bill's car, which we did, but when he attempted to reverse out of the garage, the clutch packed up and we had a dud Volksy. So we had to trudge through the snow to Jane Street where we caught a bus to the subway and then to the Greyhound Bus Terminal.

We left Toronto at 3.00pm and travelled to Buffalo via Hamilton, St Catherines, Niagara Falls and Fort Erie. From there, after changing buses at 7.00pm, we set off to Boston. The bus could only travel very slowly as the roads were sheer ice caused through freezing rain. That is, rain which freezes instantly as soon as it hits anything at ground level. Consequently we only arrived in Boston at 8.30am over two hours late.

Wednesday 3rd March 1976

So far so good travelling on the bus. Had a few weird characters. One was a Negro 6' 8'' tall with the loudest voice I've ever heard. Found it difficult to sleep last night, but once we get real tired I'm sure it will be easy. After leaving the bus depot we checked into the Hotel Avery and used our Hotel Pass vouchers for the first time. For the \$12.00 we paid for the voucher, he claims we got a \$22.00 room. Decided to stay the night in Boston so we would arrive in New York in daylight.

It snowed all day today so we were content to see the Freedom Trail through the haze of snow. Toured all the popular spots. The Archives museum, Paul Revere's house and the park with his statue, cemeteries with famous people buried in them, the sites of the Boston Massacre and Tea Party and others. Temperature was around 22°F all day. (Just heard on the news that in some places of North America, the storm is the worst in 30 years). On one of the streets of the Freedom Trail was a liquor supermarket that took our eye. We went in and bought a 26oz can of Fosters and a bottle of Mateus Rose for \$2.75. (Had them in our room tonight with tea.)

Arrived back at the room at about 3.00pm. Laima was tired so she lay down for a while but I wanted to see the Boston Subway System, so I went for an endless ride on that for 25 cents. Tonight we're taking it easy with an early night and letter writing. Leaving for New York at 7.00am in the morning.

Thursday 4th March 1976

We both had good intentions of leaving at 7.00am but we eventually caught the 9.00am bus for New York. Pete bought me the book "Rich Man Poor Man" because I had got so involved with the series on TV (we left Toronto before it had finished) so I started reading it on the 4½ hour bus trip. The day was a little better than yesterday, but not much. We had a lead foot bus driver, so much so that he was stopped by a policeman just outside New York. What a huge city!! And we both thought Sydney was big. Adelaide looks like a country town compared to New York.

When we got off the bus we checked in our luggage and headed towards 34th street from 41st street to look around for the youth hostel where we planned to spend a few nights. It's in the same building as the YMCA and costs \$5.25 each per night. A double room at the YMCA (corner of 34th & 9th) only cost \$5.00 per night, so we decided on the latter. Had a look at the room, not much, just two beds, 12' x 10', two open cupboards and that's it. The toilets and showers are just down the hall. No blankets on the beds, but we got some quick smart.

We walked across to 5th Avenue towards the Rockefeller Centre after seeing Madison Square Gardens. (Cat Stevens was appearing there). We walked down 5th slowly absorbing all the immense buildings and immaculately dressed women. We saw two completely different classes of people – the very high class and the very low class. Hot pretzels are sold on every corner. Nobody obeys the lights pedestrians that is. I wonder how many get killed in a week? We saw a few close calls today. Most of the streets are one way and every tenth car is a privately owned one, all the rest are big yellow, loud taxis. The city seems to be on the move all the time with everyone seeming to be in a hurry. We walked through a very expensive and no doubt exclusive shop, where a handkerchief would have cost \$15. We felt rather uneasy walking around in jeans. Too bad!

The advertising in Times Square is just unbelievable. We saw an ad for Winston cigarettes, 20 storeys high x 8 storeys wide. A huge painting of a guy who was blowing real smoke! Not just blowing it out of his mouth but making smoke rings. Something you have to see to believe. Went past a lot of bars advertising topless waitresses and numerous X-rated shows. Actually saw a squirrel in Central Park too – pity we didn't have any peanuts. Policemen were walking around everywhere, all for a purpose too, as we saw some very queer and scary people in the downtown area. I had always dreamed of walking down 5th Avenue and staring at the monstrous buildings. It's a really scary feeling at first – all alone in one of the biggest cities in the world. That first look is really frightening.

Friday 5th March 1976

Last night I read all the literature we had on New York and worked out an itinerary for today. Left the YMCA at about 9.30am, heading across 34th street to 8th Avenue. Went to Madison Square Gardens again to try to get in. When we arrived yesterday, Laima had telephoned Faberge and made an appointment for 11.00am today and because the building they are in is on the Avenue of the Americas (6th Avenue) we started to walk that way. They are in Burlington House on the 37th and 38th floors (alongside the New York Hilton). And what a joint it is!! Their two floors were furnished at a cost of \$8 million (in 1969!). All the passageways connecting the offices are carpeted (the walls too) with thick black carpet and illuminated with red, green and blue fluorescent lights. The offices of the Vice Presidents etc were superb, all overlooking midtown Manhattan.

From there we caught a subway to Wall Street and the financial area in lower Manhattan. The subways have to be seen to be believed. The New York Transit Authority doesn't bother to clean their trains anymore. They sweep them but they deliberately leave all the graffiti on them. But the carriages are really colourful. Actually some of the work is quite good (and naughty). Got out at Wall Street where we had a good view of Trinity Church. Went to the visitors' gallery of the New York Stock Exchange and was amazed at the activity. Left there and headed south to Battery Park and the Staten Island Ferry. We wanted to take the Circle Island Cruise but it wasn't operating.

Went to Staten Island and saw the magnificent view of Lower Manhattan and then headed for the World Trade Centre and the Observation Towers. What a gigantic project that must have been? \$1.70 each got us to the top. The lift takes 57 seconds to go to the 107th floor, (the lift in the Avery Hotel in Boston took 60 seconds to go to the 10th floor) and wow what a sight. Although

the Trade Centre is some 40 blocks away from the Empire State Building, you can easily tell "you're looking down on it". Visibility was only 5 miles when we got up there but it improved remarkably (almost instantly) after 10 minutes or so. We stayed up there for about 1½ hours and watched New York City go from daylight to dusk to dazzling bright lights. The brochure distributed by the World Trade Centre says that there is enough concrete in the two buildings to build a 4 lane paved highway to the moon!!

Next we caught a subway to Greenwich Village around the Washington Square area. Full of freaks (harmless – they weren't Negroes) and quaint restaurants depicting all nationalities. Then we started our big walk from Houston Street to Washington Square to 1st Street and all the way up 5th Avenue and the Avenue of the Americas to Times Square on the 47th Street. All this of course was at night. Bill had stressed 'don't go out at night', but we couldn't resist the temptation.

Sat in Times Square for 20 minutes or so and watched all the New Yorkers do their thing around all of the porno joints off Broadway and 6th Avenue. Really entertaining – recommend it to anyone. Scary at times but the experience was worth it. Laima said her hands were clammy as she clutched tightly to me. Finished off an extremely big day of miles of walking and years of memories by walking down 8th Avenue past all the liquor stores and bars to the YMCA.

***NO ONE CAN DESCRIBE NEW YORK IN LETTERS OR WRITING.
YOU'VE JUST GOT TO SEE IT TO BELIEVE IT!!!***

Saturday 6th March 1976

Still determined to see inside Madison Square Gardens, so it was the first place we headed for this morning. The place is closed to visitors on Saturdays – big disappointment, still we saw a model of it in the foyer. So beautiful was the sight from the World Trade Centre that we decided to go to the top of the Empire State Building. We used some free coupons we got with our Hotel Passes – saved \$1.70 each. Saturday is a bad day for sightseeing because every Tom, Dick and Harry and Peter and Laima wants to go up there. Went up to the 86th floor and looked around. It was really windy and cold, but visibility was better than yesterday. Then we caught the lift to the 102nd floor and looked at the view from the really cramped area with about 50 other people. The Empire State Building was built in 1930 and is the most modern man made wonder of the world. I wonder what will be next!

Then we walked to Grand Central Station next to the Pan Am Building (which wasn't open on Saturday) and then we headed down 45th Street to the UN Building. We only had to wait a few minutes before the next tour started – a lot of people must go through that place. About 20 people to each tour and everyone listens to the guide very intently. I guess the United Nations is one of the few organisations where every country in the world gathers for the well-being of everyone. It's sought of like walking in to a place where everyone wants to be friendly and do something good for the world.

We then caught a subway to Coney Island, a very long ride in a very old and dirty train. Most of the rides were closed but because of the warm weekends New York has been having lately, a few rides were operating. Pete went on the world's largest ferris wheel. "The Wonder Wheel" – it cost \$0.75 and he went around twice. Normally in the summer, the ride costs \$1.50. We walked around and saw the three roller coasters, which weren't operating because the tracks freeze in the winter. Then we took a short walk on the Coney Island boardwalk before we caught the subway back to the "Y".

When we were in the UN Building we had lunch in their coffee shop. As Laima was reading the menu (we had hot dogs) the waitress grabbed Laima's hand and stared at her engagement ring.

She said it was the most beautiful ring she'd ever seen. After we had eaten and were about to leave she brought over three other waitresses to see it too. And of course the people sitting next to us (Pakistani's) had to have a look as well and all in all there were nearly ten people gasping at the Physick's engagement ring. Red was the colour of the day for our faces.

After resting in the "Y" for a few hours, we ventured out onto Broadway again to see the live theatres and "fair dinkum" movie houses. The place seemed even more crowded than last night. Just as we imagined it to be, louder, busier, and more dangerous. Saw all we wanted to see and were on our way home when we walked past a bar with topless dancers. We were both thirsty, so on impulse, and also to say we went into a New York nightclub, we went in. It was a very respectable place otherwise I wouldn't have taken Laima in. Waiter took our order of a beer and brought back two bottles each. Minimum of two drinks each. Then we got the bill. \$10.75! We weren't that thirsty but we had to pay of course. Oh well, at least we saw the inside of a New York nightclub. The dancing was good too!

Sunday 7th March 1976

Breakfasted at McDonalds and caught the 10.00am bus to Philadelphia arriving at 12.15pm. Firstly we went to the tourist information office and got a few maps and pamphlets mainly for the Hill-Physick-Keith House. The attendant at the tourist office didn't believe that we were descendants of Dr. Physick because we were Australian – "Dumb Yank". We were close to City Hall so we went up to the Observatory Tower. It's a very stately and beautiful building with a 500' tower and huge statue of William Penn on the top. It was very windy in the tower so we just took a short look around. Next stop was the Liberty Bell. It has been moved to a special glass covered building for the Bicentennial because of the thousands of Americans that will want to see and touch it this year. The Yanks are really rapt in this bell. You have to fight your way through the crowd to even get a glimpse of it.

There was a really long line to get into Independence Hall so we decided to give it a miss. Then we walked a few blocks to 321 South Fourth Street to the infamous Physick house! It cost \$2 each for a guided tour – there was no thought of not going in, so we gladly parted with the \$4. The guide was very informative and knew practically everything there was to know about Dr Physick. This house is the only free standing house (from that time) left in Philadelphia. It was built in 1786 and was restored in 1965 to the Federal Period. The hallway still has the original marble stone floor and candelabra. The green room was the doctor's waiting room. It was painted in a very strong green tone and the furniture is mainly French orientated.

The guide was very anxious to tell us that the Physick Family was rather wealthy and could afford very expensive furniture and fittings. Certain things that they liked from all over the world they had put into the various rooms. eg. In the waiting room there was a mirror with a carving of Cleopatra's head entwined by a snake. On the top of the mirror there are a lot of French orientated carvings, then on the top of all that was an American eagle.

Nothing is entirely from one country. The dining room is very grand with lots of silverware. Many of Dr. P's patients were well off and being his friends he didn't charge them a consultation fee, so in return, they gave him gifts for the house. Mainly silverware engraved with special messages to him. The Dr. was a very loved man by all Philadelphians. He also gave free service to the poorer people. The den is a huge room and mainly furnished in French furniture. The furniture throughout the house was made especially for him by his friends all over the world. Upstairs in the bedroom is a huge four-poster bed and a couch where we were told the Dr. was often known to have an afternoon nap. This room is less extravagant than the other rooms but very comfortable looking. His bedroom was one of the first to have an attached bathroom – something very unusual at that time.

Another room that was originally another bedroom was now made into a small museum. In there were some of the books he had written, a handkerchief with his name on it, a silver snuffbox, his original baby hat and other silverware. In another cabinet were all his medical instruments, very primitive indeed. When he was a doctor, anaesthetic was unheard of, but his work was responsible for the discovery of new medical techniques and instruments. He was known as the "Father of American Surgery".

John Marshall, a great personal friend of his, was the 4th Chief Justice of America and was treated by the Doctor at times of illness. The Dr. had previously saved his life when he removed his kidney stones (in the days of no anaesthetic). He was suffering from an incurable liver disease when he came to the Dr. for help. Unfortunately however, he died and during his funeral procession, they rang the Liberty bell and this is the occasion on which the bell was cracked!

George and Martha Washington were also good friends of his and stayed as guests in his house. The house is four storeys high and most of the rooms on the upper levels are now used by the Cincinnati Society members as their offices. The two women guides were very interested when we told them what our surname was and we felt very proud when we told them. The last part of the tour was a look around the garden with the shrubs and trees out there being the same ones that were planted when the house was built.

The house has 22 rooms. Dr. Philip Syng Physick had two daughters, one married a Dr. Randolph and the other a Conner – he had no sons. The descendants of these two families still live in the suburban area of Philadelphia. All in all we spent two hours in the house – a very enjoyable time full of very interesting historical facts. It makes you proud of being a Physick.

We walked back to the bus station and had some tea before we boarded the bus for Washington DC. Arrived at 9.40pm and made our way to the Fairfax Hotel which we paid for with one of our hotel passes. Very stately looking from the outside, but they could use some interior decorators in the rooms. Normal tariff for the rooms is \$30 per night (HAH!)

Monday 8th March 1976

After a great sleep on a very short bed we ventured out into Washington to see what American Government is all about. Left our suitcases in a locker at the bus terminal and headed in the general direction of all the monuments etc. On the way there we walked past the FBI Building and noticed a sign advising that there were tours of the building for free. The tour explained how the FBI works and was really very interesting. We learnt methods used in tracing the criminals of the gangster era, photos of those guys and the original weapons used by them. Some of the sub-machine guns and sawn-off shotguns were fearsome. We saw how the FBI fingerprinted its criminals and how they catalogued over 16,000,000 sets of them. We saw laboratories and scientific displays and finally a demonstration of pistol and machine gun firing by an FBI agent.

From there we walked to the Capitol Building and went on a ½ hour tour of that building. Once again for free. Very stately, and ornate – nothing is too good for the President and his mates. We saw the large area where the House of Representatives sit; however, we weren't allowed to take photos just as in the FBI Building. Returned through the huge domed area that sits on top of the Capitol. Left there and headed down the mall that leads to the Washington Monument.

Got sidetracked on the way by the Smithsonian Institute. It is a brand new place built to replace the old institute, which still stands. However it is not open yet but we did get a free peek of what's going to be in there. We saw Lindbergh's Spirit of St Louis, Gemini 4, (the one that actually went to and flew around the moon), and also the original Wright Brothers plane. Eventually they will have all sorts of original NASA vehicles in there. Went from there to an art gallery and the paintings had to be the worst ones imaginable. They were in the vein of a board

painted red with a single orange line on it. Others looked like the artists had drunk a can of paint and then vomited all over that canvas.

Arrived at the Washington monument and went to the top and saw our only view of the White House because it is closed to the public on Mondays. We then went to the Lincoln Memorial and saw him and then across to the Jefferson Memorial. To get there we had to walk through all the cherry blossom trees that had just begun to flower. Although they were not fully in bloom they looked beautiful as they lined the Potomac River. By this time since the beginning of the day we had walked miles and miles and were beginning to get very footsore and weary. So at about 6.00pm we had tea at a Chinese restaurant and the shrimp curry and rice was delicious. Fancy me saying that.

As our bus for Atlanta was not leaving until 10pm we sat in the bus station and Laima read her book and I wrote all this in the diary. By the way yesterday in Philadelphia we bought a Greyhound Thermos flask for \$2.75. From now on all we do is present that flask at Greyhound cafeterias and we get it filled with fruit juice or coffee or tea for just \$0.15! It holds a pint too.

We caught the bus to Atlanta at 10.00pm. It was very crowded and all that Pete and I could manage was a seat right up the back that wouldn't recline because it was just in front of the restroom. It was a very bad night for sleeping and we both managed only a few short hours.

Tuesday 9th March 1976

Arrived at 12.15pm, put our luggage in a locker and set out to discover the place. We had been told about the Cyclorama, so we caught a bus out there. Fares very reasonable ... only \$0.15 each. It wasn't a very long ride and it was situated next to the zoo. The Cyclorama is a huge circular painting depicting the civil war between the north and the south of America. In front of the painting are figures of men and war arms all made of plaster of paris to give the painting a 3-dimensional look. A guide tells the story as you walk around the painting. When we left, we sat on a love swing and ate some oranges as we watched squirrels playing around us.

We went back downtown and discovered underground Atlanta. It's where the original city stood before it was burnt down during the civil war. Now it's full of gift shops and quaint eating-places. The smell of food was just too much, so we had a delicious pizza and a glass of beer. It began to spit a little, so we walked down Peachtree Street (main road) and admired all the skyscrapers. Atlanta buildings have many overhead passages connecting two or more buildings. Many are made of glass and other buildings reflect in them. Most of the time we were walking around with our heads looking up. Everybody thinks we have blood noses. We went inside the Hyatt Regency Hotel and just marvelled at the sight. There are six lifts, lit up by lights in full view of everyone in the foyer. There was also a bar, which looked as if it was suspended from the top. A very magnificent building.

Our bus for Orlando was leaving at 9.30pm and we were both tired so we just sat in the bus station and waited. Again a very full bus and very little sleep.

Wednesday 10th March 1976

Arrived in Orlando, Florida at 7.35am and discovered immediately that there was a Greyhound service going to Disneyworld at 8.00am, so we hurriedly washed etc, stored our luggage in a locker and hit the bus with only seconds to spare. Arrived at Disneyworld within a ½ hour and WOW what a place. The parking lots are big enough to cover Disneyland. Each parking lot is so big it is divided into smaller areas; and each smaller lot has its own name i.e. Hewey, Dewey, Louie, or Sleepy, Grumpy etc. Disneyworld is not just a Magic Kingdom, but a Magic Kingdom, Golf Resort, man-made Polynesian Villages and lakes for fishing (also man-made waves for

surfing), a camping wilderness with an old steam train chugging through the everglades to provide transportation for the campers. There are other things but too numerous to mention.

On arrival at the entrance we bought an all-inclusive ticket, which included transportation between all resorts within Disneyworld, admission and coupons for 12 rides. The entrance to the resort is one mile from the Magic Kingdom so there are two ways to get there. Monorail or steamer ferry. We chose the ferry getting there and the Monorail to get back. Disneyworld has many hotels within the grounds but none is as spectacular as the "Contemporary Hotel" which has the Monorail running through its lobby. Arrived at the Magic Kingdom (MK) at about 8.45am. We soon discovered that it is almost a carbon copy of Disneyland. So being seasoned Disney travellers now (?) we got a map and sat down and worked out what attractions we didn't see at Disneyland.

Took the RR train around the perimeter first to get a general view. Then walked up Main Street, which has very similar shops as its counterpart. Arrived at Adventureland first. One thing that DW has but DL hasn't is interconnecting canals throughout the Kingdoms. However there are no boats for riding them. Went on the jungle cruise again because it was really good at DL. Just as good here. Swiss Family Tree house was closed so we couldn't see that. Went to the Enchanted Tiki Room, which has animated jungle birds talking and singing in typical Disney style. Went to the Pirates of the Caribbean again too. Then took a raft to Tom Sawyer's Island and we really enjoyed that. Swinging bridges and mines and tunnels. Then a trip around Tom Sawyer's island, not by Mark Twain, but by a keel boat. The guide on the boat spoke in a real Southern drawl and was really entertaining.

Had lunch (and breakfast) in the Columbia House in Liberty Square. Then on through Fantasyland where all the rides were the same as DL. Used up our only A coupon on the Carousel! Then headed for Tomorrowland. The Submarine Voyage called "20,000 Leagues under the Sea" was closed for improvements. We both rode the "Grand Prix" raceway (with a bit of luck the cars might have topped 7 mph) and also the people mover – another E attraction which takes you through all, or most of, the other attractions in Tomorrowland to give an idea of what they are like. Also went into a General Electric presentation of how America has changed electronically throughout the years. Free – and very good.

Then we went to the infamous "Space Mountain". An RCA attraction (they put up the money,) it is unbelievable. To get to the ride (a 45min wait) we walked through dark tunnels displaying all sorts of space material. Then we arrived at the ride. It's a roller coaster type affair (in similar cars as the bobsled run at DL) but it's all in the dark and the cars are painted with fluorescent paint so you can watch them hurtle around 150' above you while waiting. There are signs all around that warn anyone with heart trouble etc not to go on the ride. We got on and all around were electronic signs indicating how many seconds to blast off. They weren't kidding either! Winched up to the top and away we went. Couldn't see a hand in front of your face. All we could see was fluorescent paint and meteorites flashing across the roof above us giving a planetarium type effect. Around 90° corners, up and down, Laima screamed for help and for it to stop. I think I even uttered something at times. The worst part about it is that because it's dark you can't brace yourself for the turns because for one you didn't know when the turn is coming and two, whether it's going left or right. WOW! That was our last ride, and then both of us went to the toilet!

Then we walked back through Fantasyland Castle and down Main Street to the Monorail that took us back to the entrance gates. Another great Disney day. Back at the bus station we both needed sleep, however our hotel pass place was a \$7.00 taxi ride away (there is no bus service in Orlando). So we opted for the nearest hotel to the bus station. Cost a bit more but still less than that hotel pass and two taxi rides. Collapsed that night via exhaustion and smelly clothes.

Thursday 11th March 1976

We awoke late (about 12.00 midday) and thus had missed the bus we wanted to catch to Miami. However we got the next one at 3.00pm, after a short look around in Orlando. Bit of a hole but why should they improve it when Disneyworld takes all the tourists? Arrived at Miami Beach at 9.30pm after a bus trip that was unusual to say the least. We had a fat lady who sat right next to the driver and ALL trip she sat there and talked to anyone, whether they listened or not, in the loudest, highest pitched Southern drawl you've ever heard. The bus driver nearly rolled his bus on some corners, he was that irritated and angry. When she got off at Miami and we went on to Miami Beach, he explained to us that there was nothing he could do to stop her because Greyhound changed their rule about passengers not talking to the driver. So he had to just sit there and cop the lot.

A short walk from the bus station and we were at our hotel, the Surfside Plaza which accepted Hotel Passes. A beautiful room, shag pile carpet, fridge, two double beds and it's right on the beachfront. Certainly a good investment these Hotel Passes. Went out for a look around at about 10.00pm. A lot of people in their 50's & 60's dominate the joint. They're everywhere. Consequently the streets were deserted at midnight.

Friday 12th March 1976

The air conditioning in the hotel was really cold so we were glad to get outside in the warm high 70's temperature. A truly magnificent day! We took a bus trip up Collins Street where all the flash hotels are situated. We walked along one of the piers and a short distance to the beach. The hotel beaches made the walk short. We came across a very expensive shopping area where the ladies sit and have the clothes of their choice modelled in front of them. That can be a very expensive afternoon. On the bus back to the hotel, we met the first person to ask us about life in Australia. A funny sort of fellow really.

We had a look at the hotel's pool and Pete was very tempted to have a swim, but we had to catch a bus to Miami at 3.00pm (our hotel was at Miami Beach, a 15min ride away). The bus driver gave us an informative tour on the way. We walked around downtown and were surprised to see so many Cuban people. If you haven't got Negroes, you've got Cubans. Miami itself wasn't that good, so we found the library and Pete went inside to read a few newspapers. I decided to stay outside and soak up some of the warm sun.

Then I met the most ignorant, bigheaded Yank in my life. He thought America was the only country in the world. He asked me questions about Australia, whether we had any Indians or Cowboys, if we spoke English or some other tongue, if we had our own money or used American money. When I would try to explain things to him, he would just stare into the sky as if he was 100 miles away – I wished he was. After ½ an hour I had had enough and made some excuse to get away from the idiot. He also thought that Australia was near the Arctic. Another one of those and I'm leaving this country!

Our bus was only leaving Miami at 11.30pm for Daytona, so to pass some of the time we walked to the Marina where there were hundreds of yachts and motor cruisers obviously owned by the very rich. At the Marina there was a restaurant that overlooked the harbour and the skyline of Miami. We only had \$8.37 in our pockets (our travellers cheque's were in the suitcase in the bus station locker) but we went in anyway. The bill, after careful planning by us, came to \$8.01. We didn't have enough money for a tip so we left a Canadian \$1 bill and an explanatory note.

Wonder what the reaction was? Killed the rest of the night by writing letters and the diary.

Saturday 13th March 1976

Arrived at Daytona Beach at 6.00am. Still dark but the sun was just rising. We wanted to do two things here.

1. See the famous Daytona Speedway.
2. See Cape Kennedy.

Obtained instructions on how to get to the speedway so at about 7.00 o'clock we set off. A beautiful morning and a pleasure to be up that early. Caught a bus directly to the speedway. Just my luck, there was nothing going on today so I was content to just see the track from one of the many grandstands around the 2½ mile track, banked some 30° in the corners where the cars average 180mph. The cheapest seat for the big race of the year is \$12 while the dearest is \$35. As it was only 8am when we left the track and our bus to Kennedy Space Centre (KSC) wasn't leaving till 11am, we walked the three or so miles back to the bus station. Beautiful weather and thoroughly enjoyed the walk.

We both slept all the way to KSC and woke up surrounded by rockets when the bus stopped to let people off. Paid our \$2.50 each and after a short wait we were on another bus for a two hour, 50 mile trip around KSC. After a swift bit of work by Laima we were strategically seated in the front seats of the bus. A really great place is KSC. We saw so many original spacecraft that in the end it was a bore to see any more. We saw the launch pads of the first series of manned spacecraft with Commander Alan Shepard and the Mercury Team. From that sight we went through all the following launch sites before leading up to the most recent series of manned launches – the Saturn V, which sent up the Americans to dock with the Russians. This is a project far too large to comprehend.

It starts with the rocket being built in a building that is 52 stories tall but has enough volume inside to house 4½ Empire State Buildings. We went inside this place but I bet our photos don't do it justice. Once the rocket is built it must be transported to the launch site over 3½ miles away. So they bring out the transporter, which picks the rocket up, sits it on its back and carries it to the launch site. This transporter is such a massive piece of equipment they haven't built a place big enough for it to fit in yet. Before the rocket is taken up there, the transporter also carries up the launch tower that holds the rocket in place prior to blast off. It also carries another structure that is taller than the rocket (over 50 storeys tall) to the site.

By the way, when these things are carried to the launch site they are all balanced not clamped down or anything on the transporter. A computer controls the movement, even going up a 5° incline at the launch site. All in all a fascinating day. We finished off by attending a film on the proposed new shuttle service between earth and space – just like an airliner does now – and a demonstration by a NASA Scientist on aspects of space travel. Arrived back at Daytona and immediately boarded another bus for New Orleans.

Sunday 14th March 1976

Arrived in New Orleans at 11.15am and headed straight for the motel that was listed on the pass. Motel DeVille, very nice! We caught a bus down Tulane Street and got off at Canal Street after which we walked down to the International Trade Mart Building. We went up to the 31st floor to the Observatory Tower just to get an aerial view of the place. We walked all around the French Quarter next and came across Jackson Park, where every Sunday jazz bands entertain the tourists while they feed the pigeons and browse around the gift shops and look at the paintings. This is a real haven for art lovers where painters sit on the sidewalks and paint all day. All the buildings have beautiful lace ironwork along the balconies adding a lot of charm to the already attractive streets.

Bourbon Street is one long party street. Dixie bands playing in the pubs, people singing and drinking beer as they pass all the strip tease places. The street is closed to cars on Sundays and made into a mall. The atmosphere is everywhere and nobody has a care in the world. We walked around the streets until 6.00pm and then back to Canal Street to catch our bus back to the motel. After about 5.30pm, many of the boutiques and gift shops shut and most of the people leave the streets and go into the restaurants and hotels. We went back to the motel, had some tea, watched a dumb Clint Eastwood movie and hit the sack.

Monday 15th March 1976

Yesterday we bought tickets for a Mississippi River Cruise and the inland waterways of Louisiana. Checked out of the motel and headed for the wharfs at the end of Canal Street where we were to board the Mark Twain the real one for a change. It left at 11.00am and chugged down the 'Sippi past all the ocean going ships which come to New Orleans via the river. The port of New Orleans is the third biggest in the world. A fact that surprised me. After an hour or so we turned towards starboard and sailed into an inland waterway via a lock that lowered the steamboat by 9 feet. This waterway is completely manmade and provides a convenient means of transporting stores and supplies to the Gulf of Mexico rather than the arduous waters of the 'Sippi.

After a while we cruised into the Bayou, which is an outlet of the river and was formed many, many years ago. Down along these bayous live people called Arcadians, who are a race of people descended from the Spanish but who couldn't cope with the city life. They live in fairly squalid conditions to say the least and are mainly employed by the oil companies who discovered vast supplies of oil in the area.

Returned to New Orleans at about 4.00pm along another inland waterway, which has the major industry of building oilrigs for the Gulf of Mexico. Through another lock bringing us back to the river level and we had returned. Our bus for Houston did not leave until 11.30pm so we walked down Bourbon Street again and surveyed the fascinating French Quarter for a second time. Saw a bar, which offered for half priced drinks between 6 & 8pm so we went in there. Not a soul in the joint except for the barman. Ordered two beers and got change of 50 cents out of a dollar. Couldn't believe it! A bargain and no one there. At about 7.30pm people started arriving. As each "person" came in the door, "he" blew a kiss to the barman etc and we then both knew why it wasn't patronised. At 7.32pm we were on our way to the bus station.

Rang up Bill from the bus station to see how things were in Toronto. He told us that Ted McIntosh had replied to the letter and that we could stay in his flat, which was good news indeed. So at the beginning of April, letters may be sent to us C/- 4 Simpson St, Battersea, SW 11, London. Got on our bus to Houston – packed with people again – and slept almost all the way to the land of big things.

Tuesday 16th March 1976

The only thing we wanted to see in Houston was the Astrodome. So at about 9.00am we caught a bus out there and took the tour of the massive indoor stadium. Due to a big dose of Physick luck the two previous nights had seen motorcycle racing inside the arena (they also race cars). So we missed that!! For \$2.00, the tour takes you to a theatre and we saw a film on the Astrodome and what sorts of events they stage. ie. baseball, football, tennis, boxing, rodeos, bike and car racing, circuses, and any other sport the Texans think would fit in there. The guide claimed that the Astrodome is the eighth wonder of the world. We promptly asked sarcastically whether the Empire State Building had been knocked down in the last week because that is the official 8th man made wonder of the world. She replied that when Billy Graham held a crusade at the dome once he called it the eighth wonder. Hence the Texans now plaster that claim all over their

tourists and all the junk that comes out of their gift shop. They also strangely didn't mention anything about the Superdome in New Orleans. You can drop the Astrodome into the Superdome and still have room to play cricket.

We left there and headed back to Greyhound and booked tickets to Albuquerque. Laima has an ex-workmate who used to live there. However, we don't know if he still does, so either way, we're going to find out. It's on the way to the Grand Canyon and Las Vegas so it's not out of the way. We catch the bus to Fort Worth where we change (at 2.00am) to a bus heading for Lubbock where we change (at 7.00am) to a bus heading for Vaughn, New Mexico, where we change (at 2.30pm) for a bus finally going to Albuquerque. The whole trip takes 24 hours.

Wednesday 17th March 1976

So far all of today has been on the bus travelling though Texas and New Mexico. Passing through a lot of small towns (about the size of Murray Bridge – they don't seem to have any the size of Katmandoo). Countryside is very dry. Fields seem to be ploughed, but nothing is growing except strange little structures called oil wells that seem to sprout everywhere. Arrived in Albuquerque at 4.45pm and looked up Peter Farley (ex-Faberge employee). We found his house OK but he was not home. Left a note saying we would be in the bus station. So he duly arrived there and a reunion was had. He invited us to stay the night at his place but we had intended to go to Flagstaff on the 12.05am bus tonight. However, I guess the sound of a hot shower and a bed proved too much, so we ended up sleeping in Albuquerque. He lives in a flat, which is Mexican style of course and is quite quaint. He's also a vegetarian – wonder what we'll get for breakfast.

Thursday 18th March 1976

The two Peters went off about 9.00am to hire a car and we set off for Santa Fe. It's about a 70-mile trip, but we went slowly to absorb all the beautiful countryside. We don't see any of this on the bus because we usually travel late at night and arrive at our destination at just about the same time as the sun rises. Santa Fe is a very quaint place, no tall buildings, just lots of Spanish and Mexican style house. We went into a little church that had a high balcony for the choirboys etc. When this was built, they had forgotten to also build a way up to the balcony. Eventually a carpenter came along and said he would build a stairway to the top. The stairway makes two complete 360-degree circles on the way up. After six months when he had finished, he just left, asked for no payment and didn't leave his name. They all regarded this as a miracle. When he built it, he did not put any handrails on the sides and it was rather dangerous for the old nuns when climbing up the stairs. So, two years later, another carpenter added some rails and everybody felt safe after that.

The alter is carved from wood but is painted and made to look like marble. Very impressive. All the stained glass windows and statues in the church were all presents from Italy. The fee to get into the church and look around is 25cents each, not much but it makes the church seem commercialised. A donation box inside would have been better. Then we drove a little way out of Santa Fe and up a very rocky road, which eventually changed to asphalt and we were on top of one of their mountains. Over 10,000' high. A really breathtaking view (literally). I found it rather hard to breathe at that height and also felt a bit dizzy. There was quite a bit of snow up there too and a chilly wind was blowing.

We drove down and slowly all the snow disappeared and the tall buildings of Albuquerque re-appeared. We arrived back at the flat at about 6.30pm and Marie (Peter's girlfriend) made a really nice Mexican meal. Never had anything like it before and we both thoroughly enjoyed it. Our bus was leaving at 12.05am, but it was really full and there were lots of people waiting so they had to put on another bus. We were on the second one about 45minutes later with only

about six other people. The extra bus driver had to be woken up, but we actually beat the first bus to Flagstaff by about 15 minutes.

Friday 19th March 1976

Arrived at Flagstaff about 7.00am and the bus for the Grand Canyon only left at 9.00am, so we sat around, had some breakfast and befriended a boy (Frank) from England who was also going to the GC. The bus trip took 1¾ hours. We didn't realise it, but we were gradually gaining altitude and when we reached the Canyon we were 6,000' above sea level. We walked a few steps away from the bus, and then we saw it! Breathtaking probably isn't the right word, it was really something out of this world. Miles and miles of beautifully formed rocks. The colours were just magnificent. There was a slight haze over the canyon but that didn't take away from its beauty. There were many young people with backpacks who were venturing their way down the trails. It was quite windy up the top but we found out that down the bottom of the canyon it was about 80°F.

We all started to walk the trail up the top towards Hopi Point about two miles away. It took us quite a while because every few minutes we would stop and look at the beautiful view. We started walking back about 1.30pm and decided to hitchhike to the hotel so that we could have a quick lunch then explore the other side. We got a lift in the back of a van, but lunch took longer than we expected. The other side was just as magnificent, perhaps more so, because it was no longer hazy and the sun was in the right spot to throw shadows. At about 4.45pm we just sat down and absorbed the beautiful sight. We spotted a person walking the trail and contemplated doing the same, but that meant staying overnight in the bottom of the canyon and we didn't have the proper equipment.

We boarded the bus – very tired – but full of admiration for this massive natural wonder. We met a Sydney girl and two Melbourne girls on the bus and had a nice long talk to them all the way back to Flagstaff. We arrived about 7.15pm but our bus for Vegas only left at 1.05am, so to kill some time we took in a movie, “The Hindenburg” – very mediocre. Frank, the English lad, gave us his address and said he would be very pleased if we would ring him when we got to England. Very tired, and not looking forward to the bus trip to LV.

Saturday 20th March 1976

Left Flagstaff at 1.15am and changed buses in Kingman, Arizona at 4.30am. Kingman is where the London Bridge is reconstructed. Bit tough for us to see it though. At 5.45am we rode over a hill in Nevada and there sprawled in front of us was glittering Las Vegas. People were sitting in casinos still playing even at that time. All the lights were still on and it was really something to see – a city so alive so late (or early?). Got off the bus on Main Street, near Fremont Street, which is the downtown casino area. Walked across the road to Nevada City Casinos and had breakfast for 69 cents and also played keno, a derivation of Bingo. Played our first slot machines there. The 1 cent ones. Walked around the casino area in Fremont Street, The Mint, Golden Nugget, etc. Went in and out of various places playing \$2 of nickels (5 cents). Went into the Horseshoe and walked around watching the card games. I dropped a quarter into a machine called the Mississippi Gambler and won \$10.00 for 1 coin. Made us happy. Then we decided to go the Strip.

Buses here cost 70 cents for one trip. So to save more money for a flutter we walked down there. About three miles from downtown. Saw many small casinos that are not famous but nevertheless are along the Las Vegas Boulevard. Went into the visitors' bureau and received fun books which entitled visitors to free things ie drinks, food. Used these in various casinos. Eventually arrived at the Sahara, Circus Circus, Stardust, Silver City, etc. All the big hotels are hit with strike problems and all the employees are militantly protesting outside the hotels. The Sahara is closed

as is the Thunderbird (remember that one?). Caesars Palace and the MGM Grand are closed too. However, a few of the big ones are still managing to remain open using executives as barman etc.

We walked through various casinos playing slot machines here and there. Arrived at Mr Sy's Casino where food and drinks are free to gamblers. Won another jackpot there too. Returned at dusk to the El Morocco and Silver City. In the Silver City we decided to play the roulette wheel. \$5 each and away we went. I lost mine and Laima won \$28.00. Great stuff! She was betting on the same numbers all the time. I found out later that she couldn't reach any of the others to place her bet. We went out of there and tried blackjack in the El Morocco. \$5 each but we both lost that. By this time it was 1.15am and we had been gambling for 20 hours almost in Las Vegas. Started the morning with \$55 and retired for the night in our hotel, which we had booked early and paid for out of the \$55, and still had about \$28. Not bad indeed.

Sunday 21st March 1976

We both slept like logs until the latest possible moment before check-out time of midday. Packed our bags and left them in the lockers in the bus station. We are leaving this den of inequity tonight at 9.30 pm. At about 1.00pm we walked into the Mint. We played the machines for a while, waiting for a free tour of the casino. Not very inspiring. It went for approx 12 minutes and was conducted by a French lady whom we couldn't understand. Took some photos of the Downtown casinos and then caught a bus to the Strip. \$0.70 each to go three miles! Cheaper to catch a cab! Arrived at the Flamingo, which is right at the end of the Strip.

Began walking past the MGM Grand, The Hacienda, Caesars Palace, Sands, and Dunes. All of these were closed because of the strike. Came across the Holiday Inn Showboat, which is another casino, but in the design of the Mark Twain. "Bingo" said the sign so in we went. A lot of people playing and the prize was \$50 for a bingo. So we played and played getting close sometimes and not so close other times. Walked out of there at about 9pm a little lighter in the wallet but had good fun. By the way...what time did I say our bus left? We had no chance of catching it, so it was another night in Las Vegas coming up. This time we stayed at the Westward hotel/motel for which we had a hotel pass. Right on the strip – next to the Star Dust.

Checked in and went back out to gamble. A couple of jackpots later we eventually went to bed at about 3.00am. While we were moving into the room we watched an episode of "McCloud" on TV. It had just been made and was set in Sydney on Australia Day.

Monday 22nd March 1976

After a second consecutive night in a hotel (getting to be a luxury) we once again left our bags in the bus station locker and booked our ticket again. Had breakfast at Mr Sy's casino (\$0.69) and then decided to explore the Star Dust. Very modern and plush and of course gaming tables and pokies everywhere. Tried our luck again for a few dollars but it had deserted us. Decided to watch some of the big gamblers, so we went to the roulette wheel and watched a guy win \$3,200. He was betting like a madman and it paid off. He inspired me so I invested \$5 but had no success. Played for a while with it but eventually it joined the other millions of dollars in the vaults of Las Vegas. This time we did catch our bus to Salt Lake City at 4.25pm. Have decided to go straight through Salt Lake because of the extra day in LV. From pamphlets etc there doesn't seem to be much there. Travelled all through the night on a full bus.

Tuesday 23rd March 1976

Arrived in Salt Lake City at 4.10am and had to wait until 5.30am for a connecting bus to Denver. One woman told me that I spoke very nicely for an Australian. For some reason she thought we spoke a different language in a little island that was so far away from everything. It was just beginning to get light as we left the bus depot and the sight was magnificent. Mountains surrounded the city, and the white peaks looked beautiful. This time we were on a half full bus. When we were about to leave SLC, we did a quick count of the people waiting for the bus and seeing as there were more than 43 people we made a quick dash for the end of the line.

The buses only take 43 and we were sick and tired of travelling on full buses. Sure enough we had two seats each and so did everyone else on the second bus. You get rather crafty after nearly three weeks on buses. During most of the trip to Cheyenne we slept and then changed to our Denver bus. Arrived in Denver at 7.30pm and walked about a mile to our hotel pass hotel. Very nice hotel too, tastefully decorated with a colour TV as well.

Wednesday 24th March 1976

While Pete went out to the airport to pick up a rental car, I showered and packed the suitcases. At about 10.30am, we were on our way to Boulder. We drove around the downtown area for a short time but we were anxious to get to the Rocky Mountain National Park. The mountains were all covered in beautiful green fir trees and every now and then you could spot a small log cabin hidden among the thick vegetation. The ride was very enjoyable and the day was perfect. At our first close up view of Mount Meeker we both gasped. It was covered in snow so we took our first picture. As we kept driving we gained elevation and more snow-covered mountains came into view. There are many small towns dotted along the way with most of them full of motels to cater for the summer tourists. A lot of places had stables for horse riding.

We came across a small town called Central City that was the original Gold Mining town in the area. There were hundreds of mines everywhere and I had to use all of my force to keep Pete out of them. He kept telling me how he had explored all the caves and mines at Brownhill Creek when he was younger. They looked too dangerous to me, so we didn't go exploring. In the summer, they have tours in some of the bigger mines. There were numerous old houses there that the original miners lived in. I'm glad they were left standing as they give so much character to the place. The downtown area was full of gift shops, not modern ones, but old shops renovated. The area looked like a Universal Studio's set. There were quite a few people still living there and some of the mines were still operating, but most of the revenue for the town would come from tourists.

It was still light so we drove along the highway past more of the mining towns and came across a quaint little place called Idaho Springs. If we couldn't find a better place to stay we would return here. Just past Georgetown we came across a tunnel that was nearly two miles long. It went straight through the mountains. At this stage we were 11,000' above sea level. The highest elevation we have been so far. It was 6.40pm so we decided to go back to Idaho Springs to stay the night. Found a nice motel for \$10/ night (winter rates), colour TV though.

Thursday 25th March 1976

Drove back to Denver, returned the car, and caught the 12.15pm bus to St Louis where we were to transfer to another bus to take us to Indianapolis. The whole day was spent on the bus. We left Denver just at the right time. A dust storm was developing and as we left the city limits not a mountain was in sight. The storm seemed to follow us all the way so we were glad to be on the bus and not site seeing.

Friday 26th March 1976

(Today I found Pete's first grey hair!!)

Still on the bus! There have been quite a few characters on our busses, but I guess you have to put up with all sorts of types when travelling in America in their bicentennial year. At 12.15pm (after 24 hours on the bus) we arrived at St Louis. We had 1½ hours before the bus left so we wandered around and came across the gateway arch. It's 630' high and there is about another 630' between the two bases of the arch. There is a train that goes up in the middle of the arch right to the top where you could look out over the city from 20 holes. There was an hour's wait so we wouldn't go on it.

We went back to the bus station, had some chicken and boarded our bus. Another full one, over full in fact, two people were without seats. The bus driver didn't seem too worried so we thought a few people might be getting off early in the trip. Not so, from 2.00pm till 6.30pm they either sat on the floor near the washroom (which made it very difficult) or took turns with other people who had seats.

When we arrived in Indianapolis I inquired at the information desk if the bus was allowed to carry more than 43 passengers. They told me that Federal Law prohibited it and when I told them the story they didn't bat an eyelid and looked as if they wanted me to leave. So much for the Federal Law. If I'm ever the 44th person on a bus, no way will I sit in the aisle. It wouldn't worry me at all if they had to call out an extra bus just for me! It's amazing how your attitudes change when you know your rights and you are willing to stand up for them and not be pushed around. Arrived in Indianapolis at 7.30pm local time and booked into the Travelodge – extremely nice room. We were lucky to get in because the college basketball finals are starting tomorrow and most places are booked out.

Saturday 27th March 1976

Raining like hell when we got up. Thunderstorms and tornadoes had swept Central America during the night. No damage done to us or Indianapolis. Also heard on the news that a gondola ski car crashed in Vail Colorado killing four people. On Thursday while driving in the Rockies, we were debating whether to go there because it is the largest ski field in the world. However, we didn't! Caught a bus to the Indy Speedway and was amazed at the place. The track is 2½ miles long and is set right in the suburbs. Must be worth a fortune in Real Estate, but there is no way it will ever be pulled down, as Indiana citizens are really proud of it. Went into the museum first and saw the cars that had won previous races right back to 1911. Really interesting for me. Laima said she enjoyed it.

We then boarded a minibus for a tour of the track seeing the stands etc from a driver's perspective. It seats 300,000 people on race day and the dearest ticket is \$50 and the cheapest (standing room) is \$10. They only have one race a year, yet it is a paying proposition for the owner. There is a golf course on the inside that is used occasionally. Everything is so perfect in this place. We left there and headed back downtown, collected our bags and headed for the bus station again. I had seen an ad in the paper advertising a speedway meeting in Ohio. All the time we have been in the USA we (or I) have just missed meetings here and there. I'm determined not to miss this one, as all the top drivers throughout the country will be racing.

So our bus took us to Richmond, Indiana where we got a cheap motel room and are staying the night. Tomorrow we're going to hitch hike to the speedway, which is just across the border. The town it's in is so little that not even a bus goes there (Bet it rains!).

Sunday 28th March 1976

The day dawned bright and blue with not a cloud to be seen. We set off at 9.00am walking up the main street of Richmond. We walked for about 30 min before a car stopped to pick us up. A middle-aged guy driving to Dayton Ohio to see his Father in Law. He was very interested to know that we were Australian and ended up buying us a cup of coffee where he dropped us off. Continued towards Rossburg and got another lift with a guy who was lost. By looking at the map we had, we put him straight and he dropped us off at Greenville. Unable to hitch hike here really because at the end of the main street, the road branched off into six different highways. When we reached the one we wanted we put out the thumb again and immediately got a lift right to the speedway in a van. Four guys in it, all racing fans, so we had a long talk about Australian and American car racing while driving the rest of the way.

\$6 each got us through the gate about 11.30am. Sat on the hill just like at Rowley Park. Before the meeting I approached the announcer's booth telling them I was from Australia, hoping I suppose for something for nothing. At the beginning of the meeting the announcer told the crowd that they had two fans all the way from Australia to watch the meeting. Of course I was rapt in the racing – it was brilliant. The best drivers from all over the States in their particular section.....the USAC sprintcars. We both got very burnt sitting all day in the warm sun.

Left there after the last race and got a ride with a young guy and his even younger girl/wife. Drove pretty quickly too, but safely. He let us off at the Fairgrounds – bit out of our way, but still on the road to Richmond. Bit difficult hitching on the freeway as cars whizzed along at 65mph. However one car stopped. A young guy returning to college after a week's vacation. He too wanted to know all about Australia and was a real pleasant guy. He wasn't going all the way to Richmond so again we had to get a lift. This time two guys who were returning from the speedway. They dropped us off at Richmond but a long way from the motel where we left our luggage. So we walked and walked through the town for about 3 miles. Had tea at a place that advertised genuine English fish and chips. The food was excellent but when they wrapped it in glossy newspaper that they printed themselves, it was a bit hard to take.

We collected our bags and made for the bus station. Both of us were exhausted at this stage having walked so far through the town hitching without success. Neither of us looked forward to walking the mile to the bus carrying suitcases. So we hitched again – not at all expecting a ride with luggage. However, a girl picked us up within five seconds. Not a long wait for the bus but boy what a long ride on it. We were the only ones onboard. So out of courtesy really we sat up the front with the driver. What a mistake. We asked a few initial questions about various topics and he answered them all in Andy Griffith type voice without a stop. Then we heard all about him. His \$35,000 motor home, his \$10,000 speedboat, how he was dragged underwater for eight minutes at full speed by a ski-tow and nearly "drowned". How he nearly killed his wife by leaving his \$35,000 motor home in reverse with his wife in it. How he would have been up for murder if she had been killed. All about his holidays for the last 21½ years

How his wife broke her toe water skiing (that one took about 22 unbearable miles to tell). How he picked up an octopus that had no known antidote for its poison; how he picked up a stingray; how dangerous it is to swim in the sea these days with so many deadly things in it; how a shark almost got him once in 3' of water; how the guy that wrote "Jaws" could have made it a more interesting story; how cruel it was of the Japanese Captain who fired the torpedos that sunk the USS Indiana. He claims that because it was such a big ship with 1,100 men on it and they were in shark-infested waters he should have let it go. When I protested the stupidity of that, he claimed that he should have surfaced his sub and put all the men on it and then sunk the ship. 1,100 men in a sub! I haven't got time or room to put everything down that he said. All the time when we tried to say something he didn't understand it, so in the end we just shut up and prayed for Indianapolis to come. The majority of his insane babbling was about the sea and because we

didn't say anything, he must have thought that we were quite dumb. At the end of the trip when we finally managed to tell him we were from Australia, he asked what we did. I told him I was a professional skindiver.

Our connecting bus for Chicago didn't leave until 2.10am so we had a 2½-hour wait. I attempted to get a can of Pepsi out of a vending machine. Lost my quarter – so being in an angry mood after the bus ride, I complained to the cafeteria. Believe it or not she tore off a corner of a serviette and asked for my name and address so that they could return my quarter by mail. That was the last straw and I'm afraid that lady copped a verbal Australian tirade of abuse. I got my quarter.

Then to top off a day and a half, we were sitting in the bus station patiently waiting for the bus laughing ourselves stupid over that idiot of a bus driver and the whole American system of living (apologies to any Americans reading this) when we asked a question of the bloke sitting next to us. "Wouldn't have a clue mate!" he said, as Aussie as you can get. So we spent the last two hours talking to him. He was on a two-month Ameripass ticket and was clocking up his 30,000th mile that night. We have only done 8,000 miles. Turned out he was a speedway rider from Western Australia, so my last two hours in Indianapolis were spent in bliss talking to him. Goodnight.

Monday 29th March 1976

Arrived Chicago at 4.45am having slept soundly on the bus. Checked into our hotel after walking the streets of Chicago at 5.00am in the rain. They allowed us to keep the room for Monday night even though we checked in so early. Went straight to sleep and awoke again at 12.30pm. Went out for lunch but it was a miserable day, low cloud and raining, so we returned to the hotel and watched TV all afternoon and evening. Tomorrow we'll do some sightseeing.

Tuesday 30th March 1976

We were rudely awoken at 7.30am by loud banging on the door. Later on we figured it must have been the maid waking all the people that live in the hotel permanently. You would think that a "Do Not Disturb" sign on the door would make some difference, but not to some people! We slept through till 9.30am and then showered and dressed for the last time in America. We ate breakfast in the Gold Coast Restaurant next to the hotel. A very nice little place, huge meals and very quick service. Outside the weather was typical of what we knew of Chicago. WINDY! We had a free pass to the John Hancock Centre Observation Tower so we made our way there. We were taken to the 94th floor in one of the smoothest elevators we have been in. Visibility was only 10 miles but still quite spectacular.

There are quite a few very old churches in the downtown area, which break the monotony of the jungle of tall buildings. We still had five hotel passes unused so we went to the TWA office to organise a refund. We found out there was a \$20 processing charge and a 3 to 4 week wait, so we gave them the address in Battersea, London and told them to send it to us there in English Pounds! Then we went to the Canadian Consulate to find out what duty free items we could take into Canada and also if there would be any trouble getting back into Canada. Talk about getting the VIP treatment. We were ushered into the custom officer's office where we stayed about 15 minutes and talked about numerous topics. Then we were taken to another office and given the same treatment.

We had heard about the Museum of Science and Industry so we caught a double decker train to 57th Street. For an express train, it was the slowest one we had ever travelled on! The building housing the museum was very old and stately, and quite a change from the ultra-modern buildings we had seen everywhere. For \$0.50 (admission to the museum was free) we went on an

authentic submarine. The Americans captured it in 1944 from Germany. We were told not to touch anything because it had been restored to its original condition by one of the men who sailed in it. (*I wonder whether he now drives a Greyhound bus?*). We only saw one level of it but it gave us a general idea of what the rest was like. The bunks were very tiny and I couldn't see anyone sleeping comfortably in one of them. Then we saw a 10-minute film of before, during and after the capture of it.

By this time it was just after 3.30pm and we went to the mathematics section. Spent 20 minutes there and then all the lights were being turned off. We were informed that the museum was closing. A disappointment because we thought it stayed open till 5.30 pm. One of the attendants told us to come back tomorrow. Tomorrow we would be in Canada! On the way back to the hotel to pick up our bags we walked through the underground section of Chicago. The traffic down there was just as heavy as it was above us. Quite incredible. We wondered whether this underground section was Chicago's original level before the great fire 100 odd years ago (same as in Atlanta). We had quite a few hours to kill before our bus left for Toronto so we waited in the bus station. AGAIN. GOODBYE AMERICA.

Wednesday 31st March 1976

Arrived in Detroit 5.15am (EST.) and had to wait an hour for our bus to Toronto. We've encountered this bus changing station in the middle of the night so many times. Thank heavens it was the last time. We both slept most of the way to London, Ontario and it was raining very heavily. I rang a friend of Mum's from Latvia – a Leontina Zvagulis and she was very pleased to hear from me. Wanted to persuade us to stay with her and catch another bus to Toronto – but that was pretty impossible. We arrived in Toronto just before 2.00pm and rang Bill to find out about possible accommodation. Mrs Gerrard was expecting a few girls from England and we didn't want to bother her again, besides she is not feeling very well. Bill recommended a boarding house on Dundonald Street where he stayed before he found his apartment. The landlady is Polish and seems very nice.

We settled in there, washed some filthy, smelly clothes and Bill picked us up at 5.30pm. Enjoyed tea at his place and read all the letters from home, swallowing all the news we could in the shortest possible time. In the evening we went to the Embassy Arms in Bay Street for a drink with the Drifters Club. Had a few then returned home to Dundonald Street and went to bed.

As you know we paid \$175 for the 30-day trip, unlimited travel. If we had had to pay for each trip individually here's what we would have had to pay so far:

Toronto	
Boston	\$35.85
New York	\$14.46
Philadelphia	\$ 6.83
Washington	\$ 9.20
Atlanta	\$32.30
Orlando	\$24.40
Disneyworld	\$ 4.00
Orlando	\$ 4.00
Miami Beach	\$12.20
Miami	\$ 0.60
Daytona	\$12.90
Kennedy Space Centre	\$ 2.70
Daytona	\$ 2.70
New Orleans	\$40.14
Houston	\$20.20
Albuquerque	\$50.50
Flagstaff	\$20.50

Grand Canyon	\$ 5.40
Flagstaff	\$ 5.40
Las Vegas	\$20.65
Denver	\$52.50
Indianapolis	\$55.55
Richmond	\$ 5.50
Indianapolis	\$ 5.50
Chicago	\$12.65
Toronto	<u>\$29.95</u>
	<u>\$486.58</u>

Thursday April Fool's Day 1976

Awoke about 11.00am and I read all the cuttings that had been sent to Bill while we were in the States. Took about two hours and was most interesting. Got out of bed about 1pm and took some clothes down to be dry-cleaned. Also rang British Air to book seats on their flight leaving Toronto tomorrow at 8pm for London. Have decided to go tomorrow as we may as well pay for accommodation in London rather than Toronto, which we've already seen. Bill came around about 3.00pm with the suitcases and other assorted things that we left at L'Estrange Place so that we could pack for England. Spent the rest of the day reading letters and cuttings again and getting tips on England from Bill. Excited to be once again on another adventure, but more excited at the prospect of being thousands of miles away from America. ☺

Friday 2nd April 1976

Awoke early and I went to the local supermarket to find a carton in which we could send home things we collected in the States and Canada. Packed them up and to our disgust the Post Office told us it would cost over \$21.00 by sea mail. Decided not to send them but take them to England instead. Packed everything into the suitcases and boy were they bulging? Left the boarding house at 12 noon and because we had nowhere to go, nothing to do, and all the time until 5.30pm to do it in, we just walked up and down Yonge Street window shopping.

At 5.30pm we met Bill who took us to the airport. Bit worried about whether the suitcases would be overweight or not. They were, but we weren't charged anything. Knocked over a few beers with Bill and then we boarded British Airways flight BA600 for London. Big jumbo but it wasn't full. We stopped in Montreal for more passengers and then it was non-stop to where they drive on the correct side of the road. We gained six hours on the plane and darkness in fact was only with us for three more hours even though we left Toronto at 8.00pm. According to English time we ate our dinner at 4.45am somewhere over the Atlantic.

CHAPTER SEVEN

London at last

Saturday 3rd April 1976

We touched down at Heathrow at 10.25 am. Brilliantly sunny day with a temperature of about 10°C. Herded off the plane like the proverbial sheep through customs and immigration. No problems with our officer – the only thing he was upset about with us is that “your boys beat ours” at cricket! Also, while waiting on the very long line to the immigration people, a lady was behind us all the way pushing and standing in such a way that her handbag was forever in your back. Eventually right at the end after about 20 minutes she asked us if this was Gate 26 and where was the plane she was meant to be getting on. The last we saw of her was her stupid handbag disappearing around a corner on the way to Gate 26. Hope she missed the plane.

Went to collect our baggage and were disappointed to see that British Airways had a thief in their ranks. Our suitcases are covered with transfers and stickers of the places we had been. This guy had neatly removed two Toronto stickers from both bags. To get to Laima’s he had to undo the strap around the suitcase. Rang Ted Mackintosh from the airport and he said to come on over. Originally we told him that we would be arriving on the 8th. However because we were early he said we’d have to rough it for a while. Didn’t know what he meant by that.

Hopped on board a British Airways double decker bus and for 80p each we were taken to Victoria Station, which is very close to Battersea. On the way to Victoria we had to go through Chelsea and their football team was playing today and so the streets were packed with fans wearing red and white everything! Our first glimpse of the Thames was in Chelsea and it looked terrible. No water in it. We thought someone had pulled the plug however, later we found out that the Thames is tidal. ie Affected by the sea. Caught a cab from the station to 4 Simpson Street, Battersea. Cost a quid and didn’t go past Stonehenge like Barry McKenzie’s taxi did! We then found out what Ted meant on the phone. They were having the whole flat re- decorated and it wasn’t quite ready.

It looked just great to us! The lounge has a gas fire, a lounge suite, two rocking chairs and a coffee table. The curtains are really pretty as is the wallpaper. Next to it is a kitchen also very brightly decorated. It’s bigger than the one we had in Sydney, which is really great. Upstairs are two bedrooms. The larger one has a gas fire so we decided to take that one. They gave us two single beds, which we decided to put together and make one really huge one. The other bedroom is sort of a storage room at the moment. But if Mara and Brent need a few nights’ accommodation when they arrive, perhaps we can put them up here.

Mrs Mackintosh (Millie) has supplied pots and pans, dishes and cutlery and said she would bring up a few more things for us. I want to buy some pot plants to make the place look more lived in. The bathroom is downstairs on street level and is still to be re-decorated and the toilet is outside. The flat is above a poultry shop – Mr and Mrs Mackintosh’s business. They live just a few miles away with their three children and cat and dog. They are really nice people and welcomed us with open arms. They were still doing their Saturday morning trading when we arrived, but they dropped everything when they saw us. They told us to do a bit of shopping for the kitchen before everything closed.

We only had to walk about 10 yards around the corner and then we saw a lot of fruit and vegetable stalls trading in the street. There was a supermarket there as well. Mr Mack had a stall as well where his daughter was selling eggs, bacon and chicken. Mr Mack asked us if we wanted to see his boat, so he took us for a ride. It is really beautiful with a powerful engine and 20' long. They were going out to visit some friends that night and asked if we would join them. We accepted and they said they would pick us up at 7.15pm. I prepared some frozen Shepherd's pie and peas and we had our first tea in our lovely lounge in bonny England. While we waited for Mr Mack, Peter went out to phone a friend we knew in Sydney who had been here a few months. Arranged to see him tomorrow night.

The Mack's picked us up and we drove through some very nice districts on our way to Kent. Ray and Val were very nice. Val is Mr Mack's secretary. Millie and Val stayed home to watch the Eurovision singing contest while the four of us went out to check on the English pubs. We went to five in all and they were all beautifully decorated and all very close to one another. We tried light ale, lager, and light and bitter. Enjoyed all of them. Mr Mack is a very humorous person and very witty, always chattering and full of life. He had worked very hard with his shops and had a house, 20' boat, a Cortina and – a Rolls Royce, something he is very proud of. We had a really beaut time and when we got home, about 1am (we hadn't slept for 36 hours) we were very tired and thankful for our own bed. A very enjoyable day.

Sunday 4th April 1976 – 6 Years since Pete and I met!

We slept in till 3.00pm – we really needed it. About 7.30pm Peter Green (friend from Sydney) picked us up and took us to a local pub of his where we met his American girlfriend (Barbara) and Ken and Ruth and a couple from Australia who had arrived a week earlier. We had a very enjoyable time and Pete told us what he was doing now to earn money. He got acquainted with a guy (an Aussie) who was selling vans to proposed travellers to Europe. He was making quite good money. This gives us a good contact when we want to buy one.

Then he told us about his newfound discovery. He was very interested in artwork, not such much paintings, but creations made on plywood. He said it was very big this time of year with all the tourists in town. I was very interested because of the string art I was doing in Sydney. It's not something that is mass produced, but more made for the individual. He was going around pubs in London and selling quite a few. He takes a picture of the interior of a pub and then a picture of the owner's car or something he possesses and is his pride and joy. Then he gives the photos to the artist who sketches the exterior on black plywood and makes a model out of cardboard of the individual's car (etc) and puts it in the centre of the board. He said it was going really well because of the individual touch. Pete is the middleman in the process. He finds buyers for the artwork and he also finds the clients.

Anyway, pubs close at 11.00pm on Sunday's but we ended up staying till 2.30am. The owner of the pub invited us to stay back for a while (just like the club in Sydney).

Monday 5th April 1976

This was our first real chance to have a look around the Battersea area shops close to us. There is a hardware store, fish and chip shop, a bakery, a chemist, plant shops, two supermarkets and a laundromat. Very convenient! We caught a double decker bus into the city and got off at Trafalgar Square and walked to the Strand to check whether our money had arrived yet. It had, the initial amount anyway, but it wasn't put into an account and therefore wasn't earning any interest. They promised to check everything again, so we opened an account and left.

Then we went to Kodak to put in five films for developing. After that we just wandered around (with the aid of our map) and looked at a few sights. We walked to the Post Office Tower, but to

our disappointment it was closed. We had arranged to meet Peter Green at the Walkabout Club at 7.00pm, so we decided to catch a Tube there. It was peak hour so the trains were quite full, but eventually we made it. Had a drink with him and met many of his friends that he had made during his six months here.

Tuesday 6th April 1976

Once again Peter Green came around to pick us up and we went with him to his partner's house where they operate a fairly successful van business. ie. selling vans to Australians touring the continent. They were delivering one today to a customer that needed to be cleaned and some cushions and curtains sewn up. So Laima and I pitched in and earned £15 for the day. It was a real pleasure to see the looks on the two girls faces who had bought the van when they saw it was already to go. At the house I met Lee Schubert. Remember him from Narinna Avenue? His dad drove speedcars at Rowley Park under the name of "Joe Blow". In the evening Peter and I went to play squash. Or at least he did – I watched. But from now on we are going to play regularly to maintain a little bit of the fitness that I had managed to pick up while walking so far in the States.

Wednesday 7th April 1976

As mentioned earlier, the bathroom is still being decorated so, desperately in need of a bath, we arranged with Peter to have a shower at his place. So once again he picked us up at about 1.00pm and before we left we had lunch in the lounge. At the moment there isn't enough chairs in the kitchen for three people. We went with him to Clapham Junction first where he had to view a van for sale. Then we went back to Kensington where he lives in a block of units called Sussex Gardens, right in the heart of where clubs like Walkabout, Adventure, NAT, etc, cater for touring Aussies and Kiwis. He is doing a lot of business in these places with his vans and artwork. We showered there and ate our evening meal in a really quaint pub called The White Hart Inn. Home by 10.30pm and went to bed.

We quite enjoy the Pommy beer. We usually drink either lager or light and bitter. I will take some photos of the flat tomorrow and will get copies of them made to send to you, so people will know how we live for the ridiculous £10/week that Ted has charged us. Penny and Bob would be interested too because it has changed since they were here.

Thursday 8th April 1976

Today was the only day we had a real chance to get settled in the place. I bought a few plants and made it look more lived in. Ted & Millie came up for a cup of tea and asked if there was anything we needed. They supplied us with a rubbish bin, some baking dishes and a few other odds and ends. Our TV arrived and it fits into the lounge quite well. Not much on British television. They only have three stations to choose from and one of them only comes on at 6.30pm. The TV costs us £3 a month, which is quite reasonable, but we also had to pay £8 for a licence. Pete had decided to go to a speedway meeting at Wimbledon so we elected to have an early tea. Peter Green called around and asked if he could tag along at the speedway. We all had an early tea and the two of them left and I stayed home and caught up on a few letters.

Friday 9th April 1976

After an easy morning in which we shopped and looked around the area, Peter Green picked us up and we went to the Coolhurst Squash club for a game. Laima watched while Peter and I and Tony, an Indian friend of his, played. I discovered that although a weight loss was evident, I am not as fit as I should be, so Peter and I have vowed to make it a regular date. After squash we went to the White Hart Inn for tea and a drink and then after that to the Adventure International Club, another Aussie concern.

Saturday 10th April 1976

Market day for the Mackintosh's and when we awoke we found the whole family either in the shop below or on their stall in High St. For most of the day we amused ourselves watching them work and watching the sports on TV. Around 3.00pm Pete and his girlfriend, Barbara, arrived and we went off to Portobello Rd, Kensington. A street full of traders in all sorts of things, similar I guess to Petticoat Lane which we haven't been to yet. Enjoyed our stroll although we didn't buy anything.

In the evening we entertained Peter and Barbara to tea. Ted has often told us that should we be short of meat anytime, to take some from his fridges and sort money out later. With everyone drooling at the mouth for a roast we selected a prime piece and popped it into the oven. Prepared the potatoes, carrots, onions, etc and at 10pm I was called to the kitchen to carve. Removing the joint from the oven, Laima told me not to serve the top of the meat to anyone because after tasting a morsel she decided it was a bit too salty, so I didn't, but promptly discovered that we had just spent the last three hours roasting bacon!! Four pounds of it sitting steaming on the bench as red as our faces when we told Peter and Barbara.

Nevertheless we ate it 'cos we was starvin'. Peter and Laima and I ate our serves (or most of it) but Barb couldn't bring herself to eat it. At 12.30am I was in the little house doin' it through the eye of a needle.

Sunday 11th April 1976

We had arranged the previous night with Pete to go to Knebworth House, north of London to the scene of next week's jousting competition, at which we were running a stall selling various souvenirs of the jousting era. They arrived around 11.00am with Pete looking very pale. He subsequently told us that last night's bacon was now spread through the sewers of London courtesy of having his stomach pumped at the local hospital. We apologised profusely and then set off.

We called in at Bayswater Rd on the way to have a look at all the artists' wares displayed along the stonewall of Hyde Park. Then up to Knebworth House via Luton Town and Hitchin on the M1. Very spacious grounds and extremely beautiful. An old castle is the focal point but we didn't view that today. We shall do that next week before the jousting. All along the roads there and back was absolutely magnificent countryside, incredibly green and fertile. Can't wait to explore the rest of England more fully later in the year. Spent the evening in front of the TV with chicken and chips.

Monday 12th April 1976

Decided to go into the city today to look around the shops. Firstly though, we went to the MAS (Malaysian Airways) office to clear up about our return tickets. With all the other muck up our travel agent had made before, we wanted to make sure of these tickets. We walked out of the offices very angry indeed. Our travel agent had issued us with 180-day excursion tickets that were valid only till 14th May. If we were to request a refund, we would lose most of our money. Before leaving Australia we queried him on this point and he said everything was okay. He knew we wanted to stay until December. A nasty letter demanding an explanation was immediately written and sent.

In a better frame of mind we walked through some of the larger stores on Oxford Street. Pete bought a pair of patchwork jeans and I bought a cute cheesecloth blouse. We walked down Park Lane and Mayfair (the expensive places on the Monopoly board) and found our way to Buckingham Palace. Two guards on duty, marching in a very orderly fashion. We were getting

hungry by this time so we found a nice English pub close to Victoria Station and had some tea. Ham steak, which they call gamin. Having heard so much about Earl's Court, we caught a Tube there and decided to have a drink in the King's Head. That will be the last time we have a drink there. The company was a bit rough. At about 8.30pm, we caught a bus to Battersea and settled down to some TV.

Tuesday 13th April 1976

Peter Green called around early and asked if I would mind doing some more sewing. I jumped at the idea and he said he would be around later to pick us up. While I sewed, Pete and Pete drove around to try and get a picture of Mr Mackintosh's Rolls Royce and boat because we had decided to give them a personal collage of them as a thank you for the flat. Still sewing quite madly (I'm getting quite good now), the Peters returned downhearted because they had to go back tomorrow for the pictures. Decided to finish off the sewing at home, so Greeny drove us home. Peter made tea while I sewed (which I eventually finished at about 10.30pm) and after a nice, hot meal we both went to bed.

Wednesday 14th April 1976

We were "rudely awoken" at 7.30am by loud banging on the door. Would you believe it was the postman with our five boxes of slides. We spent the early part of the day looking through them (very proudly) and remembering the times we had in America. Pete wrote on them while I prepared and decorated some Easter eggs in onions shells. This kept us busy till about 1.00pm when Peter Green arrived to take us over to Harry and Cora's place to finish off the sewing for the van. With the sewing completed, the van looked really nice decked out in hues of blue. The van was finished, all except for the motor. Harry and his mechanic had had quite a bit of trouble getting a motor for the van, which was being picked up tomorrow. It was raining a little, but Pete and I decided to walk home anyway. Only took us 15 minutes. We had some ham steak that Ted had kindly given us and settled down to some television. Ted had a laugh about our previous experience with the roasted bacon!!

Thursday 15th April 1976

Peter and I still haven't got photos of Ted's Rolls Royce as he keeps the keys to his garage in his pocket so that no one can damage it. We mentioned before I think that his brother has a Rolls as well. Yesterday someone threw brake fluid all over it, stripping the paint. The cost to repair it - £1,300. That's why Ted looks after it so carefully. Barry, his son, told us to be at the garage at 8.00am to get photos of the boat and car. Still no luck due to last minute confusion over his brother's Rolls. So we came back home and did some Easter shopping instead. Stocked up on most things including hot cross buns. In the afternoon, we hung around the place doing odd things and talking to the Mackintosh's. Father Ted, mother Millie, son Barry, daughter Jill. Funny family really. Whenever they get upset they begin shouting at each other in typical British accents using words from Coronation St.

In the evening, I went off the Wimbledon speedway again for the Daily Express Spring Classic featuring all the best riders from England and Europe. It is a magnificent stadium completely surrounded by huge grandstands, most of them enclosed by glass frontages. It was packed last night with almost 20,000 people. What would promoters in Australia give for a venue like that? Laima went around to the Mackintosh's home and spent the evening with them, meeting the dog and cat and watching colour TV.

Friday 16th April 1976 – Good Friday

Up at 7.30am, awoken by Ted and Millie who had come to operate their stall in the High St. Parked out the front was the Rolls in all its splendour (Penny was taken to the church in it). Ted had it out for its weekly clean by his gentlemen friend Arthur. I went in it with him to get some petrol. It took 13 gallons and cost – wait for it- £10.77. Petrol is about 85p/gallon here. At the current exchange rate that is AUS\$1.30/gallon. Returned to the shop and had an Easter breakfast of a pot of tea and hot cross buns.

Peter Green arrived and joined us. We left with Peter and went to the White Hart pub where we were to hang some collages in the hope of a few sales from people who frequent the pub. About 4.30pm we picked up Barbara and the four of us went to Coolshurst for a bit of squash. My Peter played quite well against Peter Knight and is improving with every game. With three Peter's and one Tony playing, Barb and I couldn't go far wrong with saying, "come on Peter". We went back to the clubhouse for a few drinks and were later joined by P Knight's wife Mary, and their Doberman Pincher dog, "Beau". For a supposedly vicious breed, she was the most docile and loving dog we had ever seen. Peter (Physick) [this is getting confusing with so many Peters] played with Beau most of the night and she loved it. About 9.00pm we left and agreed on a meeting at the clubhouse on Saturday night for a meal. Arrived at the White Hart and had a meal and the funniest, most enjoyable conversation since we left Australia.

Saturday 17th April 1976

Barry (Ted's son) was going to take us out in the boat, but unfortunately there was something wrong with it and it was in for repairs. About 4.30pm, after the Mackintosh's finished the day's trading, they all came up for an Easter drink. They asked us about our trip in America and looked over a few of our souvenirs. They mentioned how comfortable they felt in the lounge and remembered the good times they had living above the shop. Peter G had given us his Fiat, so at 7.00pm we drove around to his place on our way to Coolshurst. The meal was really nice – rump steak with baked potatoes and vegies. After the bar closed, nobody wanted to go home, so someone introduced a game. It involved two bottles and a match. The guy who taught us the game and Greeny were the two finalists (Aust V England). Unfortunately Australia was defeated. Arrived home about 12.30am tired, but looking forward to Sunday at Knebworth House and the jousting competition.

Sunday 18th April 1976

Arrived at Greeny's place at 10.00am, ready for stall selling. A really beautiful day and everyone's spirits were high as we set off. We all looked terrific in our jousting T-shirts. We encountered our first problem about seven miles further on. The van that Peter G was driving and which contained all the trestles and goodies, ran out of petrol. It happened on Millionaire's Row, a very narrow stretch of road and we caused quite a hold up traffic wise. If we were smart we should have set up the stalls there! The boys were quite shocked when the garage attendant tried to sell them a gallon of petrol in a can for £7. They found an old tin in the back of the van, which took ¼ gallon.

We picked up Peter and Marg Knight and Beau and drove to Knebworth House. We were really pleased to see the park crowded with people enjoying the sun. We set up the stall very artistically and readied ourselves for the hordes of people making their way to watch the jousting. Business was very slow to begin with because people were climbing through the fencing and not coming anywhere near us. The day's takings were only £35, but we had a lot of fun. The jousting was really great and quite genuine. One knight was badly injured after a fall and was taken off in an ambulance. We had a really good view of the whole thing because we had climbed on top of the van. About 6.00pm, the fun finished and we packed up and left. The White Hart was once again

privileged with our company for a few drinks. Pete and I were introduced to a little Scot named Billy. He joked away all night and we were all in stitches.

Monday 19th April 1976

As the jousting was over two days, we once again set off to Knebworth House, which is about 30 miles from London in a northerly direction. Set up the stalls in different spots this time after experience showed us that yesterday's spot was definitely not profitable. Today was a lot better with people seemingly more liberal with their money. Our biggest sellers at 60p were Jacob's ladders. In Australia they may be known under a different name, but they are those things that are blocks (rectangular) of wood or hard plastic joined strategically by tape, and they give the impression of the top piece falling to the bottom when released. (Dad bought one home for Bill and I in 1961). Besides these things, we had some beautiful clockwork figures that were knights on horseback made entirely from the inner workings of clocks and watches. We sold one of these at £85 to a German couple. Altogether a similar day to yesterday – beautiful weather and a big crowd. At night, very tired, we relaxed at home and watched the film, The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly.

Tuesday 20th April 1976 (2nd Anniversary Day)

Awoke early and opened a card from Mum and Dad which had arrived a week early (nothing wrong with the English GPO). Also arriving that day were two letters from home. A big one from Mum and Dad giving vivid impressions of all of Adelaide reading our exploits from around the world. (We'll keep it up!!) Most of the day was spent preparing for the night. We had invited Peter Green and Barb and Harry and Cora Corrigan (the guy who runs the van business with Peter Green) around for a meal to celebrate our anniversary. They arrived about 7.30pm and we had a really great night with good food this time produced from the kitchen – tuna mornay and chicken. The night culminated in a gift (most unexpected) from them. It was something that we had been selling at Knebworth House. Made by the guy that Peter Green knows who lives in Cornwall, it is a framed model of an old 1910 London Bus in brilliant red. Emblazoned across the top of the bus, where advertising would have gone in the old days, is "Happy 2nd Anniversary, Peter and Laima" from Peter and Barb + Harry and Cora. We "wuz" choked.

Wednesday 21st April 1976

All of today was spent refurnishing an old Bedford van with curtains, beds, etc. Laima and I reckon we have done a great job of it, but we have still to finish it with more being done tomorrow. Three more letters arrived this morning from MLC, the footy club and Mara and Brent, so that restored our faith somewhat in our Sydney friends. Laima even got one (a letter that is) from her boss who apparently doesn't even write to his mother! Watched a brand new edition of Benny Hill at night.

Thursday 22nd April 1976

Still working on the van today, varnishing, sanding, etc. so that occupied all our day once again. Having the van available and of course having to drive it to pick up materials etc I have come to know the Battersea, Tooting, Clapham and Wimbledon area quite well. Drove past the Wandsworth Prison today (where Ronald Biggs escaped from). At night it was speedway night again. This time Laima came with me and she thoroughly enjoyed it, due to sitting in a stand that was enclosed from top to bottom by glass and was centrally heated. The famed tennis courts are just across the road from the stadium at which the speedway is held.

Friday 23rd April 1976

Finished the van today, but Harry wasn't home so we couldn't deliver it. Instead we drove to the city (with the aid of a map). We found the bank okay but decided to go back a different way. Turned left at Big Ben and started going across the Westminster Bridge. Chug, chug, quarter of the way over the bridge and we ran out of petrol. We pushed the van across the bridge, much to the amusement of passers-by, and left it in a parking bay. After ½ hour or so we were on our way home again, a little embarrassed.

We parked the van outside a shopping centre and did the weekend shopping. I actually found some dill pickles (just like Mums) and looked forward to getting stuck into them. About 5.45pm (just as I was starting tea), Barry asked Pete if he would like to go out on the boat with him, so tea preparation was postponed. Promised to be back by 7.30pm, so the kids went off to play in the water. About 10 minutes after they left the gas meter ran out, so I was running around looking for 10p pieces. There was no money in the flat at all, so I sat watching TV till 8.10 freezing to death. We eventually ate tea at 9.00pm next to a warm gas fire. We decided to keep a jar always full of 10p pieces for future occasions such as these.

Saturday 24th April 1976

Finally got rid of the van to Harry and a promise of another one to do on Tuesday (just so long as they keep coming). Harry wants us to paint the next one – on the outside!! Should be fun. We'll do anything once. We watched the sports shows on TV and after tea Peter and Barbara came over for a quiet night. We had some cans of beer and had an unusual sort of conversation – rubbishing each other. Funny, whenever they come over to watch TV we always seem to talk during the film and watch the ads.

Sunday 25th April 1976

A very quiet day and a bit chilly outside so we decided to stay home. First day of cricket over here so we watched that on the television. As usual I fell asleep. Decided to do some sightseeing on Monday, so we planned the day. Had some nice fish for tea and a pot of tea to finish. A few more hours of TV and then off to bed.

Monday 26th April 1976

Received a letter from the Turners telling us about the arrival of Lachlan Grant. Very pleased and happy for Barb and Robin. We were going to do a bit of sightseeing but after cleaning up the flat and doing a few odds and ends, it was 1.00pm by the time we left. Pete has fallen in love with an MGB GT sports car that belongs to a guy who manages a clothes shop on High St. He is willing to sell it for £1100, so we decided to go to the MLC office to ask about a loan so we can buy it. It's been Pete's dream for a long time to own one seeing as how they are so cheap over here and if we take it back to Australia we can make a fair bit of money on it. We made a deal – he can buy the car if I get to choose what sort of dog we have when we get back home in Australia. Fair deal!

No time left for sightseeing after the visit to MLC so we walked to the White Hart Inn in the hope of seeing Peter and Barbara there. We met up with them, had a few drinks and helped Peter entertain some clients who were interested in a car.

Tuesday 27th April 1976

Harry gave us another van to do today, so after buying all the materials, etc, we set to work. A dark green kombi, so we bought brown and yellow curtains and brown material for the foam

(beds). Pete laid some tiles in it and fixed up the cupboards. We were so busy, we decided on fish and chips for tea to save on time. The sewing took me until midnight, but at least it was finished.

Wednesday 28th April 1976

The van looked really great when Pete put up the curtains and bedding. Speaking of bedding, that's where I stayed till 10.30am – I was pooped! Harry came over with two prospective buyers and all were very impressed. We still had some painting to do and promised it would be ready Thursday. We spent all day painting the undercoat inside, ended up with an undercoat on ourselves as well – as usual. The owner of the MGB GT has decided not to sell it, so we have to look elsewhere. Pity, because it's a beautiful car, in mint condition and only 24,000 miles done. Ted gave us some ham steak, two really thick pieces for only 60p. He really looks after us. We went to bed, but not to sleep. We kept thinking of further ways in which we could improve the van. We really have enjoyed ourselves fixing up this van.

Thursday 29th April 1976

Painting day again. We decided to buy some pale yellow paint to highlight the inside – all white looked anaemic. We finished the inside and were so enthusiastic with our painting that we did the bumper bar and VW sign on the front. Pete put some tiles on the tatty slide door and then we looked back and admired our handiwork. Not bad, not bad at all!! We couldn't put the curtains back up or bedding because the paint was still wet, but we can both imagine what it would look like – TERRIFIC! Exhausted, we washed all the paint off ourselves and Pete prepared to go to the speedway (again). I decided to stay home because we were going to the speedway again tomorrow night with Barbara and Peter. Twice in two days is a bit much for me, but not for Peter!

Friday 30th April 1976

Completed the van and delivered it to Harry, our "Guv'nor", and he was most pleased with it. We picked up another to do at the same time – this time a Ford Transit that sleeps three or four at a squeeze. We are allowed to drive the vans where we want to, so at the moment not having a car isn't really a problem. This evening we had arranged to go to Hackney with Peter and Barbara to a big speedway meeting there. Pete at the last minute couldn't make it, so Laima and I made off like intrepid explorers to conquer London in a Ford Transit. Armed with the A to Z street directory of London, we left Battersea and went past the following landmarks to get to the speedway. Kennington Oval, Vauxhall, Elephant and Castle intersection, London Bridge, Tower Bridge and some beautiful parks and gardens. We eventually got there after an hour and 10 minutes driving and a total of 16 miles. Needless to say the meeting was superb as was the trip back, which took an hour and a half!!

CHAPTER EIGHT

Two Aussies, an MGB and Spring in the UK

Saturday 1st May 1976

Today was FA Cup day; a day London, England and the world waits for. It went without question that we stayed home and watched the game direct on TV. In the morning Laima rang home to her girlfriend who had just got married and in doing so spoke to her Mum as well. Needless to say she was in good spirits for the rest of the day. After watching the Cup (I thought about all the people in Sydney who were at our place this time last year to watch the game on our colour set) we went to the Walkabout Club in Kensington Gardens for a drink with Peter. At the club we met Bruce Cox who Laima and I used to go to school with. He also told us that Peter Bond (Bernie's son) has been in London for four years and is now married to a rich Frenchman's daughter. After the Walkabout we went to an Aussie style party just around the corner. Everyone was toasting Southampton's great victory.

Sunday 2nd May 1976

It rained today, unbelievably only the second time since we've been in England. Consequently we stayed inside all day writing letters, reading papers and watching TV. Peter came around and we discussed final details about our stall in Portobello Road opening Saturday after next. Tell you more about that as we progress towards opening day. At night James Bond kept us enthralled with "From Russia with Love".

Monday 3rd May 1976

Received three letters today. From Mum and Dad, Bill and Jane Paynter. Bill sent us detailed cuttings from the ice hockey, which I was following very closely while in Toronto. Raining again today so no work can be done on the van. Stayed home all day writing letters again mainly in anger towards our travel agent who has not as yet replied. Today was an expensive day at the Post Office, with no less than seven letters going down under. Our first miserable day really in London – hope there aren't too many more.

Peter Green came over in the afternoon and told us some unbelievable news. Mr Sharma, an Indian man who Peter and Harry had met earlier, gave them a proposition. Mr Sharma owns a chain of four hotels and wants to make more money than he has in previous years. He likes Australians and likes Peter and Harry and has offered them the opportunity of using the hotels to their advantage and to make some money. Peter likes the idea because one of the hotels has a bar upstairs which he can use as a gallery for his artwork, and Harry likes the guesthouse concept. After Peter told us all this, he came up with a proposition for us – would we like to manage these hotels? WOW! We couldn't believe what he was saying.

Because Peter and Harry are still very involved in the van business and both have other interests as well, they feel they could not put enough time into the hotels – that's where we came in. Of course we would have to live in and leave this lovely flat. Anyway we went to meet Mr Sharma and had a look at the hotels. Three of them are guesthouses and one has a bar upstairs and a wine bar / restaurant downstairs. Peter and I were both excited and enthusiastic about this new offer. We all went to the White Hart to celebrate over a drink. We wanted some time to think about it, so Pete and I decided to walk home – 3½ miles. Arrived home about 11.30pm.

Tuesday 4th May 1976

Pete woke up with a headache and a bit of a snuffle – probably due to the cold air last night. Most of the morning we talked about the hotels. We also bought some material and foam for the transit van we had to decorate. Peter G came over again and asked if we could meet him at his hotel on our way over to ask Mr Sharma a few more questions. Peter left and we got ready, because we had previously arranged to go out to tea with Peter and a friend. We arrived at Peter's hotel and knocked on the front door. No answer, then a girl standing nearby said he was next door making a phone call. We began to walk that way, when four young guys confronted me and asked me if my name was Maureen Fitzpatrick.

I immediately answered 'NO' and kept walking. Next thing I knew, one of them grabbed my arm and repeated the question. I gave the same answer, this time with annoyance. Then one of the guys brought out a CID Police badge and said they would like to ask me a few questions. Pete had walked around ahead of me and when I wasn't following, came back to see what the trouble was. At this stage he didn't know they were policeman and was ready to throw some punches. The badge was immediately produced and we were separated and questioned independently. They kept looking at me and then at a picture they were holding. Then the questions started – name, name again (they didn't believe me), address, age, how long did I plan to stay, and where we were from. The same questions over and over again.

Then they brought us back together and said they wanted us to go down to the police station for further questioning. It was getting beyond a joke and I wanted to know exactly what was going on. They said they had a picture of a girl they were looking for and that I resembled this girl. I had a look at the picture and was astounded. She had bleach blonde hair, small 'brown' eyes and looked nothing like me. Pete had a look at the photo and said, "If you think that's my wife, then I've got lousy taste".

Then we were put in their car – me in the back with a policeman and Pete in the front with a policeman. We sat there in silence for about 10 minutes. Those 10 minutes were the most confusing and nerve racking in my whole life. They asked me to loosen my hair (it was in a ponytail) and they wanted to know if I had anything around my neck. Apparently this girl always wore a pendant. I should have been wearing the necklace that my Sydney boss gave me – a small silver "L". That would have convinced them I wasn't Maureen Fitzpatrick (I'll never forget that name). After about 20 minutes they told us we could go. Three of the cops knew that it wasn't me they were looking for, only one still wasn't convinced. They apologised and let us go. After we told Peter Green the story we made a 'B' line for the closest pub and a straight scotch. The girl they were looking for was wanted for theft and bigamy.

We went and talked to Mr Sharma again and asked him some more questions. We finished off the day with a nice tea at the King's Head.

Wednesday 5th May 1976

Pete stayed in bed all day today with a headache and nasty cough. Now I wish the bedroom was one level down. I would hate to count the times I ran up and down the stairs. Most of the day I spent sewing for the van and looking after the sickie.

Thursday 6th May 1976

Can't really believe Juris, my little brother, is 17 years old today. Pete stayed in bed again while I cleaned up in the kitchen and lounge and finished off the sewing. Did a bit of shopping and bought an Exchange Mart for Pete so he could look up any MGB GT's for sale. That was a mistake cause then he made me ring some places and enquire about cars. About 3.00pm he convinced me he was feeling 100% better and said he was going to get up. He made some more

phone calls while I fixed tea. Then I realised why he felt 100% better all of a sudden. It was Thursday night – and Thursday night in this household means speedway night. How could I not let him go? Pete left and television entertained me for the night.

Friday 7th May 1976

Pete spent most of the day working on the van. Once the curtains were put up it looked much better. I dusted in the lounge and cleaned up the kitchen and then decided to make Pete a present. I had some spare material and some foam left over so I made a speedway cushion. Pete was really tired and his hands hurt, so after tea he lay down to rest. He kept complaining about not feeling well, so I went over to comfort him, and because of force of habit I felt his forehead. He was burning up – so it was off to bed again. Another day in bed for my speedway fan.

Saturday 8th May 1976

We've elected that this weekend is a "car looking for" weekend. In the morning we drove the van over to Harry's place to return it and pick up some wages. We got a terrible shock on arrival when we found workmen dragging out charred and burnt wood, etc, from their basement flat. An electrical fault in the meter box caused a fire which completely burnt out a room in their home, losing some clothing and their suitcases. Harry was most upset about his fur coat that he used to wear everywhere. So we didn't hang around there too long, but went out to Croydon to a sports car place to look at some MGB's.

A couple took our eye but I wasn't too keen on buying from a dealer who always adds too much to the price over what he bought it for. Left there and drove leisurely back to Battersea enjoying the 84° heat immensely. That night we sat in the lounge room with windows flung open, eating ice blocks and watching TV. It was a far cry from several days before when we would both huddle around the gas fire to keep warm.

Sunday 9th May 1976

Up early this morning and around to the phone box where we rang Mum for Mother's Day. (Reversed the charges!!). Spoke with both Mum and Dad and it was certainly great to hear familiar voices. After that I rang several numbers from the paper advertising MG's for sale. Made appointments for several to view in the afternoon. Looked at the first one at Shepherd's Bush and went no further. It was the one we wanted. 1973 model, 32,000 miles, one owner, beautifully kept by its owner (a guy who was terribly British, moustache, etc – loved rugby and the type of bloke who must have gone to Eton). The colour is British Racing Green with a tan interior. We bought it for £1,100 and it is the type of car worth paying a bit extra for because on resale it will command just as much respect and a similar price. We pick it up on Wednesday next (the 12th).

After that we drove sedately to Kensington Gardens and Bayswater Road to meet Peter Green who was selling artwork on Bayswater Road. The Gardens were packed with people swimming in the Serpentine or just sunbaking on the lawns in bathers. Most remarkable to see, considering there was no beach. We walked down past all the art sellers to the end – about one mile, and then walked back through the gardens. As well as people, there were dogs galore. Every British person owns a dog of some nature I reckon. Drove home to another hot lounge room and a night of TV – watched "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?"

Monday 10th May 1976

Monday is usually our letter receiving day, but sadly there were none for us to read. We drove to the bank and had a bank cheque drawn for Neil Coldwell for the MGB and also visited Australia

House to get some regulations and specifications on importing cars into Australia. They didn't have any so they sent us to Canberra House who in turn sent us to New South Wales House. Then we set about trying to find Peter Green. That was a task and a half. He must be the hardest guy ever to contact. After lunch in the White Hart we arranged with a mechanic friend to check over the car. About 6.00pm we drove over to Neil's place to shake on the sale of the car. Unfortunately we can't pick it up until Wednesday night. Come on Wednesday!! Had tea (salad for me cause I'm on a diet) and sat down to our usual nightly entertainment.

Tuesday 11th May 1976

A really boring day. I guess we are too excited about receiving the car on Wednesday. The whole day just seemed to drag by, until about 5.30pm, when Peter Green and Harry arrived. We talked more about questions we could put to Mr Sharma and also what clientele we would want in the bars. Quite a discussion really because we spent the rest of the night talking about the whole thing. Peter left about 9.30pm, but Cora arrived so we still had the same numbers. Eventually the conversation changed to different topics, but the most talked about one was the recent fire Harry and Cora had had. They were to move out of the flat on Thursday, so we offered our services.

Wednesday 12th May 1976

Harry came over and asked if we could do him a favour and help drive some cars over to their temporary residence. Harry owns a block of flats on the other side of town and was moving in there for a while before he finds a permanent place. Some of the cars he has have been outside his place for months and haven't been driven. Chris, his mechanic got to work and started up an old Simca with two wires. We drove that one, Harry drove a BMW, and Chris drove a van. Whenever the Simca stalled, we had to connect the red wire to the black one. It stalled quite a few times, but the wire trick worked quite well. We had to stop to put some petrol in the cars and that was the first time Peter had to make it stall to stop it. We delivered all the cars and Harry drove us back in the BMW – beautiful car!

On the way back we diverted a bit and Harry took us on a scenic drive. He took us to the very posh district which has the only operating toll road in London. It is still going from the time of Charles Dickens. In fact the sign showing the old toll charges is still there – 6d for a horse, one shilling for a horse and cart, etc. On one side of the road there is a park, and on the other, beautiful houses belonging to the very rich. We also saw a very posh boys' college. Dulwich College – the buildings were very old and stately.

Arrived home at 4.00pm and decided to have an early tea of toasted sandwiches before we went to pick up our long awaited MGB. We got to Neil's place about 6.30pm, but he wasn't there. We felt a bit dejected, and the rain didn't help much either. Fancy picking up a sports car in rainy weather. About 7.00pm he arrived and apologised for being late. We went into his room to sign the registration papers. I couldn't believe his room when I saw it. It was immaculate, everything had its place and nothing was out of place. If he looked after his car half as well, we knew we were getting a really well looked after "motor". You could see he was a little sad when he handed over the keys, so we assured him we would do our very best to maintain the car to its peak.

Then came the moment I had been waiting for. Pete had to drive the van back and I was to drive the MGB for the very first time, all by myself. I was a little nervous, but all went well. I followed Pete to Peter Green's place where we left the van and then we drove to the Walkabout club to celebrate with a drink. We saw Harry there and talked over a drink. He had left his own car there the previous night and was driving the BMW. He asked if we would mind helping him out by driving the BMW home for him while he took his own car. We agreed, besides that meant I would drive the MG again. Harry flipped over the sports car, and because he had been in the car

business all his life we felt really proud. He said he would have bought it without even starting the engine. Pete was dying to drive it so after we left Harry's we drove through the city – a round about way of getting home. Harry lives in Battersea!! Got home and still very excited about the car, we planned where we would go tomorrow.

Thursday 13th May 1976

Decided to go to the beach today – Brighton Beach that is! Barrie gave us the general direction, so we set off in our fabulous little car. Unfortunately we couldn't put the top down because it was still a bit chilly. We got onto the M23 and tried her out at 70mph. Beautiful and smooth and Pete switched on the overdrive switch – something he's been dying to do ever since we got the car. The car handled beautifully! There was some sort of festival in Brighton, so there were lights and banners flying everywhere. We saw quite a few gardens and parks before we got to the beach. Tulips were growing everywhere; they were beautiful, long stems and brilliant colours.

We parked the car and walked to the Palace Pier and spent about 70p on the money winning machines. Did I say money winning – we didn't! No sand, I couldn't get over that, so I picked up a pebble to take home with me. We walked along the beachfront and wandered among the stalls selling "Brighton Rock". I laughed when I found out it was just candy. A lot of old people were sitting in deck chairs hoping for the sun to show itself. The place reminded me a little of Miami Beach with all the old folk there.

On the way back we took a picture of the tulips just to show people how huge they were. Time was running out, and seeing it was speedway night, we started back. As we got closer to London, the traffic got heavier because it was peak hour. It was a slow journey to Battersea. A quick tea and we were at Wimbledon. A very mediocre meeting, but a pleasing night because the wind had died down, so we were both hoping for a warmer day on Friday.

Friday 14th May 1976

A beautiful day, just the sort of day for driving around in an open sports car. We drove all around Battersea Park (for the first time) and then found our way to the city and drove across all the bridges and tunnels between London and Southend. One particular tunnel, the Rotherhilde, is about one mile long and when we drove through there with the top down, the noise was deafening especially because of a dirty big truck behind us. At night we went with Peter Green and another of his many girlfriends to a pub in Fulham where a group he wanted to hear were playing. Not bad.

Saturday 15th May 1976

Our first chance to wash and polish the car so with Ted and Barrie watching on, we had a funny day washing, cleaning and polishing every bit of paint we could find. When we'd finished, it looked so good that Ted and Barrie expressed a desire to buy one in the future. Barrie in fact said he was going out that night to look for an MGB. At night we were both pooped so after a short spin in the car, we watched TV all night.

Sunday 16th May 1976

Today was visiting day. We decided to visit a Latvian girl, Mara Sarkans, and her husband (Sax is his name for short – he is a very famous cartoonist in the London daily papers). They lived at Ruislip, which is 17 miles northwest of London. We asked directions from a cab driver at first because I couldn't find it on the map and he put us in the general direction of Slough. At Slough we could find no signs pointing out Ruislip so I asked a "Bobbie" who was shakily riding his

pushbike around a round-a-bout. He told us we were going in the wrong direction and we should head for Heathrow and a town called Staines. He said to ask further directions there.

Which we did when we arrived only to find out that (from a map this time) that Ruislip was in fact very close to where that cop is going to be buried if I ever see him again. It was only two miles from where he was in Slough. So eventually we arrived in Ruislip having done 74 miles to go 17 miles. Now we know what England looks like anyway. We spent a very enjoyable afternoon with Mara (her parents were there too having just arrived from Adelaide to holiday) and later when Sax arrived home from selling Mara's paintings on Bayswater Road. I spent some time looking at Sax's scrapbook of his cartoons and chuckling away most of the time. On the way home it took us about 22 minutes to go the right way.

Monday 17th May 1976

Today was the day Peter G and Harry put our final propositions to Mr Sharma and he said he would give a decision in a week's time. So Peter G generously decided to help us out of our boredom in not working, by offering the following suggestion. He said hop in the sports car, take all of my artwork with you and drive up to Hull or Ipswich or somewhere and on the way call into pubs, art galleries, even private homes and see if you can sell some or take orders and at the same time as earning a commission, we'll be seeing England. The artist who Peter buys from suggested it, as once before he gave his stuff to a guy to do exactly the same thing and he took orders in about three days for £800 of stock. Trust we can do the same. We'll be leaving on Thursday 20th. Most of today we spent talking about possible sales lines and planning our route.

Tuesday 18th May 1976

This morning I took the car across to the garage that does the mechanical work on Harry's vans, to get a service. The garage is in Kensington Gardens and is in a little mews behind the Australian Walkabout Club. While doing that I had breakfast in a little café for 28p – bacon, eggs and coffee. Then I walked up to Pete Green's place in Sussex Gardens – he lives in the Olympic Hotel – and he was just going down to the breakfast that is part of the rent for the room. "Come on down" he said, so down I went and he conned the girls in the restaurant to give me another plate of bacon and eggs. So quite full with 4 eggs, 4 pieces of bacon, 3 cups of coffee, and several pieces of toast, I set off to collect the car.

They had improved its performance considerably by decoating the ignition to avoid the pre-ignition that had been building up. To test her out we nicked up to Heathrow on the M4 and wow did it go!!

In the evening we went to a new club / disco type that has just been opened by the publishers of the Australian Express (a free weekly newspaper about current events in Aust / NZ). The club is called "Witchety" and is really nice, except their bar prices are too high. They have a group on every night and some of the groups who will be appearing there in the next few weeks are "Rocky Sharp and the Razors" – a ten member teddy boy type group which along with "Shakin Stevens and the Sunsets" are the best rock 'n' roll groups in Great Britain. Apparently a cult of teddy boys follow them around and dance spectacularly with their girls to the music. Should be worth seeing.

Wednesday 19th May 1976

Getting thoroughly sick and tired of our useless television, we decided to ring the TV people to get them to come out and fix it. The technician came over but said the set would have to go back to the workshop for major repairs. If there was a spare one in the shop, he said he would bring it over for us. We didn't really expect to see him again, but ½ hour later he brought over another

set. The coffee and biscuits I gave him must have done it. At night we went to White City for a speedway meeting. It was a bitterly cold night with a bit of rain.

Thursday 20th May 1976

Peter went around to Pete Green's place in the morning to pick up all the art that we were going to take with us up north. I spent the morning cleaning up the flat and packing a few things for us. The previous day, Ted had given us 2lbs of ham for £1.00, so I made some sandwiches for us to take (he is a real dear). To his other customers he's selling it at £1.38/lb. The company we had arranged to have the car insured with changed their minds, so we spent about an hour on the phone calling other insurance places. We eventually got in touch with a company in Battersea where Ted insures all his cars, so by 2.30pm that was all fixed. Off to the bank to reimburse the purse and we set off for Cambridge.

It was raining and hailing very heavily as we left London, but the weather cleared up when we got close to Cambridge. For the first hour or so we just drove around the city, having a look at the University and finding out where the prospective pubs were. Most of the pubs only opened at 7.00pm, so we decided to look for a place to rest our weary bones for the night. Came across an average looking place charging £7.00/double, so we decided to take it. It was better than paying £9.00, which was the general price in other places. The room we were given was really gorgeous, nicely decorated and very comfortable. It had the same wallpaper as in our kitchen in Battersea. Name of the hotel guesthouse was "The Lensfield Hotel" (would highly recommend to anyone).

We went to a few hotels to try and sell the artwork, but the general answer was "let the brewery decorate". We saw a really nice pub called the "Red Cow" and decided to try there. The Guv'nor was very impressed with the art, but said that his wife handled the money, and would we come back about 9.00pm when she was expected there. We tried another pub in the meantime but to no avail. We returned to the Red Cow and made our first sale to the Gov's wife. She bought a small clockwork piece. Decided to spend the rest of the evening there and work out a different approach we could use.

A whole crowd of people came into the pub and I had a quick idea. Two young ladies were standing nearby admiring some of the art and I made out to be a prospective buyer to Peter. I called them over to ask if they liked the piece I had picked out. In the meantime Pete went out to the car to get some of the larger clockwork collages. Pete came back and everyone in the pub came over to admire the art. They all loved it, but none of them were buyers. Never mind – it was only our first day. Tired, but happy about our first sale, we went to bed.

Friday 21st May 1976

Left the Lensfield Hotel about 9.00am after a typical English guesthouse breakfast. We considered trying an art gallery in the city but we couldn't find one so we walked around the centre of the town, watching in amazement the hundreds of students bicycling around the narrow, quaint streets – too narrow for two cars to pass, let alone park on the side of the road. We tried several jewellers to see if they would be interested in the clockwork art but received knock-backs everywhere. They said their head offices in the cities bought all the products sold in the shops.

A bit downhearted through lack of success we walked back to the car and discovered the river that runs through Cambridge – saw the punts and had to go punting. A must!! So we hired one and spent a magnificent ½ hour discovering the backwaters of the University. We punted under the famous bridge that connects the Uni and continued down past the cathedral in glorious weather – a clear blue warm sky. We finished that and then continued driving towards Peterborough along the back lanes shrouded by hedges through beautiful villages every two

miles or so. We arrived in Peterborough about midday but not being much of a place, we went straight through and headed for Spalding (note South Australian. names).

While going through a small village called Eye we spotted a pub called the White Hart. The same name as the one we drink at in London and for which we had a specially prepared collage. So we stopped and showed the publican and wife the collage. Unimpressed at first (we expected that considering our past performances) we were a bit depressed but decided to have lunch there. Over the lunch and a pint of lager we sold them one as they had become used to it. Overwhelmed with success we displayed the rest of the stuff that we had in the boot. This stuff (clockwork) is really startling when seeing it for the first time so when I brought it out from the wrappers the local drinkers, who we had befriended at this stage, were rapt in it. But the price of £100 was far beyond them but they gave us several names and addresses of wealthy people in Peterborough (6 miles away) who may be interested.

So we left the pub feeling much better. By the way it was at this pub that I dropped my beer in shock when I heard about the racing death the night before in Sweden of the captain of my speedway team, Wimbledon. Tommy Jansson, 23 years old, an absolutely brilliant rider and a guy who I had almost "idolised" since I've been in London. It was the same thing to me (and the Wimbledon supporters) as though John Cahill had been killed. That was the effect that it had.

So we went back into Peterborough and saw these guys. The first said flatly "Not interested" without even looking. The second was out of town and from the third we took an order for one worth £100. It was a vintage Rolls Royce and being a successful used car dealer he liked it. We decided to stay the night in Peterborough and found a nice guesthouse with breakfast for £5.50 / double. At night the speedway just happened to be operating so we went along and it turned out to be the best meeting we've seen in England so far. Peterborough raced Mildenhall, a team from the west coast. A minute's silence was held for Tommy.

Saturday 22nd May 1976

We left Peterborough after eggs and bacon and headed for Lincoln, once again along the lanes and byways of England. We stopped at Spalding, trying to sell our wares but weren't successful. We've decided at this stage to give it away because the people of the midlands just don't have enough money to buy the things we're selling. We're now going to concentrate on seeing England and sell in London where they really do go like hotcakes. Continued through Spalding and arrived at Lincoln where we immediately saw the Lincoln Cathedral built in 100AD and restored ever since. Toured that in awe, trying to imagine what it was like in those days.

Walked across the road to Lincoln Castle, a huge fortress built on the highest point of the city. Had a look at that and played the fool, me being a Briton and Laima a Roman attacking the castle. Also in Lincoln we walked through the city and saw more houses built on bridges spanning the river. Nearly every town and city in England is built on a river. Left Lincoln very much impressed with English history. A damn sight more than American history. We continued north through small villages to Goole, which is on the River Humber. We headed next for Hull, the third biggest port in England situated almost on the east coast of England.

Our reason for going to Hull was because Peter Green had given us an address there of a guy called Don Brady. Don is an ex-boss of Graeme Foster (remember him, the guy who missed East's grand final last year when he was put in hospital when they didn't know what was wrong with him.) Don has just recently been appointed a director of Reckitt & Colman and consequently was transferred from Sydney to Hull where the head office is. Don, his wife and two daughters (ages 8 and 11) live in a village 10 miles from Hull called Burton Pidsea.

We arrived there about 6.30pm and after some difficulty in finding their house, (the address given us was "The Chestnuts" Burton Pidsea), we knocked on the door and were very warmly greeted by the whole family. Their house is out of a storybook. Two storeys, huge rooms, rambling farmhouse style, eight stables at the back, lawn area enough for three tennis courts, a heated swimming pool and a paddock lush with grass for grazing horses, if they had any. They immediately invited us to stay the night and we humbly accepted. We spent the evening talking about Australia, Graeme and football, and their new life in England and the two kids, Kimberly and Samantha and everything else. About 1.30am we hit the sack heavily subsidised with Carlsberg Lager.

Sunday 23rd May 1976

Up bright and early and the view looking out from our bedroom was sensational. Another perfect day and fields everywhere around were green as hell. After breakfast the family took us touring around the villages of Yorkshire, showing us many homes in many villages that they had looked at with the view of buying. Villages with quaint names such as Lund, Middleton on the Wolds, Tickton, Burton Constable and Lelley. We stopped at Cherry Burton, where they lived while looking for their own home, and had a Sunday lunch and drink in the local. From there we went to Beverly where we had ice creams and then back along narrow roads to Burton Pidsea at about 3.00pm. Laima then taught a Latvian folk dance to Kim and Sam (two of the best little kids I've ever seen). We then all played tennis and mucked around in the sunshine on the lawns. About 7.00pm we retired inside and relaxed. Don had promised fish and chips to the kids but confided to me he had idea where he would get them from, as the village did not have a fish and chip shop. So would you believe we then proceeded to drive about 35 miles looking for a fish shop?

About 9.00pm we found a Chinese take-away place in Withernsea and settled for that. It was still daylight at this stage of course and the setting sun provided a tremendous spectacle over the fields. After a very full day we went to bed about 10.00pm after watching the thriller with the kids who were allowed to "stay up late" because Peter and Laima were here. They became quite attached to us, and us to them!

Monday 24th May 1976

We woke up in time to say goodbye to Kimbo and Sammy before they went off to school, and to give them a present each. We had some Jacobs's ladders in the car and we thought the kids would like them. They were thrilled and immediately wrote their name on them. Those two would be the most obedient and loveable kids I have met for a long time. Don told us the best tourist attractions to visit, so after goodbyes, we set off for York. Again, a beautiful day, just right for driving through narrow lanes surrounded by hedges and green fields. We try to avoid the highways as much as we can.

In York we visited the museum – not an ordinary museum. This one was like an underground English village in the old times. When we passed the candy store, you could actually smell peppermint. They must spray peppermint spray every day. Unfortunately there were hordes of school kids there and we had to fight our way to the exhibits.

From York we decided to head for the Yorkshire Moors travelling once again via villages to Malton and Pickering where we saw many fine examples of historical ruins. The moors were very spectacular to say the least with striking examples of sparse desolate areas next to cultivated fields growing crops for harvest. Funny looking sheep dotted the hills and roamed freely over the road. At the other side of the moors (about 30 miles) we arrived at the coastal town of Whitby, the birthplace of Captain Cook. Very picturesque with a harbour divided by a

bridge that connected the town. It was from here that Cook set sail for Australia or at least to discover it.

From Whitby we travelled across the top of the moors to Kildale and then down to Helmsley and Rievaulx where Anglo Saxon chapels and cathedrals abound. We then decided to go to the lakes area, which meant going due west towards Richmond and Workington. At this stage it was about 7.00pm and once again it was very pleasant driving in the late afternoon sun. We called it quits for the night at Brough on the A66 and found a lovely bed and breakfast farmhouse for £2.00 / each. Included in that £2.00 was breakfast of course, thick linen sheets, hot water bottles and a wake up knock in the morning. We had a pub tea of chicken soup and fish and chips in a basket for £1.50 / double – terrific value.

Tuesday 25th May 1976

Not a very nice morning to wake up to, raining and cloudy. After a really great breakfast we headed off for Penrith, which is the gateway to the Lakes district. The weather was very disappointing and we decided that when we got to Penrith we would just have a quick look and then head off home. The weatherman must have heard us, because it suddenly began to clear up. We drove alongside Ullswater Lake and through Kirkstone Pass. The scenery was breathtaking. The road meandered around and was covered by huge trees and then a break in the undergrowth would give you a view of the lake.

The countryside between the lakes was very hilly and the road was bounded by stone fences. No concrete to keep the stones and rocks together, they were just laid one on top of the other. Took a picture to prove it. Before we reached Lake Windermere, we passed through a tiny village called Ambleside. So far this is my favourite. A lot of other people liked it too because it was crowded with tourists in cars and hikers as well. Windermere was just as beautiful as Ullswater and we drove on a wandering road alongside it. From Stanley we drove towards the M6 highway that would take us back to London. Not much to see on the highway and we were getting hungry so we changed onto the A6 and found a quaint little pub called Plough Inn in Galgate where we had a nice lunch.

Back onto the M6 because we wanted to get to London before dark. We by passed Preston, Wigan and Warrington before we got to Birmingham. All we could see was chimney pots and thousands of tiny Coronation Street type houses. Not really impressed with the big cities. We joined the M1 just after Coventry and headed for London. Every now and then, the rain would pour down and visibility was very bad, especially because of the spray caused by the hundreds of trucks using the motorway. We got to Battersea about 5.30pm and saw that we had travelled 908 miles since last Thursday. You can have your American and Canadian scenery. England's countryside is by far the best. Read a few letters which had previously arrived and had an impromptu tea of hamburger patties, chips and beans, watched a little TV and then off to bed.

Wednesday 26th May 1976

Yesterday we received a letter from a Mr Wilson asking us to contact him at MAS so we drove to Peter Green's place, parked the car and went to MAS by underground. He told us that he had received a panicky telex from Sydney MAS telling him about our tickets. Previously, a few travel agents had sold 180-day excursion tickets to customers, but in fact the tickets are valid after 180 days. The travel agents were meant to contact the London MAS office to inform them of which customers the tickets had been sold to. Bill Hollow had in fact sold these tickets in good faith, but he hadn't contacted London MAS to inform them. He just hadn't tied up the loose ends. The MAS staff had been instructed by management that the extensions were not available to just anyone. That is why the girl we had seen in early April told us they were no longer valid after May 14th. As from April 1st a law had been passed in Australia prohibiting this sort of thing

anyway. Mr Wilson was very helpful and said to contact him a few months before we planned to leave and he would have the tickets altered. We both sighed with relief.

Then we deposited a cheque, which we had received from Arthur Frommer from the unused USA hotel passes. Also received a card from Mara from the Channel Islands asking if we could contact Adelaide and organise some money to be sent to her. We finished all our business and arrived at the White Hart where we had arranged to meet Peter Green. We moved from there to Walkabout and then to the Queensborough for the happy hour. It was here that I met a Lithuanian from Melbourne and we had a long talk. I also met a girl from Unley High. She was in Mara's year but I knew her from basketball. She (Wendy Duncliff) was leaving in a few days for Europe and was most upset when I said Mara and Brent would be in London in about a week's time. Well, perhaps they will meet up somewhere along the line. Pete met a friend of Bill's from Unley as well. A Murray Kleisdorf. They had a long talk as well, so tonight was really a big reunion with old Unley High school buddies.

Thursday 27th May 1976

Very cold today so we stayed home to work out plans for the future and what we were going to do. Speedway night at Wimbledon tonight. Their first meeting since Tommy Jansson was killed. We were there to pay our respects to him along with thousands of others.

Friday 28th May 1976

On Wednesday we had seen in Carnaby St while looking around there, an advertisement for the LONDON TRANSPORT COLLECTION, which is a display of historic vehicles that used to be used by the Transport Department in years gone by. As we still had the collages of old Bill type buses, we went along today to see the display. Sure enough there were original buses from that era, exactly the same as the models we had. So we spoke to the souvenir people who were very interested in selling the buses there. However it wasn't their decision, so on Tuesday next we have to go and see the publicity people of the Transport Department in Marylebone St. Let's hope they like them. The display was at Syon Park in Brentford near Kew Gardens and the park is very beautiful and peaceful. At night we went out with Ted to his mate's pub and we had a very enjoyable time. Laima made friends with the publican's wife and sister and a date was made to go with them to the English Derby at Epsom. The very first time we will have been to a horse race meeting.

Saturday 29th May 1976

This morning we had planned to display all the artwork alongside Ted's stall in the High Street, but rain dampened that idea. Yesterday, while showing Ted the stuff for the first time, a rather large crowd of people gathered in the street around the car and gaped at it. One old chap was particularly interested and took my phone number for contact later on for one worth £95. So on the strength of that we decided to display it today. As I said, it rained so that put a stop to it. So we just spent the day indoors, watching TV Sports shows and cleaning up. We were going to go out tonight but decided against it.

Sunday 30th May 1976

Today we went over to Bayswater Road to meet Sax, the guy who we drove up to see two weeks ago. He sells his wife's paintings on Bayswater Road and we decided to go and have a look at them. He was very pleased to see us and we talked for some time. He then had a break and we went across the road to the Black Lion pub for lunch. After lunch we journeyed up the other end of the road and met Peter Green and Dave Jacobs who were busily selling their buses. At about 4.00pm we went to the Latvian Club in Queensborough Terrace where we met Sax, and Laima

was happy to be speaking Latvian again with all the people. We spent some time there and then met Dave and Peter again for tea at the White Hart. As tomorrow is Spring Bank Holiday Monday, Dave is staying in London tonight instead of returning to his home in Portsmouth.

Monday 31st May 1976

Last night we teed up with Dave to sell our art stuff on his pitch at Bayswater Road because on a Monday a licence isn't needed whereas on a Sunday only those who are qualified can sell there. So early this morning we loaded up the car and off we went. Found a good position and preceded to create turmoil on the pavement as people stopped to look at it. We sold one big clockwork and took orders for two more. Also sold many smaller little pieces and altogether had a really fun day. Laima, myself, Peter Green and Chris, his (new) girlfriend. At about 3.00pm it started raining slightly and didn't stop until about 11.00pm at night. However it didn't stop the speedway at Wimbledon (Poms ride on anything). So Laima, who is now as keen as mustard and I trundled along to the Embassy International won by Malcolm Simmons from Poole (appropriate place to come from considering the rain).

CHAPTER NINE

London needs another pub

Tuesday 1st June 1976

TV on the blink again, so we rang for a mechanic to come out and fix it. He said the aerial was to blame and fixed it up as best he could. No cup of tea for him this time. Decided to do the laundry, so went around to say hello to my favourite laundromat lady. She's really sweet, knows everyone who goes in there. Her favourite job is helping everyone to fold their sheets, just so she can gossip. Her pet word is "Too – rah". Rather a gloomy day, overcast and windy, but still quite warm. Received a letter from Mara and Brent telling us they expect to be in London by the weekend. Juris also wrote filling us in on the news about the Youth Days, which had just finished in Adelaide. He told me that Schmiggin runs up and down the willow tree and is as mad as ever. Cheetah on the other hand is getting very fat and lazy. Pity she hasn't got Schmiggin's energy. A treat for tea tonight – steak! Very nice. Most of the day we spent cleaning the flat and Hoovering the carpets to get ready for Mara and Brenton.

Wednesday 2nd June 1976

The road tax on the car had expired, so Pete took all the papers and drove to the city to renew it. He was gone a fair while and I was getting worried. After about two hours he arrived home fuming. Apparently for about half an hour they were calling him out as Mr Neil and naturally he didn't respond. Everyone else was called out by their surnames, but not poor 'ol Pete. After everything was settled they didn't even apologise for the wasted time.

We had enjoyed the science museum in Toronto so we decided to go to the one here. Our luck had changed because we found a parking spot right outside. The museum was free and we had three hours to cover four floors. It was completely different to the one in Toronto, but still very interesting. Pete especially liked the exhibit on old cars, motorbikes and bicycles, not to mention the building of bridges, tunnels and roads. They even had a segment on the Sydney Harbour Bridge. We left about 6.00pm after a good look at everything (I still liked the other one better).

After tea, Peter and Chris came over. Chris was leaving for the continent on Thursday and wanted to say goodbye to us (she's a Melbourne girl). They were having a farewell drink at the Walkabout club and invited us, but we declined because speedway was being televised and Pete (and I) wanted to see it. They only showed about half of the actual meeting but it was still very good. Of course Pete wasn't satisfied. He could have watched it all night. Just to make up for it, he read one of his speedway magazines for the rest of the night.

Thursday 3rd June 1976

Pete woke early and drove the car over to Stanley Motors to have something checked over in the car. I stayed in bed for a while and kept company with the cold that seems to have attached itself to me. The day just seemed to drag on for me but the two Peter's were bright and chirpy because they had been to see Mr Sharma to work out some more details. Speedway night again. Funny how I seemed to feel better after I realised this, so we made some hamburgers, wrapped them in foil and off we went. A great win for Wimbledon and Leicester and a good night of racing.

Friday 4th June 1976

We still had all the clockwork collages in the lounge, so we decided to set up a stall in High Street along with all the other stalls. We set up in the courtyard after getting permission to do so. Always a crowd of people standing around us especially kids who were enthralled with the Jacob's ladders. We let the kids play with them, but kept a close eye on them to make sure none disappeared. Every kid pestered his Mum and Dad and some of the kids walked away happy, others didn't. Everybody loved the large clockwork pieces and we had quite a few enquiries about ordering items. Four young guys walked up and chose a clockwork piece of Big Ben and argued about who was going to pay (they all wanted to). As they walked away we heard them arguing about who was going to give it to "Her". Lucky "Her"! An old pensioner spent some time talking to us and told us he had been a conductor on an old "Bill Bus" for 30 years and really liked the ones we were selling. A nice chap and we both felt like giving him one as a present. I guess we're too sentimental. We didn't though.

We packed up about 4.00pm when Pete Green came over and invited us over to a pub in Barking. Pete knew the Gov. who had recently taken over and renovated the place. We had a really enjoyable night with the only trouble being that the pub is too far away. Peter G wanted a drive in the MGB, so we all piled in. Wouldn't want to try to fit four people in it though.

Saturday 5th June 1976

Considering the moderately successful day yesterday with the stall, we tried it again today. Once again crowds of people hang around "ooing and ahing" over the clockwork but no one bought anything. It confirmed what we knew earlier that Battersea people don't have the kind of money necessary to buy them, but all the same we tried – you never know who might come out of the blue with a wad. It was terrific sitting in the sunshine talking to people who had come down to do their shopping and listening to the Test match that had begun between England and the West Indies. We only sold 11 Jacob's ladders all day. Never mind. At night Pete Green came around for tea and we stayed home on the off chance Mara and Brent may arrive, but no luck. Something must have held them up.

Sunday 6th June 1976

Once again we waited for Mara and Brenton who had indicated by letter that they would arrive this weekend. While waiting I had a chuckle over something that happened yesterday. While sitting out with the art stuff, a fire engine came roaring the wrong way up the High Street. He got to the corner where I was, stopped, looked around (the driver that is) and roared off. 30 seconds later he was back again at the same corner having just unknowingly gone around the block. I could see the driver scratching his head. Suddenly struck by inspiration, he roared off again. Would you believe 45 seconds this time and he was back at the same corner again. Then within five more seconds two additional fire engines had turned up and they were parked in the middle of the intersection in a starlike formation.

The drivers all met in the middle and were studying the dispatch sheet with the address of the fire on it. Eventually Barrie (Ted's son) walked over and politely asked if he could help. As he went over, the shrill noise of yet another fire truck emerged and there he came racing up the street. However, he couldn't get far because of the traffic jam that had built up. Barrie was able to direct them to the fire, which was almost $\frac{3}{4}$ mile away. Luckily we found out later that it was a false alarm. Ted and I and everyone else laughed until it hurt after they had gone. I wish that I had the presence of mind to take a photo. It would have looked as though the fire engines had come to look at the artwork.

By 5.00pm Mara and Brent still hadn't arrived. However, at 5.15pm, a knock on the door aroused us. Except it wasn't my sister in law but Debby and Barbara – two girls from The Advertiser – Debby from copy control and Barb from classifieds. They had just arrived several days ago, so Laima (and I) had a long chat with them for several hours and made further arrangements to meet them later in the week. Laima drove them back to their flat about 9.00pm and I waited home. As mentioned before; four can't fit in an MG. Mara and Brent still haven't arrived.

Monday 7th June 1976

Received a letter from Mum and Dad this morning in answer to one we wrote to them re the hotels. Everything resolved. Today we had many things to do in the city so we walked up and down Oxford Street and then walked down to Holborn where the Kodak office is to pick up some slides. However they weren't ready so it was a wasted walk and in very hot weather. Caught the Tube back to Paddington station and picked up the car which we left at Peter Green's place in Sussex Gardens. We then went across to the Princes' Square Hotel and had a really good talk with Mr Sharma and cleared up final details. He's a funny little guy, always in good spirits and always with a welcoming cup of tea. At the moment all his hotels are full as a gook so naturally he is happy. He's most surprised because as yet, he said, the tourist season hasn't really begun. With over 400 guests in his hotels there will be no shortage of patrons eager for a drink. While we were talking he had to send two guests to a nearby pub for a drink because his bars weren't open yet. However from next week on they will be! At night we went to the happy hour at the Walk-a-bout club.

Tuesday 8th June 1976

Another day in which we spent time at the Princes' Square Hotel with Sharma, this time doing some manual work. We also had a long talk with Bob and Noreen who are the landlords of the White Hart. We asked for their advice and hints on running an English hotel. They were most helpful and their tips, combined with ideas we have from the club, should benefit us. We came home about 4.00pm and watched the last day's play in the First Test. Not an exciting finish – Draw.

Wednesday 9th June 1976

Today we were driving past the Royal Lancaster Hotel (a very posh one) and we saw that Fabergé were having a trade show there. We tried to get in but were turned away. Never mind. Another hot day (83° F), so we settled for posing in the MGB with the top down driving around London. Also left some "buses" with several conventions going on in various hotels, in the hope that visiting delegates would take a fancy to them. Nothing doing at night.

Thursday 10th June 1976

I wasn't feeling too perky this morning, so Pete went to see Mr Sharma at the Princes' Square. He arrived home about 1.30pm and told me what had been discussed. In the meantime I had written some overdue letters. Speedway night tonight. Just as we arrived at the track, we saw Ted in the pub next door and he promptly invited us for a drink with a few of his friends. The meeting was just about to begin, so we declined and walked to our usual seats. A good meeting (pairs). Reading won.

Friday 11th June 1976

Today we went and had a look at all the stuff Mr Sharma had when the downstairs area was a restaurant and bar. There were quite a few things there, icemaker, glass washer, dishwasher,

deep freeze and drink machines. He certainly was well equipped. None of the stuff had been used for quite a while and was therefore dirty. Also we didn't know how much of it was still in working condition. We saw Frank and Angela and their two children there and arranged to catch up with them later that evening. We had met them at the White Hart the morning they arrived from Australia. They were looking for accommodation, so we introduced them to the Princes' Square – which they really liked. Mr Sharma was out all day at one of his properties and we could only see him on Monday.

Pete went back to the hotel at 6.00pm to see Peter Green and show him what we had found out the back. He didn't arrive so Frank and Pete had a closer look at it. Eventually they went for a drink and a meal at a nearby pizza place. Frank was a dentist in Perth and had earned enough money to retire temporarily, so decided to go overseas with his family (he is 32). Pete had a really enjoyable evening with him and arrived home and told me all about them.

Saturday 12th June 1976

Shopping day again. I really love shopping on High Street on a Saturday. The stalls cover the entire street and everybody knows everybody else. You can get quite a good selection of vegetables, fruit, poultry and meat. So much more fun than pushing a trolley around supermarket aisles. In the morning Pete went to the Princes' Square to meet the hotel electrician and ask him to look at some of the electrical items and check their working condition. Unfortunately most of them were in very bad condition because they hadn't been used. In the afternoon we were deciding whether or not to go to a speedway meeting. Decided to stay home and save the money.

Sunday 13th June 1976

During the week we had received another post card from Mara and Brent apologising about their delay, something about money from their bank taking longer to arrive than expected. Anyway, with a bit of luck they would arrive at our place today (sometime). Decided to polish the car, so we grabbed all our rags and polish and began. Three quarters of the way through we ran out of polish but managed to make do. Once again a shiny, sparkling MG. After a huge tea – work makes you hungry – we settled down to watch an episode of McLeod that had been filmed in Sydney. While in Las Vegas we had seen the second half of the show so now we wanted to see the first half. It had just begun and there was a knock at the front door and I immediately started to panic because I thought it was Mara and I was trying to figure out what I could make them to eat. No Mara and Brent. It was Peter Green and Barbara, so we all sat down and watched the show. I think Barbara felt a bit out of the conversation, because all the three of us did was talk about Sydney and have nostalgic memories about the place. A really good show.

Monday 14th June 1976

We went over to see Mr Sharma again, but he was still fixing up some loose ends on his property, so we talked to his wife. Getting a bit tired of not being able to meet him. It's been all talk so far and no action. On paper we should do very well but we just can't get started. I can see us not being hotel workers very shortly. Especially as he wants us to use derivations of Vegemite glasses as beer glasses. He just happens to have a quantity of them in stock along with glasses that have BOAC written all over them. He is very lethargic and no doubt would be like that in the future. Never mind. Saga will probably continue later. Waited home in the evening for the elusive couple to arrive. No luck.

Tuesday 15th June 1976

Yesterday while at the Princes' Square, we came across an elderly American lady who wanted to go to Nottingham. Nothing unusual about that, except she wanted to go by taxi. The driver had quoted her £70 to take her there. When I heard about that I nipped in and offered £40. She readily accepted, so at 9.00am we set off (Laima stayed at home because we couldn't fit her in) and I had her dropped off where she wanted to go by 11.15am. 130 miles straight up the M1 at about 75mph. She duly gave me the £40 (I actually felt embarrassed even taking that much) and £6 extra for a tip. She was "a member of God's church" and all the way up there she tried to convert me. Fortunately it wasn't a long trip.

In the afternoon I called in at the John Player Tennis Tournament in Nottingham and watched Jimmy Connors and all the others warm up for Wimbledon. Then I had a look at Nottingham Castle and gee is that ever an impressive place? Robin Hood and all the boys would have had a ball there. I left Nottingham at about 5.30pm and headed down to Leicester. Seeing as how it was Tuesday and the Leicester Lions race on Tuesday night it was an offer too good to miss. So I saw yet another speedway venue and an exciting match which resulted in a win for Belle Vue from Manchester. A two hour drive had me home in Battersea at about 12.30am.

Wednesday 16th June 1976

We went to the Princes' Square Hotel again, but as Mr Sharma was really busy, we decided to see him later. We went to the White Hart for lunch where we saw Peter Green and arranged to meet him at the Queensborough for happy hour later on. We received a message from Frank so we saw him and arranged to meet him and the rest of the family at the cricket tomorrow. Frank ended up going to the happy hour with us.

Thursday 17th June 1976

We were running a bit late this morning so we decided to drive the car to Lords. What a mistake! Pete dropped me off to meet Frank and family while he went to find a park. We had arranged to meet Peter G inside. Cost £1.50. No way could Pete find a park, so he ended up driving to Pete Green's place and caught the tube back. Lords was packed and the day was pretty overcast. It cost us another £1.00 to get a seat in one of the stands. We were really hoping for a good day's play because of the money it cost us. Play was very slow. England won the toss and runs were scored very slowly. In 360 minutes they only scored 197. We left about 6.00pm to avoid the crowd and missed two batsmen getting out – just our luck. It was speedway night, so we dashed home intending to clean up a little and then go, but we found a message saying that Mara and Brent were arriving tonight. Pete still went to Wimbledon, but I stayed home to wait for the long awaited couple. They arrived about 8.15pm and we just sat around and talked about the various things we had done and seen. Pete arrived and joined in with the conversation. We finally hit the sack about 1.00am

Friday 18th June 1976

Pete had to drive down to Portsmouth to see Dave Jacobs (the guy that makes the buses) so Mara, Brent and myself went to the city. First stop was Mara's bank to check on the finances, then we walked to Australia House and South Australia House, then Trafalgar Square where we spent an hour feeding the pigeons and taking pictures. The next half hour was spent trying to fight off the pigeons – gee they are tame. From there we went to Buckingham Palace where Mara tried to make the sentries laugh and Brent and I walked away embarrassed. Then we walked to Park Lane and along Bayswater Road till we reached the White Hart where we were to meet Pete. After about an hour, Barbara arrived. We found out she was leaving for her yearly trip to America tomorrow morning, so we had some farewell drinks with her. Pete and Peter G

arrived and we all had a really good time until stumps. Pete and Brent drove back in the van while Mara and I drove back in the MG with the top down. She really enjoyed that.

Saturday 19th June 1976

We woke up to find a really miserable day. Funny how the weather changes so quickly. Yesterday was very hot and today was cold and raining. We all drove down to Portobello Road to walk through the markets. Although it was still raining it didn't dampen our enthusiasm. We were still tired because of our late night on Friday so we decided to have an early night.

Sunday 20th June 1976

Still raining, but the weatherman assured us the afternoon would clear, so we drove to Bayswater Road to see the artists at work. We introduced Mara and Brent to Dave Jacobs and then we walked down further to meet Sax. He wasn't standing by his stall, but we knew where to find him – across the road in the pub. He was really pleased to see us. No sooner did we start chatting to him and Mr Svenka arrived (his father-in-law who was visiting from Adelaide). He was surprised to see Mara. We arranged to meet next Sunday again because we were running short of time. We had planned to go to Reading for a speedway meeting. It took us quite a while to get there because everyone else on the road was going there to. The weatherman was right for once and it turned out to be a very pleasant day. After the first race we saw that Mara and Brent would be fans from now on. They really loved it. We had tea and settled down to watch "The Battle of Britain", a really good film. After talking about tomorrow's arrangements we all went to bed.

Monday 21st June 1976

Frank and Angela were coming over for tea tonight, so I stayed home and prepared everything while Mara, Brent and Peter went out. Pete went to the Princes' Square and Mara and Brent contacted a few people they knew and went to Brent's bank. Pete came back very much happier than some of his previous visits with Mr Sharma. He had contacted quite a number of people to come out and look at the place and offer suggestions. Mara and Brent were also happy; they found they had more money than they thought they had. Brent and Pete went to pick up Frank and Angela and the two kids in the van.

We had a very enjoyable evening and the kids were amused with the Jacob's ladders we gave them. We all had an enjoyable night talking about various subjects – mainly the new motorhome they were waiting for. About 11.30pm they left with Pete and Brent taking them home while Mara and I cleaned up the kitchen.

Tuesday 22nd June 1976

After many weeks of mucking about with the pub, today proved quite fruitful. I had contacted a rep from the Ben Truman Brewery who duly arrived on time. He enthusiastically surveyed both bar areas and immediately agreed for his company to install draught beer and all the cooling apparatus (valued at about £2,000) in the place. It is to be installed next Wednesday so our opening night will be shortly afterwards. This rep for Truman's is the rep for Buckingham Palace, House of Lords and the House of Parliament. On his next visit to these places he is going to take Laima and myself along. Imagine! Inside Buckingham Palace!! Flushed with success, I returned home and began to work out some publicity for the place. We celebrated with Pete G and others (Mara and Brent) with a night at the White Hart. (For a change!!)

Wednesday 23rd June 1976

All four of us spent most of the day at Princes' Square cleaning up and arranging things the way we are going to want them. The last three days have been extremely hot (about 86°F) so after a hard day's sweat we watched the Wimbledon Tennis most of the night at home on TV. Not at the White Hart.

Thursday 24th June 1976

I was up early and over at the pub by 9.00am awaiting reps from the wine and spirit people and a rep for a music system who I had contacted yesterday. Laima came over later with Mara and Brenton who then went off to the pictures. The two of us fiddled around for a while and when the day was done we once again went home to cool off (90°F today in London). Being Thursday we went to Wimbledon and watched them get beaten by Belle Vue a team from Manchester. Peter Collins broke the track record.

Friday 25th June 1976

Last Saturday while at Portobello Road we found a men's wear shop that didn't have a stall in front of it, so today we went over with Greeny and booked the place for tomorrow's trading. It costs £10 for a Saturday but with a bit of luck we'll be on a good thing if the weather stays as nice as it has been. We took all the gear down there today and set it up ready for an early start tomorrow. Called in at the Princes' Square but nothing to do until next week. Can't wait!

Saturday 26th June 1976

The four of us got up bright and early and drove out to Portobello Road to start work. Another very hot day (95°) and this unfortunately deterred a lot of people visiting the markets. The day dragged by and people weren't buying much of anything. The other people selling similar items to us sold even less than we did, so I guess we couldn't grumble. We had a most interesting day watching the different types of people pass by. One particular chap took a liking to Brenton. He kept coming back asking where the blond bombshell was and I kept telling him that Mara had gone shopping. Eventually I found out it was Brenton that he wanted. Pete didn't let Brenton forget that all day.

The stall was next to a pub that was packed so there were always a lot of people around us. About 5.00pm we decided to pack up and finish for the day. Mara and Brent went home and Pete and I went to Wembley to see the Intercontinental Final in speedway. There were 16 riders, eight of whom would go through to the World Final in September being run in Poland. The temperature was in the 90°'s and many people suffered. A very unusual night of racing as nobody was really in clear command until the second half started. Those to go through to the final were Peter Collins, Ivan Mauger, Phil Crump (Aust), Malcolm Simmons, Chris Morton, Scott Autrey and John Louis. Ole Olsen, last year's World Champion surprisingly didn't qualify. Nor did John Boulger or Billy Sanders. Crump was the only Aussie to make it.

The pubs had just shut as we left and the hordes of people were still standing outside them to savour the last drops of their refreshing drinks. A very, very hot night.

Sunday 27th June 1976

Once again steaming hot and the type of weather no one wants to do anything in. so I bought as many Sunday papers as I could and I read them all day. Stayed home eating ice creams and ice blocks. Popped over to the pub at 7.00pm in the High Street, had a couple and were home again at 8.00pm for the Sunday movie.

Monday 28th June 1976

Ditto about the weather, so I went out the back to attempt to get a suntan. Pete was at the Princes' Square again sorting things out. Mara and Brent decided to go to Newquay to meet some friends and do some shopping. Pete arrived home early and the rest of the day was spent trying to beat the heat.

Tuesday 29th June 1976

The weather seems to be the main topic with everyone – still hot. Sunbaking out the back for me again and the Princes' Square for Pete. The beer lines etc will be installed on Monday and spirits will arrive on Thursday, so things are beginning to happen. Pete had rather a hectic day running around organising things and eventually got home at 9.00pm and dragged me over to the White Hart for a drink. It was beautiful driving the car over with the top down but as soon as we arrived the heat really hit us. We met Pete Green's new girlfriend (hard to keep up with all of them) and spent a pleasant hour talking to some elderly ladies about the assets of Australia. Relief once again as we drove home with the top down.

Wednesday 30th June 1976

Still hot, and no relief in sight. At the hotel again today for a while. The Schweppes man came today and took our order and I got a free pair of sunglasses. Home around 3.00pm and settled back to watch Wimbledon (the tennis) for the rest of the night.

Thursday 1st July 1976

Much the same sort of day as yesterday in both weather and activity. Pottered around over at the Princes Square just fussing about. Returned home for the tennis on TV and had a chuckle over Connors' defeat.

Friday 2nd July 1976

Today was a manual labour day. First the delivery of spirits arrived and Brent and I carted that around then it was off in Sharma's van to all his properties where bits of bar equipment were scattered around. We picked up a Pepsi machine, beer trays, beer coolers, and an ice-making machine. We went way out past the famous Biggin Hill Aerodrome through beautiful Kent countryside. In all we travelled about 70 miles. The van was packed on the way back and would only go up even slight hills in first gear, so it was a slow trip home. At night we escaped the heat in the shade of the local in Battersea High St.

Saturday 3rd July 1976

A 7.30am start for us this morning at Portobello Road. Success today in as much that we (Laima and I) sold £80 worth so that brightened up the day a bit. Once again stifling hot and being finals day at Wimbledon kept a lot of people away. It's incredible seeing all the different types of people wandering around down there. At night we collapsed into an early bed after a long day.

Sunday 4th July 1976

Mara and Brent wanted a closer look at Bayswater Road, so we arranged to meet them at Sax's display at 4.00pm and we went our different ways till then. Mara wanted to meet some of the local Latvian People so we went to the Latvian club for a drink. The secretary of the club chatted to us for a while and told us that two Latvian folk dancing groups from Australia were

arriving Thursday night and were performing on Saturday. We arrived home just in time to see Ian and Geoff (friends of Mara and Brent) who they met in the Canary Islands. Ian is from Australia and Geoff is from Canada. Pete and I watched the Sunday movies while the others went across the road to the pub to cool down. Another very hot night! A freak thunderstorm on the M4 at Swindon was the cause of an accident in which 9 people were killed (a family) in a motorhome.

Monday 5th July 1976

Another day spent ringing people and setting up the bar. Pete tried to get the ice machine to work all day. Firstly the water kept leaking from the taps to the pipes, but after visiting a hardware store and getting proper connections we thought everything would work. No go, it was still leaking. A piece of white plumbers' tape did the trick. Well, with the water flowing through to the machine we thought we were home and hosed. The machine was filling up with water okay, but no ice was being made although the inside was very cold. We rang the firm who makes them and asked for someone to come over and fix it.

Tuesday 6th July 1976

Today, Pete and I, Mara and Brent and Ian and Geoff came over to the hotel bright and early. Mara and I put up all the soft drink bottles and decorated the bar while Peter and the other guys did some manual work. The bar area looked really nice with the mirrors at the back of the shelves giving a really nice effect. Because of the hot spell we have had, beer is very scarce and as yet the brewery hasn't been able to supply or install our kegs. Pete and I stayed while the others went off to get tickets to the Rocky Horror Show, which they intended to see tonight.

At about 5.30pm Mr Sharma came down and asked if he could be our first customer although we hadn't officially opened as yet. He invited Sally (an Aussie) one of his employees as well and they both enjoyed a bottle of white wine. Pete and I helped to christen the bar with a scotch. We left about 6.30pm and went to the White Hart to inform some people that it wasn't yet open. From there we went to the Walkabout Club to see Pete Green. If only we could have brought everyone back to the Princes' Square. We were cursing the hot weather, this being the only reason for the beer delay.

Wednesday 7th July 1976

Still hot, and still no beer. In the paper we read that 250 pints of beer were being drunk every second. No wonder there is a shortage. Many pubs have run out completely and are in the same spot as us. The Ben Truman rep rang and apologised again for the beer and said he would fix things with a few extras once the crisis was over. Not much else doing so we went home and relaxed.

Thursday 8th July 1976

There was a slight hope that the beer would arrive today, so we made a few phone calls only to be disappointed again. Tomorrow maybe. Mara and Brent had left the flat to stay with some of Ian's friends. We had told them that we might be opening tonight but had no way of contacting them to tell them we weren't. It was speedway night so Peter went and I stayed home just in case they would come over. I had a rather pleasant evening watching "The Great Race" on TV. Pete came home only to tell me they were all at the speedway. Never mind. Ian and Geoff had had their car stolen earlier that day and neither of them were too happy. All they had left was what they were wearing and the money that was in their pockets. Geoff could get another passport in a few days, but Ian would have to wait a few weeks, because he had both a British and Australian one. A rather unhappy end to the night.

Friday 9th July 1976

Same old story, no beer again, Monday was the next promised day. We tried to contact Peter Green at the Walkabout club but he was in Portsmouth, so we talked to Harry. He suggested we buy our own cans and open without kegs. He gave us the Walkabout discount card at a cash and carry place and we bought 8 dozen cans at a very reasonable price. At last we could open up. We contacted as many people as we could and made up some signs to put in the reception area. Mr Sharma was again our first customer. Firstly, two cans of beer which he enjoyed while working upstairs on the desk and then a bottle of wine. Mara and Brent came, as did Pete Green and a girlfriend and about 10 residents from the hotel. We had a good night and sang along to music from Ian's cassette player. About 9.30pm, Debby and Barbara (Advertiser girls) arrived, both with very long faces. They had arrived home from work that afternoon only to find out that they too had been burgled. All their electrical appliances, cameras, cassette player, jewellery and even some clothes were gone. They were both very upset and instead of sitting miserably at home, they decided to join us on our opening night.

One pair of Aussies has bad luck, while another pair had their faith restored. I'm speaking of Ian and Geoff – their car had been found abandoned five mins away from where they were staying. \$500 worth of camera equipment was gone as was a crossbow and a set of tools. For some reason, the picture from Ian's passport was missing – they must have fancied him. Debby was so upset she said she would leave London tomorrow. Towards the end of the evening though, they had cheered up considerably and were laughing and making jokes about their misfortune. About 11.30pm, we packed up and cleaned the place and set off for home, only to remember that all we had to eat today was two pieces of toast each. Although we were tired, the hunger pangs had to be satisfied, so about 1.00am we both made a feast then rested our weary bones.

Saturday 10th July 1976

Having had a long nights sleep, we awoke about 10.00am, breakfasted and watched a bit of the third test on TV before driving over to the hotel (about four miles). Our first morning after the night before, so cleaning up and restocking etc was the first chore. That done we settled back to await some customers. Not a busy day. The residents of the hotel naturally are sightseeing all day and generally come in about 5.00pm. A few friends dropped in and once again we had a good time. Home about 11.30pm.

Sunday 11th July 1976

Sunday is the day we want to make into a big day. The pubs shut at 2.00pm and don't open again until 7.00pm. However we can open all day due to the licence. Non-residents can drink at the bar during 2.00pm → 7.00pm if they purchase a small meal i.e. sandwich. Considering we are only 200 yards from Bayswater Road (the artists) we hope to do well. Today wasn't too bad. Three ladies saw my makeshift sign out the front and came in. They loved the place and promised to be back. Not bad today. A dozen or so Aussies dropped in and stayed till stumps. It's picking up.

Monday 12th July 1976

Our jukebox arrived today, as did the delivery of beer from Ben Truman. However still no kegs of lager, which at the moment are as rare as Jeff Potter kicking a goal. However, dozens and dozens of bottles of beer arrived and so Laima and I spent a lot of time arranging these and storing them. We had accompaniment from the jukebox while we worked. At night it was played all the time, mainly by Peter Green. We get half of what goes in there. It's 10p for two records. Received a post card from Mara and Brenton from Knottingly telling us that their van had broken down and it would cost them about £300 to get back on the road again.

Tuesday 13th July 1976

I mentioned yesterday that the beer arrived. However even if we had lager, we couldn't sell it because Truman's haven't installed the taps and lines yet. Our rep from the brewery called in today and delivered lots of accessories such as towels, ashtrays, glasses, etc. We get on very well with him and have already exchanged invitations to each other's place for tea. We're going to Buckingham Palace next time he calls there. He (John Farrow) told us that because of the hot weather he had turned down a handful of new accounts because there was no way in which he could supply them with beer. We were the last new account that he opened. Lucky us. We had a reasonable night tonight – getting better all the time as people spread the word around.

Wednesday 14th July 1976

I decided to stay home today and have my day off, besides, Rich Man, Poor Man was beginning tonight and I desperately wanted to see it. About 8.00pm Frank, Angela and the two kids arrived. They had just arrived back from a three-week tour of Great Britain. Pete had invited them to stay with us until they found a place of their own. We put the kids to bed up in the spare bedroom about 9.30pm and the three of us watched Rich Man, Poor Man. Frank went to sleep in their van when it finished and Angela and I stayed a while and talked. There was a knock on the door and we both presumed it was Frank, so I went downstairs to open the door and to my amazement there was Mara and Brent with Ian and Geoff. They told us the whole story about the van. The engine had seized and cost them £485 to fix it. They only had £5 left so their only alternative was to come back to London for more money. I felt really sorry for them because the van had only cost them £600 to begin with. After reading some letters that were sent to our address they left and promised to see us tomorrow at the hotel. Pete arrived home just after 1.00am, tired, but happy with the night's takings.

Thursday 15th July 1976

We offered to look after Ben and Tim while Frank and Angela went out to look for a flat. They were most appreciative and left about 10.30am. The two boys and I watched TV and played a few games while Pete had a few hours' sleep. At 1.30pm we drove to the pub and opened up. Pete got the bar set up while I helped the boys with some colouring in. They are two really well mannered kids and no problem at all to baby sit.

Frank and Angela arrived around 5.30pm with some good news. They had found a flat in Highgate (not too far out) with a lovely garden for the kids to play in. They left soon after, enthusiastic about moving into their new home. Just a dribble of customers after that until Peter G came in with some new arrivals from Australia. Seeing as how it was Thursday night, Pete went to Wimbledon and left me to manage the bar by myself. He felt confident that I could manage, but I was a bit apprehensive.

However Laima managed quite capably although there weren't too many people in the place. At Wimbledon it was the Tommy Jansson memorial night at which his parents and brother came from Sweden to watch the racing. A big crowd and Wimbledon beat Ipswich by two points.

Friday 16th July 1976

Normal day today. Nothing extraordinary happened to make the day any different from the past seven days. Hardly anybody in the place and the days taking totalled only about £20.00. We're gradually getting cheesed off with the idea of being barmen or rather bar managers for seven days a week and a total of 10 hours each a day. In actual fact for the last week we earned between us about £13.50 for a total of 140 hours work, not to mention all the weeks put into setting up the place. I guess we'll be looking for the first chance we can to get out.

Saturday 17th July 1976

We went over to the bar at about 2.00pm and from then until 6.00pm Laima and I wrote letters because we didn't have anyone to serve except our friend Mr Sharma who must have decided today was a day for drinking double scotches. By 7.00pm he was quite drunk and was becoming increasingly obnoxious. The focal point came around 8.30pm when a very well dressed guy came in and ordered a drink. I was about to serve him when Sharma said no, because he was a troublemaker. So I didn't serve him. The well-dressed guy argued but still Sharma said no.

They argued further and in the middle of one of Sharma's drunken sentences he said he would buy the guy a drink. I picked that up and within five seconds I showed my speed in having the guy's original order in front of him. I then said to Sharma that he owed me £1.24 including his own drink. Upon hearing this, he picked up the glass and threw it hard onto the bar, saying, "I told you not to give him a drink". It shattered into a thousand pieces all over me, not to mention the contents. Following that one came his own glass in the same way. Laima, in tears of shock at this stage, cried out "What do we do with a madman". Hearing that he began almost frothing at the mouth, and repeating, "Madman, madman!" He then began yelling "Get out, Get out!"

He claimed later on that he was saying it to the well-dressed gentleman, but at the time we took it as meaning us. So we did. Quick smart. There were half a dozen or so people in the bar at the time and they were visibly shocked, as we were at the severity of his outburst, especially the glass-throwing act. We hopped in the car and drove smartly away.

After five minutes I remembered I had four-dozen bottles of beer in the bar's freezer. So we turned around and headed back and told him. He had calmed down considerably and very much appreciated our gesture in telling him because he had closed the bar and locked up. We left there very tired and to calm ourselves down, we put the top down on the MG and toured the Piccadilly area at night! The first time we had seen the city at night.

Sunday 18 July 1976

I spent today collecting all the delivery dockets, cash receipts, etc, that I had accumulated and collated them in order to present them to Sharma tomorrow. We're not really worried that we won't be working there anymore. Sure we put a lot of work into it but it was a totally wrong environment for us to work in. The way Sharma carried on just wasn't good enough and we weren't prepared to accept that in any way. Too bad we found that out after putting so much work in. In no way did he trick us, rip us off or kick us out after doing all the work initially. We didn't lose a penny of our money, just would be revenue had we taken other jobs.

Frank and Angela, Benjamin and Timmy Newton came around to collect their bags, which we had looked after while they were touring Britain and Ireland.

Monday 19th July 1976

After speaking to Peter Green about what happened on Saturday night, I ventured alone (Laima refuses to go there anymore) to speak to Sharma. In a roundabout way he apologised for his actions and promised that he would not be seen in the bar again. He also said we would be welcome to continue running the bar but I naturally declined. He told me that the well-dressed gentlemen who wanted a drink on Saturday night was a pimp for prostitutes and without a doubt was trying or would have tried to use the bar as a home base for his girls. So I understand now why he didn't want to let him have a drink, but it was certainly no excuse for throwing glasses. He told me that in no way did he doubt our honesty, in fact he asked me to do a stock take on what had been drunk.

I did; he didn't bother to check it, and then gave us 100% of the profits for the eight days we had worked. It didn't amount to much because of the free drinks liberally given to various reps of the brewery etc to encourage them to give us their free items etc. Altogether £70.30 worth of drinks was sold; wholesale price that is. In the till was £108 so we got £38 plus another £25.00 which he gave us. So for eight weeks work we got £63.00. Oh well! We gained lots of experience of British workmen and the way of life. Now we've got to earn some quick money so we can see Europe.

CHAPTER TEN

Preparing for Europe and losing a loved one

Tuesday 20th July 1976

Not much doing today. At night we went out to Frank and Angela's place for tea. Frank is a dentist from Perth who sold his practice for what must have been a small fortune. He paid £5,300 for his motor home and seems to have a fair bit left because he now wants to open a record shop for the time he is in London. They have found a flat at Hampstead very near where we used to play squash when we first arrived. Had a really good night culminating in watching the Montreal Olympics direct, which of course are only five hours behind. So we can watch at night, whereas it would be the early hours of the morning in Australia.

Wednesday 21st July 1976

Last night we arranged with Frank to meet him in Hampstead. He was musing about his record shop so I said I'd meet him and we'd look at some possible sites. And there were plenty of them and not even a rent of £100/week upset him. Hampstead is a beautiful area. It's just up from Lords and is full of trees and greenery. He wants to decorate his shop in the general sense that all the other shops are, i.e. Old fashioned. At night we watched Rich Man, Poor Man on TV. The series has hit Britain in as big a way as it did in the States.

Thursday 22nd July 1976

While walking around Hampstead yesterday Frank remembered that I had told him about a guy we had met who sells leather and suede coats. He asked if he could see them as he said casually he might put them in his shop too! So today we went to Barking, about 10 miles east of London to view the coats. Once we'd seen, felt and smelt them we went home to Battersea and watched the West Indies demoralise the Poms by scoring 450 runs on the first day of the fourth test at Headingley. At night naturally it was off to Wimbledon to watch the Dons go down narrowly 38 – 40 to Coventry.

Friday 23rd July 1976

Today, we thought we would do the tourist act and visit all the historical places that we have put off for so long. We found a park outside Westminster Abbey and finished off the film of prints we had with Big Ben and the Houses of Parliament in the background (from both sides of the Thames). Westminster Abbey was next, and we both marvelled at the architecture and beauty of the Abbey. We walked to the Cloister and found a beautiful garden with a fountain in the centre. Not too many people had found this spot, so it was an ideal place to take a photo. From there we walked to Downing Street and stood outside Mr Callaghan's residence. This must be the most photographed doorway in the world; as must be the Bobby that stands guard outside.

Whitehall was our next stop. The horses were beautifully groomed and decorated, as were the guards. This was a very popular place for the youngsters who stroked the horses and occasionally annoyed the guards. Another picture to add to our never-ending collection. We walked through Whitehall on our way to Trafalgar Square. As soon as we got there, a chap put some seeds into our hands and the pigeons flocked to us. Then he told us to smile. Everything had happened so quickly that it was just before he clicked the camera that we realised what was

going on. We politely told him we had our own camera and would rather have our own non-professional snaps. Not only was he a photographer, but he was also a very quick con man. Must be a very lucrative business in this big tourist city.

Not much luck with the pigeons at first. They must have been at the end of their shift and not hungry. Whenever we managed to get a crowd of pigeons around us, a youngster would run through the middle and they would fly off. After about 10 minutes of patient standing with seeds in both palms, the second shift of pigeons must have come on duty because we both had two or three on each arm and the occasional one on the head or shoulder. Gee it was fun. Then we took our non-professional pictures. Greenwich was our next attraction. We stood either side of the meridian lines and took pictures. We walked through the museum and marvelled at all the old apparatus invented for telling the time. We also saw the huge 24-hour clock. It was getting into the late afternoon by now, so we decided to go home. It took us a long time to get home because, as always, we picked peak hour. It seems to be peak hour all day in London.

Saturday 24th July 1976

A quiet day spent at home mainly watching the Olympics. BBC1 show about 6-7 hours of the sports every day. The bulk is shown at night from 7.00pm till 1.00am/2.00am. Funnily we haven't got bored with it yet because there are so many exciting things happening all the time. Pity about Australia not doing very well. Most of our attention is focused on the Aussies and Poms. The cricket was on telly too, so it was a day full of sports. Should be an interesting finish to the cricket on Monday. About 5.00pm, Peter G and Barbara came over after spending a day on Peter's launch. Peter G kindly invited us to use the launch whenever we wanted to. We arranged a time to meet tomorrow so he could show us how to work it. We watched the Olympics at night.

Sunday 25th July 1976

Pete bought our usual three Sunday papers and we spent the whole morning reading them. After lunch we drove to Bayswater Rd and before we went to see Peter G, we had a look at the end of Bayswater Rd that we had neglected on our previous visits. Peter G was waiting for us and we drove down to where the boat was moored. He introduced us to Wally, who looks after it and lives on the waterfront. After a few minutes of attaching wires to the motor and connecting the petrol, we were off. We only went about a ½ mile so that Pete could get the hang of it. It was a very pleasant trip and we saw a little of what London looks like from the Thames. After mooring the boat, Peter G showed my Pete again how to connect everything. Then he did it all himself just to make double sure. The boat is about 15' long and has a cabin, fully equipped with sleeping quarters, stove and music. We drove back to Sussex Gardens where Barbara was waiting for Pete. We all decided to go to the White Hart for a drink and bit of a chat. We ended up staying all night till stumps having a really good time.

Monday 26th July 1976

Peter G had bought a '68 Kombi van a few days ago and thought we might be interested in it for ourselves, so we drove over to look at it. Pete told us he had checked it over and the engine was in very good condition. There were curtains and foam bedding, a stove and a few cupboards. He said we could have it for £525 as it was. We didn't want to make a decision straight away and said we would let him know later in the day. Before we went, the three of us watched the end of the test and saw the West Indies win the series by 56 runs. Then Pete and I drove to Australia House to see the vans that were lined up for sale there.

The van owners were having fun and games with the ticket warden. There are only a few meters in that area and the rest of the vans are parked illegally. Whenever the warden comes around the

corner (which is about every five minutes) there are about 20 vans driving around the block. Quite a funny sight actually. While looking around we saw a guy that used to work with Peter at the MLC. He and his wife had just spent seven months touring the continent and were now selling their van. It was a very nice one too, but not in our price range. The majority of vans were around £500 - £900. The vans between £500 - £600 were the same year and condition that Pete G was offering us, but they included a lot of extras. eg. Sleeping bags, maps, sinks, tents, cooking utensils, etc.

We talked about it and worked out that it would cost us over £600 to get the Peter Green van on the road and the ones at Australia House were ready to go, some for less than £600. We could always bargain if we saw one a little more expensive. Some of the owners get a bit desperate if their van isn't sold and their departure date for home is getting closer every day. They have all written on their for sale signs that no reasonable offer is refused. But first things first, the MG will have to be sold to pay for the van. We didn't want to commit ourselves to Pete G so we thanked him for offering the van to us but declined his offer. We wrote out an ad for the paper and decided to put it in on Friday. This would give us a few days to clean it up and give it a nice shine. It's going to be sad to sell the sports car, but it has to be done. Well at least we can say we have owned an MGB. We went home, had tea and worked out our finances.

Tuesday 27th July 1976

We spent the day at home fiddling with the car and talking about what we were going to do. The Olympics entertained us at night.

Wednesday 28th July

For quite a while we have been contemplating the idea of going home by Ship-Jet. This would mean a plane to Singapore and then a 6-day cruise to Fremantle. But this meant paying extra to get from Perth to Adelaide. We know that we paid over \$500 each for our return tickets but to make sure they are really worth that much, if we chose to cash them in, we decided to make absolutely sure.

Jim, Ted's brother in law said he would help Pete fix something on the car so I went to see Mr Wilson at MAS. In our own minds we were quite sure that our return tickets were in fact the second leg of an excursion fare ticket. What we were wary about was that we might have paid the full fare but would receive only half of it if they were cashed in. After waiting about an hour to see Mr Wilson, I explained the situation. He couldn't tell me off hand how much we would get but he took the tickets and said he would telex Sydney and find out what he could. I told him exactly what we suspected but he didn't commit one way or the other. He just said that there was no reason to panic. (Which is exactly what we are doing). He would ring us as soon as he had confirmation from the telex machine.

Then I went to NSW House and found out how much a train fare from Perth to Adelaide would be - \$79.50. The Ship-Jet fare to Australia is approx \$352 so the total fare home would be \$432. Therefore it would be cheaper to get home that way than using the MAS tickets. Anyway from Sydney (where we would land with MAS), we would still have to get to Adelaide. If we do get back what we paid for the MAS tickets, we have virtually decided to go the other way. It would cost us less and we would also be going on a cruise. The only thing to do now is wait to hear from Mr Wilson.

I arrived home to find Pete putting the last shiny touches to the car. Gee it sparkled. A good buy for anyone. All we have to do now is wait for the customers and someone to say yes. We spent the night watching Rich Man Poor Man only two more days to wait until the final two episodes. Two whole days!

Thursday 29th July 2001

Today was quite hot again. Perhaps we're in for another heat wave. I went out with Ted in the afternoon while he did his deliveries around Wimbledon, Hounslow and other outer areas (the Concorde flew over while we were out – what a magnificent plane that is). Laima wrote a number of letters. I also wrote one of particular importance! At night we went to the speedway and watched Wimbledon tie with Wolverhampton 39-39.

Friday 30th July 1976

Not having much to do today and not having much to do it with, we elected to stay at home. Jim, a brother of Millie's, helped me tune the MGB ready for a potential buyer. Goes really well now. A real lazy day. Watched the final episode of Rich Man Poor Man on TV. Altogether this is the second time Laima has seen the TV series, and having also read the book, she still cried at the end.

Saturday 31st July 1976

Busy day in the markets for Battersea residents, but we didn't do much again. I placed signs on the car advertising it for sale and also on the noticeboard in High Street. No reaction. Quiet day and night all round.

Sunday 1st August 1976

Once again same as yesterday. Stayed home. Improved our intelligence on the saucy London Sunday papers. The Sunday Mirror costs 12p (about 19c) and has only 36 pages in it. (It also has about 19 pairs of boobs!!).

Monday 2nd August 1976

We mentioned earlier about changing plans for coming home. Last Thursday we contacted MAS in London who are finding out about the refund on the tickets. It will be about \$500 Aust, which is about £340. Today I contacted the Ship Jet people whose fare is £238 London-Fremantle (including one night's accom in Singapore). The trip across to Adelaide is £50 by train, which gives a total of £288. So in effect we are each saving some £52 plus the cost of getting to Adelaide from Sydney. Spend the difference on the ship and we have come out equal, plus we've got a cruise, which is what we've always wanted to do.

So, providing the refund is 100% from MAS, our plans are as follows. Once we've sold the MG and bought a van, we'll leave London on about August 14th to tour England and Scotland and then down to Europe for about 12 weeks. Arrive back in London on December 4th or so, allowing us time to sell the van. Leave London on December 10th flying British Caledonian Airways to Singapore. Arrive there December 11th, leave Singapore December 12th on board the KOTA SINGAPURA (a 9,000 tonne one class cruise ship). Arrive Perth on December 19th. Catch the train to Adelaide and arrive there three days later depending on when the trains leave (we have yet to fix that up). Home for Xmas!! There you have it. Will confirm everything as soon as possible.

After finding all that out I moved on to Fleet Street the mantle of the newspaper industry. Found the Evening Standard and placed an ad for the MG. Size - 3 lines. Cost £4.20. Extraordinary. How much does the Advertiser charge? It appears in tomorrow's paper so hope someone fancies it. Spent an easy night at home.

Tuesday 3rd August 1976

I had forgotten about Maris' 18th birthday so immediately bought and sent off a card. Pete went around to Ted and Millie's place and sat by the phone waiting for prospective buyers. A few people rang and enquired about it and said they would call over and have a look at it. About 2.00pm Pete came home and I sewed up some loose stitching on one of the seats. A few people rang again but nobody actually turned up to see it. One chap wanted us to drive it to his office – about 15 miles away. Politely told him that we couldn't do that because other people might ring in the meantime and come out wanting to see it.

About 9.00pm we gave up hope of anyone calling. A chap was going to ring in the morning, so there was still a chance. The BBC are showing old TV programs for the next few weeks and tonight's thrill was the 1966 World Cup Final that England won. It's amazing how much faster soccer is today. After a none too prosperous day, we went to bed.

Wednesday 4th August 1976

A few more people came over to see the car. All seemed very impressed, but no one bought. A chap was going to ring us at 4.00pm to confirm a sale, but he didn't ring. We are beginning to lose faith in people's promises. No news yet from MAS so we can't go ahead and book on the ship jet. The Grand Prix speedway final was at White City, so Pete went to see that and I stayed home in case anyone rang about the car. We have decided to put another ad in for Friday's paper then maybe the weekend car buyers will see what a great car we have for sale. I watched another old program that the BBC is showing. Tonight was Dr Finlay's Casebook and Z cars. A very entertaining night. Peter Collins won the Grand Prix meeting but my Peter says it wasn't a very exciting night. Phil Crump was most disappointing – only scored two points.

Thursday 5th August 1976

After several disappointing days in the last week or so, today was something of a revelation. At about 10.30am I rang the ANZ bank to enquire if our extra money had arrived. It had. A cable had arrived that morning confirming the transfer of funds from Adelaide. Elated at that news we piled into the car and drove happily through the city to the bank. Having restored our wallets somewhat, we then drove to Fleet Street where we parked and hunted for a Post Office. Found one near St Paul's and placed a call to the Bank of Mum & Dad (Physick) in Adelaide. We booked for three minutes but actually spoke for four and a ½ minutes. Thanked them very much for their assistance.

From there we went back into the sunshine and walked back to the car and the Evening Standard. Invested another £4.20 for another ad, which says "MGB L Reg. 35,000 mls, Green, MOT, tax, many extras, superb condition. £1,195 ono. Tel 2289723." Three lines and a lot of money.

We then left Fleet St and returned home to find a telegram awaiting from Mum and Dad, advising us of the arrival of the money. Banks and PO's can certainly work quickly when they want to. Second pleasurable surprise of the day was a telephone call from MAS confirming that we are entitled to a full refund of the money paid for our return journey. The amount we are going to get back is \$566 each. That amounts to £370. The fare going by Ship Jet is only £238 to Perth plus £50 to Adelaide by train. Therefore we are saving £82 plus say £50 for the fare Sydney-Adelaide. That's an overall saving of £264. We immediately then piled back into the car and headed for Piccadilly Circus to book our passage home on the Ship Jet. Did that with ease so our plans are now confirmed as set out earlier.

Time was now about 4.00pm so we went home again and stocked up on much needed food and groceries for a cupboard that would have done Mother Hubbard proud. In the evening we of course went to Wimbledon to see the Dons defeat Newport 44-33.

Friday 6th August 1976

Purchased the Evening Standard at about 10.15 am (it's a very early evening paper) and looked at the ad. In all its glory. The L Reg bit means that it is a 1973 model. On English numberplates (ie ours is FGG – 660L) the last letter refers to the year of manufacture. eg. P is 1976, L is 1973, etc. the number plate always stays with the car. MOT means a certificate that is required every 12 months from an authorised garage indicating that the car is roadworthy. Tax is purely the registration fee for using the roads. You can't get a tax certificate unless a current MOT and insurance policy are produced.

A few more possible buyers came over and one lady seemed impressed and said she would like her husband to check it before a decision was made. We had a really nice roast tonight with all the trimmings and a bottle of wine to boot (actually we drank it!). The roast (lamb) cost £1.84 for 2 lbs and 3ozs.

Saturday 7th August 1976

Early this morning the phone rang and it was the lady who wanted her husband to see the car. They were pleased that it hadn't yet been sold, and came down from Clapham Common straight away to see it. A very long road test followed and a thorough inspection of engine, bodywork, interior, etc. After about half an hour they said they would take the car at £1,125, which is £25 more than what we paid for it three months ago. We were very pleased with that. He is a solicitor so we hope nothing goes wrong with it! We decided not to drive the car much until Monday when he parts with his cash and we part with the MG. So we stayed home afternoon and evening.

Sunday 8th August 1976

Foregoing last night's decision we drove to tourist spots today. First stop was Petticoat Lane for about two hours or so. The place was packed with people. Similar in layout to Portobello Road but completely different in type of articles sold. There were countless numbers of stalls selling leather coats, jackets, and clothes of all sorts. Other stalls sold electrical goods, tourist items and every conceivable thing imaginable. I made a snap decision and bought a leather 'bomber' jacket for £15. Really nice too. Also bought some film and Laima bought some sunglasses.

From there we drove all along the embankment to Westminster and then onto Bayswater Road to see if Debby's clockwork collage was ready. It wasn't. We then walked to Speakers' corner and listened to all the dills sprout out about religion, homosexuality, apartheid, and any other relevant subject guaranteed to bore the listeners. One gentleman was dressed up in style claiming he was Jesus. At a bit of a loss then to work out what to do next so we drove out to Highgate to see Frank and Angela and Benjamin and Timmy. Frank has joined the local cricket club and was playing just down the road so while Laima stayed with Angela, I wandered down to watch the action. It was at the cricket that our biggest bit of luck yet was about to hit us.

Not having seen Frank for a week or so I outlined what we'd done and our plans for touring Europe by Kombi van or something. He promptly said – "Why not take my Motorhome?" Assuming he was joking I said, "OK why not!" He said fine and before I knew it we had been allocated a brand new 1976 Ford Motorhome valued at 5½ thousand pounds with toilet, shower, hot water system, stove (oven too), fridge and a mere 1,400 miles on the clock. We then

needed to establish the hiring fee. He asked how much we would reasonably expect to drop on selling a Kombi in December after using it in Europe. I said probably about £200. He said that's what he was thinking and we then agreed that that amount would be the charge for using the van for 14 weeks or so! Not bad eh!

The insurance is easily extended to cover me for that period of time. So there's an unbelievable stroke of good luck after a bad period in the pub business. Frank is flying to Italy shortly to buy a Fiat from the factory to take back with him to Perth, so he won't be without wheels. The van has a two-litre motor and does about 20 mpg. It may be a little expensive on petrol but I guess we can't complain. A kombi only gets 25 mpg anyway. We're looking out for anyone to perhaps travel with to share costs, but it won't concern us if we don't find anyone.

Monday 9th August 1976

Just so we could have a last drive in the MG, we drove to the city to find out about visas for Poland. First we went to their tourist office to collect some data and then to the Embassy to apply for the visas. The Embassy closed at 2.00pm and we got there at 2.20pm – ah well, there is always tomorrow. We arrived home, Pete collected all the necessary papers on the car and I said goodbye to it before Pete drove off to Clapham Common to deliver it. Money and car exchanged hands and the new owner drove Pete back. Each time I heard kids voices outside, I had an impulse to look out the window to check on the car. We always had to park it on the street outside the shop.

Tuesday 10th August 1976

We got up early and caught the bus to the Polish Embassy to apply for visas. No problems, we pick them up on the 16th. Then we met Frank outside the AA office in Leicester Square to find out about the extra insurance that would have to be secured to entitle Pete to drive the van. The first quote we got was £288 for three months!!! Then we were given another one for £21.00, but with this one, the green card could only be used for three months maximum in the insured year. This was not suitable as Frank would want to go to Europe before the 12 months is up.

From there we walked to The Strand and then to the ANZ bank to put the cheque (from the car) into our account. Just by chance we went to the ANZ travel section and found out that they also insured vehicles. The quote they gave was exactly what we wanted and also with unlimited green card use. Green card is the extra insurance required in certain European countries. The quote would be confirmed by Friday so we arranged to come back then. Frank went to look at a surgery that needed a dentist and Pete and I got something to eat before we went home. A quiet night at home watching TV.

Wednesday 11th August 1976

As yet we still haven't seen the changing of the guards at Buckingham Palace, so we decided today would be the day. We arrived there 50 minutes before it was scheduled to start and the place was crowded with tourists. Police on horseback and on foot were keeping the people under control and they had their work cut out for them. We managed to find a spot on some steps, not a very good spot but good enough for the purpose. We saw all the guards marching into the Palace but couldn't see the goings on inside. Just before the end, we found out which direction they would go and found a spot where we could get a reasonable picture.

Then we took the tube to Tower Hill and got on the 200-yard long line to go to the Tower of London. Instead of walking around with a beefeater guide, we bought a guidebook and walked around by ourselves. We saw the Traitor's Gates, White Tower and all the armour that was worn and then stood on the line to see the Crown Jewels. A half hour wait, but well worth it.

The pictures we have seen of the Imperial state crown just don't do it any justice. Then we saw the execution block, Beauchamp Tower and the ravens. There was a long line for the Bloody Tower, where Sir Walter Raleigh was imprisoned, so we decided not to wait. Instead we took a picture of a Beefeater for our own never ending collection of slides.

We found a phone box and rang the Russian Embassy to ask about getting a visa for Latvia. There are too many "do nots" and very expensive to go, so I guess we'll have to give it a miss. We decided to go to the White Hart for tea so we got on the tube and went straight there via Paddington station. We had only been there a few minutes when we met Billy Byrne and then Barbara who was waiting with Peter G. By 8.30pm, there were about eight of us in all. A very enjoyable night, probably one of the last we will spend there. We arrived home quite late to find Mara and Brent's van parked outside. We left a note on the windscreen saying we would see them in the morning.

Thursday 12th August 1976

Pete got up early to meet the guys who were going to the cricket for the day. Mara, Brent and I exchanged news and views for most of the day and Brent slept for a while because he had a mild case of the flu. Mara hadn't watched television for quite a while so she stayed home while Brent and I went to the speedway with Pete. It was an incredible meeting with eight falls in all. Colin Richardson, a rider Wimbledon had just signed, was on the first lap in his first race and went hurtling over the fence after his bike. To everyone's astonishment he walked away uninjured and came out for his next ride. Wimbledon won against King Lynn 40-37. We stayed and watched the novices after the meeting and had a few laughs.

Friday 13th August 1976

We met Frank in the Strand today to organise insurance for the van. Previously we had shopped around the High Street for foodstuffs to load into the van. At 4.30pm we met Frank at the ANZ Travel Office who were arranging everything. We promptly paid the extra amount required to insure me to drive the motorhome and then caught the tube back to Highgate for tea at the Newton's (Frank and Angela) place. We played a game of cricket before tea with the two kids and after tea we kept up the competitive atmosphere by having Frank teach us how to play bridge. Before we knew it, it was about 1.00am and no way of getting home (except for an expensive cab), so Laima and I slept in the van outside their place – just to get used to it!

Saturday 14th August 1976

From Highgate we went into London once again by tube, this time to the AA (ie RAA) to pick up a book that covers all the intricacies of motoring in Europe. Very helpful too. Had lunch at a McDonalds restaurant that we found near Piccadilly Circus. Caught the bus home. No. 19 bus goes from Piccadilly to Green Park to Knightsbridge to Sloane Square, along Kings Road Chelsea and then over Battersea Bridge to our place. Watched the cricket then for the rest of the afternoon and doing odd things and getting prepared for Europe.

Sunday 15th August 1976

Clean up day today. "Spring" cleaning from top to bottom. This occupied us all day, and night time couldn't come quick enough.

Monday 16th August 1976

Once again caught the bus to the Strand to a camping store that was having a sale on sleeping bags. Bought a couple and then went to another shop which sold Kodak film (36 slides) for

£2.60. Good value; over 50p off. So I bought five. Having decided we had everything, we trooped down to Bayswater via the Oxford Circus tube from Trafalgar Square. Had lunch in the White Hart. Ventured home around 3.00pm stopping off at Kings Road for Laima to buy a pair of jeans. Night time was spent separating things we want to take with us from those we don't.

Tuesday 17th August 1976

Last Friday, we had arranged to go out on Peter G's boat today with Frank, Angela and the kids. Meeting time was 10.30am at our place. At 1.30pm they arrived. Pete and I woke up at 7am in order to do the washing, buy food to stock up the van and finish cleaning the flat. We were really worried about 11.30am when they hadn't arrived. Even more so afterwards!! When they finally arrived, we found out that the second hand Fiat they just bought had broken down on the way to our place. Anyway, by 2.10pm we arrived at Hammersmith Bridge where the boat is launched. Because of the tides, Wally (the boatsman) had anchored the boat in the middle of the Thames. We had some beer and plenty of food and all looked forward to a pleasant outing.

Well.....it took Pete and Frank an hour to get the motor started! We intended to go as far as the Tower Bridge (about six miles), but we were going to be struggling against the tide. Timmy and Ben had a great time on the bow, while the oldies sat at the back and enjoyed the view and the envy of the onlookers. We were just about to turn back after we passed the Tower Bridge when low and behold, we ran out of petrol!!! Then the oars came out and Pete and Frank showed their strength, with Timmy and Ben urging them on. We made the bank with the help from some kind onlookers and Frank ventured out to find some petrol.

About ½ hour later we were on our way again (about 7.00pm). At 8.30pm we were back at Hammersmith and moored, then they dropped us off at the White Hart where we said goodbye to Peter G and Barb and all our other friends. Caught a cab home and settled down to our last night in Battersea and London.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Behind the Iron Curtain

Wednesday 18th August 1976

Up early to collect our traveller's cheques from the ANZ Maltravers Street. We also collected our green card (proof to the Continental authorities that the vehicle we're driving in is insured). Frank delivered the van to us around 3.00pm and then proceeded to tell us all the ins and outs of how it is operated. I then drove him to the tube station so he could get home. We began to load up the van with our clothes, food, books, etc to occupy our minds while lazing about in Europe. About 6.00pm we set off, confident we had taken everything we had to. (We forgot our international licences, so we had to drive back to get them – five minutes). Called in at Ted's place to show him the van and was he impressed! I think he liked the shower the best. From there we headed for Dover via the A20. Night overtook us halfway there, so we missed seeing the countryside of Kent. Arrived at the docks about 10.30pm and booked on the 9.20am ferry to Oostende in Belgium the next day. Found a spot on the road to Sandwich, believe it or not, to stay the night.

Thursday 19th August 1976

We had to be at the ferry by 8.35am so it was a hurried trip to get there. Went through customs with no trouble and drove onto or rather into the ship. Because the van is over 9' tall we had to have a special spot. However it didn't cost anymore because the charge is per the length of the vehicle. As a matter of fact, the van cost £27 and we cost £6.60 each, which when added together comes to £40.20. The girl under charged us by £5 (we didn't tell her either). On board the ferry, we had some coffee, changed T/cheques to Belgium Francs and spent the 4½ hours idly touring the ship.

At 1.10pm we docked at Oostende and ventured onto the right hand side of the road. Whizzed through customs – only the passport was looked at. We headed first for Brugge, which is on a comparatively minor road from the docks, so that we could get used to the van. In Brugge we stopped at a market place, which after a few yards developed into the town square. It was beautiful with flags of all nationalities flying. Café's with street tables, all full, lined every street. Each café seems to be licenced to sell every form of alcohol invented. We bought some stubbies (at 55f for 6 – about 18c Aust each).

From there we went back to the van and drove to Gert where we bought some nice crusty bread from a patisserie. By then it was about 5.00pm and we ventured to find a suitable place to stop for the night. It was very difficult because one small town seemed to run into another and there weren't all that many lanes that weren't inhabited. We arrived in Asse and turned down a very narrow lane (two cars had no chance in the world of passing) and then found a short side lane. We were both very hungry because the last meal was at breakfast time, so while Pete read the maps and our bible (Europe on \$10 a day), I started to prepare our meal of pork cutlets, peas and artificial mashed potatoes. Pete 'panicked' when he saw the farmer drive up, but he waved and we waved back, so everything was OK. A bottle of wine (which we bought very cheaply in Brugge) complemented our meal, plus a few beers afterwards. Then off to bed.

Friday 20th August 1976

Awoke about 8.30am, breakfasted and set off for Bruxelles (Brussels). We had a bit of difficulty following the French named streets (I did anyway because I was navigating) but a very helpful Belgium bloke, who couldn't speak a word of English, saw that we were in a bit of trouble and we managed to understand each other after a while. He helped us get to the 'Grand Place', where the main tourist attractions were. It was surrounded by open air and sidewalk café's so we persuaded ourselves to sit in the sunshine and devour a beer and some famed Belgian French fries (frites). We saw the statue of 'Mannekin - Pis' and I bought a "T" shirt for me and a rather rude cork screw/bottle opener resembling the cute little fella. We bought some postcards and stamps and went back to the van to write them while we had a nice cold drink of water from the fridge.

We left Brussels and started for Antwerpen (Antwerp), and on the way we found a supermarket, so stopped off to replenish our supplies. What a magnificent choice of foods and drinks. Puts any other place I've seen to shame. We had some trouble determining prices etc. but with a bit of sign language and a few smiles we got on OK. Walked out of there 465 Belgium francs poorer. Found a service station just out of Antwerp where we filled up the 16-gallon tank of fresh water and found a really nice caravan park where we decided to spend the night. Pete had pork chops, while I had a salad with all sorts of goodies from the supermarket buy. Reading and playing cards occupied the evening.

Saturday 21st August 1976

We left Antwerp early in the morning and headed for the Centrum, that being the centre of any European town. Not seeing much that we liked, we continued through it and started for Breda in Holland. We were surprised when we left Belgium for the Netherlands, that the border between the two countries is almost non-existent. All there is, is a service station and a bank of exchange to purchase Dutch currency. We continued on the magnificent autobahn (full credit to the Europeans for building roads) to Breda and then onto Rotterdam, which is a city built on rivers and linked by bridges. All over Holland is the same because nearly half of it is below sea level - hence the dykes. Had lunch in Rotterdam at a McDonalds believe it or not. Left Rotterdam for Gouda - a famous cheese making town.

The road to Gouda was a second-class road - about the same as Adelaide to Melbourne only better. This road was windy to an extent, but found its way through probably what were tulip fields in spring. It followed a few inland waterways but mainly kept to small villages. In Gouda we stopped at a farm that sold "real farmers' cheese" and bought 2 lbs. It was on this road that we found the small village of Vinkeveen where all the homes have their own garage which houses a speedboat of some sort moored on the canal. They leave and get out of their boat as we get out of a car. From there we followed a river (nameless to us) for some miles, passing many "pubs" all with outside tables and chairs. With only 12km to Amsterdam we decided to find a place to sleep. We found it alongside a river near a town called Weesp. We spent a comfortable night there along with a few inquisitive Dutchmen who just happened to stop cycling at the spot where we had parked. The sheer size of the van (17' 10" long and about 9' high) attracts people like moths to a light.

Sunday 22nd August 1976

Left Weesp at about 10.00am for Amsterdam. It only took near 10 minutes to arrive in the "Centrum". Parked the van on a canal near where the canal boats leave from and began walking. Came across the red light area almost immediately. We always seem to find that particular part of the city everywhere we go - United States included. Had a small look around the centre of the city and then made our way back to where we had parked because a boat was

leaving at 11.45am for the canal trip. We began by travelling down several smaller canals and before we knew it we were out on the harbour. Anchored at the time was the Royal Viking Star, the Swedish luxury liner. Also of interest were the huge floating dry docks with tankers perched up in them undergoing repairs.

We re-entered the canals again and travelled on the Prinsengracht Canal. We were intrigued that this and the three other main canals, which were constructed and dug entirely by hand. We saw the smallest house in Amsterdam and the narrowest canal in Amsterdam. We saw the canal that all the rich merchants used to live on in the 16th century and how they used to outdo each other to show their wealth, by building steps to their houses. Each step was heavily taxed and consequently the richest merchant had the most steps. We arrived back at the landing after an interesting trip and then drove around the suburbs and parts of the city finding the narrowest streets we could. Had lunch and spent most of the afternoon in a park by a canal.

We then drove to Rembrandtsplein, the lively nightclub area. Had two drinks in separate sidewalk cafés and then had dinner in a huge Chinese restaurant called “The Indrapoera”. We had rijsttafel, which is a ‘meal’ for two consisting of 19 different items. The meal was great and cost only 36 guilders (\$US12) including four beers. Spent the night on a canal (or should I say next to it!).

The meal we had at the restaurant consisted of 19 different dishes. A bowl of hot boiled rice is the main dish and the others added to it with each of them having their own sauce. eg. Beef with peanut butter sauce (delicious), chicken with lemon sauce, bamboo shoots, vegetables – boiled, with a thin, very spicy sauce etc. On top of all this you sprinkle toasted and shredded coconut. Desserts were included in the 19 dish spread – salted nuts, fruit – apples and oranges in a spicy sauce, and a soft toffee like delight. A young American student living in Amsterdam explained to us what the different dishes were.

Monday 23rd August 1976

Last night we found out where the Heineken Brewery was, and parked close by so we could get there early in the morning. The first tour was at 9.00am but by 8.00am when we arrived, there was already a crowd of about 20 people. (Mainly NZ’s and Aussies). The tour took ½ hour and then we were ushered into a hall with seating for 170 people. Two tours a day of 170 people broken up into groups of about 20. Then they gave beers to everyone and a plate of cheese and savoury “nibbles”. Whenever there was an empty glass it was immediately replaced with a full one. The average age of the group was about 24. They showed a film about the popularity of Heineken beer and its progress. We all had to be out by 10.30am when the next group would enjoy the same hospitality, so last beers for everyone and then a quick trip to the toilet before we left. Outside, over 200 people were waiting for the next tour; so some had to be turned away.

At midday, we decided to make our way across the border to Koln and see the scenery around the River Rhein. We drove to Amersfoort via the highway and then off the highway and onto a minor road thru Ede, Wageningen, Ass, Uden, and Gemert. Just outside Deurne we found a nice, secluded spot to spend the night. We only drove half the distance we had planned to, but the countryside was so pretty and there was no need to hurry. Sent the diary to Aust – cost four guilders (why do we write so much). Had a nice tea, Pete reread the ending of the book he said he had finished last night and began another. Only got to page 20 before he fell asleep.

Tuesday 24th August 1976

Woke up about 8.30am, breakfasted and set off again. Decided to take a picture of a windmill we saw at Deurne, and then we set off for Roermond, which is just inside the German border. Here we filled up with petrol and water and then onto the border. The officials asked if we had

anything to declare. Apparently you have to declare coffee. We just said we had some spirits, but they didn't wait to hear, they were too absorbed in the van. They hopped in the back and chatted to each other in German and then told us to drive on. No stamp in the passports or anything – most disappointing. Dusseldorf was our next stop. We parked the van and had a beer (bier) in a nice little pub. 1.20 DM for two beers (about 60c).

A very big industrial city – in fact all of Germany I've seen so far is industry which makes me think that everyone is a factory worker, who knocks off at 3.00pm, then trains for the Olympics till 7.00pm, then spends the rest of the night in one of the many bier haus' we have seen. Left Dusseldorf after buying a Berliner cake, which I had for lunch with sandwiches in a parking lot on the road to Cologne (Köln). Drove through Köln, which was flattened by the RAF in WWII and has now been rebuilt as a modern city. After a bit of trouble getting out, we eventually found the autobahn to Bonn.

The book we bought from AA in London details a trip to the Rhine River so we are heading for that. Got to Bonn and drove straight through mainly looking for a camping site. Found Route 9, which we wanted to lead us down around the Rhine towards Koblenz. Got to Bad Godesberg and turned left off the main road so as we could get a better look at an old castle sitting on top of a cliff on the far bank of the river. Low and behold not only did we get a good look but we also found a caravan park on the Rhine. Cost us eight marks, about \$3, to get in and another mark each for a shower. Spent a terrific night there listening to the many barges plying the river at night.

Wednesday 25th August 1976

Were awoken this morning at 4.00 am, not by barges but by a car driving in and clanging around next to us. About 8.00am when we got up, who should be there valiantly trying to put up their tent? A car full of Pakistanis from England. At the time of writing this (9.25am) they have just finished putting it up. Who knows how long they had been trying before 8 o'clock. Who else but Paki's would arrive at 4.00am at a camping site? Probably got in free and spent the day sleeping before moving on to their next camp.

We left Bad Godesberg and continued on Route 9 adjacent to the Rhine. Today has to be one of the most glorious of our lives. Upon leaving the campsite we drove alongside the Rhine all the way. Our first objective was Koblenz, the town where the Rhine and the Moselle meet. Castles dating back who knows how long loomed from the cliffs hugging the river. We watched them with absolute awe as they came and went. One, I'm sure must have been a prison camp called Colditz. Having read so many war escape stories, I imagined myself (while driving through Germany) as an escaped prisoner, always on the lookout for train stations," thriving with Gestapo", or farm houses for solitude.

When we arrived at Koblenz we parked in a parking lot and went looking for a supermarket – found one and stocked up. We then made for the main mall of the city, which divides the old and the new city. We bought two more books to serve as a diary and also made an interesting purchase in a bakery. A loaf of bread for 2 marks 30 pfennigs (approx 90 cents Aust!!!) Worse value than petrol for which we've been paying Aust \$2.00 a gallon. At Koblenz we went for a short walk along the Rhine towards the merger of the two rivers. It was from here that all the river cruises left from. A castle, which overlooked Koblenz from here, was just magnificent!

Route 9 was once again our objective as we made our way towards Mainz. Towns with names such as Bad Salzig, Rhens, Baccarach, Oberwesel and St Goad, completely captured our imagination. It was at St Goad that we stopped for a late lunch underneath that town's castle. I decided that I felt energetic enough to walk the 2km walk to its peak. Laima stayed in the van. At the top, in absolute brilliant sunshine (haven't seen a European cloud yet!) I was rewarded

with a breathtaking view of the Rhine and its valleys and vineyards. I also discovered several tourist coaches, 30 odd cars and a completely equipped road as well. Here I am thinking I would see something no one else would. The castle was restored somewhat to its original condition and was fascinating with its tunnels, caverns and towers. We left St Goad to locate a camping spot, which we found right on the river itself.

Words cannot describe the feeling looking out at the river, the mountains, the castles, the barges, the trains and the countryside. Are we here, or aren't we?

Thursday 26th August 1976

Our first stop today was in a small village called Valksbank, where we changed some traveller's cheques for US\$100 - we got 244DM. Another beautiful day and more beautiful scenery. Castles, forests, tiny villages, the river and a beautiful blue sky. Actually it's getting quite monotonous but we're managing not to get bored. All the fields are covered in vineyards. The terrain is quite hilly, but this doesn't stop the people from cultivating the land and for as far as you can see, the vines are planted in rows up the hills. When in Rüdesheim, we drove up a very steep climb and found a nuns' cloister surrounded in vineyards. I wonder if they make wine on the side? We found a bottle shop and thought we might pick up a few cheap bottles of wine. The prices were a lot higher than we expected, so we went next door to a supermarket and picked up a bubbly and a Rose.

Most of the shops in Germany close for two hours during the afternoon. We saw a shop that sold Gaz but had to occupy ourselves for about ½ hour before it opened. We walked through all the souvenir shops but didn't buy anything. Picked up our Gaz (13DM) and started driving through that beautiful Rhine country. Does the name Rhinegold come from this area? We have tried to make up our minds as to which side of the Rhine we liked the best. No one could be asked a tougher question!! About 5.30pm we began looking for a place to settle for the night. Found a camping sight at Siebengebinge, just outside Bonn. Went to check in, but they told us to go further on. We couldn't find another office, so we set up camp. As yet we still haven't paid – will see what happens in the morning.

Friday 27th August 1976

Awoke quite late and to a miserable day. No sunshine, just gloomy overcast clouds. Managed to drive out of the caravan park without paying – no one seemed to worry and didn't give us a second look. A few short miles and we arrived in Bonn. Previously when we passed through, we had noticed the Australian Embassy, so this time we stopped to get some information.

It was outside the Aussie Embassy that we spent the fastest \$220 ever. While backing into a space to park, I glanced a car parked outside the embassy. Absolutely no damage to the van, and we were about to nick off when a guy came out. The car belonged to an Australian girl and although she wasn't upset, realized what had happened (thank god it wasn't a German I ran into – we wouldn't have understood each other). The damage to her car was minimal so to avoid insurance claims etc I suggested to her to get a quote because it would have been below my excess anyway. Only just!! 547 marks - \$220. Extraordinary. It just had to happen in Germany – The most expensive place in the world!

They told us to go to the tourist information centre across from the railway station. We found out the name for railway station, which proved to be no help at all. We would walk up to (what looked like to us) a knowledgeable person and say "Bahnhoff" and he would point out the direction for us. "Danke" and we would be off again. Again, the same procedure, and we would be headed off in the direction we had just come from. After 10 minutes of this fooling around we found a British Airways office and an English speaking lady led us straight to it. After all

that, the tourist place only had information about Bonn, whereas we wanted info about the whole of Germany. Full of brochures about Bonn, we walked back through the centrum mall and all their markets. Bought enough meat and vegetables to last us the weekend and walked back to the van with our arms full. Decided upon the route to take to Berlin (Route 56) through Siebierge and Much.

About 6.30pm we set about looking for a place to stop. Every side lane we took led to a village or through fields of hay and cows. Finally found what looked like an unused side lane, so we stopped. As yet we haven't come across a laundromat, so tonight I washed some socks, a few underclothes and a shirt. We've got pegs, but no clothesline, so we have a very colourful tree outside the van!

Saturday 28 August 1976

Awoke in the morning to find that it had been raining during the night, so our colourful tree had been short-circuited somewhat. So when we set off we hung all the clothes up inside the van, making an interesting sight for all the Germans in their BMW's, Opel's, Mercedes, or Audi's, to ponder upon while waiting their turn to pass us. We only travel at about 40mph to ensure that we see everything that there is to see. Today was relatively uninteresting compared to other days. We drove all day from our camping spot, in a northeasterly direction, avoiding the autobahns as much as we could. The morning's drive was through quite mountainous countryside. A miserable day it was too, with rain constantly falling, not heavy, but enough to keep the wipers on. Not a good day for taking photos. We arrived about 5.00pm in a place called Hoxter and found a camping ground. I ventured into the office to pay but neither the girl who ran the place or I, could make ourselves understood. Eventually a little kid of about 11 years old said to me, "I speak German" and proceeded to interpret everything. How embarrassing!?!

Sunday 29th August 1976

Left the camping ground noticing that there was a similar van to ours with GB number plates. We drove the short distance to Hamelin, (Pied Piper country) and pulled in next to the tourist information office. No sooner had we done so, than the other van pulled up. Out the occupants hopped, and they were Aussies from Sydney. Together, we found out that there was a play being re-enacted of the Pied Piper, at midday in the city square. We watched that with interest though it was in German. With a bit of folk dancing thrown in, Laima likened in to a Latvian gathering. Leaving Hamelin we drove until dusk (with a break for lunch) heading for Berlin, in a round-about direction. Arrived at a place called Wolfsburg, where it seems all roads easterly stop, because West Germany suddenly becomes East Germany. Spent the night in Wolfsburg at a caravan park pondering our next move towards Poland and the World Speedway Final.

Monday 30th August 1976

Pete had found out from an Englishman next to us in the caravan park that we would have to go to Helmsted in order to cross the border (south). Arrived at checkpoint Alpha where an English speaking person told us the procedure and the do's and don'ts. It was 5DM each for the transit visas and he told us that we weren't allowed to take any pictures at all while travelling to West Berlin, nor were we allowed to stop or take any side roads. Memorising this, we proceeded on. There were quite a few cars waiting in line so we joined on.

The lady in (what looked like) a ticket box took our passports, green card and 10DM and put them in an envelope and then on an enclosed conveyer belt to the next 'ticket box'. While we were slowly moving on the line, we noticed our surroundings. Guards with guns and rifles, huge towers everywhere equipped with spotlights and more guards walking amongst the cars, peering

in windows (with guns in their holsters). Pete and I didn't dare move and spoke to each other gritting our teeth and not moving our lips. It was all so scary and exciting!! Retrieving our passports (we got a stamp at last) we proceeded on the worst autobahn we have come across (we paid 10DM for the use of the roads?). The road from Adelaide to Sydney was 150% better than this one. The dishes, stove and cutlery clanged musically as we drove through the ordinary scenery.

After travelling 180km (and starving the whole way – we didn't dare stop for lunch!) we arrived at checkpoint Bravo where the guard took a document from our passport and we proceeded another 10km to the end of the autobahn and Berlin (west) proper. We had seen a sign for “All British Units”, and thinking that meant us, we followed it. We managed to take a wrong turn and found ourselves on the autobahn again. This time going out of West Berlin and back to where we came from. No way of turning around, so we drove a further 6km until we found a turnoff and then headed for West Berlin again (looks like this city doesn't want our company).

In the AA book, we found a map of Berlin and started to find a tourist information centre. There were two marked on the map, so after we found out where they were, we headed for the closest one. It just couldn't be found! To add to our problems, it was peak hour and cars were everywhere. It was like a really bad dream. Pete trying to avoid cars and pedestrians and me trying to follow and pronounce street names. About an hour later and with no luck we drove through the suburbs hoping to find a camping spot. No luck – both tempers were short and bums were sore, so we stopped at a petrol station to buy a map (a big one) and to ask for a camping ground. If only we could speak German!! At one service station the German-speaking attendant tried to show us on a map that the closest camping ground was about 25km away. We asked how much the map was, he didn't know, so he gave it to us.

After studying the map, we saw a campsite that looked rather close, so headed in that direction. We ended up in a narrow little lane with a river next to it. We gave up and drove to the closest main road and stopped the van and a passer-by also stopped. He couldn't help us, but then another gentleman (who spoke English) and was in a uniform walked over. We asked him where we were on the map and how to get to this campsite. You can imagine the look on our faces when he told us that that one was in East Berlin. Then we understood why we couldn't get there.

It was getting quite dark and he told us it would be very difficult to find another camp site (25km away) so he suggested we park in a “night spot” (the night spot ended up being a shopping centre car park). We asked if it was legal – he didn't really understand. Because he was in a uniform we thought we may as well. Two minutes later, we found the spot and walked across to a drinking place for a Berliner Weiss (beer with raspberry syrup) to relax. Had tea – soup and sandwiches – and then straight to sleep to try and forget the day. And what a day!!

Tuesday 31st August 1976

After no problems at our improvised camping spot we left there to drive into Berlin. It was only in the daylight that we realized how far we had actually gone in our search for a campsite. We drove some 12km before we hit the Centrum – as Europeans call it. Parked in a car park, generously provided by the West Berlin authorities. Located the elusive information bureau and found out lots of vital stuff, such as a camping ground, lists of free things, etc. Also got an interesting booklet on the politics and ethics behind the building of the wall.

Previously, while driving to the city centre, we had inadvertently come across an eerie sector of the wall at Potsdamer Place. Before the wall had been built in 1961, this had been a nightspot and big city square. Now it was desolate, with only a few souvenir shops cashing in on the political situation. Where we parked, to view East Berlin from a specially constructed

scaffolding, there were tram tracks leading right up to the wall and abruptly stopping at the foot of it. On the other side there were no tram tracks; only a 20-metre wide dirt area leading out from the wall to a barricade of barbed wire. This whole area is brilliantly floodlit at night.

The wall itself goes straight through Berlin and when it was built, completely stopped over 100,000 East Berliners from attending their jobs in West Berlin, which they had been normally doing for decades before. Apart from this obvious fault between the two Berlins, West Berlin is as normal as any other city we've seen. In fact more so. West Berliners seem to live each day to the full as though they were to have a wall built tomorrow cutting them off from the world.

We saw hundreds of restaurants, cafés and bars throughout the main streets. Even the newsagent in the underground station of the Kurfürstendamm sells bottled beer. After parking the van we had a pie cart style lunch in Aschinger, consisting of pea soup and a bread roll. Then we moved on to walk down Ku'-damm Stratz looking for sightseeing tours. We felt that the only way to see Berlin is on an organised tour. We were too late for the one we decided to go on, so we'll do it tomorrow. Having done that we inspected the church, which the allies bombed in WW2, and has been left as a permanent reminder to Germans of the severity of war. Then it was up to the top of the Europa Centre building to see the sights from 22 stories up. From here we caught glimpses of the wall, and the massive size of Berlin; but more importantly we could see into the health resort next door and watched naked men and women doing what they have to do in a health centre!

With time getting on we hopped into the van to drive to a caravan park, or should I say the caravan park. There's only two in Berlin. When we arrived, an energetic little man nicked my passport (which we get back when we leave as is the practice with most European camp sites), and then said, "Follow meee". He hopped on his bicycle and led us through hundreds of caravans, tents, and vans to a little Australasia section where he puts all the colonials. We then had a delicious meal of schnitzel prepared by the chief cook of the van. ie. Laima

Wednesday 1st September 1976

Once again missed the 10 o'clock sightseeing tour through getting up late. Also the caravan park was further out than we thought. It's almost a frontier between West Berlin and East Germany, and a 12-mile drive into the heart of the city. So, we elected to take a self-guided tour of East Berlin. Parked the van in the "Park Haus" and caught the U-Bahn (underground train) to the station of Kochstraße which is only a block away from Checkpoint Charlie. After leaving this station, the train runs non-stop through East Berlin (six stations) until it emerges once again into West Berlin territory.

We very defensively entered the non-discreet buildings housing the DDR (East German) guards. The whole process of getting through took 45 minutes. First the passport is taken after perusing the photo against the face. Then it reappears again at another window where face is checked again, plus any bags being carried. Then it's onto the money window to exchange (compulsory) 6.50 West German marks for 6.50 East German marks. Then you're free – in the sense that you can now enter East Berlin. We initially passed alongside many abandoned buildings; abandoned because they are so close to the wall and were used from 1961 onwards as vantage points for attempted escapes by refugees. As we progressed further towards the Unter de Linden – the main street – everything improved somewhat. While walking Laima and I did everything absolutely correctly. Crossed streets only at pedestrian crossings – obeyed all lights – didn't drop any papers – etc. The atmosphere was unbelievable. People hardly talked and went morosely about whatever they had to do. DDR guards were all about either sitting in offices, on the paths or patrolling the streets on foot.

At the foot of the Unter de Linden were the Brandenburg Gates. Not sure of their history but they were a key point in building the wall, because it runs adjacent to them. Consequently, to view them you need to stand behind barricades some 200 yards away. Left there and feeling hungry stopped at a café where we had to line up to get the food which we eventually ate standing up. Luckily we did stand up because the food wouldn't have reached our stomachs otherwise. It was horrible. A sawdust filled sausage and a bread roll washed down with a liquid claiming to be cola.

Continued walking to a museum called the Pergamon, but didn't go in. Glad we didn't because a little further on, hordes of people were beginning to gather. We added two more to the horde and were treated to an almost war like spectacle. It was outside the tomb of the Unknown Soldier, which is continually guarded by DDR soldiers. What did we see? The changing of the guard. From somewhere down the street, a band began playing and as they progressed closer we saw that the band and the 50 or so soldiers following, were outfitted in German uniforms, helmets, jackboots, and rifles with bayonets. The non-playing soldiers were marching ala Nazi style with exaggerated forward thrusts of their feet. They executed their manoeuvres in a very military fashion accompanied by very loud orders from "the Sarge", over a loudspeaker. Having done all that they promptly marched back from whence they came. The soldiers looked so young – devoutly following orders.

After seeing all that we ventured onto the Alexander Platz – a very modern building. So modern in fact that your shoes get wiped clean as you enter the door by brushes on the ground. Left there for the huge 360m high radio and TV tower for which we had to wait some 20mins in a queue to get to the top. Everywhere in East Berlin, people have to wait in queues due to a lot of people and an absurdly low number of shops selling anything. Absolutely no advertising is another feature. We got a good view from this structure of the wall twisting and turning throughout the city and of the absolute bleakness of East Berlin. Still having money (East German) to spend before leaving, we bought ice creams and walked slowly back along side streets to Checkpoint Charlie. Crossed through there with once again three or four checks individually on passports. As we were both entering and leaving, the DDR guards methodically checked cars for escaping East German refugees.

Once on West Berlin territory we spent an hour or so at the museum of the wall reading interesting statistics on it and detailed descriptions of successful escapes. Then it was back by U – Bahn to the van and to the caravan park for an early night after a highly unusual day.

Thursday 2nd September 1976

We really slept in this morning. Not even the people next to us woke us (as they usually do). We breakfasted and washed up and finished reading our books. It was about 1.10pm by this time and we decided to leave the campsite. We still had our passports (they had forgotten to take them on our second night) so we wondered whether we would get out without paying. When we arrived at the entrance, the gate was down, so Pete walked into the office with money in hand. The attendant who couldn't speak a word of English ushered Pete around to the front of the gate and showed him a sign saying that no vehicle was to leave the campsite between 1.00pm – 3.30pm – A government ruling! We couldn't believe it and just sat in the van stunned. After a few minutes we backed the van back and I started to prepare a cup of coffee for both of us. Suddenly the attendant walked over to the gates and opened them. We thanked them and drove through – 7.20DM richer.

We went to a supermarket and stocked up on a few items (white bread is very expensive – around 60c/loaf – as is coffee \$4 for a 4oz jar) and bought some more GAZ. Then we drove into the city and parked at our usual free Park Haus, had some tea and went for a drink at Spreckieken. A fascinating place where you sit in a huge (empty) barrel of beer. From there we

caught the U-Bahn to a place that Arthur Frommer suggested, only to find it was like the Wonderland Ballroom. Didn't go in, didn't waste any money getting there because for some reason everyone walks in and out of the U-Bahn without showing their tickets. We felt a bit guilty about it, but also a bit richer. Big Eden's was our next stop. We paid 3DM each to get in and got a free drink. Every drink in the place cost 3DM anyway. It was a very dark and smoky disco. Just had the one drink and then went to look for another of the "Eden" chain. We found one 10 minutes later, but this was a nightclub / strip place, so we didn't go in. For the rest of the night we just walked around the city looking in all the clubs and restaurants and bright lights. Then back to the van in the Park Haus where we spent the night. Our radio is tuned into the American forces radio station. The only English speaking one we can find.

Friday 3rd September 1976

We noticed yesterday that the "Krone" circus was in town, so we bought some tickets for the 3.30pm show. Before it started, we found a laundromat and did some washing. Arrived at the Big Top and were surprised at the small size of the tent. We had a reasonably good seat, bought some popcorn and waited for the show to begin. Neither of us had been to the circus for quite a number of years so we were both excited. The show began with a group of acrobats then we saw a comical segment with monkeys (very good). The juggler was very good. He did amazing tricks with hats. The usual tightrope walker, lions and tigers, horses, then a giraffe and a hippo. Clowns amused the youngsters (and us) and at 6.00pm the show was finished.

Decided to spend the night "free camping" in the woods near the autobahn to Poland. Found a spot concealed nicely by bushes, had tea, read for a while and that was it.

Saturday 4th September 1976

Awoke at 7.30am to an overcast day. By 8.15am we were on the road to the checkpoint (Bravo) between West Berlin and East Germany. Passed through there 'quite easily' if they're the words. Paid 15 marks this time to use the road to Poland. Once again the military patrolled the area. One border guard spoke English (with difficulty) and for some reason 'took to us' kindly, helping us through the procedures quite promptly. When we were leaving he displayed a broad smile in our direction. Without thinking I absent-mindedly touched my forehead with my index finger indicating a thank you. Quick as a flash he brought his heels together and saluted back to me!

It took us an hour and a half to get to the Polish border during which time we passed through considerably more East German towns than on the way to West Berlin. Horrible places, all desperately in need of painting etc. Got across the Polish frontier OK and changed some US dollars for Zlotys, the Polish money. As in East Berlin a minimum amount must be spent. Because our visa is only for two days (plus the day you enter), we then proceeded to make a mad dash down Poland to Katowice, some 400km away. Passed through towns on the way that looked almost 20 years behind the rest of the world. Cobblestone streets (the main highway) constituted the main street of the village. People everywhere stopped and looked in disbelief as we went past. It was as though we had their heads on a string, which we pulled as we passed them. Farmers still employed horses to pull their ploughs and carts full of hay, along the main highway. Cars (and there's not many of them in Poland – only buses – hundreds of them) swerved to miss the horse and cart.

We arrived at Wroclaw at about 4.00pm and filled the tank with their "ethylene" otherwise known as petrol. It took 48 litres (10 gallons) and cost 530 zlotys (16 dollars) – the cheapest in Europe so far. Continued to Katowice but got completely 'bushed' as we neared it due to a complete lack of signs. We were hopelessly lost for an hour or so looking for a caravan park and although people know that we only speak English, they still babble on in Polish as if we can

understand every word they were saying. It was getting dark and very hard to see the few existing signs, so when we found the first parking bay we stopped for the night. Nobody bothered us and with all the curtains closed we had our own privacy.

Sunday 5th September 1976 – SPEEDWAY WORLD INDIVIDUAL FINAL DAY

The day that Pete has waited years for finally arrived and what a miserable day. Cloudy skies and patches of rain. We woke early and we were on the road to Chorzow by 8.00am. Arrived at the stadium about an hour later and parked the van with the buses from all over the continent. Then the fun began. We didn't have tickets for a start; also we didn't know what time the meeting commenced. We walked around the huge stadium looking for someone who looked British. There were a few lines at different gates but we didn't know what they were for. Hardly any Polish people speak English, so when we spotted some Germans we walked over to ask about tickets, etc. Would you believe there were two English girls sitting next to them. They didn't have tickets either but were waiting for a friend to come back who knew someone on the gate. We waited with them. Eventually he came back and said that the gates were opening at 12.00 noon and if we were to bribe one of the attendants at a certain gate, he would let us in.

The guy's name was Chris, about my age, and he told me that he used to ride speedway but gave it up. About 11.30am we went back to the gate where he had chatted up an attendant, but that attendant had disappeared! (He'd probably told 400 other people the same thing.) So we decided to walk around all the gates holding money to try and entice a scalper. But the reverse happened, and Polish people who didn't have a ticket raced towards us from all angles thinking we were selling them. We were besieged. After that was sorted out, we found a guy who had one ticket for sale. We wanted five.

The price to get in legally was 100 zlotys and he was asking 300 zlotys for one ticket. We refused, not because of the price but because all the tickets were numbered and seats allocated. If we had bought five individual tickets we would have been scattered all around the stadium. We couldn't make him understand we didn't want it because of that, but he thought he would be smart and converted the price into dollars, starting off at 10. We walked away but he ran after us and said nine. Once again we walked away and he raced after us and said eight dollars. This kept happening, until the poor little bloke got down to two dollars, which he obviously didn't realise was less than he paid for it in zlotys.

Not able to get five tickets things were desperate, so we went back to the gate again where Chris had seen the attendant and were amazed to see 50 or 60 busloads of soldiers get out and go through the gate obviously to keep "Communist law and order". But we were beginning to get lucky. Chris spied a male standing by the pits talking to Polish officials. (At this stage the gates still hadn't been opened). By sign language he got the attendant (another one) to get his mate for him. He came over; we told him the story of no tickets; he immediately said, "I'll fix that". He came back with a Polish official who spoke rapidly in Polish to the other attendant, who in turn immediately raised the gate and the five of us strolled through. Chris slipped the official five pounds (in English currency which the Poles love to get their hands on) and our next problem raised its ugly head. Where to sit, since we didn't have allocated seats.

However that was forgotten for a while as we went inside the stadium. It had been dug deep into the ground and the seating was built up the sides thus avoiding grandstands. It would easily hold its reputed 100,000 people. It was massive, with the track way down below. We stood at the top and the only other people in there were the troops who completely ringed the perimeter of the stadium at the top and bottom. We boldly selected which section we would sit in and walked straight past the orange helmeted officials at the top of the stairs, sat in the seats and waited. It was about 12.10pm and the meeting wasn't to start until 3.00pm.

People began filling in taking up their seats. Our row remained completely free for some two hours. At about 2.15pm, three blokes came along, looked at their tickets, looked at the numbers on the rows and seats, looked at us, shrugged their shoulders and sat in seats in front of us. When the people came to sit in those seats, the three blokes argued with them not once turning around to us, and the newly arrived people simply once again sat in vacant seats somewhere else. We must have been causing a little confusion, but not once did anyone ask us to produce tickets.

The racing started amidst rain, which soon went away. Our boy (the only Aussie), Phil Crump won his first two races, and with only three more for him to win, looked good. Chris and the other two girls were barracking for Peter Collins, an Englishman. There were five riders from England, four from Poland, two from Russia, one from New Zealand, one from Australia, one from Czechoslovakia, one from West Germany and one from the USA. Eventually Crumpie was beaten in his third ride which left Collins as the only unbeaten rider. Whenever a Polish rider won a race (which was only twice out of twenty heats) the crowd went berserk, cheering, clapping and stomping. Whenever one of the Russians raced (neither of them finished better than third in any of their races) the crowd whistled deafeningly – their way of booing.

Finally Peter Collins became World Champion with 14 pts, followed by another Pom, Malcolm Simmons with 13 pts. Phil Crump finished third in a very good performance. The racing is conducted over the following formula: 16 riders, 20 heats, 4 riders in each race, 5 races for each rider, and that way everyone meets each other once. Collins was ecstatic that he had one and Chris and I raced down to above the pits to watch. The band played the National Anthem and mucked it up too! And to cut a long story a little shorter, the 20 odd busloads of British fans who had come over, went home happy as we did with getting third. That night we parked in a parking bay again and slept like logs after the tension of the racing and the tension of being thrown out of the stadium!

Monday 6th September 1976

For some days we had been thinking about which route to take out of Poland. If we were to return the same way as we arrived, it would mean travelling 400km through Poland and then another 120km through East Germany to West Berlin, and then another 170km through to West Germany. Our next country on the agenda was Austria and we wondered if we could keep travelling south through Czechoslovakia and then to Austria. This way we would save petrol money on about 1,000kms. One Czech girl we met at the speedway assured us that we could purchase a transit visa at the border, and putting our trust in her information this is what we intend to do today. Our Polish visa finished as of midnight 6/9/76 so we were hoping this information proved to be right.

We travelled the 70km to Cieszyn (the border town between Poland and the Czech Republic) and joined the line to cross the border. Still not sure about obtaining a travel visa, Pete walked down to the officials and tried to explain the situation. A customs and immigration officer followed Pete to the van and looked at our passports. Luckily one of them spoke a little English. They flicked through the passports and with a sorry look on his face said we would have to go back to Katowice and obtain a transit visa from the Czech embassy. We were only a few kilometres from there this morning. The van did exceedingly well on the 60mph trip back to Katowice (it's the fastest we've travelled so far).

Once in Katowice, we had no idea where to find this embassy, so we found ORBIS travel and asked for directions. It was 11.45am, the place was 10 minutes walk away and was closed at 12 noon. Would we make it? With very vague directions we attempted the impossible. Before we knew it we had driven right out to the suburbs. Asked a friendly cop and he drew us a diagram with left and right turns, but no street names. Very helpful. About 12.15pm we found the place,

and with fingers crossed we walked inside. Disappointingly we walked out again. 12 noon was definitely closing time. Now what were we going to do? We couldn't get a Czech transit visa until tomorrow, but our Polish visa ran out at midnight tonight.

We drove back to ORBIS travel and asked how to get a 1-day extension for Poland. Again vague directions about where to go and how to get there. It was all written down on a scrap of paper in writing that we couldn't understand. All we knew was that we had to take a No. 15 tram to some sort of park. We handed the piece of paper to the ticket box (for the tram) but the lady refused to give us a ticket and babbled away in Polish, so back to ORBIS. After about 10 minutes we found out that it was very close to the Czech embassy. Arrived there five minutes later. Parked the van outside and walked to the information desk.

Here we found an elderly gentleman sitting in a dark tiny room with the only light coming from a desk lamp. We showed him our passports and hoped he would understand what we wanted. Suddenly the telephone rang and he closed the glass window so we couldn't hear what he was saying!! (huh?) He slammed the telephone down, picked up his hat and signalled for us to follow him outside, he started babbling away and pointed at the van and then around the corner. Pete and I just looked at each other and shrugged. Why is communication between humans so difficult at times? He then showed us a no-parking sign and we knew what all the commotion was about. We were illegally parked, and also at the wrong building.

Pete re-parked the van and we walked into the next building. There were nine doors, numerically numbered, and after showing our passports again we were told to walk outside door no. 8. When it was our turn, we walked in to find a stern looking gentleman sitting at a desk that seemed 10 times too big for him. Again we had trouble communicating. We kept holding up one finger indicating that we wanted an extension of one day and he kept pointing to his calendar 6th Poland – 7th Australia. All the time we thought he meant that there was a one-day's difference in time. Then it dawned on me, and I said, "No, 6th Poland – 7th Austria," and he nodded his head to say he understood. He handed back the passports and smiled. He motioned that it was OK, but he didn't give us a stamp or anything. Then we wondered how the officials at the border would know that we had an extra day. Ah well we would have to face that problem when we came to it.

We had seen a camping site just outside of Katowice and decided to spend the night there, as we were both in desperate need of a shower. End of another confusing day. Shall see what tomorrow brings!

Tuesday 7th September 1976

Woke early and drove to the Czech embassy and filled out the necessary forms and handed them to the girl, then she asked us for some money, but it had to be foreign currency. Why didn't she tell us this before? We could pay either 40DM, US\$12, or £7 sterling. She told us which bank would give us the money and off we went again. Half a dozen people outside the bank were harassing Pete for foreign money. Within half an hour we were back at the embassy waiting for our travel visas (it took longer than we expected and then with these in our hot little hands we once again set off for the border).

Arrived there at 11.30am and crossed the border at 2.30pm. Reason – the officials were really slack and half of them just sat around smoking and talking to one another. There were three different desks where you had to present your passport. As soon as one official finished with us, we would stand around waiting for the next one to turn up. They were all very unorganised! Glanced at our passports as we left and saw that we had waited three hours for one stamp.

The Czechoslovakian countryside was very similar to Poland, yet somehow the people looked richer and more advanced in all forms of farming. Arrived at the Czech border around 7.00pm and this time it only took us an hour to get through. Just before we were allowed to leave the officials made a very detailed search of the van. They looked everywhere and the rifles on their backs persuaded us to open every cupboard. I think they were a bit disappointed not to find anything.

A few hundred yards further on we had to stop at the Austrian checkpoint. They only detained us for two minutes (not even enough time to give us a stamp). From there, in complete darkness we looked for a place to stop for the night and have our 2nd meal of the day.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Can anything be prettier than Bavaria?

Wednesday 8th September 1976

We headed for Vienna this morning in glorious weather. Austrian weather is definitely better than the bleak days we experienced in Poland, East Germany and Czechoslovakia. Arrived in "Wien" (Vienna) about midday, parked the van and took off on foot to the tourist office. Armed with information, we then found a supermarket to restock the sadly depleted cupboards and discovered that Austria has the most outrageously expensive food that we've had to buy anywhere. Bread 80c, can of creamed corn \$1.50, a can of Campbells soup 80c, and ½ dozen eggs 90c. Also this morning bought a litre of oil (less than two pints) at over \$4.

Having got what we wanted we decided to spend the night in the Vienna Woods. There is a road (constructed during the depression) going to Grinzig called the Höhenstrasse, which winds its way through the woods providing magnificent views of Vienna (similar to Windy Point). Found a great spot to park off the road and were settling down heating up the pizza when another van pulled in piloted by an Aussie couple. They informed us they were looking for a spot to camp before driving into Grinzig to try out the wines. Would we like to join them? So we did. And boy did we ever have a night.

The wineries are all identified by branches of fir trees hanging above their doorways to indicate that they are serving both wine and food. Mal and Linda (about 30 years old) and us ventured into one that looked lively, with musicians walking amongst the tables. We ordered some reds and received four huge tankards full for a dollar each. Downed them and another one outside before the night air forced us inside and downstairs into a cellar where people were having a ball. A busload of Spaniards, obviously pretty well soaked by this stage, were dancing between tables, on them and everywhere. Although we didn't join them in the dancing, another three tankards of wine disappeared inside each of us while enjoying the fun and games.

The wine had done its job and we decided we should attempt to get back to their van in which we came down in and Mal should attempt to negotiate the Höhenstrasse to where our van was parked. Made it safely there and opened a two litre bottle of Italian wine that we had. (Cost us 80c in Berlin). Only a quarter way through when I successfully broke up the party by wondering outside for "a pee" and getting lost, and then falling asleep somewhere. Even now I can't remember where it was or how I got there, or how I got back to the vans. All I can remember is that I got back while Mal was out with a torch looking for me. Although I doubt whether he would have found me, let alone have seen me even if he had tripped over me. He would have laid down beside me and gone to sleep as well; he was just as 'inebriated' as me (and the two girls).

Thursday 9th September 1976

Unanimous choice for today to be a nothing day. Left the Vienna Woods at about 12 o'clock and went across the city to a caravan park. Arrived there about 2pm and just settled back reading books and writing diaries. Had showers and then Laima made steak and chips for tea. Amazingly enough, steak is cheaper than mince meat here. R Day. ie. Recovery day was finished about 9pm when we both fell asleep – this time in a bed!!

Friday 10th September 1976

Today was our first day of really miserable weather. It rained non-stop and was really cold. We left the caravan park at about 11.30am and looked for a bank. They shut from 12.00 – 3.00. Decided today that we would explore Schönbrunn Castle. We had read about it previously and Mal and Lyn said it was a must to see. When we arrived we walked through an archway under the place and then we both stood and gasped. Before us we saw beautiful lawns and gardens, a huge fountain and above that, an enormous classical stone arch called the “Gloriette”. We walked through the maze of trees and shrubs, passed the zoo towards the huge indoor plant museum. The trees were cut to grow in archways, and given enough time, one could easily get lost and love it.

We walked to the huge fountain and marvelled at the sculptures – all representing Neptune figures. Then we walked the steep gradient to the Gloriette. On the way, there was a huge pond with ducks sitting around it and Pete had great fun scaring the ducks and watching them glide into the water. We found out that in the Gloriette, the Empresses Maria Theresa used to hold summertime balls. On the way down from there we could both imagine horse drawn carriages bringing important, well-dressed guests for a night of ballroom dancing accompanied by one of Strauss’ waltzes. A tour through the place was 20 schillings (\$1.30) and started at 2.30pm. We arrived at 2.15 quite by mistake. Unfortunately the tour was given in German. Couldn’t understand a word but guessed that the guide was explaining about the numerous paintings on the walls. The rooms were quite magnificent and richly decorated.

The rain was still coming down as we left Schönbrunn so decided to drive back to the Vienna Woods and camp there for the night. Did some shopping on the way – milk, cheese, apples, bread, tomatoes, gherkin, and eggs – 104.35 schilling. Would you believe nearly \$7. Couldn’t believe some of the prices – outrageous!!

Spent the night reading and glad we were inside our nice warm van.

Saturday 11th September 1976

Awoke to find that the weather had cleared and we had a cloudless day. Drove into Vienna to do a ‘tour’ (under our own steam) of the city. Reading up beforehand we found that we could visit 123 museums, 18 opera houses and 863 statues. They’re exaggerations, but almost all there is to see in Vienna is historical but interesting. Parked the van (illegally I think), in the city and began walking. Found St Stephens’ church and had a peek inside. A massive place, rebuilt after WW2. Laima lit a candle in the alter for her Dad. Left there and watched some horse drawn buggies (for tourists) at work.

Ventured onto Kärntner Ring, a road that circles Vienna proper. Nearly every building of importance is on this road. Mozart’s statue overlooks this road. Found our way back to the van (no ticket) and drove out to Prater, the huge amusement park area of Vienna. It is here that the biggest ferris wheel in the world revolves. Walked around for some hours with the Viennese people. Then went on a ride where you sit on a swing seat, which then revolves flinging the seat out. Had a great long ride on that, when the attendant must have gone to the toilet or something because our ride was triple in time any others. (Speaking of toilets, I don’t like European ones because I can’t read the graffiti on the walls!) Had a round of minigolf then it was back into the van and off to our spot in the Vienna Woods.

Sunday 12th September 1976

We were rudely awoken at 5.45am this morning by a knock on the window. I looked out the window directly into the eyes of an Austrian policeman wildly gesticulating that it was

“verboten” to park here. So through bleary eyes and in pyjamas I drove 300m down the Höhenstrasse to a “park platz” which the “friendly” cop recommended to me. We continued our sleep there. Got up for the second time at 9.00am and discovered I wasn’t as bleary eyed as I thought I had been, because fog completely obliterated everything. Bit worried that this might postpone the speedway we were going to. I just happened to see a poster advertising it the other day

Not so, because about 11.30am it lifted remarkably to a fine sunny day. After a bit of trouble, we found Bruckneudorf where Austria was racing Poland and USSR. The track reminded me of the old Skyline speedway in the hills. Rough as hell. Did not know any of the riders but it turned out to be highly entertaining with Russia coming 1st and 2nd. We sat right on the fence and Laima was convinced after the first race that we were soon to have a rider in our laps. Spent the night off the road to Salzburg.

Monday 13th September 1976

After Pete had studied the AA map thoroughly, he found out that green lines next to a road meant that it was a scenic route. So, we organized our route from Parndorf to Salzburg following the green lines as much as possible. From Wiener Neustadt, we entered the beginning of the Austrian Alps. The scenery was really beautiful and the roads were very steep, so without any choice we had to drive slowly. Everywhere we looked there were mountains (some covered in snow), valleys, Austrian houses with flowerboxes full of geraniums and green, green fields. It was a beautifully clear day and the air was crisp and clean smelling. The people were all ready for the winter months because the wood boxes were all full.

We drove through tiny, well-kept villages such as Wegscheid, Wildalpen, Hieflau which all had chair lifts going up to the numerous ski runs. From Liezen we drove through Worschach, Mitterndorf and Bad Aussee (we wondered why we had been branded with this name) and found a camping spot for the night next to a bubbling brook (obviously a good spot because we found the remains from other people’s visits). That night Pete kept hearing noises outside but couldn’t see anything – probably just a cow snooping the van!

Tuesday 14th September 1976

No cow, but he left plenty of hints that he’d been there. Continued driving to Salzburg along the ‘back roads’ of the Alps passing village after village. Came to a pass in the mountains called Pötschen Pass from where we took photos of the villages of St Agatha and Bad Goisern and the lake called Hallstätter See, Breathtaking scenery with lawn, not grass, climbing up the mountains and around houses. All the way through this beautiful mountainous countryside we sang all the songs we could remember from “The Sound of Music”. (Laima was Julie Andrews and I was Christopher Plummer). Continued on through Bad Ischl to St Gilgen where (although we didn’t know it at the time) scenes of The Sound of Music were filmed. We then hit Salzburg in pouring rain, on a road that wound down from the mountains like the road from the Adelaide Hills. Couldn’t see much, so headed for an information place and then onto a caravan park for a much needed shower. Time was about 2.00pm and still raining as we sat miserably in the van. Then miraculously the sky cleared and was perfectly blue within 30 mins. However we stayed put and worked out the rest of our trip hoping that tomorrow would be the same.

Wednesday 15th September 1976

It was, although very chilly. We left the park and drove the short distance into Salzburg and parked alongside the River Salzach. Our objective today was to relive The Sound of Music. Obtained a pamphlet from American Express showing where scenes were filmed and then headed for the Residenz Platz where German soldiers were marching (and Rolf) in the film. We

then tried to see the Festival Theatre where the Von Trapp family sang their farewell at the song contest but as far as we could see, it was only open for concerts, etc. Continued walking and found a fountain we remember from Mum and Dad's slides. No idea what it was called but it looked good. We then proceeded to get lost by walking through a tunnel in a mountain, but regained our bearings and walked back to the Dom Platz where we came across the Dom Cathedral, a massive church which at first we thought was where Maria and "old man Trapp" got married but American Express proved us wrong. That church was in the Lake District.

We found a little restaurant that served Wiener schnitzel and had our first lunch "out". We had always eaten in the van or else gone without. A good meal too. From there it was on to the Nonnberg Convent where Maria learnt her lines. Climbed a very steep hill to get there because the convent is halfway up a hill on which the Hohensalzburg fortress lies. We found a gate that resembled the one at which Maria entered however we couldn't get in any further to see where they hid from the Germans. Walked the rest of the way up the hill to the fortress and explored that at leisure looking out over a beautiful city towards the Alps. Walked back to the van and then drove to Leopoldskron Castle and the grounds in which a lot of the film was shot. The exterior of the castle was used as the Von Trapp House and in its grounds is the summerhouse where Liesl met Rolf and the lake and path where the kids fell out of the boat and stood before their father, dripping wet.

From there we decided to head for Berchtesgaden just across the border (22km) into Germany, where Hitler had a summer residence completely constructed inside a mountain. Found a caravan park where we had fun in beating down the owner to 8DM instead of 10. Tomorrow we will see where Hitler got his suntan.

Thursday 16th September 1976

Winter must really be settling in, because today (this morning) was again very cloudy, misty and raining. Just to get our money's worth, Pete had another shower – two on consecutive days – what a luxury!! From pamphlets around the caravan park, we found out that Hitler's summer residence was called Obersalzberg. So this was the first place we headed for this morning. Drove to the "Kasse" where we parked the van and inquired about the tour. It was entirely in German and cost 9DM each. Because it was such an overcast day and from what we saw of slides and postcards, there is a magnificent view from the top of the mountain. Because we had decided to go back to Innsbruck after Munich, we thought that we might encounter a better day on which to visit the mountain. We filled up with petrol and drove all the way to Munich on the autobahn. Arrived on the outskirts of the Beerfest city and found the caravan park we wanted to find, as had about 3,000 other Australians. Never before had we had to look for a spot to park the van – but there is always a first time. Had tea of schnitzel and chips and got to know a few of the people that were parked near us. Settled down to our first really cold night in Munich.

Friday 17th September 1976

Woke up to a miserable day and because of this, nobody stirred until about 11.30am. There is an atmosphere of expectancy from everyone, as tomorrow is the big opening day of the Munich Oktoberfest. More Kombi vans rolled in making the caravan park look like a huge Volkswagen used car lot. As the VW's came, so did all the tour buses from London. I counted almost twenty. Sat in the van nearly all day due to the drizzling rain. About 7.00pm it stopped so we popped up to the restaurant bar area and joined hundreds of others in a practice session for opening day. It was here that we met the guy who won the Stawell Gift this year. (Allen Pollock from Heidelberg in Melbourne.) While talking to him, in walked Peter Green and "Bazza" (Barry Jeffreys) a guy from Sale in Victoria. They had flown in from London and had nowhere to stay, so for the first time on the trip the top beds of the van were used.

Saturday 18th, Sunday 19th & Monday 20th September 1976

Three incredible days of beer drinking, singing, walking and fun. Started off on Saturday morning at about 11.00am and caught a bus to the Oktoberfest grounds. There were the two of us, Pete and Bazza, and three girls, Leanne, Elizabeth and Sue. (They had previously bought a van from Pete Green in London). We arrived there after walking a few short streets, all blocked off to the traffic, to find huge grounds with hundreds of carnival sideshows, 12 massive beer halls (each holding 8,000 people). Walked around in awe looking at the few floats that were left over from the procession through Munich. They were the brewery carts, decorated with flowers and pulled by massive draught (pun intended) horses. Bazza had a movie camera, so we raced around madly taking candid shots of the floats, sideshows and outside the beer halls.

We all bought Austrian type "felt" hats with a big feather sticking out the top and for the three days they never left our heads. On Saturday when we first entered The Hofbräuhaus, (pronounced Hoffbrahouse) we were amazed at the atmosphere inside. (We found out shortly after that the beer halls are all temporary and are only there for the 14 days of the Oktoberfest). Hanging from the roof, over the bandstand in the middle of the hall, was a giant figure (about 20' high) of a funny little angel playing a harp. He had big red, rosy cheeks and there were "clouds" hanging all around him.

People sat at long benches and drank litre glasses of beautiful Hofbrau beer. (4½ litres = 1 gallon). Price for a litre was 3.95DM (\$1.70). Each shout was about 30DM because we always gave our "fraulein" a tip. (Bazza's first tip to her was about 15DM. He hadn't yet understood the money and thought he was giving her about 50p or so). There were usually about 7 or 8 in our shout which meant that we only had to shout once every 1½ days!! After all, nine litres is two gallons of beer. The waitresses can carry up to 17 steins at once. Quite honestly I tried at one stage and couldn't even hold ten.

Australians dominated the Hofbräuhaus and consequently to retain law and order, the guards were massive fellows each with a truncheon. When someone had to be ejected, four of them moved in and with no questions asked, hoisted him (or her) up like a doll and out they went. There were no arrests as far as I know and no violence because everyone knew where they stood with these blokes around. On Sunday we heard that a German fellow (apparently quite old) had suffered a fatal heart attack while enjoying himself. The hall was so big and it was at the other end, we didn't notice a thing.

On the opening Saturday we shared a table with Germans and we all were linking arms and singing (Roll out the Barrel, Viva Espana, and numerous other drinking songs). Because of the quantity of Aussies, the band played Waltzing Matilda every hour, every day. We all stood on the seats raising our glasses singing the words. The Germans watched us in amazement and at the end they toasted us and 8,000 steins were raised and "Prost" rang throughout the hall.

On Saturday we arrived at 11.00am and left at 11.00pm. Sunday was 2.00pm till 11.00pm and Monday was big effort from 10.00am to midnight. (On Monday I found out from an Adelaide guy that Russell Ebert won the Magarey Medal with 42 votes. What an incredible effort? However, I know nothing of the finals results in either Sydney or Adelaide. I believe the Sydney Grand Final has already been played.) Each morning was progressively harder to get up but we fought our way to the showers (usually an hour's wait) and refreshed (nearly) started again.

So many funny things happened that I can't even remember them all let alone write about them. How many steins had we had? Can't remember but it would have been about three dozen. Each night when the halls closed, hundreds and hundreds of Aussies and NZ's made their way back to the camping ground – in many and various ways but never by their own van. They weren't moved for obvious reasons. Three days to remember forever.

Tuesday 21st September 1976

Day off today for sightseeing. Pete Green had flown back to London yesterday, so the six of us and "Chippy", one of Bazza's mates, hopped into our van and we drove to the 1972 Olympic Village and stadium. It was a fantastic place with the main stadium for athletics covered with a type of webbing, steel mesh arrangement. This meshing extended over the swimming and gymnastics stadiums as well. All the stadiums were built around a big lake and a man-made hill at the top of which was a memorial for the athletes killed. Across the road from the Olympics area was the BMW factory. We had wanted to go on a tour that goes extensively through the factory showing a car being built from scratch but it was booked out unfortunately. So the seven of us had a round of minigolf in the village. (I won by three strokes – from Laima. Must have been the practice we had in Vienna!). We drove back to the camp, had some tea, and decided to stay "home" for the night.

Wednesday 22nd September 1976

This morning we realised that we felt noticeably better than other people looked who had gone to the Oktoberfest last night. Bearing this in mind we all got into the van again and drove to Dachau the famous concentration camp, which is 20km from Munich. From the outside it looked like the ones I read about all the time from WW2. Electrified, barbed wire fences, sentry towers, wooden huts and a huge area for roll call. However, once inside the museum, (which pictorially traces the history of why the camp was started), it became clear it was nothing like it. We heard stories and saw pictures of Hitler and the SS amidst other horrifying ones of decayed bodies in ovens and mass graves. We also watched a 25min film of the camp. Original film taken by the SS, and that of the Yanks when they liberated the camp. The silence in the theatre was eerie as the cameras showed bodies piled tens of feet high. I was too scared to swallow. Everyone for 20 yards around me would have heard it.

We walked out into the sunshine feeling quite ill. I know I did. We walked down to the crematorium where the Nazis burnt the bodies of those who had been either shot or had died of starvation. The huge ovens where they did this were on open display as was a gas chamber, disguised as a huge shower room. (The chamber at Dachau was never used, however. All the gassing of the Jews was done at Auschwitz). A very depressing place.

The ovens, chamber and storage rooms for bodies waiting to be burnt, all remain as they were. The walls are covered in graffiti dating back to 1935. In the rooms of the crematorium are strategically placed photos of the room you are in, showing heaps of bodies, so that when you look at the photo you can realise that you would be standing on a body. Left Dachau not too happy at all. We dropped the others off at the camp, promising to all meet up again in London or Australia. Laima and I continued onto Innsbruck but only got 40km or so before deciding to stop for the night in a forest. Hit the sack around 8.00 o'clock.

Thursday 23rd September 1976

Laima woke up this morning with one of her colds – a doozy too. Set off for Innsbruck but detoured a bit so we could pass through Oberammergau. Very picturesque city with murals of scenes, no doubt of the passion play, on nearly every home and building. We walked to the playhouse but declined to go in as no tours are in English and it cost 1.50DM to even get in. However we entered a souvenir shop and were fascinated by a wall full of cuckoo clocks. We watched for some minutes and saw several of them "cuckoo" on the hour. Very tempted to buy one but they were also very expensive. After leaving there we went on to Garmisch – Partenkirchen, another beautiful place and scene of a previous Winter Olympics. It is also, as a lot of Bavaria is, an American Army recreational base. There were GI's in their hundreds everywhere. The Yanks have even bought the area around Berchtesgaden and Hitler's Eagle's

Nest, as a recreational ground. (By the way we decided not to go back to see Eagle's Nest as it was too far out of the way).

Left Garmisch and began winding our way into Innsbruck around the towering Zugspitze (10,000') through Mittenwald and into Austria again. Got a great view of the valley in which Innsbruck and numerous other villages lie, as we came down from the mountains. The River Inn, which goes right down the valley, is the most vivid colour of green imaginable. Entering Innsbruck we decided to call into a caravan park to allow Laima to have a hot shower and cheer up a bit. Thus we spent the night in the Innsbruck West caravan park.

Friday 24th September 1976

Never again though. We woke up early to have showers but there weren't any because the park is closing for winter next week and they had dismantled all the gas units and boilers! Consequently we abused the bloke like hell and left. Innsbruck was on TV a lot while we were in Canada because of this year's Winter Olympics and we remembered a lot of it, especially the magnificent mountains on either side. We left there to do a drive that was mentioned in our AA book of Europe. (They also recommended the Rhine trip). It was to discover the Austrian Tyrol.

We drove east through valleys and mountains and pastures, all with cows with bells around their necks. Passed through incredible countryside that could only look better covered in snow. Each village had heaps of ski runs and lifts to tow the skiers up. Laima and I had itchy feet for it to begin snowing (Laima also had a very runny nose). We came to Kitzbühel where the book recommended a ride on the Hornbahn, a cable car, which takes ½ hour and two changes to reach the top. We had a look at it and I'm sure I recognised it from one of Dad's photos. However, we didn't go on it because they had also recommended what we thought sounded like a better one further on. This was at Thurn Pass, but when we got there it was only a chair lift and it wasn't going anyway. We were going to go back to the Hornbahn but decided to take a long awaited ride on a cable car in Switzerland (perhaps Mt Pilatus).

At Thurn Pass we got a view of several very large and impressive mountains, all over 10,000' tall and all covered in snow. Beneath them, nestled the town of Mittersill, some thousands of feet below the mountains and us. That was our next target and we arrived there after a very steep, windy ride. Krimml was next, where we saw a waterfall (put your own words in, I've run out of superlatives for Austria!). It was over 900' high. We had to pay 50 schillings (\$3) to drive up a road from which to view it. The road also took us over the next mountain so it wasn't too bad. The scenery here was also great. We're now taking things for granted!! About 4.30pm we saw a beautiful spot to stop the night. Green grass overlooking a lake and an Austrian village. Beautiful. One drawback, it was underneath a huge power pylon. Never mind!

Saturday 25th September 1976

When we awoke this morning we both thought we were in heaven, only because of the ringing and clanging of the bells outside. Pushed the curtains across and we saw herds of cows ambling along the road. The bells around their necks were enormous and they all had flowers and fir tree twigs on their heads. Firstly we thought they were being taken down the mountain to be slaughtered but later found out it was because of the oncoming winter that they would spend the cold weather down in the valley.

After breakfast we attempted (what is usually) a 10min drive down the mountain, but because of all the cows we made it in ½ an hour. We got a great picture of a cow whose head dress had fallen down over its eyes, and the poor thing couldn't see where it was going. From Zell am Ziller, we drove through some very picturesque villages until we reached the autobahn and then straight into Innsbruck again. We drove straight to the famed ski jump where we got a fabulous

view of the city and also the cemetery, which is the last thing the ski jumpers would see before making their jump. Any person who is a ski jumper (in my mind) must be crazy, or else he soon will be. From there we followed the signs to the bobsled run. And I thought ski jumpers were crazy – bobsled runners must have rocks in their heads.

The course was unbelievable - 360° turns, 180° turns, parts of the course where their bodies were completely vertical to the ground, to the left and two seconds later, vertical to the right. What a way to make a living? Pete had a dumbfounded look on his face (more so than usual) as we walked part of the course, and said he wanted to go all the way around – on the inside of the course. I went back to the van to make some lunch. On his return he said that it was just under a mile long and U-N-B-E-L-I-E-V-A-B-L-E!! Given half a chance he would have loved to have tried it and I would have been a widow.

Now came the sad part. We had to say goodbye to Innsbruck. This is truly a beautiful place!! Zurich is the next port of call, so we drove out on Route 171 through Imst and Landeck where we stopped for the night. We parked the van strategically so that Pete could have a wash outside the van. With my cold I don't want to chance it yet. After going to bed we talked for about two hours remembering the different hotels we stayed in in America, the airports we had seen and the spots where we camped while on the continent. It's amazing how good our memories are!!

Sunday 26th September 1976

No cow bells to wake us this morning, though if there had been we might have woken a bit earlier. Mainly a driving day today. From the campsite we drove through Arlberg and remembered the Arlberg hotel at Mt Buller. Then through Bludenz and Feldkirch where we crossed the border into Liechtenstein. Not a very big country this one, because before we knew it, we were in Switzerland. Although the weather is still quite warm, the beautifully coloured leaves are telling us that autumn has arrived. We chose another scenic route from Gams to Wattwil (Pete kept asking "what will" they call this town?). From Rapperswil we drove next to the beautiful Zürichsee until we reached Zürich.

Our first stop is always the tourist information office, so when we found it and walked out with all the pamphlets we could find in English, we headed for the nearest caravan park. It's set next to the Zürichsee in a very picturesque spot (so Pete tells me). I haven't been able to see it as yet because the caravan people are doing our washing and I haven't got any jeans on. We put the washing in at 4.15pm and at 7.30pm we enquired about it. It wasn't yet dry!! We figured they must have forgotten about it. So after politely abusing them we spent the rest of the night in the van. He assured us it would be dry by morning. By the way – they had a drying machine!!

Monday 27th September 1976

First thing we did this morning was to reclaim our clothes and check if everything was there. One pair of my underpants were missing and were still missing after a thorough search of the van. But they were discovered around my waist, where all good underpants are normally found. Left the caravan park after unfortunately paying the bill and drove into Zurich to the Bahnhof (Railway Station) to change some money and post some letters. We changed \$90 to Swiss francs and uncontrollably started laughing when the teller handed us a 100-franc note. It was huge! Measured at least 7" long by 5" deep. I had to fold it three times before it would fit in my wallet. Sarcastically I asked the teller, "Do you have any bigger ones?" He promptly went away and got a 1,000-franc note. You could have papered a wall with it. This one was 10-12" long and about 8" deep. Unfortunately a 1,000-franc will not see the inside of my wallet.

Did a bit of shopping and then drove around Zurich for a bit and saw a few things. For some reason, on impulse, we decided to leave Zurich after seeing the Quayside. Drove along a scenic

route to Zug where lakes abound and after finding a nice spot by the side of one lake, we decided to have a picnic lunch. Dragged out a rug, two beers, piles of sandwiches, and sat down surrounded by swans and seagulls all looking for a handout. After we had finished our lunch we got a salami sausage, which we had bought in Germany, and was absolutely terrible. So we broke that up and began feeding time. The swans and ducks wouldn't touch the stuff but the seagulls loved it. One particular seagull performed acrobatics to get a piece. He persistently caught the salami in mid-air to save him the bother of swimming underwater to get it.

Left for Lucerne about two hours later and drove straight to Ruswil to Sandra and Phillip Ottiger-Doyle's place to meet them and also collect our mail. (Sandra was the sister of a mate at MLC, John Doyle.) Good time reading the letters and finding out news. In the evening they took us to a little café in their village for a drink. Swiss people everywhere all speaking a variety of languages. A really good night too.

Tuesday 28th September 1976

Phillip and Sandra offered us the use of their spare bedroom, but we declined and said we were comfortable in the van (which we are). In the morning we were introduced to all of Dominique's friends (she is three years old and speaks German and English). We got ready while Sandy put Natalie to bed and then we dropped her off in the village for shopping and we drove to Lucerne. Parked the van and walked alongside the beautiful lake. It was so smoky we couldn't see the other side, so Pilatus will have to wait. We walked across the beautiful covered bridge and passed all the market stalls. For a while we watched someone feeding the swans and ducks and continued our walk across another covered bridge. We found a really sweet lakeside café and ordered wiener schnitzels and pommes frites (very enjoyable) and then spent some time watching the ducks wash.

We walked up and down the hilly lanes of the old town peering in windows full of watches and jewellery and other items far too expensive for our budget. Had a very pleasant day just strolling around the narrow streets and watching people. Bought some postcards and some really cheap film (cheaper than in the previous countries we had visited). At one place near the lake we saw two guys playing chess on the sidewalk – literally. The chessmen were about 18" high and their board (marked out on the pavement) was about 10' x 10"! Incredible. About 5.30pm we arrived back at Ruswil and were invited to tea. A really delicious meal, and then Pete drove Phillip to soccer while Sandra got ready for gym. Pete and I spent the night writing cards and letters, and babysitting. We watched a movie on TV but couldn't make head nor tail of it because it was all in German. Raining outside but still quite warm. So we were comfortable in the van for the night.

Wednesday 29th September 1976

We thanked the Ottiger's for their hospitality and friendship and left Ruswil for Interlaken and Grindelwald. It wasn't a very nice day, raining and cloudy, but the scenery was magnificent. We drove through Sarine, Giswil and Lungern before we reached the banks of the Brienersee and then Interlaken where we did some shopping and general sightseeing. The drive to Grindelwald was up a narrow road with sights galore on both sides. Grindelwald is very pretty, but terribly touristy. Decided to wait and see what kind of weather tomorrow brings before seeing any of the sights, so we looked for a caravan park.

We found one in Grund and the camp warden was very helpful and gave us some pamphlets on the various mountains in the area. Fish, chips and salad satisfied us tonight, as did a few beers. Just by fluke Pete got the hot water system to work tonight (hasn't been working since we left Dover – probably would have worked a lot sooner had we had we tried to fix it sooner). Raining

heavily outside so tomorrow's prospects of a cable car ride look very remote. Amazingly enough the weather isn't cold. Spent the night writing, reading and playing cards.

Thursday 30th September 1976

Awakening this morning we cautiously looked out the window. Saw the cows and the fields and then upon looking a little higher was relieved to see the Eiger in all its glory. A perfectly blue sky with a towering mountain reaching up into it. After cornflakes and coffee we set off from the caravan park and left Grindelwald for Lauterbrunnen, just a few kilometres around the mountain. It was from here that our long awaited cable car ride would start, to the summit of the Schilthorn – 9,748' up. We parked the van and ventured to the "Kasse" or ticket office and ruefully handed over 76 francs (\$30) for the privilege of riding on the longest cable car in Switzerland. 4½ miles long.

The base of the cable is at Stechelberg (2,844' above sea level) from where it rises in four stages. The first is to Gimmelwald, which is perched on top of a sheer cliff. This section rises 1,500' between two single pylons. One at the top and one at the bottom. The cable just sits in a lazy loop between them. At Gimmelwald, everyone piled out of the first car to transfer to the next stage, all attempting to stand next to the windows at the front. The second stage was a short one to Murren rising only 700'! The third stage, however, really fixed my ears up. Up to this point things had been pretty easy. Just look at the scenery, cuddle Laima and elbow the guy next to you when you try to scratch your ear.

Birg, which was the third station, was over 3,500' higher than Murren and the cable car went up quicker than the Empire State Building lift (almost). All at once I began to hang on as the ever-present cows seemed miles below. Up and up we went, through layers of clouds (which seemed to come from nowhere as soon as we paid our money) to finally come to a rest at the station from where Swiss people gather to watch climbing attempts on the Eiger, Jungfrau and the Mönch. But we didn't hang around. With no chance for the ears to acclimatise to that height, we were whisked into yet another one for a final ascent to the summit, a mere 1,100' above. Once at the top, to our dismay it was covered in cloud, but it was distinguishable enough to recognise it as the setting for the James Bond movie, "On her Majesty's Secret Service" with George Lazenby. (It was the health resort for the girls, which was attacked by helicopters).

Avoiding the very costly revolving restaurant, we walked out onto the terrace and sat down amongst the clouds. The valley on one side was very clear but we could only see fields and very barren rock. The sights everyone wanted, those of the surrounding mountains were obliterated. But we waited for a miracle. While we waited, being smarties, we ate our sandwiches and drank our wine, which we had brought up. (On the cable car that is). Then it began to happen. As though breathing, the clouds dispersed and suddenly the magnificent panorama of the Swiss Alps unfolded before us. Then they were gone again, enveloped by cloud. Every few minutes or so the clouds would part, revealing magic scenery.

After an hour or so of waiting with the camera ready, (as everyone else was doing), to catch glimpses of nearby mountains, we called it quits and caught the cable car back down again, wishing we had been chewing gum. The ride down takes 35mins. (As it did to go up too!). On one section, (the 3,500' one) we had 99 people in the car. Each stop has a restaurant and viewing area and we got out at the middle one (Murren) and had another look, as there weren't any clouds at that level. At the bottom, we hopped into "our home" and went back to Grindelwald after nearly four hours on Schilthorn. Found a spot on the side of the road and camped for the night beside a rapidly flowing creek.

Friday 1st October 1976

Drove into Grindelwald again this morning for the third occasion. This time we headed for a spot we had found the first time. It was right at the end of the village and down a road towards the Pfingstegg Bahn (cable car). We had seen a gorge along which a path had been built clinging to the side of the cliff. It was a 2½ franc charge to walk along the trail but we figured it would be worthwhile. It began by a tunnel then continued hugging the face of the cliff about 20' above the rapids below. It was a kind of boardwalk for 400 yards and then the guys that built it must have decided it would be easier to construct a tunnel inside the cliff with windows (holes in the rock) at regular intervals. Waterfalls dotted the sheer cliff faces for the length of the walk (1,200m), and then as suddenly as it started, it finished and we had to walk back again.

Left Grindelwald (reluctantly as it was a really peaceful place) about 12.30pm and drove back to, and straight through Interlaken and around Lake Brienz, again to Meiringen and heading south for Italy. Faced with two possible routes, we inevitably chose the one that would eventually cost us money. One route (the one we chose) ended up in a place called Susten, after climbing the highest we've ever been in a motor vehicle. It was the Susten Pass, 7,000' above sea level. The road went backwards and forwards, through dozens of short tunnels, up and up until eventually, way above the snow line, we reached the top – and it was as cold as hell. The whole journey was in second gear.

We coasted down the other side to Susten and on to Goschenen, which is where engineers are currently building a 14-mile long tunnel under the St Gotthard Mountain to allow cars to drive to Airolo instead of the current method, which is by train. There is no road over the mountain, but we didn't know that. Instead, before we knew it we had shelled out 28 francs and found ourselves sitting in the motorhome on a railway wagon along with dozens of other cars. The train started and away we went into a tunnel and it was as black as the inside of a cow. Could not see a thing as we hurtled along at 50mph. Here we were in normal driving position, the motor not going, me not steering and it was terrifying really. (Just as bad as Space Mountain in Disneyland – except this time we had a readily accessible toilet to use). Occasionally a few lights would flash past, or the engine way up the front would create an electric spark that momentarily reassured us that we weren't going to smash into a wall. Twice, a train from the opposite direction came out of the blue (or should it be black?) to scare the daylights out of us. It was a ten-minute ride for about a nine-mile long tunnel.

When we came out the other end the weather was terrible. (We had started in perfectly clear weather). It was raining heavily and was very misty. Drove off the train to begin reading Italian everywhere. For a moment I thought we had gone clear through to Italy, but we established that we were now in the Italian sector of Switzerland.

Not being in any mood to continue driving after that journey, we pulled up in a parking bay near the town of Chiggiogna and recovered. Didn't stop raining all night.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Italians. You either love ‘em or hate ‘em

Saturday 2nd October 1976

It was still raining when we woke up and we couldn't see any of our surroundings. Guessed that there were mountains around us from all the waterfalls and tunnels we saw. There were tunnels galore, and train tracks everywhere. Before us, above us and next to us. We drove to Bellinzona and then Lugano before we reached Chiasso and the Italian border. The guard didn't even look at our passports, just peered into the van and then waved us on. We changed some money getting 77,600 lire for \$90US and bought 100 litres of petrol coupons (they save us about 30%).

We then drove to Como, (Perry's hometown?) Cantu and then Monza where we had a look at the racetrack. It cost us 300 lire each and was well worth it because the Porsche club had hired the track for a day's racing. It was still raining very heavily but this didn't seem to bother the racers. They were speeding around, headlights on, windscreen wipers on full and spraying water everywhere. The track is really big, because on the inside there are houses, a camping ground and forests. After watching the racing for a while we decided to leave and head for Brescia. This was harder than we thought because every road led to Milan (not to Rome!). The more we drove, the closer we were to Milan and the worse the traffic got. Italians persist in beeping their horns at everything and the horns are very high pitched and annoying. Exasperated and tired we decided to go back to Monza and start again.

On all the Italian motorways you have to pay a toll because independent private companies build them – this is why we want to avoid them as much as possible. By sheer luck we found a secondary road to Brescia and began the long trip to Venice. We didn't get too far before nightfall and began looking for a place to stop. This was harder than we anticipated because all the side roads were very soggy and because we didn't want to get stuck in the mud we drove on and eventually found a gravelled area between some fields. After tea when I was going to do the dishes, we found that our water supply had run out. Plenty outside, but none inside. Thinking that it would probably rain all night, we put some pint and litre glasses (from the Beerfest) outside, hoping they would fill up by the time we woke in the morning. Spent the night playing cards and listening to the rain.

Sunday 3rd October 1976

By the time we woke up we had accumulated enough water to do the dishes and to have a cup of coffee as well. Today was mainly a transit day and we passed through Brescia, Verona, Vicenza and Padova before reaching Venice. The rain had really played havoc during the night. Many fields were flooded and in one town a river had flooded and water was all over the road. Every Italian living in the vicinity must have been there watching the cars drive through the foot high water. Sundays in Italy must be everyone's outing day. The roads were full of traffic and everyone was in their Sunday best. All the young kids were going to discos and the older generation were occupying the bars and the restaurants. (After church).

In Munich we had heard of an Australian who ran a camping ground in Fusina, just outside of Venice, so we found our way there. Having arrived, we thought we were back in Australia again. All you could hear was an Aussie drawl. This is where we found Curly. Who's Curly? – A sweet little black and white kitten. We named her Curly because of her crooked tail. After we

fed her some sausage and milk she made herself at home and took turns in sleeping on Pete's and my lap. She must belong to the camp, but no one seems to want to claim her. It's so nice to have a cat around the place. Before we took her in, we checked her for fleas, etc, but found none, only a clean little kitten wanting some love and attention. She's getting enough attention to last her a lifetime. I'm afraid she's going to have to sleep out in the wet tonight.

At least it has stopped raining.

Monday 4th October 1976

Guess who didn't sleep out in the wet at all? Guess who slept right in the middle of the bed? And she didn't even pee in the van. Drove into Venice, about eight kms away and parked in the huge car park at the end of the long causeway that connects Venice with the mainland. 1,000 lire (\$1.25) to park until midnight, but as we entered we met another Aussie who slept overnight in the car park merely paying another 1,000 lire the next day. We shall do that tonight. A short walk and we were in Venice itself. Using Arthur Frommer (Europe on \$10/day) as a guide, we made for the railway station. Canals everywhere, with water lapping up to the buildings. No cars, just all boats. Instant drowning for anyone forgetting there wasn't a road when opening the front door.

Once at the station we were on the Grand Canal, the main waterway of the city. We decided to ride a vaporetto straight away to the Piazza San Marco (St Mark's Square). A vaporetto is the local "bus" service. It's a large motorboat full as a gook with Italians. Actually there were probably more tourists on it to be honest. The ride to St Mark's took 50mins and cost 75 lire each (about 9 cents). Unbelievable value after Switzerland and Germany. Sights on the way were passing beneath the Rialto Bridge and numerous centuries old buildings fronting the canal. Every boat on the waterways has a horn so the drivers can make out they are in a car and use it to abuse people. The Piazza San Marco lies nearly on the Adriatic Sea, separated from it only by the Lido, Venice's public beach. It is a large square packed with tourists. As we arrived it was 12.00 noon, which was prominently displayed on a very unusual clock high above the square. It's chimes were made by two figures, about 6' high, who banged the hell out of a large bell.

We walked around the square for a while watching waiters racing everywhere trying to serve everyone and musicians playing in the open-air cafes. We then went into St Mark's Basilica, an ancient church dating back to before the year 828. Mosaic gold patterns completely cover the walls and the entire roof and are incredibly beautiful. Apparently they took 700 years to complete. Time for lunch, so we had genuine Italiano pizzas in the "Conca d' Oro" restaurant, recommended as the best in Venice. Good too. Needed a doggy bag for Laima's leftovers.

We decided to visit the island of Murano next, which is the world famous centre of glass blowing. Paid the mammoth charge of six cents to ride the vaporetto for 25 minutes out there. It was beautiful sitting in the sun at the front of the boat watching the island get closer. Eventually it arrived and we hopped off and raced into a factory expecting a tour of some sort. But no. All it was, was a few seats in a dirty old warehouse watching Italians turn out some magnificent glassware. Molten glass on a rod was handed to a guy sitting down in a dirty old singlet, cigarette in his mouth, bottle of beer beside him, and in a matter of seconds he had fashioned a giraffe, or a bird, or a fish, flower, anything. Using only a pair of pliers to pull the glass into shape, he had it done as easily as if it had been plasticine.

We visited three factories in all. At the third one, we watched clowns being made in various colours. Different guys did separate sections in different colours and another bloke put it all together. It was here that we bought a family of elephants, only small but made so that they all link up nose to tail. Caught the vaporetto back to the station and then walked the short distance

to the van. The car park is right on the Venice lagoon so we had a good view all night of twinkling lights right around us.

Tuesday 5th October 1976

Awoke to a thundering downpour of rain, so we stayed in bed for a few more hours. The driver had breakfast in bed while the navigator cleaned the van a little. Although it wasn't cold outside, we still had to rug up to protect ourselves from the rain. By the time we got out of the car park, we were both drenched. Pete didn't have a hood so his hair was wet. I did have a hood but somehow my hair was wet too. The bottoms of our jeans were wet and muddy and my boots must have sprung a leak because my socks were saturated and you could here me squelching along. We were going to buy an umbrella, but the prices seem to have sky rocketed since yesterday.

We walked to the station, not to have a look, just to dry off a little and to see what we looked like. Almost scared ourselves when we found a mirror. Instead of going by the vaporetto, we decided to walk down the streets towards St Mark's Square. The rain had let up a little and the sun was peeping through the still grey clouds. Every shop was selling Murano glass, and some of the pieces were really exquisite. They were all a little cheaper than on the island itself. They have really odd shopping hours here – open from 8.30am to 1.00pm and then again from 4.00pm to 7.30pm. Although not all shops keep these hours. We are glad now that we didn't invest in an umbrella because all the streets had dried up and there was no sign of any more rain.

Feeling a little peckish, we decided to try one of the restaurants offering a "menu turistico". This is a menu of three courses with about 4/5 selections in each course. The government sets these prices mainly because tourism is such a big industry in Venice. Pete had spaghetti with meat sauce, assorted fried fish (including octopus) and ice cream. I had pasta and bean soup, grilled St Peter filet and ice cream. Really good value for 7,200 lire. From there we walked back to the station along the narrowest streets imaginable. If you spread your arms you could touch the walls of the houses. Arrived at the van and I tended to my still saturated feet. They had gone all white and crinkly. We had seen enough water to last us a while, so we left Venice and headed for Florence along the east coast of Italy. Nightfall forced us to stop, this time in a car park of a restaurant.

Wednesday 6th October 1976

Left the restaurant car park without getting a free meal and continued under a cloudless blue sky, further south, deeper into deadly Italy. Turned off the main road and headed for Ferrara, reputedly one of the most beautiful cities in Italy. When we got there we didn't think much of it, in fact drove straight though and on to Bologna, home of many a famous spaghetti recipe. Quite a big place, with all its drivers mad as cut snakes. Road rules simply don't apply for Italians. In fact, they get non-existent the further south we go. No way am I going to drive in Rome.

In Bologna, I went shopping, while Laima looked after the van, fighting people away from it (TRUE!). Had some fun and games with the shop assistants, trying to locate simple things like bread, butter and milk. Actually they were quite helpful running up and down the supermarket bringing things to see if that was the item I wanted. Left Bologna and started for Firenze (Florence). Because we refuse to drive on the toll autostradas, the road we had to drive on was terrible. For 80km it was like driving on the old Adelaide Hills road. Twisty, turning up and down, over a range of hills that we thought would never end. In fact they haven't yet, because we stopped for the night some 10km outside Florence on an old dirt road and played cards (I won – Laima), drinking at the same time a two-litre bottle of wine (Cost 50 cents). Not all that potent though.

Thursday 7th October 1976

Left the dirt road and drove the short distance to Florence passing through tiny hilltop villages. I think peak hour traffic must exist 24 hours a day in all Italian cities because there were cars everywhere. Once in the centrum, we looked for a parking place near the station, but all the spaces were too small for our van so we had to drive about two kilometres further on till we found a spot big enough. Once settled, we walked to the station and obtained a “free” map of the city from the tourist place. As far as we could see the only things to visit in Florence were the galleries and museums and seeing as we haven’t been to any yet, decided to do just that.

We walked towards the city and crossed the Ponte Vecchio (bridge). Quite unusual really because there are houses built on the bridge and numerous souvenir shops and jewellery shops. Then up Via Giucciardini (street name) to the Palazzo Pitti. This is a huge stone building (which housed the Medici family) containing a complex of museums. Arrived there at 2.15pm to find out that it closed at 2.00pm. At the back of the building are some huge gardens, so we had a short look. Then we retraced our steps across the bridge and walked to the Uffizi Galleries. We had read somewhere that if you have a youth hostel card, you are admitted free to Italian museums and galleries. So we tried it and were immediately given a ticket (we saved 30 cents each!). Here we saw numerous paintings and sculptures from the Renaissance era by Michelangelo, Raffaello and Botticelli. Spent about an hour there and then headed for the Accademia for a view of the famous David by Michelangelo. Unfortunately we arrived just a few minutes too late and we missed out on seeing the original.

It took us about 45mins to walk back to the van (to get a drink of water). 100 metres away was a huge supermarket, so we fought our way past the big fat Italian mamas and purchased a week’s groceries for \$8. Great value! It was dark by the time we walked – (staggered) back to the van and decided that the easiest way out of Florence and towards Rome would be on the autostrada. We figured that we would only have to travel a short distance to the first turnoff. It would cost us a few lire but would save a lot of bother. Once on the autostrada we drove through about four long tunnels and found a rest spot where we had tea and then read. Because of the mountainous area we figured the money we would have saved by not using the autostrada would have been used up in petrol anyway.

Friday 8th October 1976

Quite a noisy night with truckies constantly pulling in and out. Curiously, although the rest area was about two acres in size, they always managed to stop next to the van and rev up their motors. The autostradas are excellent roads, apparently the envy of other countries. No need to go around hills. A tunnel does the job no matter how big or small the hill is. We had a pleasant surprise when we left the autostrada and prepared to pay the toll. Because we are foreign ie “New Italians”, we are charged at the rate for motorcycles, which is the lowest rate. We paid 200 lire (22 cents) for 32km.

We continued on a minor road for some 140km passing through amazing towns, built squarely on top of a fortified hill. Stonewalls were constructed on the hill, and then the town was built on top of them, goodness knows how many years ago. We skirted Arrezzo. Don’t know about Laima, bit I’ve got no desire to visit any more towns that I have to. Not in Italy any way. I think my prejudice lies more towards the drivers, than the actual people. About 1.00 o’clock the map showed more winding roads ahead, so we headed back on the autostrada again. Straight as a die for miles. After we had lunch in a parking place, Laima took the wheel for the first time on the trip. Insurance wise she’s not allowed to drive, but on the autostrada we figured it would be OK. Her favourite number is 43, so for 43 miles a female drove the van for the first time.

Left the autostrada for the second time at a place called Magliano Sabina (or was it Sabrina? – Couldn't have been because I couldn't see any good points about it!) and drove on a narrow road into Rome. Descending from the hills we could see Rome or would have if it hadn't been smoggy. We had a deep blue sky but couldn't see anything. Began encountering Roman drivers immediately and so without delay we looked for a caravan park in which to leave the van until the minute we leave Rome. Did a bit of shopping and found the Contiki Bus (an Aussie camping tour) at the same supermarket. So we followed them to the 7 Hills camping ground, getting stuck for 15mins in a traffic jam. Thankfully showered and had a roast chicken for tea.

Saturday 9th October 1976

Kind of slept in this morning, and sort of missed out on doing any sort of sightseeing. We were more interested in washing two weeks of dirty clothes. About 12.30pm we decided we would go looking for a laundromat. We drove out onto the Via Cassia, a road with quite a few shopping centres, and began looking. We had been told of one on that road but couldn't find it. So using Europe on \$10/day, we went in search of one in the middle of Rome, against our better judgement. Found it about 1.30pm, but it had shut at 1.00pm, and anyway the signs said that you have to leave the washing for the owners to do it. Consequently we walked to the railway station and got a big map of the city and then headed back to the caravan park amidst Saturday traffic. Terrible. At the camp we washed some of the clothes, hung them out in the brilliant sunshine and generally lazed about after that for the rest of the afternoon and night.

Sunday 10th October 1976

Awoke very early this morning to the sound of a newly acquired Italian air horn, which an Australian on one of the tours had bought. He had rigged it up to the bus and was trying it out. "La Cucaracha" was very musical indeed. Got to talking with another couple next to us who had the misfortune to be broken into, while parked in Rome the day they had arrived. They had bankbooks, driver's licences, home address and worst of all four rolls of film, exposed but not yet developed. They were anxiously waiting for Monday so they could contact their bank in London and cable their parents. The Ities who pinched the things could easily send a cable to the Australian address they had and simply say "send money urgent" to an address in Rome. And what good loving parents wouldn't do that!

We decided between the four of us to drive our van into Rome and share costs for parking in garages where attendants look after the cars. We set off bright and early and drove over the River Tiber into the city proper. We headed first for the Vatican City. Parked with an attendant who by the way was openly peeing against the Vatican City wall when we arrived. Walked up to St Peter's Square, a massive elliptical shaped "square". Surrounding it on two of the sides were massive pillars supporting a granite roof. Straight ahead of us was the very impressive building of St Peter's Basilica or Cathedral. Immense doors opened into it through which we walked to enter what is said to be easily the most magnificent and ornate church in the world.

Being Sunday, several services were being held in many of the altars and the place was packed. On our right was a statue by Michelangelo called "Pieta". This was the one that the Hungarian/Australian madman chopped up with an axe some years ago. It now stands behind bulletproof glass. Further down we saw the statue of St Peter himself with his very well worn right foot, which Catholic pilgrims continually kiss. A vast dome, once again created by Michelangelo, appeared. Beneath it was a very strange bronze tomb resembling, I thought, an extremely large four-poster bed. Beneath it lay the body of St Peter. At 11.55am everyone, including us, joined the thronging masses gathering in the square, to see the Pope make an appearance at twelve. He speaks to thousands from very high up in a building from a tiny window. We realised at the end that we had been blessed in Italian.

Leaving the Vatican (we shall return on Tuesday to see the museum and Sistine Chapel), we drove on towards the Pantheon. Built by Agrippa in the year 27BC, it is still in perfect nick. Not a thing out of place or fallen down. So well built was it, that it is now a church. Its only means of light is through a large hole in the top of the dome. Wonder what happens when it rains?

Our next stop was the Trevi Fountain into which Laima threw 20 lire over her shoulder. Maybe we will come back now. A rather ornate fountain but more famous than beautiful. Leaving Trevi, we drove down the Via dei Fori Imperiali towards the Colosseum. I had waited years for my first glimpse of this apparent barbaric stadium and was suitably impressed. Parked once again with an attendant and strolled over and entered through an arch under which countless millions of others would have done. Broken down rocks, corporate boxes for Nero and his tribes, seats for the workers, were all in various states of decay. But it was easy to see what it must have been like. Wandered around for about half an hour in there before coming out and checking out what to see in the Roman Forum. It was closed however, so Tuesday will see us looking in there. Drove back to 7 Hills about 5pm, had tea and settled down to card games with couples from the vans on either side of us. However, all we did was talk about each other's adventures so far and persuaded them to visit America.

Monday 11th October 1976

We were informed on Friday when we registered in the 7 Hills caravan park that we would have to vacate the premises on Monday morning because some kind of inspectors were visiting the place. They had told us of another caravan park and we were headed there after a few detours. The Olympic stadium was on the way, so we stopped to look at it. Firstly the warm up track, which was being used and was surrounded by numerous huge statues depicting the games. We then had a look at the stadium itself and were a little disappointed after seeing the one in Munich (actually, the MCG looks better).

Before finding the camping ground we decided to drive up the Appian Way and have a look at the Catacombs and St Sebastian. We had lunch outside for about two hours because it was shut for their daily siesta. Once in, we were told to hurry because the English tour had already started. We couldn't have missed too much of the tour because the guide was still speaking about the Christians' graves. The guide was really interesting and spoke very slowly and knowledgeably. There wasn't just one dirt tunnel, they were sprouting off everywhere and there must have been thousands of graves. All graves, except one had been removed, so there were holes on either side of us (in the walls). Tiny chapels were dug out where the Christians went to pray. Then he showed us the graves where St Peter and St Paul were originally buried. Since then the bones of St Peter have been transferred to the Basilica. It was really hot outside, but down here we felt very cool and somehow safe.

The tour finished in the church of St Sebastian, which was built on top of the Catacombs years after they were discovered (Peter and Paul's graves were discovered in 1919). In the church we saw the grave place of St Sebastian, who was a Roman soldier originally, and also the legendary imprints of Jesus Christ. A really enjoyable tour for 300 lire each. From there we drove to the campsite and as we were registering, a West German car pooled up behind us and out jumped two Latvian kids who I knew from Sydney.

We introduced ourselves and arranged to have a talk in our van after tea. Their names were Andy Upenieks and Sany (Abolins) and would you believe they got married on the same day as us! We had a really good talk about our different experiences. We went to sleep around 11pm and at 3am we were woken by a terrible thunderstorm. The rain and hail came thundering down and the lightening was so bright we could see very clearly outside. The rain was so heavy that numerous people camping in tents had to evacuate them and sit in the toilet blocks till it subsided. Everyone in the whole camp must have been awake for those terrifying 45mins.

Tuesday 12th October 1976

If by some chance someone had slept through the storm, they wouldn't have been any wiser of it this morning because besides a few puddles here and there, the sun was shining and the sky was a brilliant blue. We set off with the people next to us (whom we had met in the previous camp) to visit the Sistine Chapel. What we saw would have me writing three pages non-stop, so I'll describe what impressed me the most. The Egyptian Mummies and the relics of their statues were stunning, as were the Roman statues, most of which were partly destroyed by the Barbarians. There were numerous rooms full of these. Then we saw the Raphael rooms. We spent quite a long time in these trying to appreciate the talents of this great painter. The one painting would cover a whole wall. Last but not least, we saw the Sistine Chapel that Michelangelo painted. It was breathtaking. The whole ceiling and all four walls were covered with this magnificent artist's work.

We left there and walked adjacent to the Vatican wall towards St Peter's Basilica for another look at this beautiful church. However on the way there, all four of us got completely soaked by a sudden downpour of rain. There was nowhere we could get protection from the rain so we just walked along and as if by magic, as soon as we reached the Cathedral, the rain stopped and the sun showed itself again. Once again we marvelled at Michelangelo's work. Pete and I decided to go on to the ruins and the other two stayed on to climb the dome.

We walked from the Vatican down a long street and reached the Piazza Venezia, on which stands an immense monument dedicated to Victor Emmanuel II, whoever he was. It is from Victor's monument that the Roman Forum begins. We continued walking on the left of the Via Foro looking at recently discovered ruins, some of which were found only at the beginning of this century. We reached the Colosseum but we did not go in again and turned to enter the Roman Forum. Shut!! Rest day. So we had to be content with what we could see from outside the fence, which was everything really. Once again we reached the end of the forum and found ourselves on the Piazza again, so decided to catch a bus back to the camping ground. Riding a bus in Rome is an experience. I reckon Walt Disney would pay a fortune to recreate a Rome bus ride as an amusement in Disneyland.

Grabbed some shopping when we changed buses and that night entertained both Andy and Sany and the couple we had gone to the Vatican with today. (Amidst another deafening electrical storm).

Wednesday 13th October 1976

Left Rome at 11.00am heading for Civitavecchia on a road that would eventually land us in Pisa. A good highway, but very boring scenery. Laima actually fell asleep in the back of the van. Before leaving Rome we filled up with petrol. On Saturday last, Italy had panicked and put up the price of everything. Petrol went up from 400 lire/litre to 500 (a 25% rise). Bearing in mind that there are 4.55 litres in a gallon and for a dollar we got 830 lire, you will work out that when I got 20,000 lire of fuel I paid \$24.40 for only 8.8 gallons!! (We had run out of petrol coupons in Florence).

Drove on and along this road to a place called Follonica where we began to look for a camp spot. Because we were adjacent to the Tuscany coast we thought we would try to find a spot near the beach. To reach the beach though, we had to cross a train line. The gates were down as we approached on a very narrow road. And they stayed down for 30mins for the sake of two trains. Traffic was banked behind us for a very, very long way. Eventually we all decided the gates were stuck and turned around. No easy matter for a van our size. Found a possie on the road in a parking space huddled in amongst truckies.

Thursday 14th October 1976

Although we didn't know it last night, we had parked quite close to the sea and could see an island in the distance. The road we were on hugged the coastline till we were well past Livorno and then we headed inland a few miles till we reached Pisa. We had no map of Pisa and wondered how we would find the leaning tower. No problem however as every few miles there was a bright yellow sign with a very exaggerated leaning tower on it. Boy, it sure did lean! We paid 500 lire each and began the climb to the top making occasional stops to step outside onto the balconies (with no rails) to catch our breath, but not for too long as one false move and down you would go. Reached the top (which did have rails) and looked at the surrounding countryside and mountainous area towards La Spezia. On safe ground, we took the usual tourist picture of Pete trying to hold up the tower. It is 14 feet off centre.

Left Pisa and drove to La Spezia which is a very pretty fishing town and a few miles later we joined the autostrada because we were approaching very steep and windy roads. We drove through numerous tunnels, the longest being over 1900 metres. The Italians sure know how to build tunnels. Just before Sestri Levante (where we planned to leave the autostrada), we stopped driving and decided to stay the night. It was a big parking bay so we weren't bothered by semis.

Friday 15th October 1976

Left the autostrada immediately that morning to rejoin the coast road again which appeared to be a little less winding. We were beginning to enter the Italian Riviera and numerous scenic fishing ports, villages and tourist spots emerged. Quite wrong about the twisting, turning road. It was just as bad as the Great Ocean road, except this was a little more exciting with the incredibly blue Mediterranean keeping us company. One particular bend enthralled us because as we came around it we saw the immense city of Genoa, which is built as close to the water as any city we've seen.

Not wishing to drive in or around Genoa, we took the autostrada straight through. Joined it at Recco and from there to Genoa we passed through no less than 15 tunnels, some 1½ miles long, others shorter. In between tunnels are huge bridges spanning the gullies. When the autostrada reached Genoa, it simply went straight over the top of the city. (Imagine a freeway coming from Mt Lofty passing over the entire city of Adelaide). Genoa is built on the coast but stretches back into the hills and it was here that the autostrada went. As we drove over the bridges we looked down on houses, office blocks, and shops.

From Genoa we stopped for lunch overlooking a village and then onto Savona, by this time back on the coast road. Drove and drove around the hairpin bends, up and down for miles watching yachts and cruisers sail away on the horizon. Called it a day near Imperia, this time in a hotel car park. Use of their hose was most appreciated to wash a bit of the van.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Spain looks like a good place for a holiday

Saturday 16th October 1976

Awoke early knowing this would be our last day in Italy. Hit the road bright and early, looking forward to seeing Monaco. In the mornings I can't wait to start driving again but by about 2.00pm the novelty has worn off again and it all starts getting tiring. Wasted no time in leaving Italy, stopping only to cash in empty wine bottles! Entered France at Menton adjacent to Monte Carlo. Changed our left over lire to francs, at last getting money that didn't resemble Monopoly money (and had as much value especially when buying petrol).

Arrival in Princess Grace's place comes quite suddenly. And it really is very nice. Clean streets, sane drivers and a manner about it that oozed atmosphere. We parked the van near the marina alongside cruisers worth millions of dollars. Also spied a few that had crept in that wouldn't have been worth a million lire. My scuffs (last year's Xmas present) had almost given way, so after stubbing my big toe on a rock, we decided to seek out a new pair. Also a good way to see the city. Not a lot of shops selling sandals, but those that were, only Prince Rainer himself could have afforded. Whilst walking, we covered many of the streets that are used in the Grand Prix around the city. Black strips of rubber 15" wide still lie on the bitumen.

We went high up into the city (which is also built back into the hills) and looked down onto the harbour. Came across the casino but avoided the experiences having burned our fingers enough in Las Vegas. Back at the van we piled in and continued west along the coast to Nice, holding up a mile of traffic as we aimlessly wandered along looking at the scenery. At Nice we stopped for lunch on the promenade, which is not really very "nice" at all. A stony beach, no sand and very windswept. Not impressed, we didn't bother to look any more but drove to Cannes 31km away. Much better here. A broad walkway bordered the beach which this time was sand, although very gritty. We were intrigued by a tractor continually collecting seaweed from the beach, weaving in and out of sunbathers (all with tops on!). Spent an hour or so here before once again moving on.

Didn't get far before finding a magnificent parking bay right on top of a cliff overlooking the entire harbour that is Cannes. Spent the night here watching yachts (and one ocean liner) sail into the sunset (sounds mushy, but that exactly how it was).

Sunday 17th October 1976

A glorious day, as have all the days been on the Mediterranean, to see St. Tropez. Once again the road hugged the coast to St. Raphael. From there it was a straight run to St. Tropez. To explain, St. Tropez is a notoriously famous topless beach. Arrived at about 11.30am and immediately got lost in a maze of small streets, all very narrow. Magnificent boats were anchored in the marina and I think we saw them all as we desperately tried to find the beach. Finally we found signs to Les Plages (beaches) and were non-plussed as to which one to go to. Very narrow country roads ran down to them, not wide enough for two cars.

The first beach we stopped at was run down, seaweedy and very small. However, a short walk around the corner "revealed" another section and its occupants. Daring young ladies they were! Back into the van and off to another beach where we decided to stay for the day. This

time it was a very long beach, once again with gritty sand and assorted collections of sun seekers. The sun, although not hot, was terrific to lie in and a swim in the cold Mediterranean was just what I needed after a strenuous afternoon of observation. Stayed the night in the car park at the beach.

Monday 18th October 1976

Woke to a very cloudy morning and we stayed in bed for an hour or so hoping it would clear up a little so we could spend the day on the beach again. We drove into the village of St Tropez and mainly window shopped because the majority of clothes shops etc. were closed, Monday being their rest day. (They were all open on Sundays.) The clothes in the windows were very nice, but very expensive. The streets were narrow and we ambled along watching the suntanned locals and trying to catch a few words of their language. We could see the day wasn't going to clear up, so we left St Tropez (Pete was reluctant) and headed towards Toulon and Marseille.

We drove slowly (as always) because it started to rain very heavily and also because we were on the lookout for a supermarket. We found a huge one just before Toulon after which we drove around aimlessly trying to find a post office in pouring rain. Didn't find one, so we left and started looking for a place to stay. Just by chance we came across a tiny laundromat and did our two-week-old washing. It's amazing how fresh and clean our clothes felt – almost new. We found a spot not far from Toulon and Pete got out to inspect the area. I was about to start tea when Pete jumped back into the van and informed me that we were going to take a quick look at Paul Rickard's racing circuit. He had seen a sign for it a few miles back and when he hopped out of the van, he heard some racing cars. So we were off again. A few miles later we found it and watched some cars drive around. It had stopped raining and was getting quite dark so while Pete watched the cars, I admired the beautiful Mediterranean sunset. It was really breathtaking.

On the way back to our original nightspot, we spied a better one, so the extra drive was well worth it. Desperately hoping for a nice sunny day tomorrow.

Tuesday 19th October 1976

Would you believe, we woke up to find a very sunny day! We drove into Marseille and got completely and utterly lost. In fact I didn't even know we were in Marseille! Stayed there long enough to post the diary and try and find a new road that led to Montpellier, but not the autoroute. After driving about 50km, and in the meantime getting abused by a bunch of kindergarten kids who knew we were lost, we found a turnoff to Marignane. Took it and a few kilometres later passed a road leading to Marseille that showed it was only 23km away. Just our luck. Whenever we didn't want a supermarket, or laundromat we see tons of them. And this is what happened today. Every village and town we seemed to pass through had both. We drove the mountainous stretch from Port-de Bouc to Arles (having lunch on the way). Just before Lunel we found a 3-star camping ground. The first thing we enquired about were the showers. The lady assured us they were hot and free. This was like music to our ears cause neither of us had showered since Rome. We must have had 15-minute showers each and returned to the van fresh and clean once more. Settled down and then read etc.

Wednesday 20th October 1976

As though by some decision from up above, it appears that having had showers last night, we disturbed the powers that be. Because this morning the rain came down in buckets. At times the thunder was louder than several nights ago in Rome. We stayed in bed and peeked out meekly from behind the curtains wondering whether to get up or not. All around there were lights shining brightly and it wasn't till 11 o'clock till that we mustered enough energy (or was it

courage) to face the elements. It pelted down. More than once (ie twice) we saw cars up ended in ditches on the side of the road having been blinded by water.

We drove through Montpellier searching for signs to Beziers. At Beziers we looked for Narbonne directions, through absolute sleet. Surprisingly after Narbonne the old man ran out of water and we were blessed with clear weather. We suggested that this was because we were nearing Spain!! Since we were travelling by car and not flying we didn't get wet! On our way to Perpignan we were diverted to another road that led us past some brand new housing developments right onto the beachfront. All the houses and shops etc were of the most futuristic designs imaginable. We also passed a nudist beach and caravan park. If only I'd known this last night. After Perpignan, which is at the foot of the Pyrenees Mountains, we located a beach and small park where we stopped for the night.

Thursday 21st October 1976

It looked like quite a pleasant morning when we woke but when Pete came back after a stroll down to the beach, he reported that it was very windy outside and quite chilly. We drove from Collioure to Cerbère, up and down steep hills and finally reached the Spanish border. Pete stopped the van and I was ready to pass the passports to the guard, but no one seemed to see us. There were about four guards sitting in the office, each with a bottle of beer. Finally one of them looked our way and with a look of contempt, waved us through. That was our introduction to Spain. Those guards must have had a hard day – we only saw about three cars driving towards the border.

From there we drove to Figueras and then to La Escala. Not much scenery worth looking at until we reached Palamos where the rest of the road was shown to hug the Costa Brava coastline. The drive from Palamos to Tossa de Mer would have to rate as the most tiring and strenuous stretch Pete has had to endure. The road was very narrow and there were countless hairpins. After leaving Tossa the next beach town was Lloret and the place looked so inviting, we parked the van and decided to stay a while. There was a huge carpark right on the beach front with a few vans already there, so we knew it would be safe to leave it.

We only walked a short distance when we found “The West Coast Bar” (I thought we were on the east coast) which was serving ½ price drinks from 3.00pm – 7.00pm. It was a small noisy bar with the latest music blaring at full volume and full of Poms. By the time we had finished our first beer (13 pesetas each) and were sipping our tequila sunrises’, we had started up a conversation with a lone Aussie. He had just driven through the Pyrenees Mountains and was on his way to find some warm weather and sun.

We stayed in the bar until 9.30pm and arranged to catch up with Roland (the lone Aussie) tomorrow. Back to the van for tea then straight to sleep.

Friday 22nd October 1976

Decided to look around the local shopping area this morning and compare prices with the rest of Europe. We were pleasantly surprised at the cheap food, grog, and tourist items available. Leather goods predominated at all the stalls and shops and we spent about two hours acquainting ourselves with Lloret de Mar, which we had fallen in love with. The next three hours were spent on the beach (just in front of the van) soaking up what little sun there was and avoiding reading books. When we left the beach we were pleasantly surprised to find a pinkish tinge on our bodies. Fancy getting burnt in October! The wind was quite strong now so we stayed in the van for a few hours and finished off our books. Roland came by and we made some plans to meet in one of the other pubs later on. Had something to eat and then we walked the short distance to the “White Horse Inn”.

What a fabulous looking pub? It had a huge roaring fire in one corner (where we sat), a really quaint bar area and atmosphere oozing out of every corner. It was just the kind of place where you could relax and feel at home – which is exactly what we did. We spent a few hours discussing books we had both read when Roland and Pauline arrived (she was on a package tour from England). At 1.00am we were kindly asked to vacate the premises and were handed four free tickets to the “Moby Dick disco” which was still open. We ambled over there and it seemed to be the place where everyone congregated after the pubs shut. They had a well-stocked snack bar where Pete bought two Cornish pasties for tomorrow’s lunch. We stayed till 3.00am and then helped each other walk back to the van. We were glad we didn’t have to drive anywhere that night (morning?). Without any further ado we fell fast asleep.

Saturday 23rd October 1976

A good sleep in this morning helped to regain consciousness. Around 12.30pm I began to read a new book we had been given in Rome. Called “The Fifth Estate” by Robin Moore, it has 378 pages and very close type. Nevertheless, the book was enthralling, dealing with the Mafia corruption in New York. I finally put it down finished at 3.00am next morning having read all the afternoon and night. Laima was the same reading a book until very late. So that was the story of today. Inside the van all the time. Too windy for the beach.

Sunday 24th October 1976

This morning dawned bright and sunny as all the mornings have been on the “Costa Brava”, as this part of the Spanish coast is called. However, an ever-present wind makes it unpleasant for the beach. This morning I struck up a conversation with the occupants of the van alongside us. They were an English couple due to retire in 10 months, named Bill and Marjorie. We made arrangements to meet them tonight in a bodega (wine bar), the owners of it being friends of theirs. Went for a stroll along the beachfront for a while meeting Roland again on the way. It is a really pretty place, and at this time of year there aren’t too many tourists. (They’re pests)

After tea we strolled up to the La Barretina bodega, meeting our new friends sometime later. I wish we had discovered this place a little earlier. All around behind the bar were barrels of wine and liqueurs. The dearest drink was crème de menthe at 12 pesetas (about 15 cents!). The cheapest and nicest that we had was a red wine called Tinto at 6 pesetas / glass. Although the glass wasn’t small, we thought we would buy a litre of it to save getting up all the time. A litre cost 32 pesetas. Having ordered and paid for it, the wine didn’t arrive. We asked Domingos, the owner, where it had got to. Grim faced he brought it over in a corked bottle wrapped in newspaper. The laugh was on us because Bill and Marjorie explained later that a litre is only bought to take home and Domingos had thought we were going home after one drink only.

After a really fun night we exchanged addresses with them and another couple they knew. They live in Devon in a country cottage and insisted we visited them when back in England. We then got the bill for the night’s drinking. Total cost 72 pesetas for two for the whole night (\$1.05). That night the heavens opened up again and Lloret de Mar was flooded.

Monday 25th October 1976

We had planned to leave today, but the weather was so miserable the only thing to do was to stay indoors. We did this and each of us polished off another book. Roland came over to say goodbye. He was heading for Andorra and the south of Spain. For the first time, I took advantage of siesta time and Pete went for a short walk. About 7.00pm we went “out” for tea and had ½ chicken / chips each – really nice. Then we went to the bodega and met Marje and Bill once more. We had wine and liquors all night and the bill was only \$1.70 for each couple.

While at the bodega we saw a news item about Venice and how it was sinking. Hope our weight wasn't the cause! Also saw a guy being carried off an arena after being gored by a bull. Walking back to our sea front positions, we noticed four more vans parked there. Would you believe with their washing hanging out – wonder if it was still there in the morning? We noticed they had signs in the windows stating (in four languages) that the van was fitted with a burglar alarm. A good idea – it would frighten potential thieves off, even if you didn't have one.

Tuesday 26th October 1976

Our departure from Lloret de Mar was delayed by yet another day (we didn't mind), when we were told that Tuesday is market day. Traders from Barcelona visit all the Costa Brava tourist towns periodically. So we walked the short distance to the stalls that ran along the streets of the village. All sorts of things were on sale from shoes, rugs, model donkeys, to very typically Spanish wares. We spent a few pesetas with a few traders, mainly buying souvenirs. Met Marjorie and Bill back at Domingo's bodega and spent 14 cents on two glasses of wine. After that it was siesta time for Laima while I explored the part of the beach I hadn't yet walked along. This time heading for a castle that hovered over the beach. Not open though. After tea, which was steak and chips in a restaurant (\$1.60), we once again adjourned to the bodega for a game of cards. On TV last night, there was an hour long documentary on bull fighting in which many times we watched matadors being gored from all different angles. The Spaniards delight in action replays of the gory incidents.

Wednesday 27th October 1976

Reluctantly today was departure day from our holiday within a holiday. We really enjoyed Lloret, especially Domingos and his bodega. How he makes a profit on the prices he charges for his liqueurs and wines we'll never know. He opens at 10.00am and closes at 1.30am every day of the week and is there all the time. (Perhaps Mr Sharma owns it?)

After filling up with water, petrol and food, we continued southwards down the Costa Brava turning off the coast towards Montserrat. We had been advised to see this town, which is built, on top of an extremely unusual mountain. As we approached the mountain we could see really weird rock formations jutting out abruptly to the sky, taking no shape or reason. As usual we managed to pick the most arduous and winding route and it took some time to get to the mountain, which we could see all the time. Climbing the road to the top we noticed incredible layers of rock one upon the other, which had been caused by erosion. If I had done geography at school I guess I would have been fascinated by it. Once at the top, it wasn't the grand spectacle we were led to believe. The view was good, but we had no particular desire to explore the monasteries and churches, which is all it was. We've seen so many basilicas, churches, gift shops etc that we avoid them now. Halfway back down from Montserrat we stopped for the night at the foot of the mountain, because Laima felt like a "heel" for not visiting the church!!! (Pun intended.)

Thursday 28th October 1976

Once again not waking too early, we left the mountain and travelled the 60km into Barcelona. A good road all the way there, not at all like the primitive roads we had endured yesterday. Our first stop was the information bureau, but we were foiled by siesta time again; no information till 4 o'clock. So we contented ourselves with driving around this huge city marvelling at how it is laid out. All the streets lie at right angles to one another and the city map could be used as a chessboard if necessary. We only saw one or two streets that had two-way traffic with the majority of roads being one way. Besides being one way, they are really wide and allow the vast amount of traffic to move easily.

After eating a late lunch in a deserted railway station we ventured back at 4.00pm to see what we could find. All out of pamphlets in English so it was actually to no avail. However, we did regretfully find out that there were no bullfights on anywhere in Spain, because the tourist season had ended (I always thought bullfights were for Spaniards). Being such a big place we thought we'd better find a caravan park (shower time anyway!) Found one 5km away where we rested our bones.

Friday 29th October 1976

Considering we were running ahead of our itinerary we thought we had better revise it somewhat. Originally we had tentatively scheduled Madrid, but it was over 500km away and we weren't too excited about going there. Had a bullfight been on, we would have gone. We also decided the south of Spain was too far away, so our only alternative was to begin heading for England. With this in mind we set off to see as much of Barcelona as we could in a day. Using our "chess map" we hopped from black square to white, seeing many things for which we didn't have names. We found the Los Arenas or Plaza del Toros. We call it a bullring. Unfortunately it was locked tight, so we had to see it only from the outside.

We also came across the "Pueblo Espanola" or Spanish Village. Erected in 1929 for a Trades Fair, it houses replicas of Spanish buildings from all areas of Spain. In these haciendas work Spanish tradesman, who then sell their handiwork to "wealthy" tourists who watch them at work. We saw glass blowers, wood carvers, artists, leather workers, lace makers and heaps of others. After this mighty quick tour of "Spain", we drove down to the docks and harbour of Barcelona which is situated on the eastern shore of Spain and right on the Mediterranean. It's here that Christopher Columbus surveys the workings from high above on his statue. Adjacent to this huge monument is his original ship "The Santa Maria" on which he discovered the Yanks.

Driving further we found the first pylon for a cable car, which stretched right across the harbour, high above the many ships, scattered throughout the docks. Having cut our teeth in Switzerland on a cable car we had to have another go and were pleasantly surprised to learn that this one only cost \$1, compared to almost \$17 in Switzerland. We also got a leaflet describing the ride, which was printed in six different languages. We had to laugh at the English translation, which went like this –

"The AERIAL ROPEWAY over de harbour, with a length of 1460 yards and elevated 370 fetes, offer you the oppotunity to get to know Barcelona in all his greatness and extension. In his ample watch-tower-rooms, whose visit for passengers is gratuitous, whilst the cableway run, has also at your service a Snack Bar (middletower) and excellents restaurants in each terminal station".

We rode the cable car there and back passing over as we did three very large luxury liners. Wonder what the Kota Singapore will be like? We were the only people, apart from the attendant, in the car going over and had one passenger on the way back. Back at the van we continued on around to where we had gone in the cable car having decided it deserved further exploration by car. Drove around Castillo de Montjuïc, an old castle with an amusement park. We also got a great view of the city from up there.

Time to go now though and to where were we heading? Back to Lloret of course. Shot straight up the autopista (the Spanish name for a freeway by the way) and were there by 6.30pm. Enjoyed a beaut meal of good old English fish and chips and then went up to renew old acquaintances (of two days) with Domingos and the bodega. While there I at last beat Laima in a game of cards. (Thrashed her in fact).

Saturday 30th October 1976

Most of today was spent in bed – me nursing a persistent head cold and Pete had the beginnings of a chest cold. The day was quite warm, but not warm enough to entice us outdoors. We could hear people outside talking about the van and trying to get a look inside but unfortunately for them, all the windows were closed to give us some privacy. Often when we are sitting in the van, we close all the curtains, but I leave one slightly open for a bit of light. Every few minutes someone's nose is pressed hard against the window peering in. The quickest method to send them on their way is to walk over and stare back at them. However, this doesn't always work, so consequently most of the time all the curtains are closed. Spent a not too restful, but lazy day & night in the van, only getting up for meals.

Sunday 31st October 1976

Decided to leave Lloret today, so we made one last visit to the bodega saying goodbye to all our friends there and set off for Andorra. We left about midday and passed through Vidreres, Anglès, Amer, and Olot trying to buy as little petrol as possible because the petrol in Andorra is relatively cheap (in comparison to the rest of Europe). The countryside after Ripoll (where two hitchhikers tried hard to get into our van when we stopped to ask them directions) was very mountainous and showed the beautiful colours of autumn. After Puigcerda we made a left turn to Seo de Urgel but stopped 20km before reaching it to rest for the night.

Monday 1st November 1976

We had just left our camp spot when Pete jumped out of the van and ran around to check the back. He's always running around checking things so I didn't take much notice. When he returned with an angry look on his face I knew something was wrong. We had a flat tyre – that doesn't sound so bad, but it happened to be one of the inside back ones (there are two tyres on each rear side of the truck to carry the weight). We wondered whether to take it to a service station or try and fix it ourselves. Decided not to risk the drive and began reading the manual on how to change one of these tyres. Fortunately it was a beautiful day so at least someone was on our side. It took Pete about 15mins to get the spare out of its cradle and another 10mins to figure out how the jack worked. While Pete was flat on his back, I read out the instructions and told him what he was doing wrong. (I don't think he appreciated that very much).

Changing the tyre wasn't as hard or as complicated as Pete thought it would be and an hour later we were on our way to the Andorra Frontier. We are quite used to not having our passports checked thoroughly and this frontier was no exception. Today is a public holiday in Spain and France and half of Spain's population must have been in duty free Andorra because the line to get back into Spain was about 4km long. We drove to Saint Julian and joined the line for petrol. In Spain it was 28 pesetas / litre, here it was 17 pesetas / litre (about \$1.10 / gallon).

Then we drove on to Andorra (the capital) and found a park in a restaurant car park where we had a late lunch in the van before walking around all the shops. Bacardi was the same price as in Lloret, but scotch was only 150 peseta (\$2.00) a bottle. One place in Lloret was serving scotch at 150 pesetas a nip!! We spent a few hours just walking around checking out prices and picking up a few bargains. After driving a few kilometres out of Andorra we came across a closed camping ground with no gate across the entrance and decided to spend the night here – what better place? Besides, a few other people subsequently had the same idea – but we had the pick of the good spots because we were there first.

Tuesday 2nd November 1976

This morning was very drab, misty and wet. Andorra didn't see us until 12.30pm when we ventured in to buy a few groceries before entering expensive France. I was very tempted to buy a one gallon bottle of Johnnie Walker scotch including cradle for \$11, but HMAS customs wouldn't have let me, I don't think. We looked around at other bargains – mostly electrical and photographic. If we buy anything we will get it in Singapore – probably a slide projector. While looking in a toyshop I came across a dinky-di walkie-talkie set that intrigued me. I had always wanted one since 1961 when Dad brought home an intercom for the Rumpus Room. However, Mrs Physick junior put her foot down on that little extravagance.

We left Andorra at 3 o'clock after filling up with beautiful cheap petrol at \$1.20 / gallon. However, we used most of it getting out of the country. The exit to France was via a 7,000' pass in the Pyrenees. It was a very, very slow crawl to the top. At 4,000' the snow began and at 5,000' the clouds enveloped us. From there on we inched our way through the snow and fog. We knew when we were at the top because we saw a very strange sight indeed. Right at the summit are a brace of petrol stations to aid a stranded traveller who may have run out on the way up. As we peered through the fog I saw two BP petrol pumps standing in a station. Between them and obviously right on top of the fuel tanks, roared a huge blazing bonfire, around which freezing cold men stood around warming themselves! We certainly got out of there in a hurry.

Customs at the French border presented no problem. Like the Spanish but with more reason because of the cold, they didn't bother checking anything either. Coasted down the mountain from there on, to a spot below the snowline that looked like a good place to stop. When we woke up next morning there were two other vans there as well.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

A final fling in France

Wednesday 3rd November 1976

Spent all day today on the road. Drove from Ax-Le-Thermes to Lourdes through the lower foothills of the Pyrenees. Autumn was in full bloom now and the colours of the forests on the slopes were breathtaking. I hope Mr Kodak allows faithful reproductions to prove the colours. Off and on, rain was with us all day, as it was last night. The increase of snow on the mountains, and gradual lowering of the snowline showed us winter was indeed creeping on. Nothing out of the ordinary happened except for the autumn colours and freak rainstorms around Tarbes. When we reached Lourdes we stopped for the night in a beautiful national park. It looked as though it had been raining leaves and not water. Pity help the curator if he has to rake 'em all up.

Thursday 4th November 1976

After awakening in our beautiful surroundings, we headed straight for the centre of town to see the Grotto and surrounding church and crypt. We walked down a zigzagging path (made especially for wheelchairs) towards the grotto. There were numerous covered stands to accommodate the hundreds of candles that the pilgrims light. Then we saw the Grotto with a statue of the Virgin Mary where she appeared to Bernadette. In the centre was an altar and to the left, about 15 pairs of crutches hung up high, discarded by the cripples after miracles occurred. There were only a few people here, praying and touching the rock with their rosary beads. After a few minutes there we kept walking and came to the "miraculous water" fountains. I filled up a few containers to take back to Mum, Kika and my Godfather. We had a look at the Rosary Basilica and the crypt and then walked back to the van and headed for Pau and took the due north road for Lanyon.

Just as we left Lourdes we glanced back at the mountains that were covered in snow and resembled "rock" cakes sprinkled with icing sugar. Decided to bypass Bordeaux but still drove through the numerous vineyards, which produce the famous wine. After Libourne we found our next spot for the night. Tomorrow we hope to make Tours.

Friday 5th November 1976

The weather hasn't been too kind lately, raining most of the time. But today was planned as a transit day with no major sightseeing involved, so we didn't mind too much. We drove to Coutras and on to Angouleme before we reached Poitiers (Sydney wasn't around). The roads were all very good which made the truckies go even faster and continually spray us with water. Reading all the French advertising and various posters, we both remembered our three years of French at school. We both tried to outdo each other with typical French phrases and vocabulary. I don't know who won because half the time I didn't understand what Pete was trying to say and vice versa. About 30 kms from Tours we stopped for the night and planned our itinerary for the next day of castle visiting. I had the choice of what castles to inspect and Pete worked out the route. Played cards and I won every game except one. Needless to say Pete went to sleep feeling very sorry for himself.

Saturday 6th November 1976

Cards or no cards, we awoke agreeable with each other and continued driving to Tours. Using the AA book once again, we turned off the highway at Montbazon and drove towards Azay-le-Rideau, the first of the chateaux we wanted to see. Along this road were other chateaux that weren't anywhere near as impressive, but nevertheless they were something to see. The Loire Valley extends either side of Tours but our time limited us to only the west. Arriving at Azay, we found the castle shut from 12.00 to 2.00pm, so undaunted we set off for another one 15 kms away. This one was called Ussé and it too was closed, but not for two hours – all winter!! We decided to have lunch in front of this one, which apparently inspired Perrault – whoever he was – to write *Sleeping Beauty*. It was an awesome chateau I must admit, with battlements, turrets and terraces prominent. We acquainted ourselves there with two Melbourne guys who were also having lunch there. After we left we still weren't too sure of their relationship with each other.

It was 2 o'clock so we drove back to Azay and paid five francs to visit the grounds and a guided tour of the insides. From the outside, it seemed as if Walt Disney could have based his Fantasyland castle on Azay. The likeness was remarkable. Our guide was French but he handed out English literature on what he would say. Completely restored, (perhaps a little too much), each of the rooms has some former King of France for an occupant at some time during the 15th & 16th century. The elderly guide, who knew we couldn't understand French, kept taking us aside and haltingly explaining things for us in very broken English.

Several times he used Laima in an illustration on how something would have been done in the years it was inhabited. He must have said something funny because each time the others in the group laughed. He was a friendly old guy who said we must stroll in the grounds afterwards. This we did amongst magnificent autumn trees with leaves continually dropping all the time. The chateau is built directly in the middle of a tributary of the River Indre and moats join it to the "mainland".

After Azay, we drove to Villandry, which is another chateau renowned for its gardens. The chateau itself was shut (everything dies in Europe in winter), but the gardens were open. However being France, it was raining and not worth the effort to rug up against the weather, so we continued on to Tours and found the road to Le Mans. (Guess who wants to go there?) Found a lonely spot off the road and said goodnight.

Sunday 7th November 2001

A beautiful morning so we were looking forward to seeing the track at Le Mans. With a few kilometres to go before we reached Le Mans, we noticed crash barriers on both sides of the road and posters advertising petrol, tyres etc. We realised that we were driving on the actual track. Later we learned that it was the "Mulsanne straight". It was a completely straight stretch for about five kms and when it turned to the left, there was a barrier preventing us from entering. We turned around and drove the five kms back to where we first noticed the barriers and then followed them around the bend. Suddenly I saw what looked like a pure white half-moon – but it was moving. A parachutist!! We watched him for a while but lost sight of him over a hill.

Then we arrived at the main grandstand area and starting line for the race. We parked the van and walked up the mound to get a better view of the track. Then we saw an aerodrome behind us and a few more parachutists jumping from a plane. One of them was free falling for what seemed like an eternity and then suddenly his chute opened. We watched their antics in the sky for a while during which time we saw a glider land. Then we turned around and had a closer look at the track. Pete remembered from the film that during the race all the grounds are filled with amusements and rides etc. so we hopped in the van and drove around the inside of the track. A huge Dunlop tyre stretched from one side of the track to the other and Pete had to walk

across it however he couldn't see anything because the sides were built too high. This didn't stop him however, because he managed to climb up the scaffolding to get a bird's eye view of the track.

We then left and found a laundromat (much needed) and did our two, or was it three, week old washing. Found a quiet spot for the night not far from Versailles.

Monday 8th November 1976

(Mara's 21st birthday)

Not a very pleasant morning (again) as we headed towards Versailles. Drove straight to a place where the treaty was signed to end WW1 and looked at it through rain streaked windows. It was useless to spend more time there (because of the rain) so we drove to Paris and with the aid of a map found a camping ground without too much trouble. Decided to plan our itinerary for the next few days instead of going out in the wet today. Unfortunately the showers were being fixed (the boiler had broken down) so we acquainted ourselves with a couple of Australians next to us and invited them back to our van for tea.

Pete had a really hot shower and then it was my turn. I came back fuming because the water in the ladies was freezing cold. I was so mad in fact that I went to the office and complained, demanding my 1.50f back. After quite a lengthy argument and after refusing a free shower token (I didn't want another "cold" shower) I finally got my money back. The girl at the reception desk had quite a bit of fire in her, (but not enough to heat up the water in the showers) and I walked out of the office happy with my achievement. After tea we had quite a funny discussion about Disneyland with our two new friends. I think we have persuaded another couple to visit America. Got to bed quite late, but looking forward to seeing Paris.

Tuesday 9th November 1976

After awaking late and still brushing the sleep from our eyes, we readied ourselves for a day of sightseeing. Walked the short distance to Port de Suresnes where we caught the #144 bus to metro station Pont de Neuilly. From here, in the distance, we saw the L'arc de Triomphe and decided to walk to it instead of ride the subway. It looked a lot closer than it really was, but still we enjoyed the walk. I noticed some exquisitely dressed French women, all with their jacket length furs and expensive French perfumes. Made me quite jealous. At last we reached the L'arc de Triomphe and saw the tomb of the Unknown Soldier along with all the other winter tourists. Then a short walk along the Avenue des Champs-Élysées checking menus all the way. Although our budget starts on a Monday we didn't want to blow it in just one day so we left this expensive street and had lunch in a pizza parlour – walked out 27f poorer and still hungry.

For about two hours Pete had been as white as a sheet and when he couldn't finish his pizza and complained of chills, there was only one sensible thing to do and that was to go back to the van. Pete went straight to sleep and there was only tea to prepare for one. Yesterday one of the camp cats had adopted us. She was as black as the ace of spades, so we decided to call her "Midnight". Soon after tea she was on our doorstep miaowing so I fed her some of the cat food Pete had bought for her yesterday. Hearing Pete sleeping restlessly upstairs (above the cabin) she wanted to join him. Needless to say I slept downstairs and enjoyed the extra room. (Both of us usually sleep downstairs).

Wednesday 10th November 1976

Pete still wasn't well so we spent the day quietly in the van. "Midnight" had left us early in the morning for a few minutes (no doubt to tell her sister, who we named "12.01, that she was on a good thing with some Australian suckers) and then came back for a morning meal. Pete spent the whole day in bed while I wrote a couple of postcards and read. About 2.30pm I was freezing

cold, so I decided to go out for a walk to get the blood back into circulation. I walked to the local shopping centre – mainly looking for a post office – didn't find one and all the shops were closed anyway, but I felt a lot warmer. Arrived back to find "Midnight" and Pete in deep conversation, so I finished my book. Only one left before I finish the lot now. "Midnight" left again but came back just in time for tea, which the three of us enjoyed at the same time. No rain for a few hours so we're hoping for a clear day tomorrow for some strenuous sightseeing (Remembrance Day – and most of the shops and banks are closed).

Thursday 11th November 1976

Feeling on top of the world today after a small fight with the flu, I raced out for a walk in the camp to discover a brilliant blue sky to replace the rainy ones we've been having. It was already 8.30am but it had only just got light. By 10 o'clock, after feeding time for in order of preference, "Midnight", me and Laima, we had managed to be on our way. By a variety of different means, with at first a walk, then a bus, then a metro (the underground train which, by the way, runs on pneumatic rubber tyres) we arrived at the Arc de Triomphe where we hoped we met see something of a service for Remembrance Day. We got there at 11.15am and the whole Champs Élysées was closed to traffic. Marching down it were soldiers of all services, bands, police, you name it. They were all dressed immaculately in uniform and covered in guns and medals. Unfortunately we couldn't see much of it as every man and his French poodle was there and the whole avenue was lined with French flags.

As time was short, we walked towards the Eiffel Tower. Of course seeing it for the first time was terrific and we couldn't get there quick enough. We were walking along the Seine and once we came to the appropriate bridge, we were there. At a distance it looked smaller than we had imagined, but standing beneath it changed our minds. Unfortunately the top deck was closed and we could only get to the second level. But we went up to there and looked all around Paris from easily the highest point (even at that level) of the city proper. Every square inch of Paris is built on and so all the new tall buildings are pushed to the suburbs (not a bad thing either). We ate an amusing lunch (homemade cheese sandwiches) in the lawns directly down from the tower leading to the Military school. Amusing because we hand fed game little spoggies (sparrows) who swooped down and pinched bread from our fingers. They flew rings around the pigeons who were far too slow. If ever a piece hit the ground (the spoggies generally caught the bread thrown in mid-air) the pigeons never had a chance.

After lunch we boarded the Metro again and went to the Notre Dame cathedral. Surprise #2 was in store. As we entered the cathedral (which is beautiful), official dignitaries began arriving in big black cars. Following them were flag bearers in the uniforms of each of the allied nations who fought in the wars – Australia being proudly represented. We watched them march down the aisle and a service began in English in remembrance of the war dead. As the service ended, we walked around to the front of the cathedral and over a bridge leading across the Seine where it splits into two for a short time (Notre Dame is on an island). Surprise #3.

Using the cathedral as a background, an American film company was producing a movie. Obviously an old-time movie, as all around us were 1940 era cars and bikes. Couldn't recognise anyone so leaving there we boarded the Metro again (it's a fabulous system) and travelled to Napoleon's tomb but it closed at 5.00pm and we would have had only 15mins to see it and the army museum. (Tomorrow). So it was back to the Champs Élysées again and a leisurely walk along it at dusk. Incredible traffic jams were occurring both on the road and the footpath. People galore were filling picture theatres, restaurants, cafés even toilets. We just happened to find a McDonalds and enjoyed our favourite hamburgers for tea. Really dark now and the arc shone like a beacon as we boarded the Metro yet again and headed for the Moulin Rouge, which looked fabulous (from the outside). - \$33 for the show, dinner and ½ a bottle of champers, even beer was \$9 / glass, meant we wouldn't see it from the inside!).

The Pigalle area around the Moulin Rouge was just like New York. If you breathed on the wrong person it would start a fight. There were sex shops galore and countless number of live pornographic theatres. Didn't spend long there (but long enough for Laima to get chatted up by a Negro), before heading for the camp after a very footsore day.

Friday 12th November 1976

A very cold morning, so we rugged up in our warmest clothes and set out for Hotel des Invalides, which was very grand indeed and housed Napoleon's Tomb, which could be viewed from two levels. From here we went to the Musée de l'Armée and spent a lot of time in the section devoted to WWII. There were numerous pictures of places which were involved in the war that we have already seen in other cities. Medals, uniforms and pictures of the different leaders and even the actual fountain pen that was used to sign the treaty ending the war. A very complete and interesting summary of all the events.

Then we caught the metro to the Louvre with our main purpose of seeing the Mona Lisa. I noticed that entry fee was 5f each but then in small writing down the bottom it said that persons between 14-25 were only 2.50f each. It was my turn to shout, so I gave the lady our passports as well as 5f and everything was cool. I got a pat on the back from Pete for that money saving venture.

We didn't really know where to go first because the place is so big but decided to look at the paintings because they were the closest. Not only were the walls covered with works of art, but also the ceilings. We soon found the Mona Lisa because there were crowds of people around her. We hired a recorder for 1f and listened to the history about the painting. There are so many different theories about that beautiful lady. We walked around for a few more hours and after our legs could not carry us any longer we decided to head for home full of thoughts about our day's outing. Did a bit of shopping on the way home to carry us over the weekend and settled down for another cold night.

Saturday 13th November 1976

After meeting a guy (Rod Whittle) in the caravan park who used to play for North Shore in Sydney, we drove out of the campground to say a last goodbye to Paris. We had not yet seen Sacre Coeur and as it was on the way out, we stopped by for a look. It is an unusual church built on what must be the only hill in Paris. From it, is a clear view of the entire city (on a good day anyway). After looking inside and out we walked a short distance around the corner to Montmartre, a small square packed with artists and some really great artwork. Several paintings would have looked really nice in our as yet non-existent loungeroom. Most of the paintings were finished but the artists were all working on new ones sketching (from memory), various scenes of Paris. Also at work were highly talented people doing portraits "while you waited". Caricatures were popular as well and we watched a couple of them being done from start to finish.

Leaving there we then drove non-stop to Bologne (34km from Calais) on the English Channel from where we intend to catch the ferry to Dover at 8.35 tomorrow morning. While on the way to the Channel we went through a not too small a town and saw a bride being walked to the church by her father, followed by 25 others dressed up in tails etc. We waved and they duly returned the compliment happily. Parked for the night on the docks after begrudgingly paying for the tickets. \$70 for a 13-mile crossing taking 90 minutes.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Merry old England (& Scotland) once again

Sunday 14th November 1976

In order to catch the ferry at 8.35 this morning, we set the alarm for 7.00am and wearily ate our breakfast in the dark. Including us, there were only four other cars and two lorries on the ferry plus a handful of foot passengers. The trip across to Dover only took 1½ hours and soon we were in merry 'ol England again. It was sad leaving the continent but we were equally happy to reach England again and to be able to understand the language. Finally got another entry in our passports and then drove to the "nothing to declare" line and showed all the necessary papers to the customs officials. He asked us all the usual questions about when we were leaving England, where had we been and what we intended to do with the van. That's when the crunch came because we told him it wasn't ours.

We were hiring it from a friend and he was taking it back to Australia as soon as the 15 months were up so that he could legally avoid the duty. Then he asked for all the papers we had that were relevant to the van and we handed over the big bag. Pete and I just sat in the van quite unperturbed while the official thumbed through everything. When he came back he read us a passage from the log book (ie registration papers) stating that a car bought to avoid duty in the UK cannot be hired out, lent, given away or sold if it is still to avoid duty while in the UK. Because Frank and we had breached that law, the van could be seized by customs and we would be up for quite a large sum of money. £4,500 in fact. But, because the customs officials did not pick this up when we left England and because we were Australians, he kindly let us go without further ado. We both sighed with relief and thanked him very, very much.

The first thing we did after that was to fill the van with petrol and drive along the coast road towards Portsmouth. At first the weather was very misty but after a few hours it lifted and the day was quite pleasant. Dave Jacobs, the artist who makes the buses, lives in Gosport and before we left for the continent he told us to visit him when we tour the south of England and this is exactly what we intended to do. It was 4.00pm when we reached Gosport and already starting to get dark and because Dave would still be in London on Bayswater Road selling his buses, we decided to find a spot to park on the beachfront.

We watched the sun set and also a few guys wind surfing. Then at 7.00pm we went to one of the pubs in the area to taste the lager we had come to love when in London 3½ months ago. Played the fruit (poker) machine and won £1.30 and then lost it because I was greedy and wanted more. Drove back to our beach spot and settled down for a cold night.

Monday 15th November 1976

Drove to Dave's house first thing in the morning and exchanged greetings. We watched him at work making the buses and various other things he does so well. After meeting his wife and family we had some coffee and then drove back the short distance to Portsmouth for a look around there. On the way we booked the van in for a service at a Ford dealer (more expense) for tomorrow. Once in Portsmouth we parked and walked around looking primarily for a stationery shop so that we could buy a diary to catch up on the vast backlog of days that had been written but scribbled on a vast variety of paper scattered throughout the cupboards of the van.

Having done that we looked around the harbour and across to the Isle of Wight lying across the bay. At 4 o'clock and dear old England becoming dark once again (we remember in the summer how we used to come home from the speedway at 10 o'clock in daylight), we drove back to Dave's place and parked in his driveway for the night. He kindly asked us in and we spent the evening writing up the diary and also watching the Royal Variety Performance live from the Palladium in London. There were some really good comedians on it too along with Shirley Bassey.

Tuesday 16th November 1976

The service for the van was for 8.30am; hence we once again rose in the dark. We said goodbye to Dave and thanked him for his hospitality and headed for Cosham. We left the van and started walking towards Portsmouth but when the rain came down heavily we had to catch a bus the rest of the way, mainly because my feet were waterlogged from the hole in my boots. We sat in the Woolworths cafeteria for a while to dry out and then ventured across the road to a pub and finished writing the backlog of the diary. At 1.00pm we rang to see if the van was ready – not until 3.00pm so we stayed in the nice warmth for a while longer. We arrived at the Ford dealers a few minutes before 3.00pm and talked to the foreman there until the van was ready. Cost was £37 – quite reasonable and they fixed up a few little things as well. By now it was getting onto 4.00pm so we headed out for Southampton and eventually found a spot to park about 15 miles from Bournemouth in a national park.

Wednesday 17th November 1976

After being woken up quite early by the National Parks officer who vigorously warned us against camping in the forest again, we set off for Plymouth. On the way were Bournemouth (which we didn't stop at) and Poole. While going through Poole we drove past the Caravan Industries workshops ie the people who constructed our van. In their yards were countless chassis', and bodies ready to be bolted onto them. After Poole we drove through Dorset, emerging at Exeter in the heart of Devon and the thatched roofs. At Exeter I took time out to look over their speedway, which is a very fast and banked track. Leaving Exeter we drove alongside the Dartmoor National Park, which is actually a moor. The gaol is on the moor as well. Arriving at Plymouth I remembered how the city had been wrecked during the war and it was obvious to see that it had been, because of very new and modern buildings. We parked and took a look around, buying two huge Cornish pasties for tea, which were nice but incredibly spicy. We stayed the night in Plymouth in a fishing club's car park right on the harbour.

Thursday 18th November 1976

We wanted to reach London tonight, so we rose early and once again drove through Dartmoor National Park (via a different route) passing some very pretty thatched rooved cottages on the way. After leaving Exeter we joined the A303 and drove through Horton and Wincarton and found ourselves stopping at the Navy museum where they had Concorde 002 on display. First we looked through the museum at all the navy planes that fly from aircraft carriers – all with special mechanisms for the wings to fold over. Amazingly enough, the Concorde looked small on the inside probably because there was so much equipment taking up a lot of room. Finished off the last slide in the camera with a picture of Concorde 002 – *it's been to Australia.*

After Deptford we stopped at Stonehenge for a short time and I remembered a sequence from the Bazza McKenzie movie where the taxi driver drove him past Stonehenge on the way to London from Heathrow. Once on the motorway the rest of the drive to London passed quickly and we drove straight to Ted's place. The whole family greeted us and we ended up staying for tea. We were anxious to read all our mail, so Ted drove to the flat with us to let us in. We decided to spend the night in the van because it was more convenient. Two weeks after we left

the flat, the poultry shop had been broken into twice and Ted lost quite a few chickens, eggs etc. He has now had bars put in to stop another burglary attempt.

There were so many letters that it took us quite a long time to read them all and then reread them in case we missed anything.

Friday 19th November 1976

Many things to do today, so we split up for a short while. Laima stayed with the van in Battersea (haven't seen George Mallaby yet!) to do the washing and cleaning up, while I went into London via the tube. First stop was Kodak to drop off some 350 slides for developing. From Kodak, which is in High Holborn, I walked down Kingsway to Australia House and the ANZ Bank. Numerous vans are still parked outside waiting for buyers, and contrary to what someone wrote in an article in the Advertiser (Dad sent over the cutting) that you shouldn't buy a van from Australia House, in winter the prices are quite amazing. Everybody lowers their prices to compete for the limited number of buyers.

Withdrew some money from the ANZ and began walking down the Strand. Came to WA House and bought a jar of Vegemite for Scotland (our jar for Europe ran out in Holland – two weeks after we bought it!). After that I went into NSW and SA House's and read all the papers. Then it was on to Far East Travel's office in Piccadilly to pay the balance of our fare home. Then the #49 bus took me back to Battersea, where after a bath, we headed out to Frank and Angela's place (the owners of the van) for tea and an evening of European story telling. They were avid listeners and Frank almost dropped dead after hearing about our little bout with customs at Dover. Stayed the night parked on the side of the street in Highgate.

Saturday 20th November 1976

We had toast and VEGEMITE for breakfast and then said goodbye to Frank, Angela and the kids before leaving out on the M40, hoping to reach Shakespeare country before nightfall. Saturday morning traffic was extremely heavy and it took us a while to get on the motorway. We reached Oxford, bought a paper and some lollies to chew on and then viewed all the old University buildings and beautiful old English houses. Pete asked where the speedway track was but we couldn't follow the directions so we left and stopped for the night just before Chipping Norton. On Friday Pete collected all the back copies of a speedway magazine he subscribed to – 13 in all and since then he has attempted to read them all at the same time and consequently he keeps having to reread. Frank and Angela loaned us an interesting book on the sights to see in the UK. Very comprehensive too.

Sunday 21st November 1976

From our overnight stop, it was only a short drive into Stratford on Avon. We parked the van and amidst bitterly cold winds, walked around the town. Down to the river and past the Shakespeare theatre was first, before venturing into Henley Street to see where he was born. The National Trust have of course, bought just about all of Stratford. His birthplace, his mother's next house, the house his uncle lived in, Anne Hathaway's cottage and the house where he died have all been restored to 16th century standards. (Quite surprisingly they didn't restore the man's house that lived across the road!). About a mile from Stratford is Shottery, which is where Bill courted Miss Hathaway. Her cottage is great with thatched roofs covering the 12 rooms, which although quite spacious, have very low ceilings. I had to almost bend my head to walk around. In 1969 the house was partially destroyed by fire, but now it is back to original condition.

Leaving Stratford we headed for Shropshire, a county in which Laima had an address of a Latvian farmer in a place called Salop. We trundled along the narrow country roads until we came to Bridgenorth. Our book told us of an old Norman castle that has a wall leaning at three times the angle of the Leaning Tower of Pisa. Sure enough the land had subsided beneath it and it was incredible how it still stayed upright. As darkness fell we arrived at Ironbridge where we found a large carpark beside a gorge. Across the road was a nice warm pub (temperature normally drops to below freezing each night) in which we spent the evening – and a bit of the morning as well, having become friendly with the landlord. We played endless darts matches with the locals, unfortunately under the title of Aust V England. Not being too good at darts Australia didn't fare to well.

Monday 22nd November 1976

After only seven hours of sleep we ventured out into the cold and saw the first ironbridge built in the world and then left for Shrewsbury. We tried to find the Latvian people who owned a farm in Aston Pigott (address supplied by Peter Kozinda) but didn't have any luck, so we drove straight to Chester. It was getting dark and the town looked really interesting so we found a carpark that cost us 75p to stay overnight and at about 6.30pm we hopped into bed because it was so cold and Pete read his speedway magazines while I read a book. About 10.30pm we turned off the lights and said goodnight. We heard on the radio that it was snowing in Scotland.

Tuesday 23rd November 1976

Leaving the van in the carpark, we walked into the city centre, which is (including the surrounding area), saturated in history. We walked beneath and through, part of the original wall and tower, built by the ancient Romans years ago. The first street we walked down was typical of the rest of the city. Down each side of the street were two level shops, described in our AA book as galleried streets, with rows of shops on top of each other. The shops above are reached by stairways from the street below. We walked around for some time poking our noses into quite a few places before retiring to the van and heading north once again.

Onto Birkenhead (couldn't see any magpies) which is across the Mersey from Liverpool. Paid 20p to drive beneath the river in a tunnel that brought us out in "Beatletown". We didn't stop, considering that the wilds of Scotland held more appeal than "Livverpul". As is the pattern of our life lately, we drove on and on to Preston where we turned right to attack the Yorkshire Moors. No sooner had we begun than the lights were turned off, so we stopped in a lonely part of the moor waiting for the sun to come up.

Wednesday 24th November 1976

After Clitheroe it was a boring drive until we reached the North Yorkshire Moors. The Moors are really picturesque with the miles of hand built rock fences dividing the undulating land and the shaggy haired sheep running around. We drove almost due north to Brough (where we spent a night when last in this area). Had a nice lunch in a pub where we had previously had tea and watched a bit of TV. Back on the road again, this time on a motorway as far as Carlisle and then we took the A7 heading north towards Edinburgh. Funny though, as soon as we reached Scotland, the countryside seemed to change. It was more colourful and Pete noticed how the people we saw looked "really Scottish" and suddenly broke into a Scottish accent. I had to endure this till we found a bay to stop for the night.

Must have been a good choice because another van chose the same spot. Spent the "Night" – late afternoon is more like it – writing letters. It gets dark just after 4.00pm.

Thursday 25th November 1976

It turned out to be quite a pleasant day as we drove towards Hawick and then on to Jedburgh. Here we saw the abbey which was repeatedly damaged by English invaders and finally burnt down under the order of the Earl of Surrey. Even though it was roofless, it is still quite magnificent with a green lawn "carpet" growing in the middle. Then we had a quick look at the former prison that used to be Jedburgh Castle before driving to the romantic land of Sir Walter Scott. We saw the ruins of the Dryburgh Abbey where he was buried and then drove to "Scott's view" where he was known to sit and get inspired for his novels. It was a beautiful view and the sun showed itself for a few minutes to help us appreciate the countryside.

So many places have shops selling knitwear and small antique looking places selling pottery. Received in change, our first Scottish £ note today and put it away with all our other foreign money. It was lunchtime when we arrived in the capital of Scotland and we found a great spot to stop. We had a good view of Edinburgh from the top of "Arthur's seat" an extinct volcano. After lunch we drove around the old town and saw a bagpipe maker's shop, kilt maker's shop and numerous antique shops selling curios. This street led us to Edinburgh castle and we spent a good hour walking through it. We saw the museum showing Scottish military uniforms and a memorial to all the Scots who died in WW's 1 & 11. We saw the Scottish Crown Jewels and a fabulous scene of Edinburgh at dusk.

We had seen a caravan park earlier so we decided it was time for a shower and made our way there. Hope to see more of Edinburgh tomorrow and maybe visit some relatives.

Friday 26th November 1976

Quite to our surprise we managed to get up at 8.30 to begin another day's sightseeing. Last night was bitterly cold and really windy. At times we felt that the van would be blown to Glasgow. We drove into the city (Edinburgh that is) and parked in an all-day carpark (20p for the day would you believe), walked around the castle to the royal mile and began our assault on Scottish craft and tartan shops looking for souvenirs. One particular shop offered made to measure kilts (plus sporran) within 24 hours. I was tempted, but I look better in footy shorts.

After the royal mile we walked down to Princes Street, the main street. Shops galore here, all specializing in "bargains" not for the French, but Swedish and Danish day trippers who whiz across from Copenhagen etc, using the cheap pound to their advantage. It was raining most of the time so we collected the van and drove to George IV Street to see Greyfriars Bobby, the little Cairn terrier who has his own statue. By this time, it was time to move on to Perth to begin relative visiting. The new motorway to the city from Edinburgh proved helpful in the fog and rain and it wasn't long before we were in a telephone box ringing John Young. He was in bed with a cold, and after telling him that we didn't have a wrong number, he recognised who we were and immediately invited us around.

Once inside his home and away from the rain, we enjoyed a great night. John had got out of bed and he and Babs entertained us with scotch and tea (in that order). John is now 70 years old, retired, (but still annoys his son, Fergus, in his shop, says Babs), and looks really well. We talked at length about our relations, Australia, his former position as mayor of Perth, our trip and many other things. They also showed us their visitors' book (which was "lost" at the time Mum and Dad went there). The last signature in the book was Bill Physick's, when he stayed with the Young's. Also in there was, would you believe, the personal signatures of the Queen, the Duke of Edinburgh and the Queen Mother!!

For a short time in the evening John took us down to his local ice rink where he plays a game called curling (won't even attempt to explain what it is). While there we had a pint of local brew

in the bar. Back home where once again we continued talking until midnight, by which time, we were all ready for bed. We parked the van in their driveway and settled down to sleep.

Saturday 27th November 1976

We had a really nice surprise in the morning when John knocked on the van (to wake us) and then gave us a cup of tea in bed. Babs made us a lovely breakfast and then we said our goodbyes and headed off for the Bridge of Earn. There are two "J Kings" in the Earn and of course we went to the wrong place first. The people were very nice and helpful and seemed a little disappointed when we left. We then met up with "our" John King and his dog Dinky, and no sooner had we sat down, than he brought in a nice big pot 'o tea. We had planned to spend a few hours with him and then head off for Aberdeen. But he looked most upset when we told him of our plans because the lady next door had helped him make up a bed for the two of us. So we decided to stay the night. Most of the afternoon he told us how he occupies himself now that he had retired.

He is a very nice chap and really aware of what is going on in the world. Pete spent a lot of time playing with Dinky and this must have inspired him because he came up with a great idea. As thanks to John for having us, we would treat him to tea at one of the pubs in the area. It took us a bit of coaxing to make him accept, but he finally agreed and went upstairs to ready himself. At the pub, we had high tea and he told us about the days when he was a butler and about all the castles he and Kate had worked in. Once at home, we watched television and John disappeared for half an hour. When he came back we found out that he had prepared hot water bottles for our bed. He is a real dear. We said goodnight and were glad to be in a nice warm bed because it was raining and very windy outside.

Sunday 28th November 1976

John woke us up at 8.30am and we joined him for breakfast, which was a joint effort of his and Laima's. After ringing John Young in Perth, which we had promised to do, we said our thanks and goodbyes to John. He really was genuinely disappointed to see us leave. We drove northwards to Dundee along the Firth of Tay. Without stopping we continued along the east coast, as rugged as it is. Although the weather was on our side, it was bloody cold, so I missed seeing all the smugglers caves hidden in the cliffs. Would have had to get out of the van to see 'em. At Stonehaven we had intended visiting a Royalist Stronghold; an old castle called Dunnottar that is built on a headland jutting out to the sea. We had a picture of it in our AA book but as is the story of winter in Europe, it was closed.

Deciding against going to Aberdeen, we branched off into the Grampians, heading for Balmoral Castle, the Queen's Scottish residence. We were really in the Highlands now. No lochs yet but plenty of mountains (Swiss people would call them hills)! Needless to say Balmoral was closed as well, so with a few hours of daylight left (it was one o'clock) we selected a one-lane track through the Cairngorms. We were beginning to encounter snow as we drove through real wastelands. No doubt in summer these hills would be covered in heather. (Bill Young told us that he drove Bill for miles around Scotland looking for heather.) We stopped for the night near Grantown – on – Spey. And froze.

Hit the jackpot today with Fraser devaluing the dollar. I figure we made about \$170 on the money we have left. Should buy us something nice. Providing we can carry it along with all our suitcases from Singapore.

Monday 29th November 1976

Icicles were hanging from our noses when we woke up – it was freezing cold! It was so cold in fact that I got dressed while still in my sleeping bag – an old trick I learned when in the girl guides. We drove 20 miles before we reached Inverness and had just a short glimpse of Loch Ness before driving on to Beauly and Dingwall. When we reached Ardgay we stopped and took a photo of Dornach Firth and Bonar Bridge. A very pretty sight. Then, instead of going up to Wick, we headed northwest and once again we were driving on a narrow one-lane road with lay-bys every few yards for passing. The Scottish drivers were very polite and 9 out of 10 times, they stopped for us. Our size probably scared them.

Once on this road, it began to snow and sleet, which made the countryside look very rugged indeed. We drove through a pass and in front of us we saw Loch Broom and the fishing village of Ullapool. (Pity Alan's surname wasn't Pool!). Here we filled up with petrol and bought some milk before driving on. We didn't get very far because it was quickly getting dark and it was only 3.00pm. Incredible.

Tuesday 30th November 1976

After eating our breakfast through chattering teeth, we drove on a few miles and found the road and countryside covered in a blanket of fresh snow. Pete cursed himself for not driving on further last night cause he's dying to see the van all covered in snow. The mountains, trees and valleys looked pretty as we drove on to Garve and back down to Beauly where we changed some traveller's cheques (again). On our way to Drumnadrochit we went through a pass and got a magnificent view of Loch Ness from high up. From here we also saw the ruins of Urquhart Castle, which gave a pleasant foreground to the picture we took of the Loch. While Pete was driving, I kept a close lookout for the famous monster, but I guess the water was too cold for him to make an appearance.

Driving up and down the hills, at times there was no snow to be seen and then suddenly we would be right in the midst of it. We drove the length of Loch Ness to Fort Augustus and after a few miles we saw Loch Lochy which was just as magnificent. We drove inland a bit to Spean Bridge and then met Loch Linnhe. At Fort William we viewed the splendour of Ben Nevis covered in snow and cloud. Across the bridge at Ballachulish and then through Glen Coe where the scenery was virginal white once again. We drove through a 1,144' pass and then through Rannoch Moor where we eventually parked for the night. There is a small loch below us and we are surrounded in snow. Most of the night was spent dancing to radio music to help keep us warm. The whole van was rocking to our quickstep. We felt stupid but a lot warmer – mainly from laughter.

Wednesday 1st December 1976

This time we had parked in the right spot, as after another bitterly cold night (the gas in the camping GAZ bottle had frozen) we were covered in fresh snow. About 6'' had fallen during the night, so a snowman was built on the bonnet as our mascot. We set off from our park at a very slow pace due to the snow covered roads, ice covered windscreen and mainly so as our snowman wouldn't fall off. However, a speeding truck got him after 10 miles, with a gust of wind it created. We saw the end of our last loch before hitting the Clyde at Dumbarton. We saw a number of distilleries here but none offering free samples.

We drove through Glasgow with only one stop to post the diary. Plain driving all the way "home" (London) now as we have planned to use the motorways all the way. For the past three days Britain has endured a cold snap and freak weather has dumped snow all over the country, even in Cornwall and Devon. Scotland had got the worst of it with trains halted by snowdrifts,

so we expect some action on the notorious motorways to London. The drive from Glasgow to the English border went without incident except it was cold, cold, cold! Needing a bath and a warm bed we drove to Brough, a small town in Northern Yorkshire where we had stayed in a bed and breakfast place in July. Booked in there again for a night but to our dismay the room was just as cold as our van. So we spent the first half of the night in front of a blazing fire in the local pub. Upon our return to the room our bed had hot water bottles in it so it wasn't too bad.

Thursday 2nd December 1976

More snow had fallen overnight as we ventured onto the M6. Driving at a sedate 45 mph we were being passed left right and centre by lorries (even going up hills). Radio bulletins were being broadcast for drivers to be careful in northern England on the roads. As yet no problem. A magnificent blue sky and snow on the ground beside the motorway. Before we knew it almost, after passing Manchester and Liverpool and moving into the county of Cheshire, the clouds built up and it began to snow. Conditions became really bad. Freezing fog and heavy snow set in. Most drivers slowed but some idiots sailed on as though it was a clear day. Thankfully we had an uneventful trip all the way to London, but radio reports spoke of multi-car accidents on motorways everywhere. One prang on the southbound side of the M1 closed the northbound side as well, as cars apparently skidded in all directions, even over the guard rails separating the two carriageways.

After passing Birmingham it cleared a little and it was easy the rest of the way. We arrived home about 6.30pm, calling in at the White Hart before going to Battersea. We had hoped to see Pete Green, but it appears he's gone to Egypt on business, so unfortunately we won't see him until he comes home to Australia next time. We parked the night outside our flat, sleeping in our van 'cos we couldn't get inside having given our keys back to Ted. Tonight was the coldest night in Britain for 40 years!!

Friday 3rd December 1976

We awoke to find the van and surrounding cars covered in frost as well as the footpaths. A bitterly cold morning so we both had a bath to warm up. We read the letters that had arrived for us while touring Scotland. Also did a bit of shopping and bought a few Christmas cards to send to people we have met on the trip. We rang the Newton's and arranged to go out for the night. We left Battersea at 6.00pm and arrived at their place at 7.25pm – it was only a 10½ mile trip, but the traffic was the heaviest we have seen in London. After we leaving the babysitter who was looking after Ben and Tim, we drove the short distance to Hampstead and began looking for a suitable place to have tea.

Fagin's Kitchen looked pleasant so we decided to try it. It was lovely and warm inside and the décor was attractive. There weren't many people there so we were wondering if the food might be disappointing. No sooner had this been said and the place was packed to the rafters. After entrée's where we had each had a different dish, we argued about whose was the tastiest. The plates were piled high with food and we struggled to consume the last morsels. After a thoroughly enjoyable meal (that cost £5 each), we stopped in at the pub where Angela works during the week serving meals. The rest of the evening we showed our company several slides they were interested in for their forthcoming trip to the continent.

Not particularly wanting to spend the night in the freezing cold van, we accepted Angela's invitation to sleep in their loungeroom. We were so warm; we even discarded our blankets and were very comfortable in our sleeping bags.

Saturday 4th December 1976

Frank and Angela were still in the land of the nod as we left early to visit Portobello Road to pick up some things we wanted. Outside the flat, cars in the street were covered from bonnet to boot by an inch of frost. We had to throw a bucket of hot water over the windshield to clear it. Passing by a pond (about an acre in size) in Hampstead we saw that it was completely frozen and little kids were walking on the surface. After Portobello Road we went back to Frank's, where he had arranged to go to a soccer match. Almost 2/3rd's of the matches throughout Britain had been postponed because the ovals were frozen with frost or snow and the blades of grass were like razor blades. However, at Highbury where we wanted to go to watch Arsenal play Newcastle, the oval is centrally heated underground by hot water pipes and was thus in perfect nick.

Frank and I wandered along there wondering whether we would get stabbed our something. But no, the capacity crowd was well behaved and we watched, what tonight's reviews said, was the best match seen in England for years. It was fantastic, and we reckoned we could become converts if we stayed in England for too long. Arsenal won 5-3 and Super Mac (Malcolm MacDonald) scored three goals against his old club. Arsenal had paid £333,000 for him this year. The crowd sang and chanted and the atmosphere was great. In the evening we played canasta and watched the replays of the game on TV before driving to Battersea.

Sunday 5th December 1976

Reluctantly we got out of bed to face yet another bitterly cold morning. A final visit to Bayswater Road was the venue for today. We said goodbye to Mara Sarkans (Sax's wife) and then talked to Dave Jacobs while he was busy making money from his buses. When we were about to leave he told us to choose anything he had on display to take back to Australia. Seeing as we already had one of his famous buses given to us as a present and have luggage problems already, we declined. Unperturbed by this, he said once we get settled in Sydney to send over our address and he would send us one of his paintings. We thanked him very much and left to drive back to Battersea.

We picked up the key to the flat from Ted's place and looked forward to a Sunday night next to a warm fire. We attempted to sort out things we would send home by boat and what we would need on the way. Reading the papers took up the remainder of the night.

Monday 6th December 1976

This morning was the beginning of a long day in London. Leaving the flat a mess with clothes etc strewn all over the lounge room floor, we caught the bus to the Strand and went to the ANZ Bank to order traveller's cheques for the journey home. Then it was onto Australia House for information on vaccinations to be boosted. Next it was down the Strand looking for firms who send home trunks by sea. Found a couple and checked out conditions and prices. We arrived at Trafalgar Square and of course we had to feed the pigeons. Being winter and not many tourists around, the birds were really hungry and during the quarter of an hour or so that we stayed, we had at least 10 – 12 pigeons at once on our arms, hands, shoulders and head, fighting each other for the seed that we had.

After checking our clothes and hair thoroughly for evidence that we had been to Trafalgar Square, we caught the tube to Piccadilly and picked up our homeward bound tickets. We leave Gatwick at 2300 Dec 10th, arriving in Singapore at 2200 next day. Leave Singapore by boat at 1600 Sunday 12th (Cabin 87), and arrive in Perth on Sunday 19th at 1600. From Piccadilly we went to Singapore Airlines in Regent Street, to find out how much hair I have to get cut off to

get in the damn city. (Too much). Then we walked around Piccadilly until nightfall and saw all the lights. By this time we were ready for home.

The bus took us and then after tea, we decided to try our luck at Bingo in the local converted cinema. Run by Mecca Enterprises, (the people who sponsor Miss World), we were in for a surprise. Because at about 10.00pm Miss World, the Jamaican girl, walked in for an appearance. In between all that we won £8.00! I'm sure that some of the woman there could easily have been Florrie, Andy Capp's wife.

Tuesday 7th December 1976

Today was scheduled as the "BIG cleanup". We tackled the van first, Pete on the outside and me inside. We were surprised to see the original colour of the van once it was washed. A very nice cream colour, so much nicer than the dirty shade of brown that was a real eyesore the last few months. I was delighted at the new colour of the inside roof as well. The fridge and stove came up really nice, as did the bathroom. It was the easiest to clean, because I just used the hand shower and let the water drain away. We stopped when it got dark and came inside for tea. Then we attempted to sort out our clothes and all the souvenirs that have accumulated over the past year. The loungeroom looked terrible when we were halfway through but gradually order was restored. Decisions, decisions! What to send by boat and what to take with us. Actually everything sorted itself out and the suitcases ended up being lighter than when we left Australia.

While we were sorting we listened to our favourite Tuesday night radio shows which we have really enjoyed. Shall miss them all. A Sunday night favourite of ours was a sports quiz program. During the half-hour show, between us we would manage to answer about four. The contestants rarely miss one. Last year's winner was a female!

Wednesday 8th December 1976

Once again we were on the move in London. This time to the bank again to get our valuable Aussie dollars (more than we would have got two weeks ago). A long wait there and after that we drove through the streets (so much easier to drive here than Rome) to Great Windmill Street to pick up a tea chest in which we'll be sending stuff home by boat. Then back home to continue the big cleanup and sort out. Think we have got everything in the right spots now. Never had to sit so long in a loungeroom and not have television to watch.

Thursday 9th December 1976

Today, things really became hectic. Last minute shopping, last minute packing. In the morning we went to Clapham Junction to buy some jeans and in the afternoon we loaded the tea chest (which is going to take 10 weeks to get to Sydney) into the van and took it to Piccadilly Circus and Windmill Street. Blatantly illegally parked, while it took an assistant from the firm and I to carry it across the street. From there we hustled out to Hampstead to return the van to Frank and say our goodbyes. Breathed a sigh of relief when we handed over the keys. Only one minor dent – so small it can only be seen on a sunny day! Then a long tube ride back to London for a farewell drink in the White Hart.

Goodbye London!

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Home, across the sky and the oceans

Friday 10th & Saturday 11th (about 14 hours long) December 1976

Our last day in London. Laima passed it by doing some more shopping and I stayed in Battersea, believe it or not, but relaxing with nothing to do. Around midday the shopper returned and we both hung around, a little sad that we had only a bit more than a week left. Sad especially that we were leaving London, which despite England's problems is a fabulous city and one we have really enjoyed living in. About 4.30pm we toured the High Street traders saying our farewells, as we had become quite friendly with a lot of them. Everyone knew we were Aussies and staying at Ted's place which is why Ted thinks that his robbers, (whilst we were in Europe), knew them and us and knew that we weren't there.

Then after saying goodbye to the Mackintosh's, Ted drove us to Clapham Junction station (British rail, not the tube) and we caught the train to Victoria Station. It was from there that we would catch the train to Gatwick. We went across the road to the Shakespeare Tavern and had a meal there and a last London lager. We then checked into the British Caledonian terminal at Victoria leaving our bags there for the journey to the airport. 45mins later we were sitting in the airport lounge at 9.00pm having another lucky last London lager, along with hundreds of other Aussies and Kiwis who had taken advantage of the cheapest way home. At eleven o'clock the fun (?) began. We went through Customs' formalities etc and got on a bus to go the considerable distance across the tarmac to the plane. It wasn't a British Caledonian plane, but another mob called British Air Tours, whom no one had ever heard of.

However, the 707 looked in good shape and after the cabin became choc-o-bloc (not a seat to spare), we took off about half an hour late. Everything was smooth for an hour or so. Drinks had been served and the meal was just about ready when, well over Germany, Capt. Jackson delivered a bombshell by telling us that the No. 1 engine had just unaccountably stopped. It had been vibrating badly so they turned it off and it wouldn't start again. They were going to turn around and go back to Gatwick for repairs or another plane. That hour was so long! The trouble was obviously not too bad otherwise they would have made a landing at an airport in Europe somewhere. But it didn't matter how many times I told myself that, I still could have filled a teacup with sweat from my hands. People all over the plane were sinking whiskies left, right and centre.

Eventually we landed at Gatwick at around 1.30am after the pilot had dumped 30 tons of fuel over the Channel. Four hours later the new plane was brought out and we took to the air once again. During those hours on the ground, because we had already cleared immigration and customs, we had to sit inside the first plane and watched ice form on all the windows and the wing and fuselage. It was another cold night in London. While watching them prepare the new plane, we saw the tanks being filled with fuel and at the end, after they were full, petrol spewed out everywhere all over the tarmac. No one was hardly encouraged to board the new plane, an identical 707. One elderly lady near us was so frightened that a nurse had to be called to calm her down. Needless to say the flight to Karachi was incident free. We ate our evening meal at 6.00am London time, and as it turned out our last meal until we got to our hotel in Singapore!

We touched down in Karachi at 4 o'clock in the afternoon local time. The flight had taken seven hours. We spent two hours sitting inside the Pakistani airport terminal before boarding the

plane again. Needless to say we had to walk through spilt fuel that again covered the tarmac beneath the aircraft. On board the new crew gave us the bad news. Gatwick airport had not notified Karachi that we would be late, thus there was no food available for the plane. Although it's strange that the food we would have got, had we been on time, was not available. To make up, the airline provided all the drinks free. However, the Aussies had already drunk the plane dry of beer, so there was only spirits. Undeterred however, the scotch, gin, and brandy were attacked ferociously. The six-hour flight to Singapore for the 188 passengers was spent in a very merry mood. Even the hosties and the crew chief joined in because they had nothing to do.

Eventually we touched down in Singapore at 3.00am, with very empty stomachs. Customs formalities and the feared hair regulations were a farce. The Singaporean customs bloke had longer hair than I did. Buses were waiting to take us to the Royal Ramada Hotel where we were assured of an immediate meal. The hotel was luxurious. Eventually after being given rooms we were fed at 4.30am with quite a healthy meal, quite obviously prepared at short notice. So at around 6.00am we went to bed after an at times frightening journey from London. We left an early morning call with the operator for 8.00am!

Sunday 12th December 1976

Didn't really go to sleep but continued drinking the miniature bottles of scotch that we had got from the plane. Joining us was a New Zealander who we were to become quite friendly with on the ship. At about 8.00am, after watching the sun come up over the city, we packed our bags and left them for delivery to the ship. We caught a cab into Raffles Place to do a quick bit of duty free shopping in the three hours we had in this city. Went to Mohan's department store, which sells everything from milk to stereos. After much haggling we eventually bought a 4-in-1 stereo. It has a 4-channel turntable, 8-track cartridge player, cassette player and an AM/FM radio. We also got a brilliant slide projector – fully automatic. All that plus a couple of records for Aust \$270.

Feeling very happy with that we went into another store to buy some Thai silk for Laima's mother. It would have helped if we had known exactly what Thai silk looked like. Our salesman was a real con artist. So much so that he sucked us into buying cotton, telling us it was Thai silk. Something really funny happened then. His offsider, who had met us in the street and lured us into his shop by saying "You wantee buyee cheep dutee free?" came in and said, "That nice cotton you got there!" Following that the guy who sold us the "Thai silk" started giving all kinds of dirty looks to his mate and looked as though he could strangle him. But he was very good and returned our money under sufferance.

Time to board the ship now so we took Mohan's courtesy car back to the Ramada Inn and caught the bus along with everyone else to the docks to board the Kota Singapore for Perth. Once we had struggled on board with three huge boxes full of stereos, speakers and projector, we found our cabin on C deck # 387 and settled back to await our luggage to be brought on board. I glanced out the porthole and saw the Singaporean porters playing basketball with the suitcases. Some had already broken open and the contents spilled out everywhere. We weren't having any of that, especially Laima and I who had mirrors from Portobello Road in ours. I raced out and waited for ours to appear in the truck bringing them from the hotel. Personally I took them from the truck to our cabin.

After customs etc we sailed silently out of Singapore to Aussie.

Monday 13th through Sunday 19th December 1976

The whole week was spent lazing in the sun, lounging at the bar, gutsing ourselves in the dining room, playing cards in the library, playing bingo in the lounge and swimming in the pool. When

*we crossed the equator, of course King Neptune came on board and the usual ceremony took place. I volunteered for a part and was covered in mud at the end of it. The crew stood at the top of the ship and pelted eggs and sticky balls of spaghetti at the participants. Believe it or not, it was really good fun. We all then jumped **in** the pool to clean up. Laima won \$50 at bingo on the first day and probably lost the lot on the following days.*

We shared a cabin with a couple from Melbourne, Julie and Gary, who were great company. As we sailed closer to the coast of Western Australia, the ship began to broadcast an Australian radio station and we all stood in our tracks as we listened to the slow drawl and broad accent of the Australian race. It was great to hear it again but embarrassing to think that we speak like that all the time. We arrived in Fremantle on Sunday 19th, disembarked and made our way to the airport where we had to wait nine hours for our connecting flight to Adelaide.

Monday 20th December 1976

After a long wait, during which we slept most of the time we took off via Ansett for home, at 1.30am. Three hours' time difference made it 7.30am in Adelaide when we arrived, to be greeted tearfully and (hopefully) joyfully by all our families.

WHAT A BLOODY GREAT TRIP WE HAD!!!.