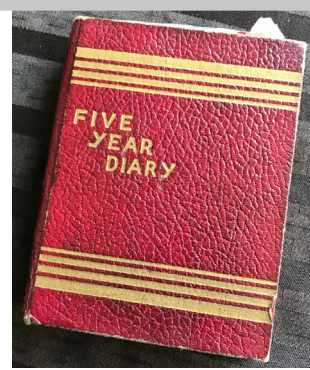


TEN

AMONGST FAMILY IN SAN MARTINO; THE
END OF THE JOURNEY; THE LONG TRIP HOME



June 29 – July 2, 1953

[From Cologne, Germany to Wiesbaden, Germany; to Lucerne, Switzerland; to San Martino al Tagliamento, province of Udine, Italy.]

July 2 – Aug. 30, 1953

[San Martino al Tagliamento, plus side trips.]

Aug. 30, 1953

Rose dead tired so I didn't go to church, everyone else said they would go for me. Said a few more goodbye's...

She spends almost two months — the second half of her grand journey — in the hometown of her people, the relatives who, at the start of this trip, were just names she had been told. Now, they are family.

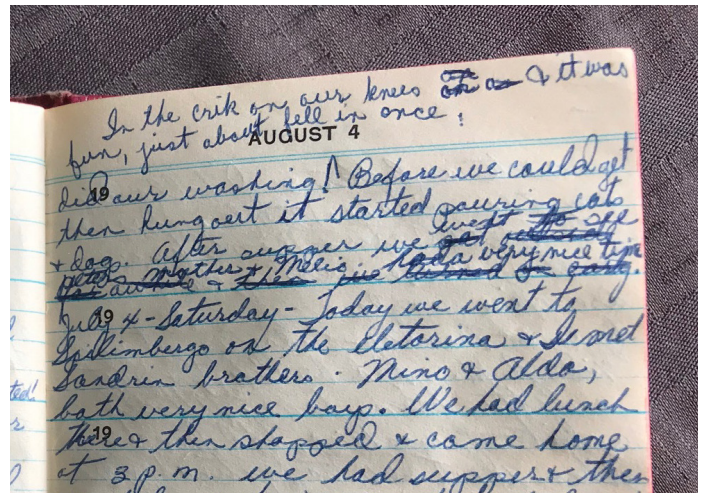
Erna has by now left the trio a duo, just Irene and Louise, both the Canadian offspring of Italian immigrant families. They settle into life in a small town in Friuli, just 80 kilometres west of the border with Yugoslavia.

They visit friends and family, eating and drinking their way around town, playing cards, writing letters home and staying up late to listen to music or just talk. It's a rare evening that ends before midnight, and more than a few end well after that.

A dutiful young woman, she goes to church, chips in with the washing and cooking, and visits her Nonno, whose blind eyes drip tears in her presence.

But she also explores. There are day trips to Venice and Spilimbergo. Bathing in a "crik." Learning to ride a *bicicletta* and quickly becoming proficient enough to pedal between towns.

There is even a trip to Lake Como, where they sun themselves on the beach and walk along the waterfront. "Boy there ain't no man shortage



here," she writes. "We didn't get very far before these 2 boys started talking to us & walking with us. One was Vittorio & the other Franco. They tried to woo & pursue us but no go."

The next day, however: "Vittorio and Franco came along in a row boat so we went rowing with them for 3 hours."

After two months, after saying goodbye to Cescio and Rinaldo and Regina and Santina and dozens of others — Are there tears? Promises to write often? Pledges to visit again? (She will, 18 years later, with her husband and sons.) She doesn't record any details in her diary — she is on a larger craft, the SS Andrea Doria, a modern and luxurious ocean liner that is three years from its infamous sinking off the U.S. coast.

The journey back to North America is unremarkable: sunbathing, seasickness, singing and dancing, new friends. Then New York. Then Chicago. Then the long bus ride back across the states: Wisconsin, Minnesota, North Dakota, Montana, Washington.

And, finally, home. A small-town girl, 22 — same as she ever was and changed forever.