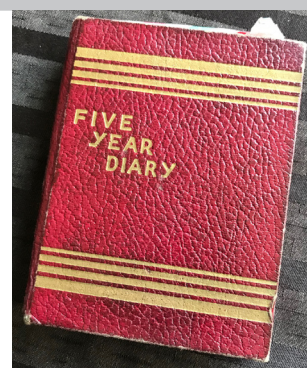


FOUR SINGING & DANCING, CHAMPAGNE & PIZZA, NEW FRIENDS & NEW HORIZONS



May 20, 1953

Today Louise & I ordered a birthday cake for Erna, she was quite surprised, except she was sick & couldn't enjoy it. We played cards to-day to get our mind off of the roll of the boat. In the afternoon we had a concert & and in the evening we had dancing to records except there aren't many young people to dance with.

May 21, 1953

Today we were invited to join another couple... for dinner. Jerry & Vicky, Spanish from Ecuador. It was Jerry's birthday & Vicky surprised him with a few others for dinner & a cake & champagne, first time for me, mmm good. We had a wonderful time. Later we went to the bar & sat & drank & I sang for hours & we all sang too until 1:30 A.M. Wonderful evening.

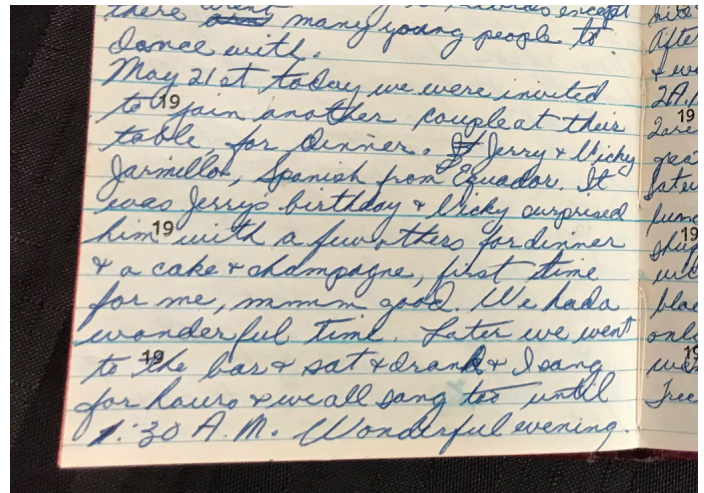
May 22, 1953

Today we have Gala nite. Everybody dresses nice & we danced to the orchestra. After the dance our gang got together & we sang & drank & ate pizza until 2 A.M. We have met 3 nice girls, 2 are Spanish & one is Sicilian we have great fun together.

She likes to sing and dance. She makes friends easily. She is packing every ounce of living she can into the hours she has aboard the SS Saturnia, a steamer that is taking her and her Vancouver pals Louise and Erna from New York to Gibraltar, Barcelona and beyond. *

Rolling waves don't stop her. She has faced rougher journeys — her whole life to this point has been a voyage upon uneven and uncertain waters whose rollers and undercurrents might cause a lesser woman to stay ashore.

She doesn't. She plays cards and dances and drinks and stays up late eating pizza. And sings.



In a couple of years, singing will set the course of the rest of her life. She will rehearse a duet with a man for an Italian festa in East Van, but their voices won't mesh. Instead, there is this other man, Giuseppe, an immigrant from a small town in Vicenza, in northern Italy — a couple hours by car from her relatives in Friuli, if his family had more than a bicycle for transportation. Her clear soprano and his powerful tenor go beautifully together, as they will for the rest of their lives in church and Italian choirs.

And from then on, it will be Irene and Joe, Joe and Irene.

But before that, there will be more days at sea: champagne — mmm good — shuffleboard, close pals and new friends (and would-be boyfriends?), and singing, lots of singing.

(* Who knew mom liked to party? I'd only ever thought of her as the child who never knew her own mother, the teenager who was orphaned, then the wife to Giuseppe and the mother to my brother Paul and me. It makes me smile to think about it, to set my mind to this middle part of her life that was so full of life.)