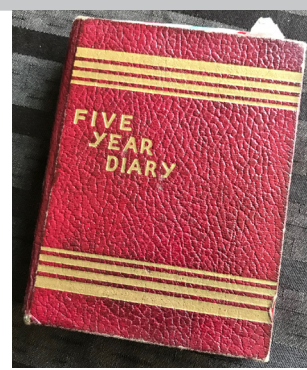


SEVEN

CHURCHES & PALACES & PAINTINGS; HAM SANDWICHES & CHAMPAGNE & DANCING



June 14, 1953

Today Louise & I were heathens and didn't go to mass, we got up at 6:30 and had breakfast & left for Paris at 7:20...

They will always have Paris. They will always have the Louvre and the Eiffel Tower, the Champs Élysées and Place de la Concorde.

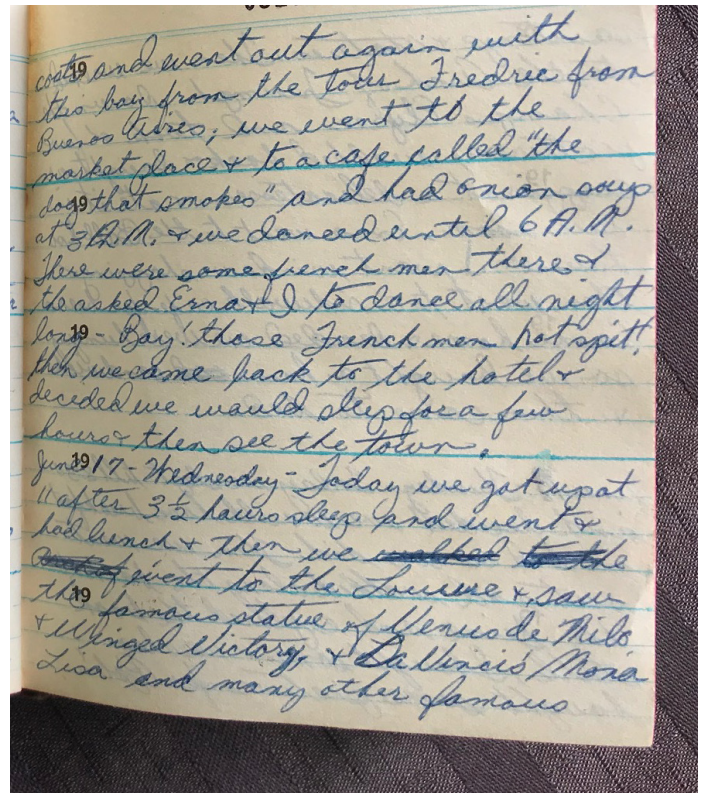
They will always have ham sandwiches and cold beer at sidewalk cafes, and champagne in French Quarter nightspots.

They will always have the solid-silver angels at Church of the Blessed Sacrament and "the most beautiful rose windows imaginable" at Notre Dame and the 270 steps to Sacré-Coeur, from which "you can see all of Paris." *

They will always have the miles in their legs and the Paris dirt in their soles. They will always have the exquisite, intricate paintings and tapestries of the Palace of Versailles.

They will always have the "colossal" show at the Folies Bergere, where "the costumes were fabulous, yards of the best velvets & satins, & bejewelled so they blinded you, & the show itself was wonderful, especially for the men. They left nothing to the imagination."

And they will always have June 16, 1953. Irene, Louise and Erna begin the day with a long walk to the Eiffel Tower. In the evening, they go on a nightclub tour, then, having met Fredric from Buenos Aires on the tour, they stop back at their hotel at 2 a.m. to grab their coats. They venture back into the night for onion soup at 3 a.m., then they dance until dawn. "There were some French men there & they asked Erna & I to dance all night long —



Boy! those French men, hot spit!" **

For as long as they live, they will always have Paris.

(* Decades later, my wife and I visited many of these attractions and, on our second trip to the City of Lights, climbed those 270 steps to reach Sacré-Coeur — it was sweltering July day but the funicular was either too expensive or not working — and, indeed, you can see all of Paris from its hilltop perch.)

(** I smiled and laughed reading my mom's recounting of her days and nights in Paris — BTW, "hot spit" is roughly equivalent to "hot damn." And seeing on paper the joyous tales of a young woman who'd known grief more than most, and whose eventual passing at 50 would leave an unfillable void in her family, I said aloud to myself: "Focus on the life, not the loss.")