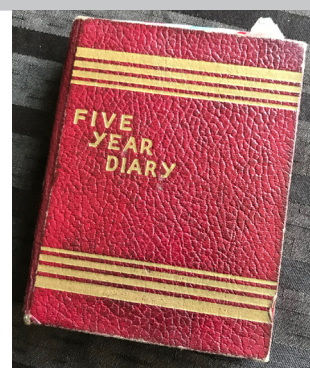


NINE

AL FROM ONTARIO, A MOTORCYCLE RIDE, WINE, WEINER SCHNITZEL & WHAT IF

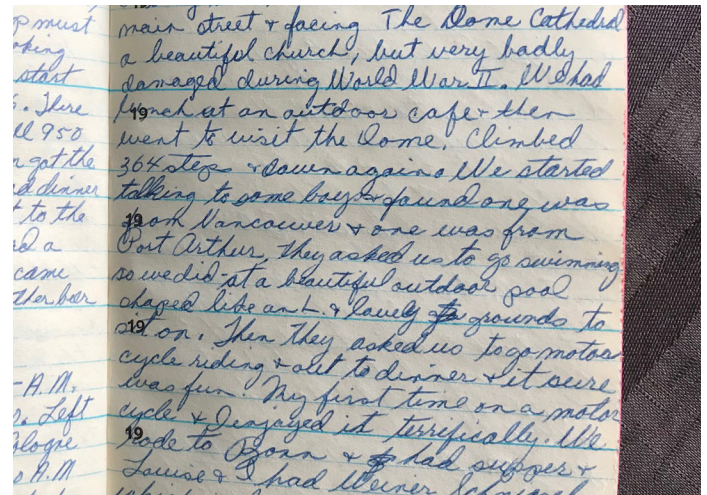


June 24 – 27, 1953

[London to Brussels, then on to Amsterdam...]

June 28, 1953

Rose at 5 A.M. but I wasn't awake till 10. Left Amsterdam at 7:15 by train for Cologne, Germany. Arrived at 11:30 A.M. ... We had lunch at an outdoor cafe & then went to visit the Dome. Climbed 364 steps & down again. We started talking to some boys & found one was from Vancouver & one from Port Arthur, they asked us to go swimming so we did at a beautiful outdoor pool shaped like an L & lovely grounds to sit on. They then asked us to go motor cycle riding & out to dinner & it sure was fun. My first time on a motor cycle & I enjoyed it terrifically. We rode to Bonn & had supper & Louise & I had Weiner Schnitzel, which is German for breaded veal cutlets, & rode back again & then we got dressed up and went to a night club called Capri & saw a floor show & drank Rhine wine & danced until 3 A.M. ... They were really swell boys...



Bill from Vancouver and Al from Port Arthur are the latest “boys” whose journeys intersect hers. The others are waiters and locals and fellow tourists while Bill and Al are in the RCAF.

What they have in common is eating and drinking and dancing and flirting at a time of life when responsibilities are few, and a free evening is all the excuse needed to hop on a motorbike and go for dinner in another city.

Could any of these flirtations have blossomed into love stories given enough time and space?

Could her life have been theirs?

Could her story have been rewritten with a cruise ship waiter in a small town in Italy or an

armed forces veteran in northern Ontario?

Could that fateful meeting of voices a few years later in East Vancouver with the man who would become her husband have never happened, with not even a ghost of an idea that something else could have been?

And if that happened, what of the rest of her story, what of her boys — what of this page?

She would have had a different life but would she have found greater happiness?

Most importantly, would she have had a long life filled with good books, great meals and beloved grandchildren, or would the cancer that would ravage her, then finally take her at 50, on Mother's Day, have been just waiting?

It is both jarring and joyous to ponder these possibilities. To love her and miss her almost 40 years after her death but wonder, just a little, whether the end would have been delayed in an alternate life.

In this life, however, Irene has new people to meet and places to see, and she is preparing to return to San Martino and her brother Cesco before coming home to Canada for good.