

MY TRIP TO EUROPE

by

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MY TRIP TO EUROPE--Summary

In 1934 I traveled to Europe with my parents and my sister. Visiting far off countries with their strange customs made a lasting impression upon me. We traveled through the North Sea and landed on Poland. From Poland we went to Lithuania where we stayed for a month and a half. It was here in a small town in Lithuania where I obtained a true view of ancient Europe. Leaving Lithuania, we traveled through Germany, into France and stayed at Paris for a short time. Finally we embarked for America, enlightened after two and a half months in the old world.



MY TRIP TO EUROPE

In one's lifetime there usually occurs an incident or experience, which, because of its emotional effect, is never forgotten. Such an experience was my trip to Europe.

I
In the summer of 1934 my parents, my sister and I embarked from New York. Our destination was a small country in northern Europe, Lithuania, where we were to visit my grandparents. Being only eleven at this time, I experienced the wonderful sensation of starting a journey to a far off and different land, much as one would feel in starting a trip to the moon. Eagerly I roamed the huge liner, and I concluded that my first ocean trip would be a delightful one.

Although I had been on the high seas for only a few hours, I experienced that affliction of many landlubbers, seasickness. For two days I was tormented by the pitching and the rolling of the ship. However, on the third day of our voyage I managed to enter the ship's swimming pool, and after a delightful swim found myself no longer a victim of seasickness. The succeeding days of my ocean trip were happy ones. Deck tennis, quoits, moving pictures, and similar diversions--all were enjoyed. Throughout the trip I was thrilled by the brilliant evening sunsets, and I loved to watch the gulls, who ever faithfully followed in our wake. One day I was enchanted to see the spouting of a whale, and I carefully noted this incident in my diary.

Seeing the mountains of Scotland presaged the end of our voyage on the sea. Soon afterwards we passed Norway and then

after stopping a few hours at Copenhagen, Denmark, we finally docked at the port of Gdynia, Poland. To me Poland seemed a dreary land, a land of sadness and of work, and comparing it with my native land I could not help but appreciate living in the United States. We did not stay long in Poland, but since the Poles were quite hostile toward the Lithuanians, we had considerable difficulty in finding our way; strange as it may seem, the Poles would not direct us to Lithuania. At last we obtained an antiquated cab and crossed the Polish border into the Free State of Danzig. To my dismay I noted that every house in the "Free State" was decorated with a Swastika. My parents wisely saw the beginning of Germany's encroachments. Having spent the night in Danzig, we took an old, but speedy train through East Prussia into Kaunas, Lithuania .

Although Kaunas was the capital of Lithuania and its most modern city, to me it appeared small and ancient, and its appearance only heightened my already growing dislike for Europe. Being at an age when curiosity abounded, I recorded many of the unfamiliar customs of the Lithuanians. Women wore lower heel shoes; men, higher heels. The girls and women always had long hair woven into two braids and usually wore aprons and carried huge pocketbooks. Both the men and boys wore short pants with a wide belt. Everyone seemed to ride bicycles or tricycles or horses. The roads were poor and their vehicles were anachronisms. Finally I noted with great disappointment that their ice cream cones were pitifully small.

In our hotel in Kaunas I began to explore our new surroundings. To my delight I found we had a balcony adjoining our rooms. Immediately I got some firecrackers which had been left over from the Fourth of July, went out on the balcony, and lit one. There followed the usual ear-splitting noise of a "four inch salute". Hardly had I explained to my parents what had happened when the hotel manager and two policemen entered the room. Although beset by the difficulties of a foreign language, my parents finally clarified the situation, but not, however, before an excited crowd had gathered on the street beneath the balcony. I later found out that Lithuania was in a state of political unrest (as it was surrounded by Germany, Russia and Poland -- all who had territorial claims against this small country.). Thus, who knows, if I had lit a "six incher", I might have precipitated a revolution.

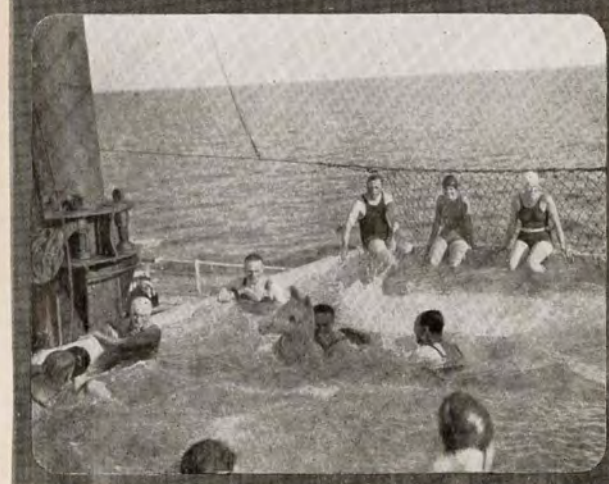
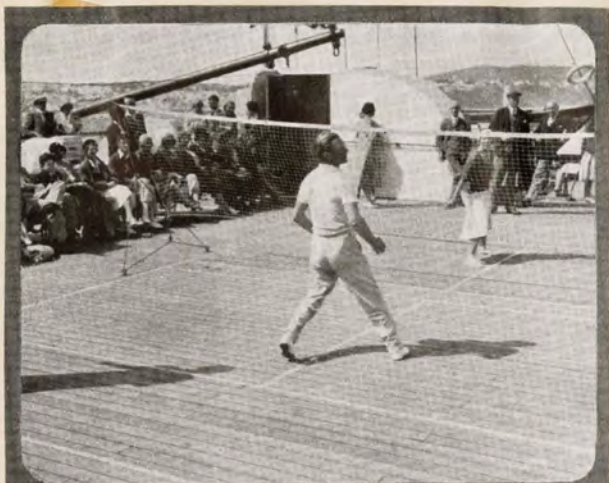
From Kaunas we went to my mother's birth place by car (a 1926 Chevrolet whose wheels came off during the journey). We finally covered the forty miles in six hours. It was in this **Small** community that I lived for the next month and a half. It was like living in another world, a world where modern conveniences were unknown. Hence, I was quite relieved when we boarded a train homeward bound.

From Lithuania we traveled through the Polish Corridor on into Germany through Berlin, ^{then} Belgium, and finally we stopped at Paris for a few days. Of all the places I visited in Europe, Paris was the most enjoyable. For the first time in months we ate

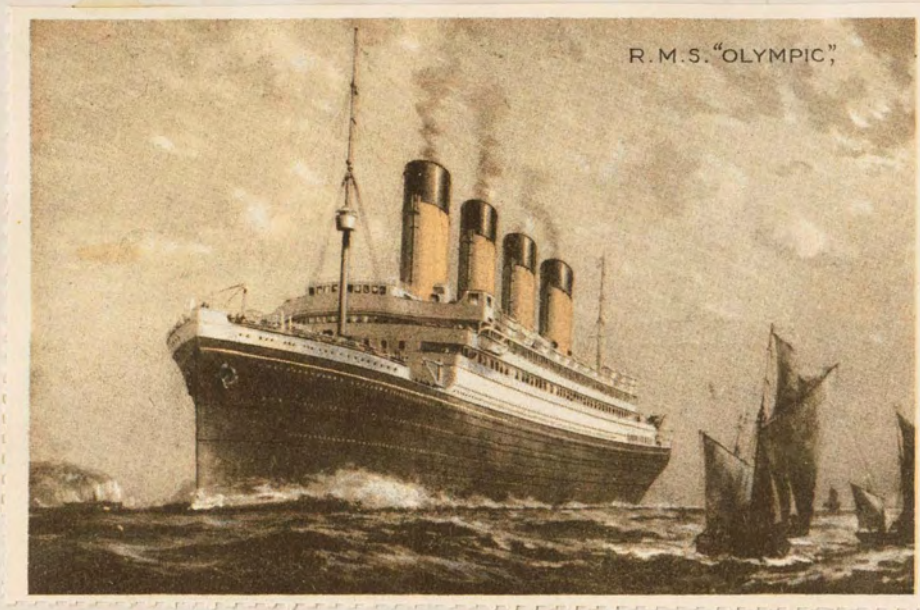
good food and stayed in a beautiful hotel. We enjoyed sight-seeing tours, visiting all the famous sites in Paris. Nevertheless, it was with alacrity that I left Paris to go to the French port of Cherbourg. At Cherbourg we boarded a ship which was to bear us home, the luxury liner "Olympic".

Except for the usual few days of sea-sickness I greatly enjoyed my ocean trip, even more~~so~~ because our destination was home. After five days I sighted the Statue of Liberty, and once more I was on free soil, fifteen pounds lighter, but twenty times happier than when I had left.

I shall never forget my trip to Europe, not alone because of the new peoples and lands that I had seen, or the varied experiences I had had, but also because of the deeper appreciation I had acquired of my native land, the United States of America.



"Deck tennis, quoits, moving pictures...were enjoyed..."



"the luxury liner Olympic..."

PARIS — Le Palais du Trocadéro et le Pont d'Iéna A. L.
Trocadero Palace and Iena Bridge



"We enjoyed sightseeing tours in Paris..."