

August 1987

This is Irma Kackert relating my trip to Australia, by myself, want to scuba dive there. I am on the bus from my home in Thousand Oaks, California, to LAX terminal in Los Angeles, there I will start my 3 week trip of adventure in that country. I make all the arrangements myself, don't use a travel agent. I had originally planned to take a trip to France, and meet friend Virginia Aubry there at this time, but her vacation dates were changed. I have the next 3 weeks off from my teaching position, hydrotherapy classes, so decided to go to Australia, and see the coral reef there. I planned it quickly, only 4 days ago. Yesterday I needed to go to the Australian Consulate in Los Angeles, to obtain my visa to enter the country, so left home at 6:25 a.m., trying to avoid rush hour traffic on the freeway. I found the proper building, but found the Consulate had moved recently – I searched out the new place and the proper office. When finally waited on by a clerk, they approved my application, but said they did not give out a visa on the same day of application! I explained that I had my plane reservation for tomorrow, needed the visa today. So, they made me wait all day, from my early arrival there, until 3:30, their closing time. But I did get the visa!! Driving back to Thousand Oaks in rush hour traffic was a hassle, but I made it o.k.

I am taking a medium sized suitcase, the leather duffel bag that I bought in Turkey, and a large shoulder bag, which I will also use as a purse. I will be taking a train and a bus in Australia, so don't want to take my very large suitcase, it is hard to get it onto a train. It will probably be cool in Sydney, so will need warm sweaters there, but the Queensland area will be tropical and warm, and summery clothing will be appropriate. I also am taking my own snorkel, dive mask and booties. I have traveled so much in the past few years, I have learned how to pack with the necessary items needed.

## **FRIDAY AUGUST 21**

I arrived at the airport at 6:30 p.m., to find that the flight was delayed from 8:15 p.m. departure time, to 9:30 p.m. so I had some time to wait. We took off at that time, and flew to Hawaii, then had to deplane and wait one hour in the transient lounge, for the next leg of the journey. It was 4:15 a.m. (or 1:15 a.m. Honolulu time) when we re-boarded. There was a large group of people waiting, including a group of women from the island of Tonga. They were all seated on the floor, for there were not enough chairs, were very friendly and spoke with me, saying they were returning to Tonga, from a visit with relatives in Los Angeles. They spoke on my tape recorder, in English, and then in the language of Tonga, it will be fun to listen to the tape in the future.

We next boarded a 747 plane, that would make a stop at Aukland, New Zealand before going on to Sydney, Australia. It was a LONG 9 hour flight, and looking outside noted that it never became daylight – we left LAX at 9:30 p.m. and were ahead of sunrise all the way. It finally came about 10:30 a.m. California time. There was a movie shown, Whoopie

Goldberg in "Burglar". Most people slept, and I did, just a little bit. I also played poker with a couple from Atlanta, Georgia, who sat next to me. I lost about \$1.50 in the game, but it was fun, and passed the time. Meals were served on the flight, and drinks were complimentary. On arrival in Auckland, we had to wait one hour, in the transient lounge. I could see that it was raining outside, and foggy. Walking through the gift shop I looked at lovely wool items of clothing, sheep raising is prevalent in this country. I changed \$2.00, just to get some coins from New Zealand. At 2:45 p.m. we took off again (after environmental officers came through the plane, and sprayed something, on interior of plane, and passengers (never saw that done before) for Sydney. We arrived there at 5:45 p.m., California time, or 11:00 a.m. Sydney time. Now it was time to change my watch. What a long trip this was, almost 16 hours on the way from LAX, 19 hours since I left my house. Going through immigration was easy, did not have to open suitcases. I changed money, \$200 into 274.64 Australian dollars, equivalent to about 1.22 AD for one USD. They also have coins called "cents" here.

I went to the Information desk, and got a hotel room, near the downtown area, and with breakfast, close to the things I want to see here. The airport bus took me into town, and to the hotel, but the driver delivered me to the wrong one! He carried my suitcase in, and then left. The desk clerk started to register me, but then looked at my voucher, and said "He brought you to the wrong hotel, you should be at the Great Southern hotel!" Great Balls of Fire!! She told me it was just 5 blocks away, right down the street, and using her directions, I walked it, made it o.k. This was not a good entry to Sydney, but it turned out all right. The hotel was adequate, large, clean room, a lounge area on each floor, and a small kitchen with electric kettle to make tea or coffee – kind of "homey". I relaxed a bit for a while, then looked at tour folders to see what is available here. At 1:30 p.m. I decided to go out and take a bus tour of the city, but first called Glen Donaghoe, Monika's friend whom I had met, visiting her, in Switzerland. He was at home, was very surprised that I was in Australia, and wanted to come to the hotel, pick me up, and take me around Sydney. He was now living back here. Within a half-hour, he arrived in the lobby, and took me out in his car, showed me around the water front, the garden park, and interesting areas. We walked through beautiful botanic gardens, near the art museum. He knew the names of all plants and trees, is studying in college for a degree in horticulture, and works part time for a nursery. He is a young man, Monika's age. We walked to the beautiful opera house, on the waterfront, which I've seen in pictures, so many times. It is unusual in architecture, was designed by a Scandinavian architect. I took a few pictures in the fading afternoon light. As it got dark, he drove to the Bondi beach area of Sydney, a name I had heard often. The sky became very dark with thick clouds, and then lightening flashes appeared, a very striking sight, we sat in the car for a bit and watched the display, then he suggested going to a coffee shop nearby (there were tourist shops all along here) and have a Cappuchino coffee. We did this, then walked a bit more, found a Lebanese restaurant nearby. I treated him, for his kindness, he had fellafel, and I had a schwarma, eastern food we both enjoyed. It was so good! Then he drove me back to my hotel, saying he would contact me again, while I was in Sydney. I retired soon, after showering. It has been a long time since I was in a bed, Thursday night, and now it is Sunday night Sydney is a very old city, in some areas there are very modern skyscrapers, and new buildings, but the charm of the old "row houses", which have been restored and purchased by the affluent population, was pleasant. Many have iron grillwork on the front porches, for decoration. This iron was made in

England, and used for ballast in sailing ships, that brought prisoners to Australia, from England. Then the ironwork was used for railings and various decorative effect, on the houses. We also saw the huge, beautiful, St. Mary's cathedral, built in the days of Queen Victoria. The weather was mild and warm, I expected it to be colder. Maybe I brought too many warm garments.

## **MONDAY AUGUST 24**

Yes, I had jet lag! I went to sleep about 9:30 p.m. and slept right away, awoke at 1;15 a.m., could not go back to sleep. This was the pattern I would endure each time I went back and forth from Saudi Arabia to America, the flight was so long. So, I got up, wrote in this journal for a while, read a magazine, and did some hand laundry of blouse and undies. But, I felt well, I am a good traveler. About 4:00 a.m. I laid down again, and fell asleep till 7:00 a.m. Then I rose, did floor exercises, dressed for the day, and went down to the dining room for breakfast. It was in a very large room, with elegant old, red, Victorian wallpaper. I selected juice, bran cereal, scrambled eggs, toast and coffee – all very good. Then I went to the train station, which was up the street 2 blocks away, and bought a ticket to go to the Blue Mountain area by train. This was about 60 miles west of Sydney, with elevation of 3400 feet, and a rift that goes on for many miles in the area. I read that it is bigger than the Grand Canyon in U.S.A., but different, for it is tree covered.

The ride took about 2 hours, and I found it very cold, when I arrived at the station. I had on a sweater, under my red nylon jacket, and was wearing my travel hat, but noted that people were wearing heavy winter jackets, warm caps, gloves and high boots. The wind just howled, I was having trouble standing erect! In the little station, I bought a ticket to take me out to a supposedly picturesque spot, "Echo Point". This is where the stone formation called "Three Sisters" stands (3 tall formations of rock). I exited the bus at the end of the line, looked out over the deep rift and the trees, and saw the rock formations. This area is now a state park and draws a lot of tourists. It was a most beautiful sight, and I wanted to get some pictures; it was so windy and cold, I had to hold onto a post near the gift shop, to be able to stand still and point the camera. The wind was so strong! I stepped back into the little shop, a lady there told me there was a footpath, going down to another scenic spot, and I wanted to walk there, it goes along a cliff. I expected to hike this path, but as I went out, some gusts almost knocked me over, the walk would take forty minutes, it was very cold, and I just decided to go back, get the bus and return to town. Arriving there, I sat in the little station, near the pot bellied stove, and took the train back to Sydney. I was cold all the way. When back in the station at Sydney, I ate in the restaurant there, had a very good fish meal and steaming hot coffee.

I returned to my hotel room briefly, then went exploring again. I had been told by Glen that the tall observation tower was down on George street, about 6 blocks from the hotel, so I walked slowly along, and found it. On the way I discovered a church, named St. Peter Julian, so I stopped in, made a short visit, then went on to the tower. Sydney is such a busy place, traffic is very fast, I walked carefully. I noted, as is true in most large cities of the world, old buildings are being torn down, and new skyscrapers are going up. The building cranes are everywhere. There is a great variety of ethnic population here, many Chinese and Indian persons noted, as I walked along. Also I saw small restaurants of so many

nations in the middle east, Thai, Japanese, Indian, Indonesian were noted. Just like Singapore, shops seen carrying merchandise from various countries, were plentiful. My hotel is close to the large Chinatown in Sydney, I was told.

I found the tower, called "Center Point", located in the midst of a one block square shopping mall. Here there are very expensive stores, with the tower rising above them. There is an elevator that carries you 330 meters up to the observation level. There are 4 levels up at the top, TV and communication offices are on the lowest level, shops and restaurants occupy the 2nd and 3rd levels, the top, or 4th level is for observing the city below, the harbor area, and ocean beyond. It was a spectacular sight, almost breathtaking. It was about 5:00 p.m. when I arrived, just before sunset. It is the fall of the year here now, opposite to our summer time. There were dark clouds to the west, that is the area where I was earlier today, and the sinking sun was behind them, making a lovely display. I took a couple of slides, hope it was not too dark, and they turn out well. Looking down, I could pick out the gardens where Glen and I walked, also the opera house, and ribbons of streets leading to the hotel where I am staying. My observations from up here will be one of the highlights of the trip, I am sure. Also videos could be viewed, showing the construction, which was done in 1981 and 1982. There was an entry fee of 3.50 AD, and I felt this was proper for the enjoyment of the "Center Point" experience. I stayed up until darkness fell, and I could watch the ribbon of car lights on streets below. They do have smog in Sydney, the air was not perfectly clear.

Walking back to my hotel, I stopped in a restaurant and ate dinner, then was ready to shower and retire on arrival. There is definite evidence of the English background here, (England governed here for many years), signs on buildings, the accent of speech, being a couple of them. I can understand the "Aussie" people much better than the English I worked with in Saudi Arabia. I miss the soft spoken friendliness of the middle east countries when I traveled there, especially Thailand. People are polite and friendly here, but don't offer conversation or ask where I'm from, or traveling to, as I often find in other countries when I travel alone. I would like to do a harbor cruise before I leave Sydney, maybe I can do it tomorrow. It is too bad Monika Schnarwiler, my friend, is not living here anymore, but she is back in Switzerland, her home country.

## **TUESDAY AUGUST 25**

I slept longer last night, jet lag was better, did not wake up until 3:30 a.m. I don't feel tired, that is great. I read for a while, wrote in the journal, then went back into the comfy bed. The wool blankets are covered with a thick, fluffy comforter, something like the bed-socks that are on the beds in Germany, nice and warm. I noted that this hotel has a laundry room on my floor, with washers and dryers that guests can use, after 3:30 p.m. It's too bad I don't have a lot of soiled clothes, but this is just the start of my trip. I like to stay in the Pension type hotels, because they have the conveniences of home. They are often in older buildings, with older furniture, but then I am old too, we go together! There is a television in a large room, on my floor, but I have not had time to watch it.

Now, I had a surprise – about 6:30 a.m., as I was about to rise, my phone rang, the desk clerk said there was a man in the lobby to see me. I said I would be right down, pulled on a

sweat suit quickly. It was Glen, on his way to work. He thought I might leave Sydney today, and he did not want to miss saying good-bye – or would I stay at his home a night or two and see more of this area. That was so nice of him. I said I was going to call friend Andrew in Brisbane, to complete my plans of visiting him there, he suggested I do it now. I did, reached Andrew, the result: I will spend another day here in Sydney as there are a few more places I would like to see, then Glen will pick me up at 4:00 p.m. today, as he finishes work, and take me to his home. I'll take the train tomorrow evening to Brisbane, and Andrew will meet me at the station. I did not expect these young men to treat me so generously, they are friends of Monika, whom I met with her while I traveled in the Philippines, and in Switzerland. What a nice way to start this day! After Glen left I went to the dining room for breakfast. It was a pretty room, very large, with dark furniture. I had juice, cereal, toast, bacon (the old fashioned kind, nice and meaty), eggs and coffee. Then I packed up my cases, checked out at 10:00 a.m., left the cases at the hotel in the luggage room, and will pick them up at 4:00 p.m. today.

I walked down George Street and stopped at St. Peter's church, made a short visit and thanked God for a fine, safe journey. At bus station 13, just a bit further down the street, I caught the "Explorer" bus, a service for tourists, to enable one to get off and on, at interesting places. The fee was 7.50 AD, the map given showed all the station numbers, and what was at that station. The weather was perfect, blue sky, sunshine, no wind, temperature was about 72 F. The driver called out interesting places as we drove on. Australia is going to celebrate their 200th anniversary next year, 1988. They keep the old buildings in good repair, and are building many, many new skyscrapers, 35, 40 and 50 stories high. It is a busy, busy city, the autos drive on the left side of the road, as in England. There is a Hyde Park area, a wonderful, old, Queen Victoria building, and customs are copied from the English, such as eating with knife in the right hand, fork in the left. I can often pick out people from England, on the airlines, eating with this particular trait. In Barbados I found similar traits, the result of English colonization there also.

I got off the bus at Sydney harbor, and took a ferry boat through the long, naturally enclosed area (with only a big gap where ships can go out to sea) to the little town of Manly, a development at the end of a long peninsula. There are white sand beaches on the inside area of the harbor, and on the open sea side, also many shops nearby. A promenade leads the short way to the Pacific beach side, this is lined with very large fir trees, native to the area. There was a curved bay, white sand, low waves rolling in and sun sparkling on the water, really a lovely sight. I sat on a low wall, above the beach area, and soaked in the beauty, eating some lunch I purchased, a good bacon sandwich and an apple. Then I walked back to the ferry landing and rode to the Sydney harbor again. Much reconstruction is going on, repairing sidewalks, docks, landing areas, etc. A huge skyscraper is going up, dwarfing the old customs building at the harbor landing. I guess that is progress.

I caught the Explorer bus again and rode to the next stop, the world famous Sydney Opera House. It sits on the waterfront, and is shaped so differently, resembling white shells reaching to the sky! An architect from Denmark, Jan Osten, designed it. When it was partially built, the exterior completed but not the interior, he came to a disagreement with the government of Australia, and he left the country and never returned. Other architects had to finish the interior halls, 3 of them. It was finally completed eleven years later. I

learned these facts, and more, when I took the guided tour, for the inexpensive fee of 3.50AD. It was started in 1968, and is so different in design and construction, was fascinating to go through it. At the south foyer, where one has to walk up about 300 steps to reach it, one can look out of the glass walled area to the beautiful arched bridge beyond, the harbor below, the sun deck, and downtown area across the water. The steps were purposely put in, in place of elevators (except for handicapped patrons), for the architect thought persons would benefit by the physical exercise, getting more oxygen into their lungs, which would make the brain more receptive to the music or drama.

The first theater, smallest one, seating 550 people, is for drama and ballet presentations. Next we went into the opera theater, which seats 1500 persons, the acoustics here rate the 3rd best in the world: Berlin rates first, Copenhagen second. The seats are made of white birch wood, native to Australia, and upholstered in red Australian wool fabric. The stage has 2 revolving platforms, the scenery is stored up above, and lowered as needed. Tickets for performances range from 65AD down to 25; there are some box seats on each side of the upper two levels which are used mainly for storing equipment, for sound, lighting, etc., but occupants can sit there and not see all of the stage. They listen to the music, and the seats are sold for 10AD.

The next was the largest, the concert hall, a separate "shell", or building. This is huge, holds 2700 people, and the Sydney Philharmonic orchestra gives concerts here, plus other noted singers and artists. Again, the seats are shaped of white birch and are upholstered in Australian leather. A huge pipe organ is situated up very high, the operator's back is to the audience, he sees the conductor through closed-circuit TV. The air conditioning, heating and lighting bills amount to over one million dollars a year! This was such an interesting tour, was glad I could do it. I walked back to the bus stop and noted that the roads in the area were being repaired, they were of square blocks of wood, pounded down into the dirt, similar to old cobblestone roads. There was very little parking area near the opera, cars had to park in a parking garage, in another area, and then take a shuttle bus.

Again I rode the bus around the rest of the route, seeing beautiful parks, interesting buildings, old areas, the Kings Cross district, Elizabeth bay, then back to the train station. I alighted there, and walked to my hotel, a block away. I picked up my bags there, then waited 5 minutes, Glen arrived and drove me to his house. He rents the house, and lets out rooms, to share expenses. Two young women and a young man are renters now. We sat together for a bit, had coffee, and talked over past times. He built a fire in the fireplace, then we had a good dinner of vegetables, spinach noodles and potatoes. We also had wine with the meal, an Australian Chablis. I gave him some money, knowing he is a student, they always are short of funds. I know, having had children in college. On retiring, I slept in one of the 5 bedrooms, comfortably, under a big down comforter, a very puffy one. I slept well. This was a great day, I never thought I would be inside the great Sydney Opera House – if I was remaining here longer, I would attend a performance. I should mention here, that during the day I changed money at a bank, obtained 408.16 AD for \$300. Rate: for 73.5 cents of U.S. money I received 1 Australian Dollar.

**WEDNESDAY AUGUST 26**

I woke at 3:30 a.m., (still have jet lag) but felt rested, and was comfortable under the wool blanket and comforter on top. The room was cool. About 5:00 a.m. I fell back to sleep for a short time, about 2 hours later I rose, dressed, and went to the dining room. I had breakfast with Glen, and after that he suggested a walk along the cliff area of Bondi beach, which was not too far from his home. We took his dog "Woofie", a large German Shepard, which he was training. First we walked down near the beach, then climbed to the upper cliff area. It was sunny, bright and cool when we started, but after an hour it warmed up and I removed my sweater, the sun felt so good on my arms. Woofie was started in obedience class when Monika was here, and Glen continues the training. He behaved very well as we walked along for about 2 hours, the path was of cement in some parts, and there were many joggers making use of it. Houses were built very close to the sea, and sometimes there were small parks and picnic areas along the way. What a beautiful spot!

There was a valley to walk through, as we circled back, it was wooded and grassy. Glen knew the names of most of the trees and bushes, explained them to me. He is an interesting young man, 26 years old. Our walk continued back to the residential area, through a small park and up a very high hill, where we had a beautiful view of the sea and town. Glen said he went to grade school in this area, when he was young. We rested a bit there, then returned to Ocean Street. We passed such a pretty house, the porch was decorated with the white ironwork I mentioned previously. An elderly couple was just coming out of the gate, I talked to them, and took their picture. This has been their home for 45 years, and they've lived happily here.

Back at Glen's home we dined on spinach quiche and yogurt, plus a cup of tea. I packed my suitcase and readied myself for the drive to the train station. On the way I asked Glen to stop at the St. Mary Catholic Cathedral, and he did have time to do that. He had to be at a college class at 3:00 p.m. The church is made of sandstone blocks, is very high, and is the largest cathedral in the southern hemisphere. The stained glass windows were beautiful, the Gothic architecture majestic. We each burned a candle, knelt a few minutes before leaving. I thanked him for giving me the opportunity to see this church. He drove on to the train station, I bought my ticket, and thanked him again for his hospitality. I checked my bags, for the train, then had time to walk out and go down George Street again. The area is quite familiar to me now. Later I turned down a side street, where there were food shops, Korean, Japanese, Chinese, Thai. I chose one and had fish ball ichowder, very much like that I had often on the beach at Bali. It was spicy hot, and contained good rice noodles. After that I returned slowly to the train station, sat there until 5:15 p.m., then boarded the Brisbane Limited. The ticket agent told me I was lucky – there is a special price going into effect today, called STAND BY, whereby the ticket purchased after 2:00 p.m. on the day of travel, costs 35AD instead of 69AD. I was fortunate. The conductor gave me a seat next to the window, for which I had asked. We left promptly at 6:00 p.m. A gentleman nearby was very talkative, said he was from Brisbane and offered information about the area. He told me about laying the track for the railroad, when it was started, and American surveyors had done the great planning for the "border loop", the method used to get the train up over the mountain. There was food service on the train.

## THURSDAY AUGUST 27

I didn't have a very comfortable night, for the coach was chilly and I did not have a blanket. I had brought a sweat shirt and a sweater along and expected to use them as a pillow, but instead wore the sweat shirt and covered my lap and legs with the sweater. I couldn't sleep much, feeling cold. At daybreak, heavy mists hung over hillsides and low bogs, then the sun came up and cleared the mist away. The sun felt good as it shined on me through the window. The train traveled very fast, and it was not a bad ride; I had coffee, toast, jam and fruit served from a cart the attendant pushed through the aisle. The man from Brisbane came to my seat again and talked more about the rail line, Brisbane, and Australian affairs. He was very interesting.

Arriving in Brisbane, I found a new, wonderful transit building where trains, long distance and local buses, and taxis arrive and depart. There was ample car parking, many shops and food booths, a very convenient transportation center. Next year the World Fair Expo 88 will go on here, and they have done building to accommodate the crowds. I left my bags in the luggage room, and walked to a plaza about 5 blocks down the street, exploring the area. It was a spring-like day, part sun, part clouds. Later I walked back to the transit station and ate, chose good Aussie roast beef and vegetables. A lady and her daughter sitting near me, were friendly, talked about Newcastle where they resided, and said I must go there in my travels, it has lovely beaches and many vineyards.

I then went to the spot where Andrew said I should wait, and he appeared soon, greeted me warmly. He took my bags and escorted me down to street level, where Alison (one of the young women who rent a room at his house) was waiting in the car. They had both just come from work. It was great to see Andrew again, the last time we were together was in 1983, on Boracay Island in the Philippines. Monika, her brother, Andrew and I went there to snorkel in the beautiful China Sea. We drove to Andrew's house, which he rents and lets out 2 rooms, like Glen. It was in a nice residential area, the city looked hilly in part, yards had grass and flowers, everything was clean and well kept. We sat on the back porch, visited, had a glass of beer. Alison is a scuba dive instructor and works with a dive shop group, she explained much about the Great Barrier Reef, which starts north of here, and where I expect to do some scuba diving. I saw such wonderful corals and fishes in the Red Sea as I did many dives there, and want to compare the sights here. The other young woman who lives here also, came home, her name was Jackie and she was from England.

Andrew made a dinner of fresh trout and vegetables, accompanied by a glass of white wine, made in Australia. It was very good. I had suggested I go to a hotel in Brisbane, but Andrew had said "no, you will stay with me at my home". He put a folding bed on one side of the living room, for me, said we would all share the house comfortably. I was tired, for didn't sleep much last night on the train, so was happy to retire. I felt o.k.

## FRIDAY AUGUST 28

I slept quite well, the house was cool so I wore a sweat shirt over my light weight pajamas, and was comfortable. They do not have any heating facilities in the house, this area never gets very cold. It is the end of the winter season here, just opposite to our climate in



America. Andrew and Jackie went to work before 9:00 a.m., I took the opportunity to do some hand laundry and hang it out on the line in the yard. Alison said she was taking the city bus, which ran right past the house, to the University, where she is studying for a degree in Zoology and Marine Biology. I could ride with her to the town center and she would guide me to the government tourist center there, where I could get much information. The bus fare was a 1 AD coin. At the center I booked an afternoon tour of the city, which left at 1:00 p.m., so I had time to shop in a couple of stores, purchased some post cards and a T shirt.

The bus took us to a high lookout over the Brisbane river, where boat regattas are held, and saw the old buildings provided for the social functions related to those times. There were many older houses seen, decorated with the white iron work brought from England. We went to Mt. Cook, a very high spot where one had a 180 degree view of the city below, and toward the Botanic Gardens, where the coral trees (with red flowers), native eucalyptus, other trees and bushes are planted. There was also a large, domed building where tropical flowers, plants and palm trees were seen inside. The Lone Pine Center was visited next, here we saw koala bears on the branches of eucalyptus trees – they eat only these leaves for their food – are so cute, almost like a teddy bear. Their front feet have only 3 phalanges, like 2 thumbs and a middle one, all have very sharp nails. All native animals of Australia were on view, cages of cockatoos, cockatiels, parrots, lizards, turtles, snakes; kangaroos and wallabies were in separate areas.

We arrived back at town center about 5:30 p.m., in the midst of busy traffic. It did move easily, but slow, better than some large cities I have visited throughout the world. The population of Brisbane is one million people. I waited at the local bus stop for bus number 144, and rode it back to 38 Richmond street, near Andrew's house. I watched carefully as we rode, and did get off at the right corner, it was just getting dark. Jackie was having a lady friend over to visit, and had prepared a meal, invited me to eat with them. She made a delicious chicken curry, beets with chopped onions, yogurt, humus, and strawberries with ice cream for dessert, all so good! When finished, I washed all the dishes, told the others to go into the living room and visit, for I appreciated eating with them.

## **SATURDAY AUGUST 29**

I slept well, but awakened very early, as is usual. I stayed in bed until 7:45 a.m., then did some floor exercises, and had breakfast. Andrew did not have to work today, said he would drive me out of the city, to the rain forest west of the city, a mountainous area with heavy wooded growth. He removed the top from his Jeep auto, we drove away about 10:00 a.m., wind blowing through our hair, so I put on my Safari hat. It was sunny and nice and warm. We drove about 40 miles, in some places there were majestic views of coral sea beyond, city views below, and valleys spreading far. Arriving at the rain forest we walked, observed eucalyptus trees, so tall, some very large in circumference, palm trees, ferns on the ground, and also fern trees. Various vines hung from trees, many bushes with flowers in bloom. Andrew knew the names of most all of them, gave interesting comment as we walked the trail, about 2 kilometers long. We came upon a very pretty waterfall, then turned back to the entrance area, where there was a grassy, picnic spot. Some people were having bar-b-q meals there, the roasting food smelt good. I treated Andrew to lunch

at a restaurant surrounded by a huge growth of trees, had super ham, cheese, tomato sandwiches, and apple pie with cream smothering it – yum, yum!

Next he drove for another 2 hours, to different areas of national forest, and to a spot with plaques and information signs about the gold mines that had been here between 1890 and about 1945. We stopped, walked to where one could look down into a mine shaft (protected with low fence so one could not fall into it), and see the solid rock the miners had to dig through to get to the veins below. The mines were not profitable, though people thought they would find a huge gold strike, as happened in California in 1848, and they were abandoned. The state here did a nice job in preserving some areas to view. In the rain forest we would hear the sharp call of the WHIP bird, and the cat bird's call, almost like a cat's meow. These birds are native to the area. We also saw some scrub turkeys walking around, in a cleared area, I took a picture of them. This was such a nice event, for Andrew to take me into the rain forest, but he said it was his pleasure, for it is one of his favorite places to go. On the way back, stopped at a store and I bought him some groceries, and a bottle of wine. He looked in a telephone book, and found the address of a Catholic church near his home, there is a mass tomorrow morning at 8:00 a.m., and I can walk there.

## **SUNDAY AUGUST 30**

I rose about 6:15a.m., slept so well, guess I am over jet lag now. It was beautifully sunny, but clouds soon came in view, the temperature was about 70 F. I put on a dress and sleeveless sweater, and started for the church. I was early, so walked on a couple of different streets, admiring the neat houses, and pretty yards. Most of the houses are set on poles, above the ground, so air circulates underneath, and also because they have infestation of termites. As I neared the church, a young woman stopped her car and offered me a ride. I said "I am only going to the church ahead", but she still offered, she was going there too, and played the guitar at mass. I accepted. How friendly people are here. When the mass ended, the lady in the pew ahead of me turned and greeted me, asked if I was a new parishioner, I said no, that I was traveling, and seeing Australia. She and her husband carried on a nice conversation with me following that. Outside the church, the priest greeted me, asked my name, and welcomed me. As I walked toward Andrew's house, a lady who had been at the mass, entered her gate ahead of me, then turned and welcomed me as a visitor to her country. People are so friendly here!

About 11:30 a.m. I went downtown, by bus, wanted to go to the Natural History Museum, where Andrew works, but first I sat in the plaza area just to enjoy the sun, observe people, wrote on a couple post cards. Then I walked to the transit area nearby, got some information on cities between Brisbane and Cairns, which is far north and where the climate is tropical. I also learned about returning to Sydney by a bus, instead of the train. I lunched on a beef and bacon pie, typical "Aussie" food. It was very good. I walked to the river, quite a few blocks away, was ready to cross the long bridge toward the museum, when it clouded up and looked like it would rain soon. Not wanting to be caught, and have wet clothing to pack (I am leaving Brisbane early tomorrow morning) I decided to turn back and take the bus, I arrived just before there was a light shower. Andrew had spent the day at home, studying subjects he is taking toward his degree. He expects to complete this

next year. Alison and Jackie had been gone all day, to Alison's parent's town, they returned about the time I did, and a meal of chile, rice, sour cream and cheese was made. We all made a toast to friendship, with a bottle of champagne I had purchased. We had fun together, as we ate. In the evening all watched TV, the "Living Planet" program, and then "Mad Max," a weird show about post-nuclear war. I said my good-bye's to the girls, as I will leave early in the morning.

## **MONDAY AUGUST 31**

Awoke early, as I always do when traveling by train, bus or airplane, rose at 5:00 a.m., dressed, and put last things into suitcase. I will carry the purse/bag and other shoulder bag, and have my navy color knit coat, a big towel and a sweat shirt in it. These I can use for a cover-up on the train, don't want to be chilly, as I was on the trip from Sydney. Alison was up early too, she drove the school truck here last night, has to be at the marine research station for 36 hours of duty, will be on a vessel performing various duties at sea. They count various types of fish, examine the stomach content, of certain kinds, etc. She will probably be an important marine scientist someday, likes the work very much.

Andrew drove me, in the 4 wheel Jeep, to the transit station, where the train departs. I left \$10 on my pillow, for "taxi" service. He carried my bags to the train, put them on for me, and invited me to stop again, on my way back from Cairns to Sydney. He is such a nice friend! The train departed at 7:15 a.m. and we were soon rolling along through the countryside, forest, mainly eucalyptus trees, but with banana and palm trees seen now and then. Sometime there were sudden, huge rock formations sticking up, one was called "glasshouse mountain", looked rather strange. A lady sitting next to me commented that kangaroos live in the area and could be seen, probably in early morning, or at dusk. The train is very nice, there are tray tables at each seat, and seats recline, are comfortable. There is a shower room plus small separate wash room at one end of the train, toilets at the other end – a packet of soap and disposable towel are at each seat. This is the first time I have encountered a shower room, on a coach train. We pass by workers for the railroad, maintaining tracks along the way. Some of them are red haired, red bearded, large husky men, bare to the waist and wearing shorts and the Aussie brimmed hat. We slowed at a small town, passed a cemetery and noted the tall, thin markers standing at the head of the solid cement slab they put over graves here. Every country I travel in has a different mode of burial grounds, it is interesting to me to note this. The sky was cloudy and grey, but gradually more and more blue appeared.

Later, passed Bundaberg, an area mainly agricultural; sugar cane is grown extensively here, and rum is distilled in several places. I've seen sugar cane growing in Puerto Rico and in China, went through the sugar processing mill in Puerto Rico. I did note a couple of fields here with pineapple plants, also a river with irrigation canals from it, to nourish the crops. Quite a few people got off at the next town, including the young Australian woman sitting next to me, she was pleasant, had loaned me her travel book of Australia, with names of hotels, interesting places to see, etc. She hopes to go to Cairns later on, to river-raft there. We stopped at Rockhampton, where we could get out and walk a bit, to stretch legs. I mailed my post cards there; stopped again at another small town, left there about 9:30 p.m. I felt I had seen a lot of the country today, from the train.

## **TUESDAY SEPTEMBER 1**

I slept well, had a window seat and no one next to me, so could put the folded sweat shirt and towel behind my head, with seat back, and cover with the knit coat. I was very comfortable, not cold as on the previous train trip. Awoke about 4:45 a.m., stretched a bit, then took a shower. Most all people were still asleep, no other early risers. The shower room was all of stainless steel, walls, floor, etc., the water was nice and warm and felt good. The soap and 2 paper towels furnished, were adequate, everything was clean, and I enjoyed feeling fresh, this was my first experience of a shower on a coach train. I don't know of this feature on trains in America. At 6:30 a.m. we stopped at Prosperpine, and, close to sugar cane fields seen, was a molasses and sugar processing mill. This is still an agricultural area.

Just at dusk last evening, I watched closely out of the window, and 3 different times I saw a kangaroo hopping along in the distance. I was hoping I would see some of them from the train. I was in the lounge car, where I sat awhile and had a glass of the local beer, also talked with an Australian lady and 3 young Aussie lads who worked on the railroad. They said the kangaroos really are a nuisance, so plentiful, they run out on the road and are hit by autos, usually wrecking the car. That is like the camels in Saudi Arabia, the same thing happens with camels there. Australia raises many cattle, for beef, and I saw a lot of them grazing in fields. Later, back in my seat, a lady showed me a new Solitaire card game called "Patience": place a deck of cards, face down, in a clock formation, then proceed to pick up the card in number 1, (the Ace) position, place it where it belongs numerically, face up, and pull out the bottom card, look at it, place face up, where it belongs on the "clock". The Kings are placed in the center. Continue picking up each card, 2 is next, etc. When all 4 Kings are in the center, face up, you lose, the game is over. All the down cards can be counted against you, if you wish to keep score. This lady was very friendly, but a great talker!

This train route is inland, there is a low mountain range to the east and the Pacific ocean is beyond that, about 25 or 30 miles, I was told. It is bright and sunny this morning. Sugar cane and cattle seem to be the economic picture, as we went along, there were not many forested areas seen any more. As we proceeded and were about an hour before the city of Townsville, on the coast, low marshes were seen. I did see 2 small kangaroos, or wallabies, sitting in a field, also saw a lot of horses grazing. I noted large termite mounds on the ground, in some places. We made several brief stops, at small towns. At one spot I saw smoke rising far off, to the right, and thought it was from burning of the sugar cane, but then could see it was from a tree covered low mountain, or hill. They are probably only about 1500 feet high in this area. I have decided to get off the train at Townsville, try to do a scuba dive, and then go on to Cairns later. I can use the same ticket, am allowed to get off the train, and continue on later.

Arrival at Townsville was at 1:30 p.m., and I left the train there. I had some information about the area, from the Australian tourist book, it described a real "old time" hotel, close to the station. I like to stay in this type accommodation. I found it, very close to the station, just across the street, called the Great Northern, and built in 1900. There was a pub

downstairs, a wide dark wood staircase led to the registration on the second floor. I registered, obtained a room, very plain, but with sink and running water, twin beds, a table and chairs. Showers, tubs, toilets (for ladies only) were down the corridor, a separate area for men was in a different area. Everything was very clean. There was a wide veranda going all around the building, I could enter it from my room, there were a few tables and chairs out there. Around to the back of the building, off of the veranda, were stationary tubs, clotheslines, ironing board and iron, for the convenience of hotel patrons. For the price of the room, 16 AD, it surely was convenient, had all necessities. I rested a bit, then went out and explored the nearby area. After walking around for a short time, I went into the pub and had a chicken dinner, and a glass of beer. I was told by several Aussie people, that the pub is the place to eat, for you will get very good food, men, women and families frequent the pubs. The restaurant area was quite large, the food was plentiful and very good. When traveling, in most countries, I will drink beer with meals instead of water, for I am not always sure the water is safe to drink, but I need hydration, and beer is safe. I have learned this through travel information, beer is pasteurized in the bottle, and microbes cannot live in it's acid content.

After eating I walked toward the mall, about 2 blocks down the street, there was an information kiosk there. On inquiry, I learned there was a dive shop just 4 blocks away: I went there, and booked a dive for tomorrow, will go out for a ride 1 ½ hours from shore, on a boat called the "Reef Link". It will take divers and snorkelers, wet suits, tank, regulator and pressure gauge will be furnished. I have my own mask and snorkel. Then I walked toward the waterfront, there was a marine area and a small beach. It was warm and sunny, weather very pleasant, most people were in shorts and summer clothing. I noted that male workers, along the rail tracks and at other projects, all wore shorts and the broad brimmed hat, that seemed to be the universal style. It looks nice.

## **WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 2**

The hotel was very noisy last night (I was warned there would be a bus load of young people, on holiday), staying here. There was loud laughter, people running down the hall, calling to each other, when they arrived and until about 10:00 p.m. Then they all went "out on the town" and I slept until I heard them come back at 1:30 a.m., but I went to sleep again. I left the hotel at 8:15 a.m. and walked to the dive shop. They had told me that I could ride this morning, to the launch area, in their truck, which would be taking tanks and equipment for the dive. At the Reef Link we were joined by a dive instructor and 6 students, who were going to make their second open water dive. There were other tourists also, some were going to snorkel, others just taking the boat ride. It was a large craft, could hold a hundred people. All my equipment was given to me, it was in a plastic crate, the tanks of air were put on board.

We left shore at 9:30 a.m., sea was calm, sun shining, no wind – in fact, a perfect day with temperature of 25C. I had taken a Marazene tablet, in case there was a rough sea. As we rode along, a tape was shown of the fish and corals common to the Great Barrier Reef, and I can truthfully say I have seen them all, in my dives in the Red Sea. Now I will compare them here. Arriving near the reef, we stopped at an anchored platform, got off there, and put on wet suit, and readied to dive. The scuba divers were taken in a small tender to a

spot further out, we then entered the water. I did not want to hurt my back by carrying the heavy tank, so Steve Balson, my divemaster and buddy, put it on my after I slipped over the side, into the water. The divemaster, Fergie, in the Caribbean also did that for me when I dived in Barbados. I am traveling alone, carrying two suitcases, so I can't afford to injure my back and have pain.

The water was crystal clear, as I descended it was a beautiful sight: plenty of fish of many varieties, the coral was colorful, there were caves, tunnels and some bommies (big coral heads). Overall I don't think the corals were as colorful as those in the Red Sea, but I have heard that the crown-of-thorns starfish have invaded large areas of the reef here, leaving it dead and grey looking. It felt so good to be down amongst the fish again, I was relaxed as soon as I cleared my ears, and was swimming freely. Steve and I did not go really deep, the floor was only about 60 feet down, we did descend there. I followed him, there were cliffs, caves, tunnels, we went through two of them, so narrow that my regulator hose caught on a coral crag and it almost was pulled out of my mouth. I scraped my arm on a sharp coral, it bled a tiny bit – felt this was just like diving in the Red Sea, I always came out with a few coral cuts! In one tunnel we found a very large toadfish, about 45" long, and thick, the biggest one I've seen: it has big round eyes, a whitish mouth, black and white spots on the upper body, and stripes below. We often saw them, partially hidden in a cave, with only the heads sticking out. This one was lying on the bottom, very quiet, Steve approached it, stroked it, and motioned for me to do the same. I did so, then it swam away. This is the first time I've stroked a fish underwater, though I've held a puffer fish by the tail once. Exciting incidents!

The hydroids seen were plentiful, and in colors of green, tan, black and orange. I saw 3 different starfish, a species new to me, tan in color, very puffy and thick, smooth and with a few spots. There were also many large clams seen. We were down 55 minutes, this was about my 60th logged dive, and I thoroughly enjoyed it. Returning to the boat, we had hot coffee and cookies, and warmed up a bit. Then, put the wet suit jacket on again and prepared for another dive. This time I stood on the in-water platform at the back of the "Reef Link", put the tank on there, and dropped into the water. We were back near the platform, I went down alone and watched the many large fish here. I think they often feed the fish at this spot, so they stay in the area. For this dive I rented whole-foot flippers, and wore socks, so the fins did not rub against skin. Steve was busy with a student, I was alone for a short time, enjoying myself, then he descended and we searched out more coral formations, and many different kinds of fish, was down about 45 minutes with him. Then it was time to return to the platform, and get ready to depart, return to shore. Lunch had been saved for us, of shrimp, chicken, vegetables, cold slaw, rice, and cucumbers. I was hungry, and it tasted very good.

There had been a dive accident, just before we arrived at the platform: a scientist on a research ship had the "bends" after surfacing too fast from a dive. A radio dispatch had sent a helicopter out, to land on a platform anchored out here, for that purpose. The victim was being taken, right past us, over to the helicopter, to be transported to a hospital. I took a picture of the departing helicopter. I hope the victim does not die, we could see him on the stretcher, as they went to the helicopter. All in all, I had 2 pretty good dives, though I did not know I would be going out on a tourist-type boat. The dive shop has it's own dive boat,

but only uses it on 3, 4, or 5 day trips to different places. These are very expensive, also I don't have time to do that here, want to get to Cairns and dive there. About 3:45 we started back to shore, arrived about 5:30 p.m. I walked back, through the mall, and to the hotel, had food on the way. Now, I am sitting on the nice veranda, in fading daylight, recording my day, and giving thanks to God for such a good one!

### THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 3

Another day! Bright blue sky, sunshine, no wind, temperature must be about 80 F (30 C), and I would call it perfect. I'm sitting on the wide veranda outside my room, having breakfast. The street below is busy with moving traffic, Townsville is a port city, on a bay of the South Pacific, this region is called the Coral Sea. Yesterday I was down in it, enjoying it's colorful coral. I feel good about my dives here, am glad I could accomplish them. Looking around, as I sit here, I note there is a high bluff beyond the shore area, and houses have been erected there. A park has been made along the waterside, and a new, large marina has been built next to it. There are very tall palm trees all along the boulevard below me, making it very scenic. I note many varieties of eucalyptus trees, also hibiscus, oleander, bougainvillea and powder puff bushes grow in yards. Garden flowers are seen everywhere, it is a pretty town.

I went over to the train station about 9:00 a.m., and made a reservation to take the train to Cairns tomorrow, it leaves here at 12:30 p.m. Next I walked to a hotel nearby, that also has one in Cairns, and I made a reservation to stay there. It will be dark when I arrive in Cairns and I want to have a hotel reserved. Then I checked at a video store to see if I could use my recorder, on electric current, with the adapter I have, but it will not work in this country, wrong voltage. I did use it in some countries, but will have to continue with batteries here. I wanted to be in the sun today, so walked leisurely to the lovely outdoor swim pool down by the waterside, and had a swim. It is about 25 meters long, very nice, and in a lovely setting. There were some very good swimmers doing laps in the pool, as I did mine. I got out, rested a bit on a lounge, then swam again. After finishing I purchased some fruit and ate it, feeling good. The stinging jellyfish are in the waters here at this time, it is the season for them, so not many people swim at the beach. I was stung once by them, when swimming in the Straits of Malacca, Malaysia.

On the way back to the hotel, I stopped in the Barrier Reef Aquarium, a 2 story high building with huge tanks inside. Many varieties of corals, anemones, hydroids, mollusks, sea cucumbers and fish are seen – on one side are tanks holding predator type, the other side has all the other kind of fish: parrot, wrasse, fusilieers, bat fish, groupers, damsel, humbug (sergeant majors), and emperor angel fish. The water was not very clear, I was disappointed to note that. There were smaller exhibits of tanks with crayfish, butterfly cod, shrimp, gobies, and clown fish, much nicer to observe, because the water was clear. Many photos, enlarged and with descriptions, gave information about the reef life here. The fee was 6 AD to enter, Townsvile is a tourist center, they capitalize on their location near the reef.

**FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 4**

Awoke to another beautiful day, guess this is the ideal weather time here, for later on it gets very hot, I am told. I had breakfast at a restaurant, they had delicious bakery items and I enjoyed some with my eggs and coffee. Next I went to a bank and changed \$200 into 271.74 AD and cents, the rate was .73 U.S. cents for 1 AD. There is a fee of 5 AD for changing traveler's checks, plus 10 cents each, for a certification stamp – that was different than most countries. I also purchased a blank audio tape, I have already filled a 90 minute one, need another. It cost 3.99 AD. I feel prices are high here in Australia, except the hotel I stayed in. Going back to my room, I packed my bags and checked out at 11:00 a.m. I pulled them across the street to the station and waited for the train at noon.

LATER - I am on the train now, have passed through some "bush" country, which is mainly forests. Some trees are cut for lumber, could note these places and saw sawmills nearby. Then there was more agricultural land, sugar cane, pineapple, banana fields. I noted, at dark, burning of the sugar cane fields, that will be cut tomorrow. They do this to get rid of the dry growth at the bottom of the canes, it promotes the sugar content also. The canes are cut by machine now, and taken to the sugar mill where molasses and brown sugar are processed. Later, in the club car, I had some food, and talked with 2 Australian men who gave me much information. The story is that the Aborigines, who were early inhabitants here, started burning the fields to get rid of the snakes, for they cut by hand in those early days. Now, machines cut the canes, but the burning still goes on the night before cutting. --  
-- Just saw another large, burning area, it looks startling against the darkness.

The train arrived at Cairns (pronounced Kanes here) at 9:00 p.m., an hour late. After collecting my bags from the baggage department, I took a taxi to the small hotel, where I had reserved a room. It was only 3 blocks from the station, but not knowing my way, and in darkness, I would not attempt to walk it. The room was clean, sparse, but with all necessities, it had twin beds, and I used one to spread suitcase and other bags out. I had a shower, and retired soon, for it felt good to stretch out and relax after the long ride. The weather here is quite warm, the temperature rises as you go north, Australia is below the equator.

**SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 5**

Awoke very early, as is my custom, and felt very good because I slept well. I rose, did some exercises, dressed, and went down to the first floor dining room. My room is on the second floor. Breakfast, which is included in room rate, consisted of juice, cereal, milk, toast, marmalade and coffee – eggs and bacon were an extra fee. I had looked at pamphlets showing different activities here, and decided to take the narrow gauge rail train to the mountain top, little town of Karanda. The train was established in 1900, was a difficult project to lay rails up to the top, most was done by manual labor, as there were not the big machines that we have today. The rail cars have been restored to their original, unique beauty: wood shutters, that could be raised, were over the glass, beautifully etched windows. The seats are of dark wood, upholstered in red leather, and are a bench-type, extend from one wall across to the single aisle on the other side of the car. The emergency



pull cord (there is a 10AD fine for misuse), is still in place. The windows slid down easily, so one could lean out a bit, observe scenery, and take pictures.

It was a scenic trip, after leaving foothills outside of the city of Cairns, we ascended slowly through thick rain forest (the term here for dense tree growth), noted flowering vines, and sometimes orchid plants growing. As we went higher, the palm trees and deciduous kinds disappeared, and conifers were seen. There were several varieties, some had very lacy-like branches, others were the huge pine trees seen in most mountain forests. There were many breathtaking views, sometimes looking down into a deep gorge of the Baron River, and once the ocean, glistening in the distance, could be seen. We made a short stop at a waterfall, that fell in two levels, into the river below, I took pictures there. In about 1 1/2 hours we arrived at the top, and the Karanda train station, vintage 1915. It has not been changed, was charming to see, there was a very wide roof overhang on each side, extending over wood platforms. Under the roof, at various sites, were huge hanging baskets of ferns, orchids, and several varieties of epiphyte plants, sometimes called staghorn ferns. These grow in tropical climates, sometimes called "air plants" because they do not need soil, to grow. Mistletoe is in this genus of plants, grows off of a tree. I walked through the little village, there was not much to explore, but I did note quite a few Aboriginals, men and women, walking around and some of them were muttering to themselves, and appeared as having too much alcohol to drink. They receive a stipend from the Australian government monthly, and sometimes use it quickly, to buy beer, instead of food. This area is inhabited by many of them. I inquired at the little post-office, about going back to Cairns on a bus, instead of the train, was told it would leave in fifteen minutes. I bought a ticket for 4 AD (you had to give your name, it was put on the ticket) and rode back down the mountain. That was quicker, the road was twisty, but good, was not as scenic as the train ride.

Back in Cairns I walked around and explored, went down to the shoreline, found it was a wide, flat, muddy area. They do not have a nice beach, though there is a park with grass and benches. I checked travel agencies, and there booked a Monday morning trip, to ride the rapids on the Baron River, also a one-day scuba dive trip for Tuesday. Most of the dive trips offered were for 3 days, but I don't want to do only diving while I am here, and be away from the city for 3 days. On inquiring, I found that the St. Monica Cathedral is located only a few blocks from my hotel, and mass is at 7:00 p.m. tonight, very convenient for me. I walked through the marketplace, where there were many crafts displayed, also vegetables and fruits of all kinds. Most of the shops closed at 12:00 noon, as is the custom here on Saturday, after that the streets were really empty of people. The weather was nice and warm, probably about 83 F, I had on sleeveless top and slacks, was comfortable. The national garb for men here, seems to be a shirt, shorts, and knee length socks.

I attended mass at St. Monica church, put on a dress for the occasion – have worn slacks or shorts all week. I noted when the priest came in from the outside, into the church, he was also wearing shorts, not long pants. I enjoyed the service, there were many people in attendance. It was now dark outside when mass ended, but the neighborhood streets were not empty, people were walking, including families with children in carriages, I felt safe. This was different than the U.S.A. on Saturday nights, where restaurants, some stores, and amusement areas are open. I finally found a small restaurant that was open, and had a

good hot beef sandwich, with potatoes and green beans. After that I walked back to the hotel, read for a while, wrote in this journal, and retired.

## **SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 6**

I had breakfast very early, in the dining room, then was ready to be picked up at 7:45 a.m. by a tour bus. I had booked a tour for today, through the hotel, a trip north to Port Douglas, and a bit further inland, including a tour on the sugar cane train. It would be a full day trip, included lunch of typical Aussie food, the fee was 32 AD. The sky was cloudy, but cleared up a short while later, the bus was a large one, quite luxurious, there were not many passengers. Our driver was a young man, he gave much information as we rode along. Soon after Cairns, we stopped at Trinity Beach, and picked up two more people. As we rode on the highway, we noted many bicycle riders coming toward us, they were doing a "triathlon", first a jogging stint, then bicycle ride, and last, a long swim. One has to be strong to do this.

We drove along for 29 miles, very near the ocean most of the time, with lovely views of sandy beaches. The water was aqua colored, very clear, not very rough. There were also many areas of undeveloped land, called here "the bush". We turned in at the Port Douglas road, came to the small, narrow gauge, Bally Hooley Sugar Cane Train. All bus passengers, and our driver, got on these open sided cars and we were taken for miles, through the sugar cane fields. Our driver explained how it is planted, grows, is harvested, and taken from the fields to the mill. He got out once, dug up a small piece of cane that had been planted, and was sprouting, and would grow into the tall sugar canes. 4 re-growths can be had this way, after that the field must be plowed up, and planted again. Cut pieces of the cane stalk, will be laid lengthwise on the ground, to grow again. It was all interesting information, I didn't know Australia processed, and exported, so much sugar. When we reached the sugar mill, we entered the front building, a hostess served us tea, cookies and cheese, and displayed a video that showed the process of harvesting the cane. It is brought from the fields in small rail cars, is pressed, the juice runs into huge wooden vats and is processed into molasses, and brown sugar. The refining into white sugar takes place at a different location.

After the Bally Hooley train ride, we returned to the bus and continued driving north, to the Daintree river area, an estuary, where the river meets the Coral Sea. This water is part salt and part fresh water, the incoming tide pushes salt water into the mouth of the river, and the two waters mix. There are crocodiles living in the fresh water river, and some also live in the sea here, where the river enters the sea. The Aussies call them "old salty" crocodiles. We passed through the village of Mossman, then through more rainforests as we gained elevation. There were giant trees, vines, undergrowth of bushes, some palm trees. One huge vine, called "shower of orchids" grew profusely, it was like

a sheet of lavender falling from the tall tree, was really breathtaking. There were Poinciana trees (a relative of the Jacaranda tree) with bright red flowers, yellow blossom kapok trees, huge staghorn ferns, some banana trees, all these things grow well in the tropical climate.

We came to the tiny village of Daintree, which has a population of only 100 people, and is at the end of the highway we traveled. There is nothing but “bush” country beyond here, no paved roads. We had our lunch, which had been pre-arranged, at “Bushman’s Lodge”. I took a picture of the large sign that hung on the front, it was of interest to me, because my maiden name was Bushman. The proprietor stated that the name was chosen, because men who work in the bush, to put in telephone lines or cut timber, can stay in this lodge at night. It was not the name of the owner. We had a delicious lunch of local food. I chose the fish called barramundi, excellent eating, it was cooked on an outside grill. Shrimp was also available, they called it “shrimp on the bar-bee”. We ate outside, under a vine covered arbor, it was very pleasant. The lodge was located next to the Daintree river, I walked there, to see if there were crocodiles, but none were evident. I was told that a local lady was eaten by crocodiles, about 3 months ago, when she swam in the river. She knew that was forbidden, but did it anyway, how sad to hear that story! There were a couple of tourist shops near the river, where one can go on an excursion boat, to look at crocodiles.

Next we drove back toward Mossman, stopped at the Mossman River gorge, a sign next to the highway said “Swimming Hole”. The driver turned in here, we drove down a small road that ended at the river. It was proclaimed that there were no crocodiles in this river, and a few people were in the water, sitting on big boulders, and enjoying the coolness. I took off my shoes and waded in the clear water, which was very cold. Returning on our homeward journey, the next stop was at a butterfly farm. This was a huge tented area, of net, in the midst of lush tropical growth. We entered the tent, where they produce many varieties of butterflies, which were fluttering around, were told they are exported to many different countries. It is a business venture. There were also small birds flying around inside. After this stop, we headed south for Port Douglas, which was a very small town, and has a wonderful sandy beach, extending for 4 miles. It is a great spot for a resort, and we could see that this development is already started. 176 Million AD will be spent here, to make a golf course with a one million dollar clubhouse, tennis courts, condominiums, restaurants and shops will be built. 1000 Oil palm trees have already been brought in, and planted along the new road, at a cost of \$600 each, plus cost of transportation. The development will bring many people to the sleepy village, it will not be a rural area anymore. We stopped here, I waded in the water at the beautiful beach, it had such nice, white sand, and the water was warm, not cold. There was a pier in the town, where large, dive excursion boats docked, we watched one, called “Quicksilver” come in from a day out at the reefs. Now we returned on the highway, to Cairns. I felt this was a very good trip, we saw, and experienced, so much, was a great adventure. Back at the hotel I showered, rested a bit, then walked to the train station to see if I could make a reservation to return to Sydney, but the window was closed, no agent available. I’ll have to do it tomorrow. I was tired, but felt good, and sleepy – retired soon.

## **MONDAY SEPTEMBER 7 (Labor Day in America)**

I slept so well, never even turned over once, arose, did my floor exercises after putting a blanket down. I feel good after doing them. Went down to breakfast, then thought I would inquire about taking the Greyhound bus back to Sydney, instead of the train. I walked to the bus office on Grafton Street, just 1 ½ blocks from the hotel, found they have a fast service bus, and made a reservation for the one that leaves at 7:15 a.m. on Thursday, the cost was

99 AD. There was an extra fee, because it is an express bus, will take me to Brisbane in 25 hours, much faster than the train. I will probably stay overnight in Brisbane, then go on to Sydney. Next I walked back to my room, changed into a swim suit, and got ready for the Baron River rafting trip, walked to the office of the "Raging Thunder" rafting people. It was right across the street from the Greyhound office. I joined 10 other people, who were going on the ½ day trip. We were all taken in a small van, to the river, which was about a half-hour drive northwest of the city. There we were given instructions, issued helmets, life jackets and paddles. Then we lifted the rubber raft up above our heads (there were 6 in our party) and carried it down the embankment to the riverbank. Now there were more instructions given, about paddling, leaning, moving to one side of the boat to get out of a wedge position, in the rocks, bending low and hanging on, going through steep drops, etc.

We entered the water, practiced strokes, turning the boat, learned what to do if thrown out, etc. There were 2 boats, we followed the first one. We soon were in a gorge, with beautiful scenery on each side, the water was calm for about the first fifteen minutes of paddling, soon rapids appeared. There were huge boulders, with narrow areas to go through. Sometimes we entered them properly, bow first, sometimes we got stuck, sideways, between big rocks, and we all had to lean to one side, as our guide would instruct us, until we loosened the boat from the boulders. It was exciting! Sometimes we went down a rapid area, backward, water splashed all over us, we hung on tight. One time we became wedged between boulders, had to get out on the rocks, stand, and lift the boat free, then climb in again. The first BIG rapids (one of two) was called "rooster tail". Members of the expedition staff were on the high rocks there, with a rope and buoy, so that if we tipped over and were thrown in the water, they could rescue us. They also took pictures of us, which we could purchase later, in their office. We made it through that rapids o.k., but the other boat did not, it tipped over, one girl was thrown out and drifted downstream, then a young man fell over – but no problem, except the girl lost her paddle. They both came to water's edge further down the stream. I would say this trip was more exciting than the Colorado river rafting trip I took with friend Virginia Aubry, about a year ago. There were rapids to go through here, for over an hour, then the river became more placid, and at a calm area, we went over the side and swam a bit in the warm water, it felt so good! Later, our guide had us try going up against a "drop", and surfing. The surge of water turned the boat, much water came in, and the fellow, Pat, just in front of me, fell in, but he held onto the rope, and Charles, the other man in front, and I helped pull him in, grabbing the shoulders of his life jacket. He was not hurt. Now we had a long area of quiet water, before arriving at the spot to take the boat out, the van was waiting there. We again carried the boat (on our heads) up the embankment, to a small café, and changing rooms. Scones (hot biscuits with raisins), butter and jam and tea, were served to us, we all felt it had been such an enjoyable trip, we had much fun. The English couple, Charles and his wife Sylvia, were probably over age 50, the others were all young people. I'm always the oldest person, on these adventures, I am age 72 now. Most of my friends don't enjoy such events, maybe dancing is the most activity they have in their lives. I appreciate being able to bicycle, do hikes, etc.

We were driven back to the office, I returned to my hotel, showered and changed clothes. Then I went to a bank and changed \$200, received 271.74 AD, a rate of about .73 U.S. cents for 1 AD.

Leaving the business area, I strolled down to the waterfront, they call the Esplanade. The tide was out, so the mud flats were exposed a long way; it is too bad the city does not have a pretty, sandy beach right here, like the 4 mile beach at Port Douglas. That was so beautiful! I watched a few boats come in, from their reef trips, then walked back to the hotel and ate dinner there. Tonight I had pork chops, potato and gravy, green beans, cooked celery cabbage, fruit salad and ice cream – a plentiful meal. Before I retired, I wrote some post cards to family and friends, and wrapped the pretty earrings I had purchased today, for Mary Lynn's birthday. This ends another beautiful day in tropical Queensland, Australia.

## **TUESDAY SEPTEMBER 8**

I awoke very early, as I knew I had to be up at 5:45 a.m., to go out on a scuba dive trip today. Went down to breakfast at 6:15, just had juice, coffee and fruit, and took sandwich of bread, butter and jam to eat on the boat. I thought the bus would pick me up at 6:45 a.m., went back to my room to gather things, but it came at 6:10 and I was not in the lobby. I should have looked a little better, at my dive schedule, I was at fault. The desk clerk gave me the message that I should walk 2 blocks to the left, from the hotel, then go left again for 4 blocks to the Marlin jetty, and look for the boat named "Sea Star". I did so, arrived before 7:00 a.m., and found the ship. People were loading it with air tanks, and dive gear. They found my name on the list of divers, and I boarded, people from the dive shop greeted me. There was another instructor, named Vickie, who had a few of her students with her, they were going to do the final open water dive, of their course, to complete their certification. They were nervous about it. I have already done this, in the Red Sea, when I became certified. Ralph, a stocky young man, was from the dive shop, and explained the day's events to me, was helpful with wet suit and equipment. The Sea Star was a 61 foot cruiser, with upper and lower open decks, down below was the seating area, galley, and head. There were only 5 certified divers aboard, some students, and a lot of snorkelers, most boarded wearing only shorts and a t-shirt, carried a towel. The sky was grey, it was misting a bit, the air was warm. After leaving shore, we were out just a short distance, when a small boat came alongside, bringing 3 young girls, who had missed the boat at the dock. The small craft drew up alongside the Sea Star, and they transferred into it.

We traveled along for about 3 ½ hours before coming to an island called Michaelmas Cay, and stopped here. A dory was lowered to the water, and Ralph drove snorkelers to this island. It took three trips to accomplish this, the snorkelers would remain here and snorkel around the island reefs. Our anchor was lifted, and we continued toward different reef areas, where diving was better. The Sea Star anchored here, I put on the "shortie" wet suit (knee length, short sleeves) the back pack, with tank and regulator. I had my own face mask and snorkel. Ralph helped me put the tank on as I stood on the platform at the lower end of the ladder, going over the side. I wore socks with the fins. Putting the tank on here, saves my back from any injury by carrying it, it's heavy. I had no hat or gloves, descended easily, had no problem with clearing ears, or with buoyancy. My weight belt was sufficiently heavy to take me down. The visibility was not very good, probably only about 25 feet, but there was much coral. A lot of it was grey, not colorful, there was a huge, round, coral boulder that was full of blue tube worms, the short ones. They are misnamed, for are not at all like worms, but small flowers; when approaching near them, they close quickly and sink

down into their tubes. In about 90 seconds, they open up again, are really pretty. We did see many large fans, of different colors, also hydroids, curling and waving in the current, colors of black, green and yellow. I was disappointed though, for the entire large mass of coral was grey, I expected it to be better than my dive last week in Townsville.

There were many different species of the coral "sponge" seen, in yellows, tans and green, and I noted a lot of mushroom, or razor coral, lying about. These are pure white, and very sharp. I spied 2 huge molluscs on the sandy bottom: one was a baler shell, about 12 or 13 inches long and shaped like a scoop or shovel (said to get it's name because it was used by natives, to scoop water out of their canoes), and a huge triton shell, the twisted and pointed at the end, kind. You may find these in shops, for sale at a very high price. These were exciting to find, we picked them up, examined them, and replaced them, to grow bigger. Their "foot", the flat pad exposed when the animal is in the shell, was easily 4 by 5 inches, these were very big shells. We also found a huge clam, with a colorful mantle, it must have been 30 inches long. As I rubbed my finger along it's mantle, the shell closed, but not completely tight, I really don't believe the tales about stepping on one and having it trap your leg, are true. I still didn't want to try it! This clam was about 24 inches high, a big one.

My buddies and I were down about 45 to 50 minutes, the water temperature was only about 70 F and I was cold, wished they would have given me a full wet suit, covering all of legs and arms. Ralph helped take off the tank as I was on the bottom of the ladder, I ascended the rest of the way to the deck. I was shivering, so dried off quickly, noted I was not the only one who was cold. We were given hot coffee, and stayed down near the galley, to get warm. The wind was now blowing hard, sea was choppy, and the clouds looked stormy. The snorkelers, who had been brought aboard while we dived, were really cold, they wore only their shorts and t-shirt, wrapped their damp towels around them.

When all were aboard again, the dory was pulled up and placed in it's spot on the top deck. We then proceeded for another 45 minutes, further in the Coral Sea, to a far-out reef. The sea was really rough, big waves were pounding the Sea Star. We went through 3 different cuts in the reef (where the ship could pass through) found a little quieter spot with deep water, and stopped there. Again, Ralph put my tank on while I was on the ladder, I descended easily. My buddies this time, were 3 young fellows, it was only their third time to scuba dive. One was Diggeree, from England, the other Martin, from Australia. As you descended, the wave motion at the surface did not affect you, it was peaceful down below, no big current. I could see immediately, as visibility was much better (about 60 feet), that I had found beautiful coral, similar to the Red Sea. Corals of many varieties and colors, were there to view, blues, pinks, greens, yellows; huge fans swayed with the motion of the water. There were alcyonarians, soft corals that look like flowers, but are really animal matter. There were many anemones, with the clown fish swimming amongst their tentacles, and I had my first sighting here, of the fine needle coral, hystrich, that was so prevalent in the Red Sea. It is fragile and delicate, I finally did get a piece of it home from Saudi, after several attempts, it breaks so easily, even when I packed it in styrofoam, or popcorn. Everything here was beautiful, and large. This is what I would call a good dive, finally!!! We did see a shark, in the distance, but it didn't frighten me. We 3 buddies stayed together quite well, though Martin was one of those divers, who want to swim along rapidly, I like to meander

slowly, and examine the coral closely, take in all the beauty. After 35 minutes I signaled that I wanted to ascend, for I wanted to snorkel also, at this site. The young men stayed down a bit longer. Again, Ralph took off my tank while I was in the water, this works out so well for me. Then I did a stride jump from above, without the dive gear, and snorkeled about, enjoying the fish.

While we were anchored out at the far reef, Charlie, the skipper of the Sea Star, had a bucket of fish pieces, and fed them to big fish in the sea, as he stood on the lower rung of the ladder. Many huge hump-head wrasse came quickly, and grabbed the pieces, some were over 40 inches long, and wide, Charlie estimated them to weigh about 300 pounds, they were colored yellow, green and orange. Other large trevally (jacks), snappers, emperor fish, and a couple of reef sharks were in the group trying to snatch food. Charlie could touch the back of one large wrasse, as he neared surface trying to get some food, he went down, then the second wrasse (Maori is their name used here), came around and ate. This was all very exciting to watch. While I was snorkeling, I saw one of the big wrasse near me. After the feeding was finished, and we were about to depart, I noted the tide was going out, and now some of the tops of reefs were visible, they were the healthy, tan color, not the dead grey seen on my other 3 dives here in the Great Barrier Reef.

Everyone was called in from the water, Vickie had tested her students, in the underwater routine needed to pass their exam (Vickie and the other instructors had worn full wet suits, plus helmets and booties, they kept warm). I changed into dry clothes, ate the lunch they had saved for me, and drank hot coffee. We started to pull away from the reef, when someone on the upper deck yelled out "we left a snorkeler on the reef". The skipper immediately turned the craft around, we saw a man waving to us, he was half swimming, half running over the coral, toward us. He was picked up from the water, but it turned out that he was not one of our snorkelers, but came from a very small boat out on the other side of the reef. It was bobbing, and jerking about in the waves, the men in it could not start their motor, and needed help to return to shore. Luckily, our skipper had a spare battery, he tied a rope around it, drove our craft next to the stranded boat, and lowered the battery to them. It was a good thing someone saw the frantic man, otherwise they would have been marooned out there all night, and really tossed around in the heavy sea. This was really a rescue at sea!

We started our return journey, the huge grey cloud bank was over us, and the sea became more violent; at first the waves and troughs were about 4 and 5 feet high, we dipped and rolled. Then they got increasingly worse, as deep as 10 and 12 feet, we rolled side to side, the bow dipped way down, then up, we would roll and dip again. A curtain had been put up, on the lower deck, to keep the water away, but huge splashes came through the top and the bottom openings, and water rolled across the deck. My shoes were soaked and pants were wet through to my skin. I marveled at myself, I enjoyed the huge dips, it was like riding a roller coaster, and I didn't get seasick! Many were hanging over the rail on the lee side, "losing their cookies", or trying to make their way to the head, looking green. I used to get seasick, and appreciate the fact I don't anymore. It took us over 4 hours to get back to shore, the storm kept up almost all the way to shore, it was dark when we arrived. I did get a nice slide of the sky, as the setting sun was almost obliterated by the black clouds, really

a pretty sight. Those swimmers with just a t-shirt and towel, were so cold, the wind blew hard all the way, they had gotten wet coming back.

I felt good, was not even tired. I had to wait, at the dock, for the Peter Tibbs Dive School bus to transport me to my hotel, first they had to stop at the school to unload tanks, and for the students to find out if they had passed the open water dive test. At the hotel, I got into dry clothes: it was too late for dinner in the dining room, so I went next door, to a Lebanese restaurant. I was used to mid-east food, ordered a HUGE schwarma sandwich, coffee and an apple. The schwarma was delicious, had tabuli, humus, babaganoush, tomato, onion, cilantro and meat in it, was very filling. I have eaten a lot of them. So that ended a great day here, doing what I came to Australia to accomplish, to dive the Great Barrier Reef and find good corals, I finally saw them!

### **WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 9**

The grey skies were still present when I awoke early this morning, and it was raining. The inclement weather we had out at sea yesterday, followed us here. I felt luxurious, stayed in bed a while, for I didn't have to hurry this morning. I have this day to rest up, after having 3 very busy days of sightseeing, rafting, diving – I will prepare for travel, to Brisbane tomorrow. I prayed a rosary, in thanks for being safe on this trip, then arose and went down to breakfast. I talked with a few people there, also residents of the hotel, that I've seen each day, a German young woman, an Australian couple, and an Australian man with his 8 year old son. It was nice to have conversation with them. The morning hours were occupied with a leisurely shower and shampoo, recording on my tape of this trip, and organizing clothing. I rinsed out my swim suit, and hung it on a hanger so it would dry well in the breeze from the circulating ceiling fan. It is very bad to pack wet articles in a suitcase. I will be on the move steadily now, until I leave Sydney for America. I am surely glad I came the great distance up to Cairns, I have enjoyed the tropical climate and the sea.

In the afternoon the rain stopped, and I went to the Greyhound office, confirmed my reservation for the bus at 7:30 a.m. tomorrow. At the Raging Thunder office, across the street, I obtained the picture taken while going through the rapids on Monday. It was very good, immediately brought back the memory of the water splashing over us. After that I went to the library, near the hotel, and asked for books on corals and fishes of the Coral Sea. The attendant brought some, and I spent 2 hours looking through them, learned the names of many I had seen here, and also in the Red Sea. As I walked back to the hotel, I was behind 3 people walking ahead of me, one man wore a t-shirt with a print "Scuba Luv, Thousand Oaks, California" on it – that is where I live! I talked to them, said I live there too, they had just arrived and were going out on a dive boat for 5 days, hoped to do many dives and see beautiful corals and fish. It is a small world, finding someone from your home town, so far away. I ate in a small restaurant, ate some good "chux" (as they call chicken), pineapple rings dipped in batter and deep fried, were served with it. It was delicious. Back in my room, I re-packed the suitcases, so I can leave one in storage at the Brisbane terminal, and only carry one to Andrew's house. I read for a short time, then retired



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**THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 10**

I am leaving Cairns now, arose early, went to breakfast at 6:10 a.m., returned to my room, brushed teeth, put last things in leather duffel case and went to the hotel desk to return the room key, received the 4AD refund charged for it. I planned to walk to the Greyhound office, but another lady, who ate breakfast at my table, was going there too, invited me to share her cab, so I did. She was from Australia, going to Townsville. On the Express double decker bus, I got a window seat upstairs, the second from the front. This was a beautiful new bus, huge windows, soft seats, a blanket and pillow provided on each one. It is a grey, misty morning, with fog toward the mountains on my right side, as I look out. We will be driving on the Pacific Coast Highway, going south, so I will be seeing different scenery, than on the train coming up here. I feel lucky, had nice warm, sunny weather while in Cairns, it changed the day I was out on the reef, diving, now we are having rain, but I will be riding and it will not bother me. I will be on the bus for 25 and ½ hours, hopefully arriving in Brisbane tomorrow morning. There is a radio playing, on the bus, and I just heard the weather report: Sea – today –swells will be 3 meters, also light showers. I experienced those swells when coming back from the outer reef on Monday, WOW, we really got tossed about. I am so lucky I accomplished the dives before foul weather set in.

In the countryside we are passing through, I see many sugar cane fields, then rain forests for many miles. Tropical bushes, vines and trees are combined with sycamores and pines. The yards seen in front of homes along the highway, are well groomed, some are beautifully planted. Varieties of palms seen are: traveler, coconut, date, saw tooth, I've seen banana trees and shrubs with various colored leaves and blooms. The African flame (or coral) tree has huge red flowers, is so pretty, also the huge mango trees are in blossom now, there are Jacaranda trees also, but they are not in blossom. The rain forest areas are very dense, and present a very nice view, as we drive along. I do think of the snakes that live there also, there are many poisonous kinds here. LATER The rain has stopped now, as we passed Innisfail, then made a 10 minute stop at Cardwell, right on the sea. I stepped out of the bus, and noted the beach was close to the highway, and Hinchinbrook Island, the largest island in the Coral Sea, is not far off shore. It does not appear to be very touristy, Cardwell is a small town. The clouds were leaving, blue sky appeared in spots. A little later passed through town of Ingham, the world' largest sugar mill is located here and it processes sugar cane from the many fields in the area. We noted the little train cars, loaded with cut canes, being pulled from the fields to the mill, and could see high smokestacks there, puffing out smoke as processing went on.

We arrived at Townsville at 12:20 p.m., it was our lunch stop, for one hour. I wanted a t-shirt from the dive shop here, where I had arranged my dives, so instead of eating, I walked very fast through the mall, and to Flinders street, and the shop. I purchased the shirt, which had "I've Been Down Under The Barrier Reef" on the front. I didn't buy it when I was here before, and wanted to have it. Walking back, as I ate cookies and an apple, I made it o.k. just before bus departure time. The weather was very nice, and dry, in Townsville. Leaving there shortly after 1:00 p.m., now noted the terrain was flat, cattle were in some fields, there were also plantations of mango trees, and fields of vegetables growing. We were back in agricultural areas. The highway left the ocean shortly after Townsville, went inland a little. Stops were made at Ceili Beach and at another town. We passed close to a cemetery,

just outside of Ayr, there was no fence around it, and I could note all graves are covered with solid slabs of either concrete, or granite, with a tall, thin stone standing at the head of every grave. They were very close together. Near Bowen, the area for many, many miles, was suffering from drought, and a lady who got on in Ayr and sat next to me, said they have been without rain for several years. Then, later on, noted the range land looked so dead, she said cattle had to be moved elsewhere, because of no grass growing..

A beautiful sight of the sea came into view again at Airlie Beach. Here the high hills, covered with green trees, came right down to the village and the beach. Boats do go out from this area, to the islands that have coral reefs, some have accommodations to stay. Next we came to Whitsunday, then Shute Harbor. The bay here was full of yachts, and I was told this is the millionaire's resort area, sailing boat races go on here, and accommodations are reserved about a year ahead. At Shute Harbor we left the bus for 10 minutes, stood near the piers extending out, that accommodate the large boats taking people out to different islands, including Hamilton. The islands appear to be high in the center, and covered with trees. The water was very clear. Our dinner stop was at Proserpine, I chose local food called "egg-burger mince" and hot coffee. It was a very large bun holding thick pieces of beef, fried egg, tomato, pineapple, lettuce, beet slices and cabbage slaw in it. It really was very good, ate it on the bus, as we made a short stop.

Now, it was dark and about 8:30 p.m. the second movie was shown on the screens suspended from the ceiling. It was a "007" movie, with a lot of action involving luxury boats, submarines, etc. I fell asleep for a short time, the movie was not interesting to me. About midnight we stopped for a break, I purchased a glass of orange juice, and after that I slept well all night, under my blanket. Awoke about 6:00 a.m., now the landscape was very pretty, quite hilly and wooded, with the tall eucalyptus, and palms were seen here and there. Everything was very green. I noted people who were out, were wearing jackets, the tropical temperatures I have been in, are gone now, it gets cooler as you go south. We passed Nambour, a pretty, hilly suburb-type little city, with a lot of flowers everywhere. We are now on the Bruce highway, a better road than the highway we have traversed, we travel fast. A little later entered a divided highway, which looks quite new. At 7:11 a.m. the radio music came on again, John Denver just sang the song "Come Let Me Love You, Love Me Again", it sounded so nice. I see Glasshouse Mountain ahead of us, that singular, high thrust of granite which I saw from the train going north.

In an hour we will arrive at Brisbane. This bus has been very comfortable, I have enjoyed the trip. As we neared Brisbane, traffic was heavy, autos were bumper to bumper, moved along slowly. The city has a population of 1.3 million people, it is quite spread out, with many suburbs. We arrived on time, at 8:40 a.m.

## **FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 11**

I picked up my luggage at bus side, went into the transit lounge, brushed teeth and freshened up. I had coffee, toast and fruit in the restaurant, then inquired about going down to the Gold Coast, an area south of Brisbane. I wanted to see that area, before I left Australia, heard it was like Miami Beach, in America. I felt very good, and bought a round trip ticket (ticket-return, the phrase used here) to Surfers' Paradise, on the Gold Coast. I

can ride there, observe the area and the beach, relax and eat, and ride back. Surfers' Paradise is about 70 kilometers away. I note that American Franchise stores are all over here, Kentucky Fried Chicken, K-Mart and Woolworth stores to name a few. I noted signs along the road, quite different than ours, such as "no take-over", instead of "do not pass", and autos are driven on the left side of the road. We just passed "Dreamworld", a large amusement area, similar to Disneyland in America. It took 1 hour and 25 minutes to arrive at Surfers' Paradise, and the Gold Coast is the name given to this area; it is full of high-rise apartments, luxury resorts, many, many restaurants and clubs, shops, and more shops. I walked from the bus station, through the touristy area, to the wide, white sand beach. It was beautiful, there are sidewalks along it, and I strolled slowly and took in the sights. I was told the beach extends for 45 kilometers, in this area. There was a good surf, and people were in the water either body surfing, or using body boards, in a different area. It really was a lovely sight: if I had seen this area earlier, I might have spent a couple of days here. Brisbane has no beach, people come here to enjoy this one, in summer it is very crowded. The air was cool, my jacket felt good, but the sun was bright, so after walking, I took off my shoes, rolled pants legs up to my knees, and relaxed, lying on the sand. I took off the jacket, and put it under my head for a pillow, and when lying down with the sun on your body, it was warm, the breeze did not hit you.

After relaxing there a short while, I walked to the huge water slide nearby, really a big one, and watched the people come down it. There was a McDonald's right across the road here, and I went to it, bought a burger and a shake. When I finished I walked slowly back to the station, and rode the bus back to Brisbane. Near the station was a large lagoon with grassy areas around, and picnic tables, would be a nice place in summer, to meet with family or friends. The streets were busy with people and traffic.

Arriving back at the transit center in Brisbane, I called Andrew, to tell him what I had done since leaving here one week ago. I reached him at his work, and he was pleased that I called, asked about the dives I had done. He suggested that I walk over to the museum, it was open until 5:00 p.m., he would show me through it. I replied that I would first see about getting a bus tonight, to Sydney, and make a reservation, then I would come. I put my suitcase in a locker, next to my other case, which I had left also in a locker when I departed Brisbane. I was able to get a seat on a bus (another double decker) leaving tonight at 7:00 p.m., then I walked to the museum, not a far distance from the transit center. When I arrived there, Andrew came from his particular work area, and escorted me around. It is a Natural History museum, very spacious, and well planned. There are dinosaur and other mammal skeletons, fish and birds of Australia, and in another section were gems found here. The local bird displays were great, there was a sound track for each bird shown, I remembered the "whip" and the "cat bird" calls, we heard them when Andrew took me into the rain forest, but never saw them. The cat bird was quite large. There was a section where an airplane and a steamship model were displayed, also several rooms of things from Fiji Islands, drums, masks, weapons, etc.

Finishing my tour, I gave my thanks again to Andrew, for his hospitality. He scolded me for leaving the \$10 bill on the pillow, at his house, when he took me to the train last Monday morning. I invited him to visit me in California, if he ever comes to America. The museum was about to close, and I walked back to the transit station. This is quite new, and very

efficient, it serves long distance and local buses, the train also departs from it. I had some food in a restaurant, retrieved my luggage, and got my seat assignment on the bus. It was in the first row, upper deck, a window seat. The windshield area right in front of me, was very large, so I had a good viewing area. A young woman sat next to me, she was going to visit her parents in Sydney.

As we left Brisbane, it was dark, the lights in tall office buildings were on, the bridge at the harbor was all lighted, and boats on the river were sparkling with lights, all made a very pretty sight. As we rode through the night, the bus was quite cool, but each person had a heavy blanket, I was comfortable. The temperature became much cooler as we drove south, and moisture formed on the windows, inside. Sunrise was at 6:20 a.m., and I could note steam coming up from the rivers, there was fog in many places. A breakfast stop was at 7:00 a.m., it was really chilly when I stepped off the bus, but I was glad to stretch my legs after the long ride. I really felt very good, thought I would be more stiff, after riding all the way from Cairns, a distance of 2500 miles. In some areas, as we continued on, we could see the ocean and beaches, but forests were prevalent. We had passed Newcastle, this is an industrial city, quite large, there is coal mining carried on here also. I noted several quiet bays of sea water, they provided boating facilities. The scenery was very nice as we drove along.

## **SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 12**

Arriving in the busy traffic of Sydney, I noted shoppers were out in full force, for all shops, pubs, etc., close at noon on Saturday, don't re-open until Monday morning. An exception is made, so a few pubs can open for a couple of hours, late Sunday morning. The streets are quite deserted on Sundays. When we arrived at the Greyhound bus station, I hoped to be able to get into a store, but being just after noon, all were closed. I had the name of a hotel, run by the same owners as the one I stayed at in Cairns, that was close to the bus station. I found it, and took a room there for tonight. These are used mainly by local people, are sparsely furnished, but very clean, and have the necessities for travelers. The rules of conduct are posted, and enforced, so the hotels are very safe for a lady traveling alone. I relaxed for a little while, then took a luxurious hot bath, talked on my tape, and finished writing in this journal. I felt fine. My departure reservation is for Monday, but knowing that most everything is closed on Sunday, and the opera season is not open now, I decided to try for a reservation to leave tomorrow, if a seat is available. I called Continental Airlines and did get a reservation for Sunday. Through the hotel, I also requested pick-up at 1:30 p.m., by the airport van service, to take me out to the airport. I can leave my suitcases here in the luggage room, when I check out at 10:00 a.m., and pick them up as I leave the hotel, later.

About 5:00 p.m. I walked out, dressed warmly in white sweat suit, and blue knit coat (for it was very cool) and attended the 5:30 p.m. mass at St. Peter Julian church. It was said by a priest from Sri Lanka, he spoke English, with a very definite Indian accent. I greeted him, on the way out of church, he was very friendly. I now walked about, looking for a place to eat – in opposition to Saturday night in Brisbane, some people were on the streets here. I found a Chinese restaurant, and selected cashew chicken for my meal. It was very good, and a large portion, but I could eat it all, as I did not order rice. I ate everything with

chopsticks, even though those little mushroom halves were slippery! Returning to my hotel, I stopped briefly at the Hilton, and looked about in the gift shop. I had planned to have a cup of coffee in the café, but I was just too full. Back in my hotel, I re-arranged everything in the suitcases, and retired about 9:30 p.m.

### **SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 13**

I slept very well, didn't awaken until daylight, had time to lie luxuriously for a while, and do stretching exercise on the bed. I had continental breakfast, in the hotel, put the last things into the suitcase and checked out. I left them in the luggage room, received claim tickets for them, to use when I go to the airport. I had a few slide exposures left on my film, so walked out about 9:45 a.m., looking for interesting places to use them up. I came upon the huge St. Andrew cathedral a few blocks down the street (at the Town Hall Court). The carillon bells were ringing loudly, it was so nice to hear them, I opened my recorder to tape the music. There were 4 or 5 uniformed service men standing on the walk, near their vehicle, and holding a large Australian flag. I was curious, so excused myself, and asked what branch of service they represented. They wore blue uniforms and were the color guard of the Australian Air Force, offered information that the bells were sounding for a service to begin in 15 minutes. It would be a tribute to all Air Force men who served in a battle with Great Britain, in the 1940's. I thanked them, asked if I could take their picture, "certainly" was the answer, "but we will be in formation in front of the church soon, maybe you would like it there". I did get the picture there, then decided to enter the church and observe the ceremony. It was an Anglican church service, with prayers, music, and a great male choir with very good voices. I enjoyed the music. The cathedral was huge, like many big churches I've been in, in Europe. There were very large bouquets of flowers throughout, and people filled the pews. I left midway through the service, at a time when people were standing, for I wanted to walk more, to the Queen Victoria building. This has been made into a classical style mall, and shops were now open, from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. There is symphony music playing, from tapes, heard throughout the area, some shops opened, and food places offered ethnic menus. I chose yummy satay (Thai food), pieces of lamb, skewered on a bamboo stick, roasted, and dipped in a curry sauce. I always enjoy the far-east foods. I next walked to the train station, thinking I might find a map of entire Australia, but had no luck, there were only sectional maps. Chinatown was nearby, I wandered there, then found the street with "Paddy's Market", a covered area with many stalls, and people selling all kinds of articles. These are the week-end markets, open on Sundays, and local merchants are trying to force closure, because they do not obey the Sunday closing hours. I heard about this problem on newscasts, in Brisbane and Cairns.

As I walked back toward the hotel, I noted a pub open on the corner, so decided to try and buy a bottle of wine from Australia, to take home as a souvenir. I did succeed, the female bartender was very pretty, and pleasant. I drank a glass of draught local beer, asked the lady if I could take her picture as she filled my glass, she agreed, and that finished my roll of film. I had hoped to do that, so I could pack the camera in the suitcase for the trip home. Finishing the roll of film was a fine way to end a good trip to Australia. Arriving back at the hotel, I retrieved my luggage from the storage area, and waited for the van service, to the airport. The weather is partly cloudy, cool, am wearing the red jacket, with light sweater underneath.

I was picked up by the airport van, at 1:30 p.m. There was a young American girl passenger too, going back to California, then on to New York. She had come here to scuba dive, as I did, but fell onto mussel shells as she was getting off the boat at Green Island, cut her leg so badly she had to stay out of the water for 3 weeks, before she could dive. What bad luck she had! She said she heard the Red Sea is the best diving place in the world, as I also proclaim. At the airport, went through the usual regime, on leaving a country, filled out the usual card, and paid the departure tax of 20 AD. It was not too crowded, everything was orderly.

## **MONDAY SEPTEMBER 14**

The flight to Honolulu, Hawaii was very long, over 9 hours, and tiring. A movie "Tin Men" was shown, I fell asleep watching it. Complimentary wine, or mixed drinks, were served before dinner, then the movie. I can't say I slept well, but was not too uncomfortable. I feel I am a good traveler, have gone back and forth between Saudi Arabia and U.S.A. each year, for 5 years, plus all the trips taken to Europe, Asia and Africa, while I worked in Saudi. A light breakfast, fruit slices and a muffin, was served just before we landed in Honolulu, at 6:00 a.m. There it was very warm, and humid, the sky was just getting light. We were now in the U.S.A., went through the usual immigration service, which flowed well. We had to answer some questions, as to where we had been, etc., pick up our luggage, but did not have to open it. It was re-checked to Los Angeles. We were allowed to step outside the terminal building, noted that it had just stopped raining, everything was very wet. People were clothed in shorts, and light, summery clothing.

At 8:10 a.m. we took off for Los Angeles, on the second flight of this trip. I was feeling very well, happy that I travel well, the flight time is 4 hours 50 minutes. A breakfast was served: chicken crepes, carrots, fresh mango and pineapple slices, milk, a Danish and coffee. I felt I was well fed, and the service was good on Continental Airlines. Following the food service, a movie "Maid In Waiting", with Alee Sheely, was shown, and I enjoyed it. The plane was quite full, flight was smooth. About 1 hour before landing, complimentary drinks were served, alcoholic or soft drinks. On arrival at LAX, I secured my luggage o.k., nothing was lost, then called daughter Mary Lynn, to tell her I had safely arrived. She used to pick me up, but driving the Los Angeles freeways has become hazardous, there is so much traffic now, and I can easily take the Great American Stageline direct from the terminal, to Thousand Oaks. It stopped at the hotel there, and she picked me up, drove me to my home.

No matter how beautiful I find places, all over the world, there is no place like home!!!

Irma Kackert