**What do you remember about your decision to go to Paris? An easy or difficult decision? Were you nervous? Happy? Other emotions?**

As a freshman, I had already studied the language of French for four years and was proficient enough to pass the Hollins entry language test that entitled me to not have to take further language courses. However, I signed up for more because of my continuing interest.

When the offer of a year to study in Paris came along I was more than interested and completely thrilled when my parents decided that their investment in my future would be better spent on Hollins Abroad than for a fancy debutante party!

**When did you study in Paris?**

Mid-February 1956 – Feb 1957

**How did you travel and from which destination/s?**

We were originally scheduled to sail on "La Liberte" but was changed to USS United States from New York to Le Havre, France. We returned on "La Liberte."

**What did you take with you? Do you recall any specific items that you bought for your trip or any items that you were not able to take with you?**

My luggage was mainly a steamer trunk that had been my mother's. It stood up, opened, and held three or four drawers on one side, hanging space on the other. It was stuffed with our daily wear and special occasion wear. Daily we wore mostly skirts and blouses/sweaters, socks and flat shoes/ stockings and high heels.

I well remember my father reluctantly parting with one of his favorite cameras shortly before the ship left port. Then he shouted from the pier that the camera didn't have film in it! I managed to borrow some in time for our slow departure amidst the deep whistle blasts and shouting from the crowds along the rail and ashore, streamers and confetti filling the air. So very exciting!

**What do you remember about your arrival?**

Our arrival at Le Havre and the short bus ride to Rouen was very cold. We were all very tired, not exactly exhausted because of our full-height excitement. Everything we saw, smelled, tasted and experienced was new and exotic. A fast nap before dinner was interrupted by a jarring sound by the funny telephone which took some concentration to figure out how to pick it up, answer in response to the caller speaking garbled French (– something about “le diner . . .”) and hang up. It was a pleasant shock to remember we were now having to speak in French. We were in la belle France!

We all gathered for dinner downstairs and became nearly hysterical with laughter when a waiter/garcon was passing the cheese tray and one of the girls couldn't decide which to choose. She sang "Eenie, Meenie, Minie, Mo . . ." to which the garcon proceeded to cut her a small slice of each that she pointed to. Our laughter, unfortunately misunderstood, caused him to storm out of the room at the perceived insult. The rest of us finally got served after Miss Wilson followed after him and managed to explain that the laughing was because of the girl's difficulty to choose among so many fromages delicieux!

**What do you recall about the first meeting with your host family?**

How curious everyone involved was! First, however, our large steamer trunks had to be hauled up six flights of stairs after breaking down the antiquated, small, and delicate elevator. That caused quite a stir. Meeting the family was very formal with handshaking all around, followed by serious instruction regarding the use and foibles of la toilette which was shared with several others in the family. We were mostly left on our own except at breakfast and dinner.

**What sorts of cultural differences between you and your host family did you notice? What things did you become used to after you had begun to live with a host family?**

The dinner table was where most of the daily exchanges took place. One was expected to be there at the appointed hour, engage in conversation, and eat what was put before you. There was a maid who served the food. We had potatoes served every which way, nothing was in great quantity, and most everything tasted good.

We soon learned that if something offered at the dinner table was refused, it was not offered again. Poor Sue, my roommate, was tired one evening so said, "No, merci" at the dessert. She was not offered one for the following two evenings until she made it known that she really did like dessert. She had also refused the interesting food "Petit Swiss" that requires some time to like. I came to be quite fond of it.

We were very surprised to see that all the children had wine with dinner. The youngest, age 7 or 8, had his with mostly water. Madame said they also drink beer, especially when they are not well.

I was also amused and impressed with the kind of games the youngest boy played. His favorite was to pretend to be le Roi de France who rode a white horse wearing flowing robes and carried a long sword into battle. Of course, the American counterpart is Cowboys and Indians.

The older kids were astonished to discover that I came from New York and had attended high school there. They had a strong impression that the schools there were bad and dangerous mostly because they had seen the movie "Blackboard Jungle." They thought all schools were like that and that New York was only a big over crowded city. They were not aware of the state and its size. In fact, they could not grasp the vast size of the United States, thinking one could drive from New York to Chicago, Florida or California in one day. Someone one day asked me if I knew his friend who lived in Chicago.

They also thought that businessmen in their fancy offices all put their feet up on the desk and smoked cigars. They wanted to know if that were really true. Of course, Hollywood has had its heavy influence on these kinds of impressions, as did the "cool" behavior of smoking by handsome, strong men and beautiful women. We all smoked and thought we looked sophisticated!

They were quite amazed to discover that I was left handed, though I had been with them for about eight months. The French mostly eat with their fork in the left hand, sometimes eating off of the back of the fork, and use the right hand for slicing the meat. They did not encourage anyone to write with their left hand since their mythology considered left-handedness to be "gauche," sinister and wrong. It was thought that was a sign of being a criminal. (Hence, I was not the only one learning new things!)

It took several months before we were issued an invitation to join the family in the salon for cafe after dinner. Sue and I knew we were considered more of a part of their family after that. That was when the conversation was less formal and more fun. Of course, we were more fun for them by then since we played less of a guessing game with our knowledge of French improving with each day.

**11. Do you recall your host family’s name and address? What were your accommodations like with your host family? Did you have your own room? What areas did you share with others there? What do you recall about that residence and your time spent there? Have you been back to see your host family?**

Our family lived in one of the better sections of Paris - arrondissement seizieme,

6 rue Andre Colledeboeuf. Metro stop: Mozart. Sue and I shared a fairly nice sized room that contained a small sink, looked out to other apartment buildings, a small courtyard in the middle. Of course, we had to get acquainted with the Concierge and learn how to operate the finicky lift. More than a few times we had to step it up for six winding flights because it was out of order. We rarely saw other occupants. The rue was short and quiet. It was a quick walk to a boulangerie for the morning baguette that was still warm from the oven. Not far from there was a fragrant, enticing Patisserie with the BEST eclairs, napoleons, etc. etc. that had a steady business from Sue and me.

I have never been back to visit there. The family was not listed in the Paris telephone book by the time I returned many years later with my husband.

A letter arrived from Madame in 1972 with current news of all her children. She was happily living with Pierre in Beynes. No mention was made of her ex.

**12. What things, if any, still seemed strange or unfamiliar to you, even after your stay abroad?**

Funny as it sounds, what seemed strange after our stay abroad was to arrive back in the U.S.A. and see our huge and colorful cars! America now appeared extraordinary and over done in many ways!

**13. What classes did you take? What special memories do you have of the classroom and study experience?**

We took classes in the French language at l'Institut Britannique and also wonderful conversational classes with Madame Marchand. We went to Raspail for les Cours Practique every afternoon from 4 - 6 p.m. My lectures at the Sorbonne itself were on French Literature, Geography, Sociologie, and Histoire de l'Art Moderne. There might have been others but I enjoyed these the most. My favorite was Geographie when I learned so much about the land and its features and, of course, enjoyed the slides showing where these geographic features were.

My strongest memory is when we stood for our exams. My turn: Down the aisle I alone walked to face looking up to a panel of professeurs rattling papers and finally looking down at me, then asking that I recite a certain poem by Baudelaire, etc. They wrote notes as I stumbled on. Somehow I managed to finish and not fail entirely!

**14. What do you remember about your professors or administrators?**

I do not remember becoming acquainted with any at the Sorbonne. At the appointed hour the hall was filled with restless etudiants, the bell rung, the door opened, in marches the professeur while everyone stands and applauds. The lecture lasted almost uninterrupted for an hour, until the bell rang again, we stood, and the speaker made his exit.

It was less formal but fairly regimented at l'Institut Britannique. There we shook hands with the professeur and had exchanges during the class period.

The best instruction came from Madame Marchand who had developed a very well known program of teaching French as a second language. She used dramatics and humor, engaging each of us. We looked forward to her classes and never wanted to miss a single one.

**15. What fashions or styles made an impression on you? Did you change your sense of fashion or style during or after your stay in Paris?**

In 1956, "frowns unlimited" went to those wearing shorts or blue jeans on front campus or to those going into town without wearing stockings and gloves. Hence, we were properly equipped for our life in the city.

I well remember the time Sue and I decided to wear our Bermuda shorts on a hot day during the weekend. The kids in our family about fell off their chairs laughing and pointing at us. After a quick change, we decided to pack away the shorts and save them for the back campus at Hollins!

Fashion was prominent in Paris. Store windows were works of art displaying their lovely clothes. Madame showed us how she bought only a few expensive designer outfits and changed them around to look different for different occasions. She took us to several Haut Couture houses for their fascinating shows. I had a beautiful blue dress made for me by one of the less expensive boutiques.

16. **What special friendships do you recall?**

There were the special few from Hollins that kept me stabilized. We talked, shopped, double-dated, ate, drank, and laughed together. My roommate was wonderful but sometimes was impatient with my wanderings. Skippy was the most fun and adventurous, luring us out on late nights and managing to find places to meet cute dates. Grier was amenable to most of our ideas so often joined us, as did her roommate, Linda. Judy was my closest, most understanding friend.

My roommate Sue, Judy, Grier and Linda and I went to St. Aygulf on the Cote d'Azur for our Easter vacances the last week of March and first week of April via train to Cannes and stayed at a "relais" filled with other students.

Sue, Grier, Rhys, Libby Lee, Judy and I did a six day tour of the chateau country in a rented car. Judy was the only one old enough to drive in France. It was totally wonderful to see such beautiful countryside and the fabulous castles. We all got along very well somehow stuffed in one car!

17. **What emotional/sentimental stories do you want to share? Heartbreaks? Happy endings?**

Somewhere along the way during the long three month summer tour I suffered bouts of depression. My friend Judy was especially kind and tolerant and helped me regain my balance. We remained close friends (our husbands as well) ever after until her death two years ago in England.

**18. Do you remember being homesick? What brought it on? What did you do to relieve the sadness?**

I don't remember ascribing my down mood swings to being homesick, but maybe they were. I was not getting my usual affirmations and suddenly thrust out on my own. Learning to stand on your own two feet is sometimes tough, made more difficult when on foreign soil. I was - and still am - thankful for the group of friends who were dealing with similar "issues" and offering smiling support. This included Miss Wilson, one of our accompanying professors. We talked, hugged, had coffee or beer together, and went to concerts. Those things helped.

**19. What did you miss from home?**

Certainly I missed being able to call home and looked forward to letters from my parents and friends. I always felt Hollins Abroad was an extreme privilege and tried to share a bit of this new experience with them by writing a lot of letters and taking a lot of photos to share with them later. Mostly I did not miss them as much as wish they were in Paris and on tour with us.

**20. What did you miss from France, after you returned home following your stay abroad?**

Once home again and back on campus, I missed the hustle and smells, sounds and visions the beautiful city of Paris held. I missed the freedom of movement allowed us, the chances to explore and meet new and different people and have the pleasure of being able to communicate with them in their language.

The rules and regulations of campus life now seemed like child-control. Conversations were too often concerned with petty and insignificant subjects. I found many to not be really very interested in what we did while away, unable to comprehend such things, of course, and perhaps a bit jealous.

**21. What do you recall from your travels and vacations?**

How does one speak of the thrill of making your own plans with maps or with a travel agent, then taking off on your own for the first time? Scary and wonderful. Bold and adventurous. Our small group was, indeed, wide-eyed and nervous to take a long train ride down to the south of France; then, another time, to rent a car and have Judy drive us through the Chateau country where we bought our own tickets and made our own tours through the mysterious, historical and wondrous chateaux, then stopping for picnics in green fields.

Most memorable might be when a few of us travelled via train to Seefeld, Austria for our Christmas vacation. The ski lessons were taught by a very cute instructor who kept yelling, "Soft in the knees!" and then would come to gently pick us up out of the hard snow. We had special smiles for him. On Christmas Eve we attended a small church I'm sure you've seen on a calendar where one of its past parishioners had written "Silent Night." All the candles and quiet solemnity surrounding us were viewed through misty eyes as we sang "Stille nacht, heilige nacht . . ." This was all topped off with a fantastic ride through the back hills on a sleigh while we sat warmly covered by a heavy blanket protecting us from the cold and hearing the prancing of the horses feet, bells shaking, moonlight glistening on the snow, as we glided through space, all the while offering praises and thanks to God who allowed us to be in such a magnificent place at such a special time!!!

**22. What “food memories” do you have?**

I don't remember having "bad" food. The French make the best pommes frites and eclairs chocolat, plus most everything else. They can do wonders with potatoes that are prepared sliced, sauced, gravied, fried, baked, or cooked on their own and put into salads. The same with rice.

One day a knock on the door had a neighbor proudly bringing Madame a freshly shot large rabbit. Sue and I were shocked! How can you possibly eat Peter?? Sue refused, but I decided to put some on my plate and reluctantly discovered it to taste like a wild chicken, but not as good.

The other introduction was to the French specialite - la grenouille. Before going to a fancy Fashion Show by Christian Dior, Madame took us to lunch at a popular restaurant, "La Grenouille." The challenge was to try their main item. The idea of eating legs of frogs had less appeal than the rabbit! First, however, we HAD to start with "les escargots." Madame would not tell us what they were, but insisted they be a part of our fabulous meal. Wow! How different and delicious they were - especially with all the butter and garlic. Neither Sue nor I could tell her what we were eating. It was much later when Madame dared tell us what they were. She did not want to spoil our fun of attending one of the best fashion shows of the season. We were dazzled and totally unaware that our perfume was overridden by the strong smell of garlic in our breath.

We fit right in with the French, especially those we met on the Metro. That seemed to be the prevalent smell in the jam packed trains.

23.  **Did you reach a point where you felt “French” during your stay? When” Why?**

I don’t remember ever feeling “French.” I became comfortable among French people and could sing some of their songs and laugh at most of their jokes but did not master the language and all its argot well enough to speak or understand all that was said at their normally fast pace. I worked hard on la prononciation that was somehow easier for me than for my very southern roommate. My biggest compliment came at a gathering and someone asked me if I were Spanish? My accent was not that of an American.

As I became more familiar with the language and my way around the streets and the metro of Paris, I spent more and more time with the French and could better understand their viewpoints.

Probably the closest I got to “feeling French” was the time when a few of us from Hollins was invited to a student’s “Surprise Party.” The surprise was what food was brought for all to eat. We played games, sang songs, danced, feasted on a variety of good food, and did all the silly things one does at parties in France.

24. **Were there any mistakes or regrets? Anything you’d like to redo?**

I am sorry to have not joined the summer tour group more in some of their silly antics instead of allowing myself to get in some funky mood.

I should not have passed up the opportunity to take a fabulous cooking course at the American Cathedral. That, plus so many other activities were available to us: concerts, lectures, plays, etc. It was difficult to wisely plan the brief time we spent abroad. I never did get to the grave of Chopin.

**25. Were there “learning moments” that you can recall? Things that made a big difference and/or when the “light bulb clicked” or when you could reflect on what you had learned?**

One of our planned group tours was to visit La Musee de l’Art Moderne. Many of us dragged our feet off the bus and up to the entrance already deciding we much preferred the kinds of classical art we had seen in Le Louvre. Ho Hum! Here we go. It happened that our guide met us in the lobby and led us into the gallery where the walls were filled with sprawling art works filled with dripping colors, streaks and dots. What is this?? Wow! We did recognize one: “The Nude Descending the Staircase.” As the guide gave us more suggestions and talked about the ideas of these modern artists, we began to see details, forms and wonders take shape. Artists such as Bosch, Picasso, Matisse, Dufy, Leger and Braque all had new things to say. The Schools of Cubism and Fauvism entered our vocabulary, our eyes got better adjusted, and our minds further opened to a world previously unknown. I don’t think there was one of us who didn’t emerge from that Musee changed in some way. Appreciation comes in so many different ways and it has been retained.

**26. Have you used aspect of your Hollins Paris study in your life throughout the years since? What? Where? How?**

I think the first aspect might be the gaining of self-confidence and ability to venture out on my own, to start taking responsibility and think in broader terms. It is easier to understand and gain rapport with someone not American now that I have experienced being an “outsider” or foreigner myself.

Another aspect was to make use of my camera. It was not just a way to record places we travelled to but also to approach other people and bring them into my circle. I started doing this then and am still doing it. My husband and I have made several tours in Europe on a motorcycle and later did a sailing circumnavigation over a period of three years. The camera played a strong role in all the many places we visited – and the ability to converse in French became not just useful but sometimes important when dealing with authorities in foreign ports.

I will add that the habit and discipline of keeping a journal and writing letters was also important to me. These things were started during my year abroad and set a pattern for me all through the following years.

**27. Have you used French? In what careers?**

I entered Hollins with the intention of majoring in Music/Piano. That changed with the Hollins Abroad opportunity. One cannot prepare for a Senior Recital and miss a full year of study for that. So I changed my major to Sociology. Simple enough. My Minor was in French.

Upon graduation I explored several next steps. Graduate school was being considered. I took the Civil Service Exam and considered a job as an interpreter at the U.N. or at the airport in Montreal, Canada. Also there was an opening to teach French at a new university in Florida. However, my future husband made his move to keep me closer to home. I became an executive secretary to an architect until we had our first child. There were no occasions to speak French there.

As mentioned earlier, I have used French during some of our travels over the years. A few years ago my sister and two granddaughters came with me on a River Cruise up the Rhone River. It was a great way to use my very rusty French.

Recently we purchased an old New England Inn, though someone else manages it. I have had several fun exchanges in French with some of the French Canadian guests.

It’s always fun to interject a phrase or appropriate French word to impress at a cocktail party. My singing group sometimes sings a song in French and I do enjoy that!

**28. Do you ever have visual flashes to any of your experiences there? What do you see? What do you remember?**

One that stands out was a day in Paris while attending lectures at the Sorbonne. Upon emerging back onto the streets, we found ourselves having to walk through a large political demonstration. Leaflets were thrust into our hands, the chants of “Paix en Algerie!” were getting louder and louder, aggressive pushing by some almost rose into fist fights. Sue and I hurried through the crowds as fast as we could, somewhat frightened.

This is related to the time we were on vacation in St. Raphael and got into conversations with French students who knew more than we did about some of our American history. They had to explain to us the affects The Marshall Plan had on the French. Until then politics had been a vague word but did not seem to directly affect us. In France we found the students actively aware and involved in politics, especially since the universities were located in the major cities of France. Most U.S. universities are located in their own separate territories with their own cultural life.

Certainly the best visual flash was to see a sort of “clochard” approach my date while we strolled the late streets of Montmartre and try to lure him to buy some of his postcards which he secretly, discretely revealed to be displayed on the inside of his coat! That epitomized the Parisian nightlife. -- Maybe even more than the glitz and glamour of La Moulin Rouge or the Lido!

When I see pictures of l’Arc de Triomphe, I am visually reminded of the exciting parade down the Champs Elyssees on La Fete de la Victoire 1945 in early May, the French flags, the cheers from the crowds, and the flowered wreath laid on La Tombe du Soldat Inconnu. It was very moving.

**29. Do you recall important personal struggles that you grappled with in Paris and/or because of your time in Paris**?

My personal struggles were mostly based on feelings of separation from the group at times, uncertainty about the dating situations, concerns about how to best split my time for study and exploring Paris. The longer we stayed in Paris, the more we discovered things to do and learn, places to go -- and the less time we had to work with. Naturally the ongoing battle was not to gain more weight from eating all the good food and patisseries that tempted us every day. My fancy new dress would no longer fit if I wasn’t careful.

**30. What did you feel were your accomplishments and triumphs?**

Number one accomplishment was to pass exams and receive a kind word from the instructors and my parents. Sue and I both felt good about the relationship and experience we’d had living with out family.

One strong memory that remains is of our Hollins Abroad group departing on the train for Le Havre and our homeward bound ship. Members of the respective families came to offer warm hugs and waves of Adieu. As if orchestrated, everyone at the same time broke into huge cries and sobs, unstoppable until long after the sights and crowded buildings of Paris disappeared from view. Swallowing hard, we began the lifelong process of processing this wonderful, difficult, happy, sad, fantastic experience, melding it into newly revised definitions of who we were. This changed person could be described as the start of a triumph.

**31. What French or European attitudes or ways of thinking opened new perspectives?**

Our French family had certain opinions about Americans, just as we had preconceived notions about the French. It was a very healthy thing to discover that in so many ways they were just the same, and to learn about and understand our differences made us more bonded. Our history and culture brought us different structures and behaviors but underneath it all we could still laugh and cry about similar things. We felt warmly accepted from the first even before we could adequately form conversational talk. We learned that the most important thing was for us to make an effort to learn. This opened the way to allow new perspectives into our personal views. Change was happily inescapable!

**32. What gifts did you bring home to family or friends? What did you bring home for yourself?**

My mother received a lovely large scenic plate from The Netherlands, my father a set of hand blown liqueur glasses and pitcher from a beautiful factory in Italy, my brother and his wife got sweaters from England, my sister probably got a bottle to sweet smelling perfume. She doesn’t remember. Nor do I, I’m sorry to say. For myself, during the three months travel around many countries of Europe I bought gold charms to represent each one for a bracelet. Actually they went on TWO bracelets that I still have. There are a few small treasures that get hung on the Christmas tree each year as well.

**33. Do you consider your study in Paris a vital part of your undergraduate experience? Do you consider it a vital part of your life experience? Why?**

For the most part I have already expressed the importance this experience brought. Certainly it was a vital part of my personal and educational development. It was the highlight of my four year college time, but only added to what I already was gaining by being at Hollins.

During that time there was not heavy emphasis on building careers for women. Some were launched on a business working track but many of us were expected to marry and live happily ever after, able to work the New York Times puzzle, play a good game of bridge, and carry on intelligent conversation with their successful husband.

I have always given thanks that I could have the privilege of being a “stay-at-home mom. My children had the benefit of their mother’s ability to make adjustments to various situations, and one still does. He sought my help in editing a book he recently published. Early on I learned to go with my husband on a motorcycle and an ocean sailing yacht and make those adjustments. We are now enjoying those golden retirement years with our days filled with new challenges and activities that so far have kept us out of trouble. Most of our kids and grandkids live nearby so are a part of our life. That is the best of blessings.

**34. Any additional aspect/story/memory that you want to offer**:

I have had a ball answering your questions and thank you for working on a project that should have interest to even those who have not gone abroad as a student or traveller. My grandson was interested in my long ago trip, surprised to see me pictured as a young lady and to discover that my many slides were in color! Hey, it wasn’t THAT long ago!!!

Thanks for the memories . . .