

*Elaine and Stuart on May 25 2006 Trip***DISCLAIMER.**

I will be sending my complete journal as some of you have requested a repeat from last year. I guess you guys get a thrill from my "chatty style" as Stuart calls it. You may read what you want or not. Since my loving husband doesn't want to do anything at night this diary gives me something to kill the time. Have fun. Love Elaine



Thursday May 25, 2006

We left Phoenix at 7:30 a.m. After only two hours of sleep last night I was feeling pretty good considering. US Air first class was just okay. They gave us a full breakfast and had a stupid movie - Big Momma's House Two. We arrived in Philly on time and found our way to the first class lounge which was very nice. Lots of drinks and sandwiches. Me met an extremely expensively dressed couple and started a conversation with them. They had been delayed since the day before because they came from Florida and their plane had to circle because President Bush was in Philly and no one can land while Air Force one is on the ground or something like that so they missed their connection by 6 minutes. They were not happy. They were on their way to Venice for a cruise on Symphony. Stuart found out that their son was a basketball player for the New Jersey Nets. No wonder because they had told me they were both teachers. I knew they were not able to dress like that on teachers' salaries.

The plane in Philly was late by an hour. Then when we did get on the plane in front of us broke down on the tarmac. They had to get a bus and get all the people off before they could tow the plane. So we waited for another hour on the tarmac.

Business class in Lufthansa was very very nice. Each seat is like a self contained little capsule. The seats are bright blue and very ergonomic. You can completely lay down or recline. They have a massager on them and personal reading lights attached to the head rest. They have outlets to plug in your laptop and wireless internet while you are in the air!!! Each seat has its' own tv screen and you can watch over 12 movies whenever you choose, play a lot of games, watch tv or listed to tons of music. They give you those sound cancelling ear phones. They loaded us with tons of food and it was really good. For dinner I had grilled shrimp, rice a mushroom ragout and it also came with a salad with grilled eggplant and peppers and sun dried tomatoes. For desert we had tiramisu and chocolate truffles oh and fresh rolls. Oh yea - lots to drink of which I tried all the wines. They gave us

full pillows (not those crappy foam things on other planes) and nice blankets. We got eye masks and socks too. By the way I was too busy eating to do anything but watch one movie. However, we did sleep for 4 hours after dinner. Nice to lay down.

Friday, May 26, 2006

We of course missed our connection in Frankfurt so we had to wait 4 hours. Frankfurt airport really sucks. It needs to be torn down and rebuilt. It was a mess 4 years ago and still is.

When we finally arrive in Athens of course we had no luggage and they could not track it. I was upset but stayed calm because I was so tired. They were so gracious (hopefully you can hear my sarcasm) and gave us two plane white tee shirts (to sleep in they said). What generous people.



We took the bus into Athens (since we didn't have any luggage) and it was kind of cool being with all the locals. We got off downtown near the Placa because someone told us that is where the hotel was - of course it wasn't. So we grabbed a cab and got to the hotel for 10 euros. By the way - everything is outrageously expensive here but we did save money by taking the bus (7 euros for two) and the cab to the hotel. We only spent 17 euros and the cab ride directly from the airport would have been 40 euros. Remember the euro is worth approximately \$1.30 so if something is 10 euros it would be \$13.00.

Hotel is wonderful. The bed is so luxurious. Stuart won't get out. According the Greece travel books this is one of the top hotels in Greece and it really shows it. I guess all those points I have are really paying off. We have a balcony which has a great view of the Acropolis which they light up at night and the Mediterranean on the other side. However two glasses of ice tea are 5 euros. Oh yea, internet was 30 euros per day!!

We took showers - I washed our undies and we slept - slept until noon the next day.

Saturday, May 27, 2006

When we woke we were starving. We took the hotel shuttle to the Placa and went to a restaurant to have Luby (green beans for all the non-Lebanese people) with rice, Lamb chops, Greek meatballs (delicious) and Greek salads. We had so much food that we took the rest back to the hotel. Bill was 45 euros.

We found a travel company and booked a city tour for tomorrow and arranged for a car to take us to the port on Monday - the hotel warned us to do that because there will be a Taxi strike on Monday. At least they warn you. I went shopping - found some great peddle pushers at Marks' and Spenser. That is about the only reasonable store however no Marshalls. We found a Sephoras and got Stuart some new cologne and me some makeup. I felt so much better now that I was shopping. I was still upset about my luggage and didn't know what we were going to do if it did not come. We were wearing our shorts (that I put in the carry bag at the last minute in case it was hot)



and the free Lufthansa white tee shirts. Everything closed down by 4 on Saturday and no stores will be open on Sunday (making Stuart happy) so we took the metro back to the hotel. What a nice clean subway. They are having an exhibit of painted large cows here in Greece. They are everywhere and very funny. I took lots of pictures. When we got off the subway we had to walk about 2 miles to the hotel and I wanted to because I saw a "spider man" cow on a building and wanted a picture. Stuart of course was complaining but I got my picture.

At the hotel - **OUR LUGGAGE HAD ARRIVED.** I have never been so relieved. We unpacked with unabashed glee!!! We had more expensive ice tea sent up and took a rest with the interesting tv in Greece, three Spanish stations, three German stations, one Japanese station, one United Arab Emirates station, CNN International, Bloomberg, British News and the rest Greek. **NOTHING** for ME to watch. I ate the leftover Luby, rice, meatball and Greek salad (with my fingers - no fork) and Stuart ate chocolate which is normal.



About 9 we went for a walk and low and behold - there is a Starbucks a few blocks down. What a treat - Iced, venti, decaf, sugar free vanilla, non-fat lattes!!! There was a wedding going on in the church next door and that was neat to watch. We walked around the block and found the one and only open pastry shop in Athens. We got two

different kinds of baklava and cookies. Walked around the corner and there was a large cinema. They had the luggage and they could not track it. I was upset but stayed calm because I was so tired. They were so gracious (hopefully you can hear my sarcasm) and gave us two plane white tee shirts (to sleep in they said). What generous people.



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DaVince Code in English (Greek subtitles) but Stuart wouldn't go. So back to the hotel to write

my little

diary. See you tomorrow.

Sunday, May 28, 2006 - This morning was our city tour. Barely got there in time. Another long bus ride. Those really are not my cup of tea but it is what you have to do to get a tour. Saw a bunch of great old stuff. Sent you the following pictures: 1. Original Olympic Stadium. 2. Ruins 3. Acropolis from Athens 4. Us at the Acropolis. 5. Guard in dress uniform at palace.



After that we left the tour and walked to the Flea Market. God was it hot. I don't know if it was because we were so high up on the Acropolis or it was the weather. I will tell you this - that walk up to the Acropolis in that heat is not something for the faint of heart. The Flea Market is really big, narrow streets and junky. Everything is so expensive it isn't fun to shop - thereby ruining one of my greatest pleasures. However I did take a risk and buy a pirated version of the Da Vinci Code. Got it for 4 euros. Will see if it works after this. Stuart was upset by the heat and wanted something to eat however he was complaining about the Greek food. Funny - he loves Lebanese food but didn't want Greek. Every time we stopped at a restaurant and looked at the menu he didn't want to eat there. After an hour of that crap I just went into a restaurant. It was great. Greek food - which Stuart complained about - but I loved it. I had some type of lamb dish that was chopped lamb made into long fingers, grilled and layered on top of pita bread with a wonderful tahinni (sesame seeds for you non-Lebanese out there) sauce and grilled tomatoes. The owner also brought me a plate of grilled pork as an appetizer on the house. Stuart saw "beef burger" on the menu and ordered. Of course when it came it was like yesterday's meatballs and he wouldn't eat it. They also gave us a large plate of French fries that were really good. So in order to appease Stuart I took the Pita

bread, cut it in half, put the beef burger on the bread, asked for some onion and lettuce. Took some mustard and made him a hamburger. He then ate it. Years ago when we traveled he loved to try different things. Not anymore. **DONT GET OLD!!!**



Afterwards the owner brought me a wonderful plate of desert. It was unbelievable. It was yogurt made into a creamy mixture - like our Lebani and had fruit in it and covered with honey. God was it good. One of you family members please make that for me!!!!

We found an outside antique market after that and I have sent you a couple of pictures. Onnday (making Stuart happy) so we took the metro back to the hotel. What a nice clean subway. They are having an exhibit of painted large cows here in Greece. They are everywhere and very funny. I took lots of pictures. When we got off the subway we had to walk about 2 miles to the hotel and I wanted to because I saw a "spider man" cow on a building and wanted a picture. Stuart of course was complaning but I got my picture.

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e of the pictures if for the guys out there. See all the old helmets and swords? Stuart did get a kick out of that. It was so

messy, hot

and crowded I didn't even look for any picture frames.

By now it was two o'clock and we just couldn't get a taxi. No one would stop. Of course I didn't bring the map and we got so lost. Finally we found a hotel and begged (literally) them to get us a taxi. They called and one came about 10 minutes later. The Taxi's for some reason do not stop for people. I have no idea why. We did however find out that the Taxi strike tomorrow is because the government is make the Taxi's put in seat belts. Serves them right.



I went swimming on top of the hotel. What a neat pool with a great view of the Acropolis. Had a "Nescafe drink with ice cream" and meet a bunch of people who will be on our cruise.

Tonight we had dinner at the hotel with two other couples on our cruise. Back to the room to pack. Tomorrow to

the ship.

*Political
Commentary:
People in
Greece (the
Greeks) really*

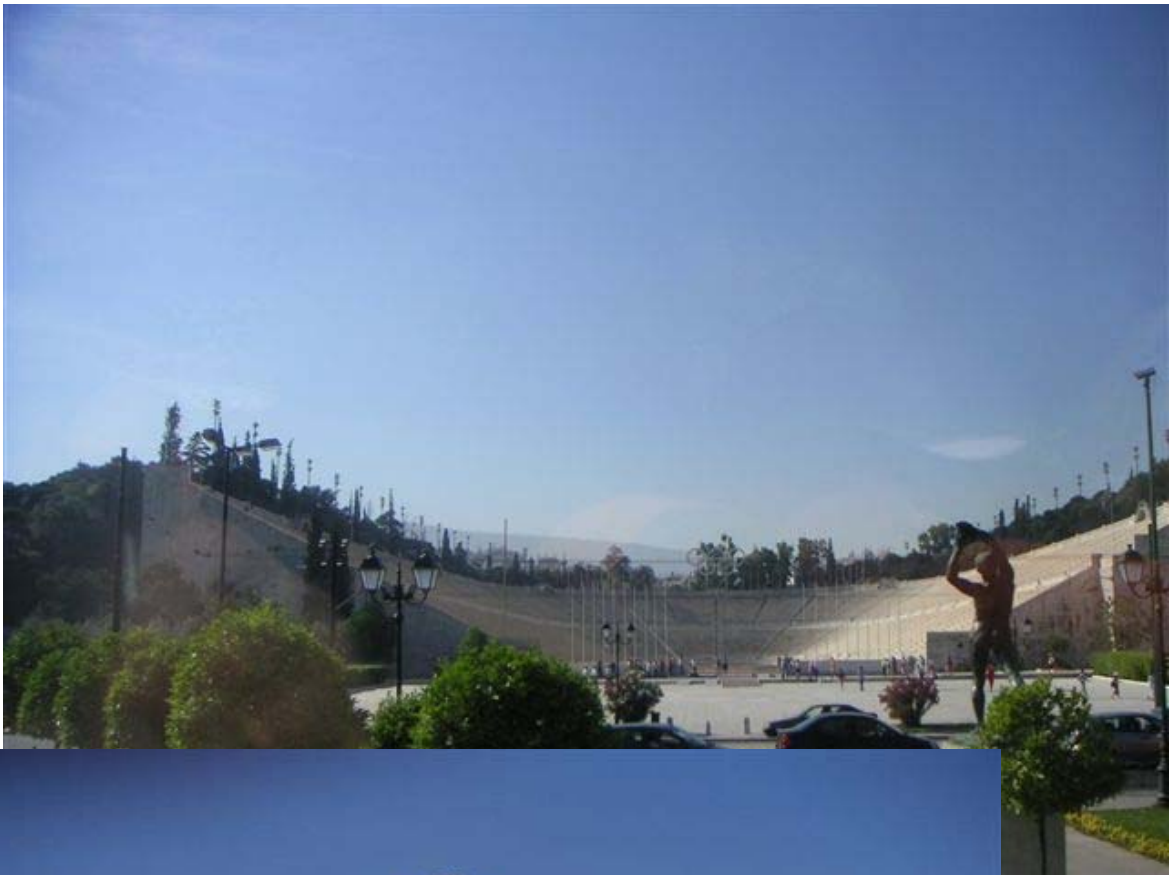


are kind of rude (don't get upset Carole) but they truly are. They screamed at the people looking at the Acropolis to "hurry hurry, get out of the way". They don't respond to you and when you ask for something they can be quite sarcastic. Athens really needs a good cleaning. The lawns are a mess and the streets are dirty with lots of leaves, cigarette butts and weeds. Everything is made out of marble as marble is 1/3rd the price of wood. Even the curbs on the streets are marble, however **NO ONE EVER CLEANS THE MARBLE**. Except for seeing the Acropolis there is nothing to do here. I saw better and older ruins in Lebanon. The traffic is a nightmare and there is no parking. I am sure the islands are much better but this is my last trip to Athens. Lebanon is so much better, even 11 years ago right after the war.

Everyone have a good holiday.

Elaine

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