

Iris's Travel Memories and Anecdotes

December 16, 2021

> Most of the memories and anecdotes described here are from trips Gene and I took—many with children and grandchildren, some with parents, some with friends, and some on our own. Like Gene's travel memories, these too are for daughters, sons-in-law, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, great-great-grandchildren-to-be

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> And as I did in my memoirs, I quote from Kazuo Ishiguru:

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> "As a writer, I'm more interested in what people tell themselves happened rather than what actually happened."

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> A selection of our travel highlights:

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> Visiting the Soviet Union in 1967, right after it was opened to

> American tourists, and China in 1981 (through the World Bank) right

> before it was opened to American tourists

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> The border guards' lengthy check underneath our car as we crossed the

> border between East and West Berlin two years before the wall came

> down

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> Reading the inscriptions in Hiroshima's Peace Memorial Museum, which apologized to the "dead souls" of Hiroshima for Japan's role in World War II and to the people of Nanjing for the "Rape of Nanjing"

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> The surprise of seeing Hiroshima as a thriving Japanese city and

> hearing from an American taxi driver (married to a Japanese woman)

> that in all his years living there he had never seen any hostility to

> Americans

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> The honesty of the displays in Normandy's French museum, which

> highlight French collaboration in the Holocaust and photos of French

> women sightseeing with Nazi soldiers in Paris

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- > The woman next to me at Washington's Holocaust Museum who said she was
- > one of Schindler's Jews and Schindler called her his "shaina maidel"
- > (beautiful girl)
- >
- > The young doorman at the Munich airport, two generations removed from
- > the Nazis, who apologized to us for the Holocaust when we asked for
- > directions to Dachau
- >
- > The Buddhist monk in Kyoto (dressed as if he had emerged from a
- > Japanese screen) who discussed finance with Gene and apologized to us
- > for Pearl Harbor
- >
- > And the traditional vegetarian lunch that followed
- >
- > The drunk journalist we met for dinner in Moscow, who shouted about the
- > horrors of the Soviet Union as the elderly woman at the next table stood up with
- > tears in her eyes and said, "Remember the Soviet Union lost 20 million people
- > during the war."
- >
- > Another journalist in the Soviet Union who had just returned from
- > interviewing Svetlana's (Stalin's daughter) children after Svetlana
- > had defected to the United States
- >
- > And a visitor to the Soviet Union who told of a Russian passenger
- > bribing the pilot of a commercial flight to make an unscheduled
- > landing in a remote area to pick up deer antlers from his friend
- >
- > Our guides in the Soviet Union who had received no news about Nikita
- > Khrushchev (the former premier) in the years since he had been purged
- > from office and were thrilled to hear we had seen him on television
- > with his wife and dog— while telling us to keep walking so our
- > discussion would not be obvious
- >
- > Japanese temples and gardens in Kyoto and the Miyajima
- > "floating" shrine, a torii gate on the Inland Sea
- >

> The Japanese woman who was afraid to tell me which paintings she liked during a museum visit for fear she might offend me if they were not the same paintings I liked.

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> Among my many protocol mistakes in Japan: taking a bath before each of the men had used the wooden tub; arriving at a formal Japanese dinner late and finding all service on hold while I struggled to finish my appetizer of gum-like (and very expensive) mushrooms; inviting a junior staff member to a World Bank reception for senior executives and finding him hiding in a corner, face to the wall

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> Hearing from Tess about her trip to a Chinese rock mountain forest and

> being reminded of our Chinese paintings as she hiked

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> Buying flowers, carefully chosen by a corner market owner to be

> appropriate as a thank you to the bed and breakfast hosts who, many

> years earlier, had carried Diana downstairs and to the hospital when

> she had food poisoning and dehydration

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> Watching Quinn navigate the stepping stones of Japanese gardens and

> stop at every drink vending machine he could find

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> Pam's photos of children everywhere

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> Mike's Denver Post article about our trip to Japan, with a photo of

> Quinn in a bamboo forest

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> Sushi Den, Izakaya Den, Domo

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> The presents our grandchildren brought back from various places around

> the world, most recently a book from Madeline of Hiroshige's "One

> Hundred Famous Views of Edo," celebrating Gene's and my birthdays and

> a trip to Japan we took with her and her family 12 years earlier

>

> Celebrating Maya's, Sam's, and Quinn's birthdays in various places

> around the world

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- > Pam searching for playgrounds everywhere
- >
- > Tess showing me video clips of Harry Potter films that matched the
- > places we were seeing in London
- >
- > Tess and Emma following in Taylor Swift's footsteps at St. Paul's
- > cathedral
- >
- > Sharing a compartment on a 24- hour train ride in heavily-censored
- > China with our guide/"minder," 25 at the time, who devoured every book
- > in our suitcase and told us of China's senile leaders and, a year
- > later and now 30, turned up at the World Bank, a member of the
- > establishment
- >
- > Crashing a traditional Egyptian wedding at the Mena Hotel overlooking
- > the pyramids
- >
- > Madeline turning to me on a London bus and saying, "They don't do that
- > anymore, do they?" as the tour guide described beheadings in the Tower
- > of London
- >
- > Finally finding a city—Buenos Aires—that is on my body clock and stays
- > up all night, and then reliving the experience many years later
- > through Maya's descriptions of her semester abroad there
- >
- > Maya's article in The Student Life comparing her experience at Pomona
- > College with her semester abroad at the University of Buenos Aires
- >
- > The fun of sharing trips to New York with our children and
- > grandchildren
- >
- > Crashing a large group of movie extras being filmed for a New York
- > scene in "Planes, Trains and Automobiles," with Gene directing me, as
- > Steve Martin tried to make it through revolving doors at the same time
- > the extras were pushing in the opposite direction (The scene made it
- > into the movie, but I couldn't find myself.)
- >

- > Taking Sam to Ellis Island when he was six to show him my father's
- > name (which is also his name) on the wall, and then watching Sam
- > search for my father's suitcase in the museum
- >
- > Seeing Yayoi Kusama's art exhibit and infinity mirror rooms with
- > Madeline in London
- >
- > Pam and Mike's trip to Wuhan to meet Hayden at two years old and
- > seeing Hayden's joy as she ran through Wuhan parks blowing bubbles
- > with Mike, gathering leaves for Pam, and showing her athleticism on
- > steps
- >
- > Seeing the beauty of Haiti on a cruise with my father and Louise
- > before the dictatorship and learning of Haitian's dream of creating
- > beaches and a tourist industry—and many years later sharing
- > experiences with Emma when she returned from a medical mission to
- > Haiti
- >
- > A leaky Mexican plane with my father and Louise (our first flight)
- > after taking the train from Bethlehem to Mexico City because my father
- > wanted to make sure he saw Mexico before the plane crashed
- >
- > The motorbike brigade in Bermuda: Gene sat behind Diana; Deb sat behind
- Pam; Roberta sat behind Michael; and I sat behind Ken, feeling like a French
- movie star in a New Wave movie.
- >
- > Michael Gottesman's backgammon game with a shop owner in a Jerusalem
- > market to determine whether Michael paid double or nothing for the
- > set—he paid double
- >
- > An offer of 50 head of cattle for Diana in the same market
- >
- > Playing "Zorba the Greek" and dancing the traditional Greek dance in a
- > Mykonos restaurant with Diana and Pam
- >
- > Being overwhelmed by the beauty of Santorini at a time when the island
- > had only one guest house and the eight of us (four Rotbergs and four

- > Gottesmans) went to the top with baggage and 16 donkeys
- >
- > Hearing Leigh's stories of travel adventures
- >
- > Learning about life from Max, the tour guide on my first trip to
- > Europe in 1951
- >
- > First hating, then learning to love Paris on that first trip, when
- > bullet holes from World War II were still common on buildings
- >
- > French food and a ping pong tournament on the SS De Grasse, a French
- > Trans-Atlantic ship that sailed from New York to Europe
- >
- > Speaking French in France (or so I thought) and being answered in
- > English
- >
- > Celebrating Verdi's 200th birthday in 2013 by seeing his operas in
- > opera houses throughout Northern Italy, topped off by visiting his
- > villa in Sant' Agata and seeing "Falstaff" in the small opera house in
- > nearby Busseto—also attended by Verdi's step daughter's descendants,
- > who still live in the villa
- >
- > Days filled with gelato cones while traveling with the Bray bunch in
- > Umbria
- >
- > Gene's drive onto Pebble Beach golf course during a trip to
- > California, as Sam shouted for him to stop while laughing hysterically
- >
- > Chasing butterflies in Umbria for Eva's class project
- >
- > Gene's game in Venice with Sam, Eva, and me to see who could cross the
- > most bridges, while Diana and Leigh dropped out, using the broken
- > stroller as an excuse
- >
- > Visiting Emma when she was a newborn in Yeppoon
- >
- > Learning about Australia from Leigh

- >
- > Harpa, the gorgeous glass concert hall and convention center in
- > Reykjavik
- >
- > The Sydney opera house
- >
- > Visiting and revisiting and revisiting the spectacular architecture of
- > the Oslo opera house and then climbing to the roof on the outside ramp
- >
- > Armies of soldier crabs marching on a Queensland beach in Australia
- >
- > A five-hour bus ride from Melbourne to see fairy penguins march in and
- > out of the sea
- >
- > The Daintree Rainforest and Cape Tribulation in Queensland
- >
- > Watching feluccas (wooden sailing boats) on the Nile River
- >
- > Thai and Japanese restaurants in Yeppoon
- >
- > Competing for first place in number of times an American tourist has
- > gone to the hospital in the remote Lofoten Islands in Norway
- >
- > The vicarious pleasure of reliving our travels in Japan by hearing Sam
- > and Tess's enthusiasm in describing theirs
- >
- > Diana's introduction to my first "wormer" in Yeppoon—an elegant woman
- > who was also the daughter of the man who, with the wormer's brother,
- > set explosives on the grounds of a Japanese resort in Yeppoon
- >
- > Irv's reaction to Pam's postcard, written from Pam and Mike's balcony
- > on the French Riviera during their semester abroad
- >
- > After attending a Colorado College - Denver University basketball game
- > with us, Maya's letter to the president of Colorado College protesting
- > the taunts of the fans
- >

- > Mike mountain climbing everywhere
- >
- > My childhood memories of trips with my parents—talking to a parrot on a boat to Bermuda, a burning cross in front of a hotel in the Poconos, overnight trains to Montreal with my mother, flirting with World War II soldiers on trains to Miami Beach, days spent collecting empty soda bottles with Alan Cristol in Miami Beach, boardwalk games with my father in Atlantic City, seeing television for the first time standing outside a bar in Atlantic City, mashed turnips with my father at Horn & Hardart in Philadelphia, pre-Broadway musicals and plays in Philadelphia, my father pointing out how much more beautiful Vermont's side of the border was than New York's
- >
- > Meeting with Rabbi Joshua Boettiger, Franklin Roosevelt's
- > great-grandson, at the synagogue in Bennington, Vermont, the town
- > where my grandfather had also been a rabbi
- >
- > A big smile from Albert Einstein to us when he emerged from the
- > Institute for Advanced Studies in Princeton as Erwin Bareiss and I
- > stood outside
- >
- > Ingrid Bergman, my teenage actress idol, as she emerged from a New
- > York theater
- >
- > Hearing about Jack Benny from his daughter at a dinner in New York
- > with Hal Lazarus, Michael and Marian Newman, and Art Buchwald
- >
- > Visiting South Africa in 1993 as it was emerging from apartheid
- >
- > Nelson Mandela at a dinner with Franklin Sonn in New York
- >
- > The fun of London theater and late-night dinners with Madeline, Tess,
- > and Emma, followed by Pret A Manger goodies from Madeline for
- > breakfast
- >
- > Visiting Northern Ireland (coincidentally, a few days after Barack Obama's visit),
- as barbed wire came down and Belfast began to thrive after the peace

agreement, but gates between many Protestant and Catholic neighborhoods were still locked at night, and political graffiti and grim humor abounded.

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> Our many trips to Bethany Beach with Diana and Pam, and later their families—including one at the time of the first moon landing; another with 25 people (mostly psychologists) in a house for 10; a third when Gene, Maya, and Madeline won second place in a sand sculpture contest and Quinn joined the photo

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> Pam searching for children's clothes everywhere

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> Hayden flying a kite on the Ocean City beach on a crisp winter day

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> Tess and Emma, elegantly dressed to see the Royal Ballet, while we went to Rachel Wolf's wedding reception, followed by a dinner of huge chunks of roast beef that Tess said she was glad she missed

>

> Hayden's joy as she ran on Maui beaches Tahiti, Moorea, Bora Bora—and the surrounding sea

>

> Seeing a particularly beautiful and emotional ballet with Eva in San Francisco

>

> Natalie Dessay singing directly to Emma as she sat in the front row of a Metropolitan Opera performance of "La Sonnambula"

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> Maya serenading Lynn and Geoff at their wedding in Evanston

>

> The beauty of Mohonk, the joy of our 50th anniversary celebration with children and grandchildren and our reunions with the Lazari— while always making sure never to miss a buffet or a tea

>

> Playing "The Game," first learned at Mohonk, in restaurants everywhere

>

> Shopping with our family fashion advisors—in Switzerland with Eva for an elegant ski jacket and at Mohonk with Madeline for the perfect scarf

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- > Falling in love with “Don Carlo”—and opera—high up in the Vienna opera house with Gene, my father, and Louise
- >
- > “Nabucco” on the floating stage of the Bregenz opera theater
- >
- > The spectacular beauty of Iceland and the Norwegian fjords and the Lofoten Islands and Torres del Paine/Patagonia and Sicily and Corsica and Hawaii and French Polynesia and British cliff walks and the west coast of Ireland and Northern Ireland and Skye and Mull and the Alps and the Amalfi Drive and the French Riviera/Corniches/red rocks and Provence and Guilin and Japanese temples and gardens and
- >
- > The excitement of cliff drives, missed by traveling companions who waited at the bottom
- >
- > The drive along the northwest coast of Maui
- >
- > Working with Eva to produce a professional recording of our toasts and musical selections to be played at Sam and Casey’s Maui wedding
- > reception
- >
- > The Mana Kai Maui, a room with a view, the turquoise sea, rainbows, sunsets, sandcastles, surfing, beach walks, late afternoon gatherings, whales, dolphins, turtles, touch football, frisbee, gourmet feasts, fish tacos, sushi, musubi, cinnamon rolls, Ululani’s shave ice, pina colodas, POG, Lappert’s ice cream, Paia Fish Market, Sansei, Cafe O’Lei, Monkeypod, Mama’s Fish House, happy hour at 5 Palms, The Game, Scrabble, Bananagrams, Pictionary, Trivial Pursuit, poker, guitars, football pools, fireworks, Grand Wailea, Swap Meet, shopping, movies, Paia, Makawao, Makena, La Perouse Monument, Iao Valley, Hana, Big Beach.....and, now, new adventures, new views, new enchanted gardens at 3505 Malina Place.....
- >
- > And.....teaching our grandchildren the art of crashing hotel pools in
- > Maui
- >
- > Pam searching for the perfect pizza for Quinn in Japan and Iceland

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- > Leigh's gourmet Italian lunches after each day of sightseeing in
- > Umbria and the Amalfi Drive
- >
- > Eva's story about the earthquake she thought was a car hitting the building during her semester abroad in Florence—a reminder of the earthquake I thought was a subway under the house—as Eva says, it runs in the family.
- >
- > The Winter Olympics in Calgary with Diana and Barbara and Sam Santos
- >
- > Hitchhiking with a Chinese army truck when my walk around the lake in front of the Summer Palace turned out not to be around the lake
- >
- > A Japanese man when seeing Gene for the first time in a few years: "You got fat."
- >
- > My adventures as sole chauffeur (gear shift car) of a 500 mile drive through Kenya and Tanzania touring game parks—dodging potholes, trapped by elephants, and rescued by border guards with machine guns, who helped us change a flat tire.
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- > A three-hour drive alone, back to see Le Corbusier's church in Ronchamp after Gene, Roberta, and Michael had voted to go straight to our hotel rather than taking the 20-minute detour as we passed the turnoff to the church. Any guesses about which of the three worried that I would be in a highway accident?
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- > An Israeli Hasidic rabbi and a priest, both in kilts, bonding during a
- > Maclean clan reunion on the island of Mull off the west coast of
- > Scotland
- >
- > Visiting Latvia and Lithuania, my ancestral homes
- >
- > Seeing the curvature of the earth from the Concorde supersonic plane
- > (Madeline and Hayden—this is the closest we made it to space!)
- >
- > Getting an inside look at the competitiveness and stratification of
- > Singaporean schools

- >
- > The fun of seeing Quinn surrounded by children in a Japanese
- > elementary school and the surprise at discovering the freedom those
- > children were given to run around the classroom
- >
- > The fun of seeing our grandchildren enjoy the playfulness of our house
- > and tower on their visits to Potomac
- >
- > The joy of sharing movies, musicals, plays, ballets, concerts, operas,
- > operettas, soap operas, with Gene, with my parents, with our children,
- > with our grandchildren—everywhere
- >
- > Wonderful trips with various assortments of grandchildren and their
- > parents in London, Paris, France on a barge, Switzerland, Venice,
- > Florence, Rome, Umbria, the Amalfi Drive, Iceland, Japan, Australia,
- > the Virgin Islands, New York, the Hamptons, New Paltz, Philadelphia,
- > Baltimore, Bethany Beach, Chicago, Las Vegas, Sedona, California,
- > Hawaii.....so happy that we were able to share these experiences with
- > you
- >
- > Maui, Maui, Maui, and the birth of Sam and Casey's marriage
- >
- > Our travels made their way into books we wrote for our grandchildren: Tess's
- love of dogs inspired the story of an international dog costume contest in "Tess
- and the Dog Star;" "How Emma Stopped the World" began with an actual incident
- that occurred as I drove with Emma in Oahu; and Quinn's trip to Japan is
- immortalized in words and illustrations in "Quinn's Search for the Samurai."
- >
- > Love,
- >
- > Iris