

**DIARY**  
**Ann's Journey to Malta, 1985**  
**March 30 to April 13**

This was Ann's first and last trip to Malta. It was, for her, a dream come true. It solidified her identity, with the culture she inherited from her parents. This Diary is an intriguing extension of Ann's "Inner World" which I capture in Ann of Green Pastures. Her other Diary "Living with Cancer" on this Web site continues the multifaceted person that made her a very irreplaceable cornerstone in so many lives.

I take full responsibility for mistakes in transposing Ann's hand written diary. The Maltese names of persons, places and foods were not clearly written probably due to Ann's attempt to jot things down before they escaped her memory.

Ann toured Malta with her niece Ann Buhagiar from San Francisco and her brother in law, Frank Buhagiar likewise from San Francisco.

**March 30, Saturday:** George, Georgann and Aaron took me to Ann's. We arrived in time for Palm Sunday Mass at 5:30 P.M. We returned home and had something to eat; we then talked and got ready to leave 10:30 P.M. Flemming, Ryan and Joey took us to the airport. We checked in and boarded our airplane at 11:50 (our plane was World Airways). We tried to get comfortable and then we were on our way at 12:30 A.M. from Oakland. New York here we come!

**March 31, Sunday:** Our DC-10 arrived in Newark, N.J. at 8:17 A.M. Ann's Cousins, Rita and Rose were at the airport to meet us and drove us to their mom's home in Astoria, N.Y. How lovely it was to meet their mom, Chetta and dad, Sam. We had some coffee and toast. We were tired so we took a two hour nap. When we woke up Rita's three brothers and their families were at the house to celebrate their dad's 73 birthday and also to meet us. What lovely people!

We ate a little lunch and then went to visit Frank's other two sisters Carmen and Rachel. When we came back to the house Ann and I had some good Maltese meat soup which Chetta had made. They had ordered a delicious birthday cake for Sam. The whole group of 21 people sang Happy Birthday. We had a nice visit afterwards. We talked about Malta and family and looked at many pictures.

Time was running out, at 7:45 we got our things together and said goodbyes. Rita and Rose took us again to the Newark airport. We found out that our plane would not leave for London until two hours later at 12:30 A.M. Ann and I are sitting looking out the window and it is raining like "cats and dogs." Ann and I talked about family and our expectations in Malta. God give us good flight!

**April 1, Monday:** Finally we took off at 1:00 A.M. on a 747 plane, Virgin Airlines, owned by Boy George's manger (rock singer). It was a delightful aircraft with a

young crew, roomy and pleasant. We really had good seats towards the front. We saw the movie Flamingo Kid, a good show. Since our flight was two hours late we only had a four hour stop over rather than twelve hours. So, we could not go into London. We boarded a bus from Gatwick Airport to Heathrow airport. The bus ride was along the country side. The homes were all made out of bricks and we saw many brick, old English architecture home.

We decided to get a bowl of soup and a delicious banana split at a nice comfortable restaurant at Heathrow. Our waiter was Frano, a delightful Slovak. He gave us three scoops of ice cream instead of two.

We checked in with the Malta Airlines at 7:00 P.M. The flight should leave at 9:00 and then it is Malta! Here we come! We should arrive in Malta at 2:00 A.M.

## IN MALTA

**April 2, Tuesday:** Our Boeing 737 came down on the holy turf of Malta at 1:15 A.M. How surprised we were to see so many of the family: Grace, Nata, Mary, Giovanna, Lelli, Marcelle, Carmel and girlfriend Edith. It was great to see them all for the first time. Cousin Frank, 89 years old, woke up at 2:30 A.M., when we arrived at the house, to greet me!

Ann and I became so excited flying over Sicily. We knew we were close to Malta! First we flew over Gozo and then Malta. Lelli drove us home. They all came to the house for tea and coffee, cake and finger sandwiches. We went to sleep at 3:30 A.M. They put me up in Giovanna and Lelli beautiful bedroom. I had a terrific sleep. I thought I was going to wake up at 8:30 for Mass, but instead I woke up at 11:30 A.M. I took a nice bath and then had dinner about 12:30. Giovanna cooked an excellent meal: mashed potatoes, roast beef, cooked lettuce and good Maltese bread. Giovanna and Lelli and Cousin Frank took me for a ride to see Xjhayra (a beach area) and saw their summer home. We stopped to see the house where Pa was born. It was demolished, a skeleton and gateway remained standing. I also saw the house which Pa and Uncle Paul had built in 1905. Pa carved a statue of the Sacred Heart in front of the house. We then drove by Marsascale Bay, Jerma Palace Hotel and SaintThomas Fort, 200 years old, at the time of the Knights of St. John.

We came home and had some tea and delicious cake, layered with ricotta cheese. Cousin Mary took me to see a number of cousins in Zabbar. Cousin Joe stopped in and a number of other cousins.

Around 7:00 we had a snack: soup, ham, hard boiled eggs and good Maltese bread. More relatives came to visit. At 9:00 P.M. Carmel, Edith), Marcelle, Toni, David, Carmen and Ann took me to Jerma Palace Hotel for a drink and good

conversation. I got to see Marcelle and Toni dance. What a lovely day! God bless all the family!

**April 3, Wednesday:** I woke up at 7:30 and went to 8:30 Mass with Cousin Mary. How nice to hear the hymns in Maltese. I came home and had breakfast then Frank, Ann's dad, and Ann picked me up about 10:00 A.M. Frank's brother Lelli drove us first to Mosta to the church of the Assumption, Rotunda. This is the church where the bomb which weight 1,000 pounds went through the huge dome, hit the side wall and landed on the floor. At the time the church had 300 people and no one was injured. The wall of the dome was 6 feet thick. We saw the bomb in a back room. From there we drove to the town of Rabat and Mdina the old city which is surrounded by a wall. It was interesting to walk the narrow streets. It reminded me of the old city in Jerusalem. Before we walked through the city we had something to eat at an outside café. From there we took a bus to Valetta, the capital of Malta. It is the station for each bus line. There is no driving of any cars in the shopping area of Valetta. We did some shopping. I looked out at the visiting area, in a park, that looked out to the Grand Harbor. We visited St. John's Church in Valetta which the government would like to make into a museum. Frank and Ann took the bus to Hamrun and I took the bus to Zabbar. I met Cameru's wife, Doris, on the bus. We visited all the way home.

Giovanna cooked me a delicious froga (omelet) ggoghoc (artichoke), potatoes and bread and tea. We went to visit Grace and family as they had a company from Holland. All the family went to meet them and visit a while. We went home and I insisted that Marcel sleep in my bed (really her bed) instead of on the sofa. A lovely day, thank you God!

## TO GOZO

**April 4, Thursday, Holy Thursday:** I woke up at 6 am and had breakfast. I gathered together my things for my trip to Gozo. I said good-by to Frank and Giovanna. Lelli took us to the Ferry boat at the northern end of Malta. We passed along a mountainous terrain it was just beautiful; it reminded me of the north of Israel. The ferry boat was packed. Joe Vella, Franks' friend was there to meet us, in his Mercedes Ben Taxi.

We stopped to visit Rotunda Church of St. John, a church within a church, it was just beautiful. We stopped at the next town Victoria, the capital. We went shopping. The next stop was Xlendi, a beach resort and at a bar I took pictures. We stopped at the church of the Blessed Virgin Ta Pinu (a man named Pinu gave his property to build the church).

Joe took us to his house in Zebleng. His wife had a delicious dinner for us. What lovely people! Joe has three daughters: Maryann, Dorine and Louisa. They gave us some gbejniet (Maltese cheese).

We drove through Marsalforn, a seaside resort. An elderly woman was making Maltese lace and some people (tourist) were swimming. This is the beach where Frank used to swim when a boy. Then we went to Xaghra Frank's home town. We went to our lovely apartment. We visited the church of Mary's Nativity. Each town has a piazza with a church in the center. I went to take a nap, Frank and Ann went to visit relatives.

Holy Thursday services started at 7 pm and finished at 9 pm. It was a beautiful Mass with 12 priests participating. A Mass we went to the Olympia Bar and had some Anisette to drink and visit with the people.

We LOVE Gozo and its people. We went to bed at 1:45 P.M.

**April 5, Friday, Good Friday:** I woke up at 7:30 A.M. I had a light breakfast and got ready to take our walk to Ramla Bay (The Red Beach). It was an interesting walk. We met some people with the name Sultana. I took a picture of the Sultana coat-of arms. They showed us their garden and gave us some lettuce and uh jbejniet plane (plain cheese). They were so hospitable. We continued on descended the hill. We met a man who went the school with Frank, in Xaghra, Dominic Azzepardi. In his early days he was a male nurse and his hobby is collecting pictures of British and American war ships. He also believed in prevention medicine. We continued. After about 3 miles we arrived at Ramla Bay. It is a big beautiful beach and we went wading. We ate our lettuce and cheese, as we sat on the rocks and looked out to the sea. We got a drink of soda from a soccer team who were training on the beach. We headed up the hill and back to our apartment.

We took a nice rest for 45 minutes. We got dressed and went for a meal at Jela's consisting of minestra, lettuce, tomatoes, Maltese bread, wine, sardines, olives and anchovies. The combination taste so good.

Good Friday services started at 3:00 and lasted until 4:30. There was a spectacular pageant about 6:00 P.M., with two bands and the whole procession finished about 10:30. Afterwards we went and had anisette to warm us up. We finally went to sleep about 12:00 A.M.

**April 6, Saturday, Holy Saturday:** We woke up early. Joe picked us up. We said our goodbyes first at Xaghra. We had a cup of coffee at the bar. Joe took us to Xwieni to his brother Johnu's and Tonino's (his wife) summer place, a one room built inside the side of the hill. We drove along the coast and saw the salt pans mad on the rocks. The salt water for the sea washes into the pan formation and 4 or 5 days the water dries up and the salt remains.

Along the coast we also saw men bird trapping. We went to Joe's village again to see his church, The Assumption. The altar is made out of beautiful rustic marble found in an area close to the village. Zabbug is the highest elevation in Gozo.

## FROM GOZO BACK TO MALTA

We went to Victoria and shopped. We bought a few things, pastitza u jbejniet. We went to Alendi to have a swordfish dinner. We treated Joe. On the way to the boat we passed St. Lawrence where Fungus Rock is. Some removed the Fungus to make medication. We saw also watch tower-time of Turks, called Dwejra, a small chapel called St Ann's. was a huge rock with huge hole called, "As Your Window" Along the side of this was another little beach called "In Land Sea," a tunnel in the rock going out to the sea which little boats can go through. Finally, we reached the boat and said, "Good by to Joe." There were few people on board. Then I boarded the bus to Valetta.

The bus passed through the town of Mellieha, St Paul's Bay and Xemxija (Shemsha-ha). The homes are made of limestone. It is the natural resource of Malta. I passed through Msida, Mama's home town and her birth place. From Valetta I took a bus to Zabbar. In the evening I got all dressed up and went to an Easter Vigil at the capuchin Fathers Church. It was packed with people. There was an outstanding choir of young children and adults. They were so enthusiastic with lively songs. After church we all went (Marcel and Toni, Ann and Paul and I) to Radio City dance hall. What a ball we had! The Maltese people can really dance and children were there with their parents. It was mostly ballroom dancing. The music was on tapes. We left at 12:30 A.M. What a delightful day as each day has been.

**April 7, Sunday, Easter Sunday:** I went to 8:00 Mass. The church was overflowing with people. The choir was lovely with a lot of young voices. My Cousin Carmenu's daughter, Ruth, was helping to direct the choir.

After Mass Carmel, Lelli and Edith took me touring. The temperature was in the high 70s. We first stopped at the pre-historic caves of Hypogeum. It was discovered when a man was digging to build a home. Then we visited an area where archaeologist found animal bone similarly found in Africa. The museum is called Hagar Qim (Ha-jar-eem). Then we went to Dingli Cliffs. The story is: a Turkish spy lived in a cave in the side of the cliff, monitoring the coming of ships.

We came home to eat our Easter dinner. Giovanna had a delicious meal for us. Brodu, agine-fil-form and (timpana, roast-chicken) with mash potatoes and carrots and desert: jello with fruit and whipped cream (very thick), and coffee.

Many cousins dropped by. I could not possibly remember all their names. You can feel the love for their Nanu (Grandpa Frank) and their aunts and uncles.

We drove, in the early evening to San Julian's and Sliema with Sister Rose, Giovanna, Lelli, Marcelle, Toni and I. We walked along Sliema's boardwalk along the sea. There were many, many people. Sister told us about a Rock Mass

presented by the youth of Malta. We stopped for a few minutes. There were many youth there. I have never seen so many teenagers gathered at a Mass. It was very moving!

I forgot to mention that in the morning we had gone to the Three Cities which come together: Cospicua, Victoriosa, and Senglea. They are all surrounded by fortifications built in the 16 and 17 centuries when the Knights of St. John occupied Malta. We went to the church at Victoriosa and witnessed the Easter Tradition of men carrying the statue of the Risen Christ. It was a moving experience of bands playing, people throwing confetti and people cheering. We came home in the evening and had a snack and talked a good while.

It will be an Easter I will never forget and will never experience again. Thank you God for this wonderful opportunity!

**April 8, Monday:** (Temperature is 85 degrees) I woke up at 6:45. I had breakfast and then went to the bank. We left to pickup Frank and Ann at 9:30 in Hamrun. We drove towards the northern part of Malta through the town of Zurrieq where Lelli and his family came during the war. Giovanna saw a German plane crash near her school. The church is called Santa Maria. This area is farm country. The people sold eggs and cheese and with the profit they built their church and this is the reason the dome is in an egg shape. It took 5 years to build.

We drove to Gnejna Bay (Ge-nag-na) beach. What a lovely beach. Many teenagers went in swimming off the rocks. The next stop was Fommir-Rih Bay (Mouth of Wind). Well named! It was very windy. We stopped at a farm nearby. Giovanna knew the family but they were not home. The next beach was Golden Bay. It consisted of two beaches. The sea was the most beautiful color I had ever seen, blue and green. This area is called Ghajn Tuffiehra (eye of the apple). At the hotel in Golden Bay is where Lelli and Giovanna spent their Honeymoon 25 years ago. The temperature was unusually hot 85. The water temperature was still cool, though. We waded our feet.

We headed back and stopped at St. Paul's Bay for dinner at Gillieru Restaurant. The windows looked out toward the area where St. Paul was Ship wrecked, on a little island that jots out. There is a large statue on this island of St. Paul. The dinner we had was excellent. For appetizers we had steamed mussels with red sauce, for the entrée Ann and I had pepper fillet steak, the others had fish. We all had a taste of each others food. It was all so good. I ended with a delicious cup of coffee. We treated Lelli, Giovanna and Marcelle. They were so appreciative. We stopped to see Sister Clementa (my cousin) at St. Paul's Bay but she was not at home. She was in Zabbar. Lelli surprised us by stopping and treating us to an ice cream.

We arrived back in Zabbar in the afternoon. We visited with family. Mary took us to meet cousin Tonna and her Sister, Sister Clementa and their brothers Salvu

and Geraldo. We went to see Pawla who lives nearby. She belongs to a lay-society founded by a Maltese priest for unmarried people. They do Christian work in the area.

During Easter Week all the homes are blessed by the parish priests. We met Father Joe Sultana (a cousin) coming out of a home. It is interesting how all the people on the block are sort of dressed up waiting at their front door for the priest to bless their home. Father Joe ministers to the town of XghahrC, (Shy-ra).

In the evening we went to Carmenu's and Dons' house for a party. They had such a lovely spread with all the Maltese goodies. Their children Ruth, David, Samuel and Grace were there. Their home is above Giovanna's and Lelli's home. It is fixed up very lovely with big rooms. Ruth is 23 years old and received her MA degree from a college in Chicago area. Her boyfriend Joe (Maltese was attending there first. David is studying to be a Pharmacist. Samuel is the outdoor type of person. He loves skin diving. Grace just had her 16<sup>th</sup> birthday. Frank came up stairs for the party. Many of the family were there plus Grace and Natu's friends from Holland.

In the evening before we would get ready for bed we would have some warm milk or tea to drink, and do a lot of talking and laughing. How we all love to laugh about the many twist in life.

Another full day, which was spent with Ann and Frank, and I had a very enjoyable time. God blessings are many! Thank God for a loving family.

**April 9, Tuesday, Temperature 89:** This was the hottest temperature on this date in 30 years.

I woke up around 7 am. I had breakfast and I always waited for Frank to come out of the room. He was so cute sitting there in his chair, at 89 he was such a delight to have around. He sometimes would joke with us and even did a little singing. He sang, For me and my Gal. After breakfast I wrote in my journal a little. Then I helped Giovanna clean the kitchen.

Lelli took me to Frank's, brother's house, for a Feneck (Rabbit) dinner. Carmela cooked us a delicious dinner. The rabbit was superb. They marinated the rabbit in wine-vinegar then cooked it slowly. We also had baked mashed potatoes mixed with cedar cheese, eggs and milk. The baked cabbage had white cheese, egg and milk on it. For desert we had jello and strawberries. After dinner Ann and I went up on the roof and sunned ourselves, it was hot but it felt good.

At 3 pm Frank, Ann and I walked to Msida. We stopped to shop and visited St. Joseph's church, the church Mama was probably baptized in. Then we went to see Charlie Vassallo's hotel, The Continental Hotel in Msida. A lovely hotel and we met the co-owner, Joe. He gave us a drink at the bar and showed us the pool.

A very nice man! We walked down by the inlet and took some pictures by the water. I took the bus to Valetta and then a bus home to Zabbar. Every time I got home Giovanna would ask what I would like to eat. I just had a small snack.

In the evening we were invited to Mary's and Lorrie's house for a little party. She must have worked all day preparing the food. It was delicious especially the Maltese pizza. Carmenu and her family came over. Mary's son, Paul, and fiancé Sonya, was there. How generous Frank's family are! And they were so self-sacrificing to make our stay an affair to remember.

**April 10, Wednesday, a little cooler:** I had to wake up early in order to meet Ann, Frank and nephew George at Valetta gates.

Cousin Carmenu drove me. We shopped especially for Evelyn's gold bracelet and I picked up a few things. I took the bus back to Zabbar.

Giovanna cooked us Qurnita (octopus). It is the first time I had it. It was absolutely delicious! It was cooked in salsa sauce and served with spaghetti. After we ate our meal at 12 noon we went to St. Gregory's feast at Marsamxett. I could not believe the crowd of people that were there. There were a lot of vendors selling food, clothing and so on. It was very different. Frank came with us but sat in the car. We then drove to Point Del-a-Mara above Marsamxett. It was a beautiful view of the surrounding towns. To our amazement we met Cousin Chetta (Aunt Annie's daughter) one of the cousins I had not met yet. She was with her daughter Carmen and her daughter Sylvia, the third generation.

When we got home I got ready to go to Jerma Hotel for a swim at their indoor pool with Marcel, Toni, Paul, Ann and a 13 year old friend of theirs. When we got there Toni's friend who works there informed us the pool was out of order. We were quite disappointed. So, Paul suggested that we go for swim in the Baghar ic-caghaq (sea). Paul dove in first off the rock then Marcel and Ann. The water was quite cool, but the air was warm. I was dying to jump in but it was already 6 pm; finally got the courage, after 5 minutes, and jumped in. It was cold and salty. I swam for about two minutes and got out. Surprisingly, the air made me warm.

Lelli picked me up at 7 pm to go back home to change for dinner at Philip's home (Frank's nephew). We arrived at Philip's home about 8 pm. It was a beautiful Villa home, very modern. His wife Mary Ann was lovely and the same with their two children. We had a delightful dinner and served under candlelight. The day was so full and so much fun. I will NEVER forget jumping into the Mediterranean Sea.

**April 11, Thursday, 70 degrees:** I attended the 8 am Mass, Mary and I went together. After Mass I went to buy my gold letter "A" from the jeweler and also went to the florist and bought Giovanna and Lelli some beautiful flowers for the house. The rest of the morning I packed my suit case. Giovanna made a Maltese soup with vegetable, pork and pasta and a side dish of salad.

After our meal we went to see the Malta Experience.” It was an excellent film on the history of Malta. It was shown at the Mediterranean Center. Afterwards, Lelli, Giovanna and I went to the War Museum at Valetta. We then picked up Marcelle at work. She looked so tired. She works at a shoe factory. I was so tired on the way home. I was dying to take a nap. When we got home Sisters Rose and Clementa were there. They gave me a gift. How thoughtful! A number of relatives came to say good-bye. It was my last night. Our visit is coming to an end. How sad!

**April 12, Friday, cool in the morning:** During the night I must have woken up once every hour. We woke up at 5 am. Even Cousin Frank woke up to say good-bye. He gave me a beautiful Maltese-Cross and one for Ann. It was hard to say good-bye to him, what a dear, loving man. How happy and privileged I am to have met him and to have lived with him for 2 weeks. I said good-bye to Marcelle in bed, she did not go to the airport with us as she had to work at 6:30. It was so sad, saying good-bye to Marcelle, what a sweet young woman she is. I enjoyed her so much.

Those who came to see us off at the airport were: Lelli, Giovanna, Carmel, Edith, Carmenu, Doris, Joe, Frank’s brother Lelli, his wife, Carmela, Frank’s nephews Philip and George. We were ready to start boarding around 7 am and good-bys had to be said. How hard it is when you know you will be thousands of miles away and not really knowing if we will ever meet again. TEARS WERE SHED!

It was a good flight to Heathrow airport. We took the bus to Gadwick. It was an hour ride. We checked our bags with Virgin Airlines and got our designated seats. Then we went to the restaurant and had a little to eat. We had some English currency left over, so we did some shopping. I bought some jewelry and a China bell.

We had nice seats and lots of leg room. We arrive in Newark, went through customs, and Rose, Frank’s niece, picked us up and took us to her mom’s house in New York. Her two brothers and wives came over and had some good conversations. At this time we were walking zombies; we were so sleepy.

We had some pizza to eat. Chetta and Sam were so gracious and hospitable. I took a shower and jumped into bed and slept like a baby.

**April 13, Saturday:** We woke up at 6 am and left for the airport at 7. Our plane was to take off at 9 am from Newark, NJ. Frank did not come with us as he was scheduled for another flight.

We had good seats. We met a lovely boy of ten who was traveling alone; a real nice kid. We also met a lovely man, Chester. He was going to Sausalito, not far from my home, to visit his son for his 40th birthday. Chester thought the world of

Ann. It was a good flight. We had a stop in Baltimore and Kansas. Our stop in Kansas the stewardess was nice enough to go buy some popcorn for us.

Our trip was coming quickly to an end. What an enjoyable, pleasant and fun two weeks. How great it was traveling with Ann, so compatible, and Frank, her dad, also!

Flemming, Evelyn, Ryan, and Joey were there in the lobby to meet us. It was wonderful to see their smiling faces.

Thank God for our lovely and safe trip. IT WAS GREAT!