

Q: In *Forbidden Loves, Paris Between the Wars*, did you really find a stack of envelopes and a diary?

A: Yes and no. I found a box containing what appeared to be hundreds of letters, all in French, and read enough to realize that they were love letters. In the infinite wisdom of a teenager, I decided not to invade my mother's privacy so I burned them. Since then, I have found nothing more.

Q: Did your mother ever tell you about her beau or about her life in Paris?

A: Not much. One summer when I was 15, I took a tour of Europe with the Bishop's School. My mother flew to London where I met up with her after leaving the school group, and traveled to Switzerland and France. In Paris, I was introduced to some of her friends from that era and spent a weekend at the Chateau described in the book where I met the Contesse.

I know that she was at Le Bourget for the arrival of Charles Lindbergh and I was told that James Joyce temporarily lived in the apartment above hers on the Ile St. Louis.

One of the characters, Gina, was based on the life of my best friend's mother who generously shared her experiences in Paris with me and read over my manuscript before she died.

Finding my mother's building was a spooky experience. I knew more or less where it was located, but I was not sure exactly which building it was. As my husband and I strolled around the Ile St. Louis, I stopped in front of one structure. A gentleman was leaning out of an upper story window. In my most polite French, I explained a bit about my book and asked if we might be allowed to come inside. He politely said yes, descended and opened the great *porte cochere*. He was leading us through what could be best described as a tunnel leading to the stairway in the rear when I suddenly stopped. There were no lights and the little daylight that peeped through was confined to the entry. But in the dark, something told me to stop. I pointed to the left and, although we couldn't see anything, I asked, "Is that where the concierge lives?" The gentleman was aghast. "What?" I repeated my question and he sputtered, "It was. But, but that was over fifty years ago!" In the shadow, once our eyes adjusted, we could discern the window and door of a closed up room. "The concierge now has an apartment in the rear of the building," he told us. So, how did I know? I have my ideas but leave it to you to come up with your own.

Q: Is there any way to relate your story to today's events?

A: Yes, in fact, in light of the horrors of Katrina, I think there are two parallels to consider.

One is the element of nature. No matter what man does, despite his thinking how above it all he is, nature will ultimately have her way. Read the stories about my adventures on the high seas in *Nature's Wisdom*. When you have sailed through

Beaufort force 8 winds and survived a micro-burst, you learn quickly to respect nature.

And two, the horrors of the Great War and the scars left behind are all too reminiscent of Katrina and Iraq. The letter my great uncle wrote describing his living conditions while serving on the front lines as a priest evokes the image of Saddam Hussein huddled inside the cave. The pictures of Katrina survivors shown on TV visually bear the same emotional and physical scars I tried to depict of the survivors of the First World War in France.

Q: So it is man's inhumanity to man and nature taking the upper hand?

A: That is correct. We share this planet for a short period of time. There is so much beauty to enjoy and so many good people to love and share our happiness with that you wonder, at least, I wonder why we can't get along and appreciate what we do have instead trying to destroy it. I feel that mankind has overstepped his boundary. He seems to be looking for control when he should be going inside and developing his imagination and intuition. Read my book *Myth, Magic and Metaphor* to understand this point of view.

Q: So your books, though different genres, are really not that dissimilar?

A: Not really. My philosophy is that history is someone else's point of view. It is up to each one of us to attempt, even in the smallest way, to make this a better place to live by sharing our insights, our observations, our creativity. Take the responsibility of feeling the moment and recording that feeling. Our lifetime on this planet is but a blink in the scheme of things so why fight, kill and steal? Maybe if we learn to listen to the voice within, we will make better decisions for ourselves and for others.