

A Day in the Life of... Katherine

It is just 4 years since Katherine died so tragically - it does seem like a lifetime ago, as it is of course, but her memory remains so strong.

I have often thought about just one of the days of her life when we were with her all day, and perhaps I should share that day, especially as one question I have still awaits an answer...so here is just a short revival of that day; but first an introduction to set the scene:

It was during Katherine's last summer that we spent a week in Pepe Mark's beautiful house that he rents out mostly to vacationing English families escaping their island cold and rain. [You may remember that was the hottest summer in Paris for many-a-year, with thousands of old folks dying of heat stroke in their non-air-conditioned apartments, unable to visit the slightly cooler parks which were closed



- because the superintendents claimed the trees were too sensitive to have the people there - I kid you not!] The house is in the small village of Grenade just 60 miles east of Biarritz in the extreme south-west of France, just before the Pyrenees rise



into the Basque country on either side of the Spanish/French border. Most days we spent time in the swimming pooled garden that stretches down to the river Adour which borders the edge of the village. The village itself still has some fortifications from when it was founded by the English of Queen Eleanor of Aquitaine. The tourists form just the latest invasion of the continent (only their money is appreciated by the French).



During this particular day, however, we (Mary, Katherine, Mireille, Savannah and I - Geb had gone back to Paris to work) drove into the foothills of the



Pyrenees: we stopped to have lunch in a dusty dry village which was on the route to Compostella - indeed we saw a pilgrim and his overladen donkey at the church door. Savannah and Mireille had run off to find the swings in the park above the broken-down battlements - they knew that in the South of France, unlike security-conscious Paris, the swings are free to enjoy at any time. I remember we later found a scary secret passageway



down into the battlements, not to the small river below, but into a dark dungeon - only Mary and Katherine were brave enough to go down into the blackness - doubtless their peasant ancestors had been forced to go there a thousand years ago.



But what I really remember is the return trip.....

To keep Savannah and Mireille in good spirits, they were looking for



and identifying objects through the car windows - “there is a house on Mireille’s side”, would say Mireille; then, “there is a house on Savannah’s side” said Savannah, etc. But it did seem that



all the exciting things were showing up on Mireille’s side -



“There are some cows on my side” shouted Mireille; even Mary was able to find fields of poppies on her side (the same side as Mireille). Yet here were more cows on Mireille’s side... What was Savannah to do? So, suddenly, out came her trump! With a gleam of triumph she shouted: “I see a **lion** on my side”. That

was the opening for all sorts of wild things...



Fortunately, we were almost back to Grenade, passing through undulating hills with ripe cornfields and cut



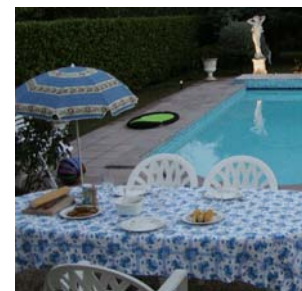
wheatfields. Katherine asked out loud “How about some corn for supper?”; then, “Stop the car, I see some there on my side”. So we stopped the car, jumped out, quickly snapped off a half-dozen corn, and got back into the car; closing the doors just as the farmer’s wagon came around the corner of the road - wow, that was a close one, we all exclaimed, as we went on our merry way laughing, with the booty stacked carefully out of sight.

Many of the fields had these giant rolls of cut hay, ready for the cattle to eat in



wintertime: one sees these rolls everywhere, sometimes covered in black plastic - in France and England, and even in America. Katherine’s description fits the rolls perfectly: she calls them “giant rabbit turds”. Perhaps her own original thinking, perhaps not, but it was new to us, and

leads to my question which remains unanswered: Katherine, did you mean “giant-rabbit turds” or “giant rabbit-turds”? It is a question I always ask whenever I see them in the fields, just as that day in southern France four and a half years ago.



Well, we did get back to Grenade quite late, but in time for a twilight supper on the terrace, which included some delicious corn...

Written by Gordon on the 4th anniversary of Katherine’s passing.