

entrance.

We invited Margaret to join us, and within twenty minutes we were at the Plaka which had been transformed from a sleepy Sunday community into one of crowded streets and outdoor nightclubs, many featuring bands. Our desire to be where the action was influenced us to choose an outdoor taverna between two clubs each with blaring bands exuding lively Greek music.

We sat under a grape arbor while George treated us to a bottle of wine and a platter of fresh pineapple, strawberries, cantaloupe, and honeydew melon. With eardrums nearly bursting from the loud music, we tried to discuss the Greek and Turkish situation on Cyprus, Margaret's travels and our own.

We walked Margaret to her hotel before returning to ours. She would be leaving for the States the next morning. George left us too, but we expected to see him the next day. At our hotel, we learned that the cruise to a Greek island had been cancelled due to impending bad weather.

Athens  
Monday, May 3

George phoned Nino early in the morning to see if we could meet him that evening as he would be busy during the day. But, since Neil had arranged for all of us to dine that evening at a good Greek restaurant, Nino reluctantly said goodbye to George for all of us.

After breakfast Jen, Tanya and I took the crowded underground train from Omonia Square to Piraeus, Athens' seaport five miles

southwest on the Saronic Gulf. On the ride, we stood among businessmen, snappy uniformed sailors, laborers, women and children in western dress and older women wearing black.

The overcast day revealed a bustling harbor of all types of ships. Greek sailors loitered at one wharf while at another a freighter was being loaded with cargo. We ambled along one wharf where fabulous yachts were moored, trying to guess who the wealthy owners might be. Having read about Aristotle Onassis, I told Jen and Tanya that it was from this port that, as a young man, he said goodbye to his family and set out for Buenos Aires to seek his fortune.

After touring the wharves, we ensconced ourselves in a nice restaurant with large curtained windows looking out on the street. Apparently, it was a popular place for merchants and fishermen to lunch. Again, we ordered the dolmothakia, knowing it was good and a bargain. Afterwards, out on the street again, we couldn't resist buying dessert at a bakery. Each of us picked one of a variety of rich cream-filled cakes so abundant in Greece.

We had all started gaining weight in Turkey due to the mountains of dyhydrated foods we were inhaling plus the rich local pastries and puddings we snacked on between meals. Now, in Greece, with its comparable fattening delicacies, we noticed that many of the girls were gaining unwanted pounds. Even I had gained back more than I had lost in India-Pakistan, so much that my moneybelt had recently torn and could no longer be worn.

Following lunch, Jen and Tanya decided to visit a nearby beach.

while I returned to the hotel for a nap. Torn between seeing more of this famous city and getting enough rest, I opted for the latter, having become by now over-steeped in sightseeing.

After a long nap, I was awakened by Jen who had just returned. Each of us showered and dressed for dinner. We met the group in the hotel lobby at 7 P.M. From there we proceeded to O Fantis taverna in the Plaka, a twenty minute walk.

On entering O Fantis, we found the exuberant patrons engaged in loud jovial talking, some clapping to the music and all enjoying the wonderful Greek foods and wines. The decor was provin-cial with village scenes painted on the walls. For the third time, I ate dolmothakia which Neil had ordered for all. To compliment our fresh pineapple dessert, he ordered a bottle of ouzo for us to sample.

While we ate, two tall handsome young men, one dark and one fair performed with precision traditional Greek dances including the famous syrtaki. As the evening progressed, the merriment increased finding even some of our more subdued personalities coming to life.

Leaving O Fantis around 9:30, we toured more of Athens by night, returning to the hotel by 11:00. Jen and I packed our cases before retiring.

Athens to Platammon  
Tuesday, May 4

We left Athens around 8:30 A.M. and headed north along the Aegean Coast. After an hour or so of driving, we came upon the ancient pass of Thermopylae. Neil had Graeme stop the bus in a

parking area centered by a larger-than-life bronze statue of a battle-clad Spartan. Neil explained that this statue was erected to commemorate the heroic Battle of Thermopylae during the Persian Wars dating from 500-449 B.C. He related that in 480 B.C. as a Persian army of approximately 2,500,000 was advancing on Athens, the Spartan king, Leonidas with 300 Spartans and 8000 auxiliaries detained these Persians for three days at this pass. However, their luck changed when Greek traitors led a detachment of 20,000 Persians through the mountains to attack the Spartans from the rear. King Leonidas, learning of the fate to befall his men, gave them permission to retreat before the final onslaught. But, as retreat was contrary to their code, 300 Spartans remained along with 2000 auxiliaries and all perished in the battle. The Persians then took Athens. Neil summed up by saying that the hatred that had welled up in the Greeks during the Persian Wars would a century later be avenged by Alexander.

We hiked around the pass for several minutes, photographing "the Spartan" and using the bushes and rocks for our loo spots. Our next stop came at noon in a town where the new cooks, including me, shopped for groceries at a modern supermarket which labeled every item in the Cyrillic alphabet making our choices difficult.

Around 3:30 P.M., we arrived at a campsite on the Aegean a couple of miles north of the small fishing village of Platammon. The lovely camp on the water's edge with the Olympus Mountains in the background was our compensation for the missed Greek island excursion.

3

After setting up our tent on the grass near the beach, I joined Ross and headed for the cooktent where we met the other cooks to begin our first afternoon of meal preparation. The balmy afternoon found some of the group hiking up a nearby hill to explore an ancient castle while others went swimming and sunbathed. Cold showers followed in nice facilities.

Cook duty involved countless trips to a water faucet to provide a constant supply of water for cooking and washing up. There would be no "bachelors" tonight. Instead, we set about marinating steaks, scrubbing potatoes and wrapping them in foil, slicing tomatoes and cucumbers, and cutting celery and carrot sticks. The dessert of apple crumble took at least an hour to prepare.

The fellows built two fires on the beach for cooking the potatoes and steaks. Both of the bus tables were set up nearby to hold the food and dishes. Heaping our plates with the scrumptious food, we hovered around the fires enjoying it.

Sitting with Jen, I learned from her that that afternoon while in the restroom, she had talked with some Australian girls traveling west with another group from another bus firm. They complained about personality clashes within their group. The fellows had been very domineering. Mixed couples in tents had not been unusual. One of their girls had quit the trip in Iran and had flown to England as a result. The situation was so bad that they wondered if they could finish the trip.

This story made me feel grateful to have been included with my group which, despite some minor differences and an occasional

personality flare-up (not worth writing about), got along and respected one another. The trip otherwise might have been a nightmare and a great disappointment.

Platammon  
Wednesday, May 5

We cooks were up an hour before everyone else preparing a breakfast of scrambled eggs and French toast to be topped with lots of butter and jam. and peach jam.

The day's activities would be the same as the afternoon before, hiking, sunbathing, swimming and resting, but there would be one addition--preparation for a talent show with everyone participating. The instigators for this had become bored and thought this would be a splendid idea. I didn't have a clue as to what I would do.

Except for a couple of hours, I spent the day with my co-workers preparing the evening meal. At noon Greame and Neil drove the four of us into Platammon to buy bread from the bakery and fish from the fish market for a fish fry on the beach.

The fish fry was another successful meal. Afterwards, we moved to the grass between two tents for the talent show. Two lanterns provided enough light to see the humorous skits, magic tricks, musical numbers and a pantomime to a cassette tape. These acts were climaxed by a hilarious ballet performed by Nino, Robert and Ross dressed in self-devised tutus. I ended up being a prop for one of the skits. Throughout the show, our boisterous applause drew other campers, Greeks and other Europeans, who watched and enjoyed the fun. We finally settled down by midnight.