

MY WAR

by Estelle Bruno

In May of 1982, my daughter and I planned a trip to England. This was so exciting for me as I had never been to that country.

When it was time to pack, I was eagerly laying out all I would need for our 7 day trip, when all of a sudden my husband pops his head into the room and says, "Is that your suitcase?"

"Of course," I said.

"Oh no," he says, "that suitcase will never do." He proceeds to bring in this huge red plaid garment bag, which was his. He insisted I must use this one. "You never know what the weather is like in London, it rains for five minutes, then gets cold, and besides, I want you to have enough room to bring me a lot of those Dundee cakes, you know, the ones the Brits are famous for."

So, I don't argue, I just give in.

The following day, my sister comes over inspecting my packing and insists I must use her make-up case . She says mine will never hold all my cosmetic stuff. So, once again, I give in.

Our plan was to meet at the Boston Airport terminal for our flight on British Airways to London.

When my daughter finds me wandering around the terminal, lugging that huge plaid garment bag and the make-up case, I see a look of horror on her face.

"Whats wrong?" I ask her.

She says, "What the heck are you doing with Dad's gigantic garment bag? And, good god, Aunt Lotties pink Barbie Doll case!"

I never connected it with Barbie. I stood there frozen, sure she would complain about what I was wearing, but I got lucky on that one — passed the test. Suddenly my stomach made a gurgling sound. I had a feeling this was a bad beginning.

Well the flight did turn out fine, first class, champagne, great dinner, the works.

We landed, then had to take a train from Gatwick, then we would board a bus to our hotel in London.

Well we got on the bus, me first, dragging that huge garment bag across the floor. I knew I was going over feet, cause I could hear peoples' annoyed sighs.

After some time, we heard the bus driver call out what we thought was "Hilton." We got off the bus, me dragging that garment bag again over those feet. But off the bus, when we looked around, there wasn't any Hilton, just a dark tunnel. We yelled for the driver to open the door and asked him, "Where is the Hilton?"

He growled back, "I didn't say Hilton."

So, back we got on that bus. We could hear people saying, "Oh no, they're coming back."

We did finally reach the Hilton, only to be told our request for a non-smoking room wasn't available. They did manage to find us another hotel which had a non-smoking room. All I could say was "thank you god."

So we were finally in London. We spent days doing all the touristy stuff, like seeing the Queen's guards, and tea at Harrods. After a lot of shopping, we decided to go to the theatre.

As we entered the theatre lobby, we were stopped by the police, detained, and all our packages searched. How did we know they were having their Falkland war with Argentina?

"Do we look Argentine?" my daughter whispered.

They finally realized we were Americans, and let us in. We saw a great play, I think it was "Evita," bad choice with their war going on.

Exhausted, we got a cab back to our hotel, daughter goes right to sleep. I'm too wound up to sleep so I write cards to all our friends. Then I have to go down to the lobby for postage and mailing.

When I leave the elevator on our floor, I'm walking the long hallway when suddenly these automatic doors shut me out, right in my face. Some bells go off. I'm terrified the hotel is being bombed or on fire — I'm screaming for my daughter, people are opening their doors, one woman with cream all over her face. Then those hall doors opening as quickly as they had closed.

I ran down the hall to our room, banged on the door, my daughter opening it. Quite hysterically I asked her, "Didn't you hear me calling you?"

Her reply was a sleepy, sarcastic: "The whole hotel heard you."

I'd had enough! My head had but one thought in it: burn baby, burn.

