

Metropolis

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I have visited New York City three times. Each visit was under completely different circumstances, and it would be difficult to determine which visit I enjoyed most. However, all things considered, I believe I should have to rate my first trip as being far more exciting than the others, and an experience

I shall not soon forget.

It was summer, 1945. My telephone rang one morning, and in answering I was surprised to hear the voice of my high school music teacher asking me if I could arrange to go to New York with her the following Sunday. I most certainly could arrange to go. I had had previous plans, but they were immediately forgotten. I had always wanted to see New York City, and here was an opportunity to fulfill my desire.

We left Indianapolis on Sunday, June 26, at 6:00 p. m., on the **Knickerbocker**. Miss Scherf, my teacher, had obtained Pullman reservations for us. This was also my first experience in sleeping on a train, and I was surprised at how comfortable and restful sleeping on a train could be—in spite of the fact that I was excited in the anticipation of arriving in New York the next day.

I shall never forget Grand Central Station. What a contrast to Indianapolis' Union Station! And where on earth was everyone going in such a hurry? We were thoroughly shoved about by the time a porter rudely grabbed our cases and hurried us to a waiting taxicab. I had never ridden in a cab with an open top (I was told one referred to them as Sky-View cabs), and how happy I was to be ushered into one my first minute in New York. As we slowly made our way through a sea of cabs, I became aware of the noises of the street. Noises, but they sounded beautiful to me—like music—George Gershwin's "An American in Paris." But I wasn't in Paris; I was in New York—and I was thrilled!

We had rooms in a comfortable but modest hotel in Greenwich Village. At first I was a little disappointed that we were not to stay in mid-town New York, but in the days to follow my disappointment changed to delight. As soon as we had arranged to have our clothes taken care of, we put on our walking shoes and set out to explore the immediate vicinity of Washington Square. I had read interesting stories about life in Greenwich Village, and thus I surveyed with interest the many peculiar activities going on in the square. I stopped at every artist's exhibit—in some cases more to observe the artist than his art. There was a woman who was making buttons from shells, and just two doors down from her, another woman was making earrings from buttons. On a corner a little old man was selling nylon hose (they were still hard to obtain in 1945). I had never seen anything like this before. It was extremely difficult to keep from staring at these characters. I noticed something else about the square. No one was in a hurry. Everyone seemed to saunter along the street, and the park in the square had an occupant on almost every bench.

We boarded a Fifth Avenue bus, and within fifteen minutes we were in mid-town New York. Again we were rubbing elbows with people who evidently had only one minute to get where they were going—and woe to anyone who got in their way. Never in my life had I beheld so many things of interest. It was like Christmas morning—so many presents that it was hard to decide which should be opened first.

In the days that followed, we managed to include visits to St. Patrick's Cathedral and the Little Church Around the Corner, a boat trip around Manhattan Island, a ferry trip to Staten Island and to the Statue of Liberty, trips through all the department stores, and dinners in interesting restaurants. I have to smile when I recall the restaurants.

Miss Scherf had been interested in my music activities in high school and, because of the encouragement she gave me, we became great friends. Her attitude toward me was motherly, and she wanted to do things for me that she would have done for her daughter. However, she operated on the strict principle that one should never permit a person to give him anything. That is, some compensation must be made by the receiver. We went to the best restaurants in New York, and after a \$2.50 lunch she would say, "Now, dear, that will be fifteen cents." Never before had I enjoyed such luncheons for fifteen cents, and, needless to say, I have never enjoyed them at that price since. My taxi fares were always five cents, no matter what the meter read. She was rather eccentric, as these incidents would indicate; but can you deny that, though eccentric, the idea had merit? One's companion on a trip, you know, has a great deal to do with whether or not the trip is enjoyable. Because my teacher was an individualist, she hesitated at nothing. I laugh when I recall how she would stop one of those pained-looking persons who was in a metropolitan hurry and ask, "Would you recommend a good play for us to see? We're from out of town." The responses were surprisingly patient. I really believe they enjoyed telling us.

Our visit ended too soon. Although I had decided I would not want to live in New York City, (the trip, I learned, was primarily to interest me to live there and go to school at Julliard) I left with reluctance. We had had a gay time.