

1980: SU RIDDELL – A NEW START IN LIFE

rue Auguste-Vitu, 75015 Paris

Monday, 25 February 1980

Dear All,

After your phone call we had supper, so now I am refuelled and ready to write you a long letter.

LETTER PART I

Weekend and last week's news:

Tuesday it was Pancake Day, and we had friends around.

Wednesday evening I went to the MRA young people's meeting, in the MRA house at Boulogne B. A Swiss radio/TV correspondent came to talk to us. He sparked off plenty of reaction, so it was good.

Thursday I went to dinner with Michel and Marie-José Orphelin and Véronique and Gérard Gigand. More of that in Part II....

Friday evening I did the weekend shopping and went to the pool, which is only just up the road.

Saturday morning Cindy [Gardner] had made me an appointment for her hairdresser at 10 am. He did a really good job and was amusing, singing and dancing to a Diana Ross record as he worked. In spite of that, it looks really good! I'll get Sue to take a picture for you. Then I bought a pair of shoes.

I was invited by Cindy to lunch at Boulogne – with just the Tates, Gigands, Veronique's sister and brother-in-law, Cindy and I. It was nice. Then Cindy and I took a bus to St. Cloud and walked up to the park and hired bikes. We spent an hour racing down paths deep in mud and getting ourselves filthy and the bikes all clogged up. We had to run back to the bus as she had to get back to prepare the evening meal. Then I hurried onto our bridge near the flat, to snap the view as the sun sank. In the evening we went to see the Zefferelli film of Romeo and Juliet. Although I knew the ending and was determined not to snuffle, when the lights came up I was wiping tears from my cheeks.

When I woke up on Sunday it took me about 10 minutes to remember all I'd done the day before, it was such a variety.

Sunday I went to Church, but my head was hammering. When I got home, I went to lie down for a few minutes and slept solid until 3pm! My head still thumped so I made myself get up, as I knew of only one cure – a swim. After 26 lengths I felt OK, if not wonderful.

When I got back, Sue [college friend and flatmate] and I went to the Grand Palais to the Mucha exhibition.

Work's OK, Sue's OK. Weather is variable. Saturday sunny, Sunday wet, today a bit of both. So, that's all the news, now on to Part II.

PART II

I will tell you this again, having told you on the phone:

At the MRA 'national weekend' Michel Orphelin said that by the summer his 'one man show' on St Francis of Assisi should be translated and ready, and that he was now thinking of forming a team to get it 'on the road', starting hopefully at Caux in the summer. I listened with only half an ear, not thinking it would affect me. Yet afterwards, a persistent thought kept popping back – "Why couldn't you join in?" I didn't see why I should – I can't see what I'd have to offer; I may have other things to do; I wouldn't make any money; it would be hard work no doubt; and I would have to completely change my lifestyle. Yet the idea would not go away. Something was telling me I could help people, through working for Michel's show - and that something was strongly getting through! If I can find the strength to change my life, to accept to do this work for a few years, it might be the only thing I'll be truly happy doing. At that point my eyes were opened. Suddenly, I could not bear to go on searching for my own adventure. I wanted desperately to be on God's adventure.

So, I decided to write to Michel three days later, on my [21st] birthday, telling him I'd had this idea. Those three days in between, I was in a most peculiar state. I was so excited, full of life, energy. I've never been like it before, I was full of adrenaline and never stopped thinking about it. On Tuesday night, I

suddenly sat up in the dark and put pen to paper in a short note to Michel. Wednesday morning, my birthday, I posted it. I didn't hear from Michel for about two weeks and that was awful. Then I had a note asking me to dinner at his home with Marie-José, so we could talk it over. It wasn't possible to find a time for a couple of weeks.

Finally, last Thursday 21st I went, and found the Gigands also invited. They are a young couple working fulltime with MRA. First, I told Michel exactly how I'd had my idea, and he was intrigued. I admitted I didn't see what precisely I could do. So we talked over the possibilities and he stressed that, just because I have a secretarial background, that doesn't mean it's obviously my role. My own 'wanderlust' makes me think that I'd rather be with the show and not staying in an office, but if that's what I'm needed for, then I will accept that and throw myself into it with all my heart.

So, as I see it now, there are two things to do. The first is to talk over 'Living in faith' [with no salary or guaranteed income] with someone. Then I can go back to Michel and talk over the possibilities again. Maybe it won't come clear soon, but the important thing is to do all I can, then wait for the answer. I have tried to make some time for guidance every day since then. With my recent sleep problem it's not been easy, but I've pressed on.

Well, that's the story up to now. As it's 9.30pm, I need to do the washing-up and go straight to bed. Please give me any comments – be quite honest and utterly tactless! Thank you for so much for your love, care and concern. Your moral support would be essential to me in this. Lots of love, Su

P.S. Michel is working on the assumption that it would be a professional company. I would never expect any financial help from you, after all I'm out-in-the-world-earning-my-own-living-now. Only moral support, as I said.

P.P.S. I don't mind who you want to talk to about this. I've tried to be totally honest and put down all my fears and hopes. You may like to talk it over with others.

POSTCARD:

Tuesday morning, waiting in the metro.

I'm so glad I told you, I feel that's a great weight off my mind. And your reactions were so lovely!

'Bye again - Su

*Rue Auguste-Vitu,
75015 Paris
Sunday 3 February*

Dear Aunty Judy [great aunt],

Thank you very much for the wool. I've started on a tapestry piece and I'm really enjoying doing it. I'm trying different patterns and am learning a lot about which colours to use, and the different combinations possible.

The cold spell is over now, and it's very mild but rather wet. Since my birthday things have been very quiet. This week promises to be more interesting – Monday I have two friends coming to dinner from work. They are both French, so I have to present English cooking in a good light. Tuesday we have to go on an expedition to the laundrette to wash sheets and bigger things. Wednesday I'm going to a meeting about Islam. Thursday I hope we'll go skating again. We've been twice – the second time I didn't seem to make any progress. Still, I do enjoy it. Quite a few friends go, which makes it more fun.

Work is busy now; I have a lot of pressure to get a huge task finished, it's a challenge, and I think the only way I shall get through will be by staying later at night. As I normally finish an hour earlier than most people, that's not really a hardship.

Bye for now. Lots of love, Su

28 February

Dear all,

Enclosed is an interview from the Tribune de Caux, with Michel Orphelin and the author, Hugh Williams; and parts of the programme from the "Poor Man, Rich Man" tour in Britain.

I still don't know what part I might play in this. I've no fixed ideas and no particular wishes. It's always in my mind, so the picture will become clearer in time. I want to talk with Michel again, to find out what jobs I could possibly do. Until then, I can't really think very practically. So at the moment I'm concerning myself with the wider questions. There's no hurry.

Hope all is well chez vous.

Lots of love,

Su

rue A-V, 6 March 1980

Dear Mum and Dad,

Have just written a long letter to Jim [brother]. A long letter from Mum also arrived today.

Guess what! To your probable disapproval, we are going to rent a telly, Sue's idea. I'll be able to get on with my tapestry in front of it, and at last I'll get my ironing done. I shall be glad to get a decent news programme again as the radio's hopeless. Sue wants it for the films.

I would like to take a week and come home as soon as possible; from now until Easter is impossible, but it could be the last week in April or early May. I do want Mum to visit here for a whole week, as every time she's come has been rather hectic, and she's only got a brief glimpse of Paris.

Right, I must go to bed now. Oh, last night I went to a 'plenary' meeting at Boulogne. All good stuff.

Lots of love, Su

Work, 12 March 1980

Dear All,

I've just a few minutes to scribble this. I just posted a letter to you all, and one to Aunty Judy. Yours might have been overweight, it seemed rather lumpy.

Now, what have I done lately? Last week was busy. Saturday, Cindy Gardner came to lunch then we went to the Musée de l'Homme, and got exhausted. She's lovely company. Sue's friends were here all weekend, but Sunday I went to tea at Boulogne because Claude [Weiss] wanted me to help serve tea. She'd invited two Vietnamese families, who were shown slides on Brazil. Cindy had two Americans there too, who were very nice.

Saturday our telly arrived. The only thing is, it's all in French.... I know that's obvious! We watched Sunday evening and Monday, and my tapestry is getting on once more.

You remember the girl I met in Lorraine, Nathalie - who is with MRA in London and often writes articles? Her sister Prisca gave me a lift home last Wednesday and mentioned that she's interested in the St Francis play. I thought we could meet and chat. I tried to phone her last week, but she wasn't in. I found I was talking to Nathalie, home for a few days. So we talked for ages - the things she's been doing are so interesting.

Because of the need to say something about holidays at work, I have arranged to go and see Michel Orphelin on Thursday to discuss the future some more. Your letters have all been tremendously helpful, pointing me in the right direction for working things out. There is still a long way to go, of course. One problem is containing my enthusiasm!

Anyway, I'm very well. Oh, and I'm going to the Crenns' [family friends in Brittany] this weekend.

'Bye for now, lots of love, Su

rue Auguste-Vitu, 75015 Paris

14 March 1980

Dear All,

I am on the train, on the way to Morlaix with Claudie [Crenn] and friends. Claudie only rang to invite me at the beginning of the week, but as there was nothing on this weekend, at last I'm getting to see the Crenns again. I have all the parcels Mum brought. We left Montparnasse at 7pm and arrive at Morlaix after midnight. I do like train journeys, you can do all the little things that never get done otherwise – like writing letters, reading old newspapers, and it's good to just stop and think. I'm really looking forward to fresh air, the sea, countryside and seeing the Crenn family. Even in the countryside around Paris, I never really feel refreshed. Perhaps I need the sea air.

Anyway, the point of this letter is to tell you about last night's meeting with Michel and Marie-José (Orphelin). I went straight after work, so we could talk before the meal. I got Michel to explain about all the jobs that need to be filled to put on the show. This tells me what I can't do, what I might do, and gives a better idea of the general working of the production. This is my summary:

1. 'Prospection' Contacting likely 'clients'
2. Administration / accounts Michel's already found a French man to do this
3. Electricians/ technicians For light, sound, etc. Needs tech knowledge. However this includes the projectionist, i.e. operating the slide projector, which a woman did before (maybe I could do that).

As I said, I'd like to do something different. Anyway, I've offered to help between now and the summer if there's a leaflet to be sent out. The idea is to rehearse all July then go to Caux to present the show there and get the team together. Michel is very concerned that I must be sure it is the right thing for

me. We talked a lot about that.

Monday lunchtime:

I must give you a report of the weekend: Saturday, Michele [Crenn] and Mitou [husband] came to lunch, and we went on a tour from the sailing school to Roscoff and into St Pol. In the evening I went out with Claudie's friends and didn't get to bed until 4am.

Sunday the same group went all the way to Plogoff (a traffic jam the last 10km) and the Pointe du Raz. We arrived late – everyone was leaving - there was a 'manifestation' [demonstration] taking place, as a nuclear power station is planned to be built there. They were claiming 50,000 people visited that day. After that we got an 11 pm train back to Paris, arriving at 7am. I went straight to bed when I got back and slept until the phone (fortunately) rang. I didn't get to it, but thank goodness it did, as I got to work on time.

This is all rather scribbled and a summary but long enough already.

Lots of love, Su

rue Auguste-Vitu

24th Monday

Dear All,

Having phoned you earlier, I thought tonight I'd write a good reply to all your recent letters.

I've just realised the week I asked for leave is exactly the one Mum wanted to come here. The thing is, that's the only week free at work. And also, I want to be at work in the last month to get as much done as possible before I leave. Could Mum come earlier or later?

Do show my letters to whoever you want, and talk it over with anyone. They might have thoughts that will help you, or help me. Yes, I do think 'people' are the most important thing. Yet, when faced with genuine need, I

feel so inadequate. I must put some thinking time in on that one, God will tell me what to do.

Dear Mum, you haven't an awful temper! It's good to let your anger or frustrations out, and I know I was very awkward over a long period of time. I'm learning from my mistakes now – learning a lot about myself that's very painful, but healing. A misspent youth (late teens) maybe, but now I can understand others.

When I wrote to Jim recently, I expressed my awe at my luck in life. Having the support and love of a caring family means more to me than all the material advantages I could ever imagine. I've not met many people who have the same background of care and concern. That makes me one of the best-off people of my acquaintance. That really awes me. And I'm so very thankful.

Oh, an interesting idea came to me recently. My Bible readings were saying that we couldn't really imagine what God is like – only a version compared to ourselves, and therefore a human definition. Yet he is much more than that, infinitely so. So (the readings said) God put Jesus on earth in his own image but in human form, to help us see what God is really like. So now I see what "My beloved son" really implies. God was revealing himself. Amazing. A new outlook to me, though really basic I suppose.

I just wanted to let you know how much I appreciated your thoughts and how they helped me with my worries. They raised more things for me to chat over in the mornings (I usually whisper to God, I like to feel I'm physically conversing with Him.) There are no more fears or doubts anyway, in my mind, that I can do this work with the St Francis play. I'm now concerned about two things. One is to be convinced that I am following God's will and not my own. The other is a general cleansing, until I become an honest, unselfish, loving, pure receptacle for his use. The first needs patience, the second is, of course, a major project, a lifelong one, but to a novice, surprisingly rewarding. Each step is so thrilling.

Right, I'm really tired so must get to bed now. I hope you're all OK and it's so lovely to hear of your re-strengthened faith. Thank you all, very much, for the time and thought you've spent on me.

'Bye for now – lots of love, Su

rue Auguste-Vitu
75015 Paris
6 March 1980

Dear Jim,

I was very touched by your letter. Your confidence in me means so much to me. Your own faith is obviously so deep. Both of us have had the best possible upbringing. See how, within a short space of time we could pick up the threads of faith (a basic faith already 'implanted'). I find it very awe-inspiring to think that I am among the truly well off people in the world. I am healthy, educated, well-balanced, have never wanted materially, love my family, have many friends, have a good job, oh, so many other things.

Anyway, it's great to hear that you're trying quiet times. I like Dad's way of doing it. List of people to care for, then sorry, thank you, please. I always jot down subjects I want to think about when they occur to me, and tackle them. I really enjoy my quiet time. The only problem is that my mind is overactive and bounds off on different tacks. The answer is to have plenty of time.

What are you planning for the summer? Do consider Caux, it should be a really good session (the one I sent the pamphlet about). It was lovely to hear about your holiday, it sounds so lovely, with all that snow.

Lots and lots of love, Su

Train to Paris [from Zurich], Easter Monday

Dear All,

It is very difficult to write, but as I've not much to do this is a good opportunity. I will tell you in more detail about the weekend when I get home with my photos and cards. Corinne [college friend] gave me a fantastic

weekend, drove me all over the place, and paid for everything. I feel really refreshed and I've seen her corner of Switzerland thoroughly. I'm looking forward now to going back there in the summer.

I'm really looking forward to coming home.

Lots of love, Su

rue A-V, 30 April 1980

Dear Jim and Dad,

I've just got to bed, it's 10.30pm and I remembered I'd been meaning to get a letter in the post to you.

Mum had a good first day today – she cleaned our bathroom, kitchen, hall and 'salon' and prepared an array of salads and a bread-and-butter pudding. And went back to the big supermarket (we went last night, and she remembered the way.) So she's quite happy. I feel guilty. But I can't stop her!

Cindy came to 'diner' and we had a good chat. She is very relaxed, so we all had a good evening. Tomorrow Mum is going to have lunch with Claire Dunn, and Sue and I are going to Boulogne for a lunchtime barbecue and then a film in the afternoon. I'm very pleased Sue is coming. I expect Cindy asking her helped.

I spoke to Michel this morning, and have decided to go on working for a few weeks in June. Which means the pressure's off for handing in my notice right now. It all seemed so complicated. I expect this is right, but tomorrow morning I'll have another last think.

Anyway, Michel was very glad to hear I'd rid my mind of all doubts on what to do. I asked him the question, "Do you really need me?" And he said we would all have some particular skill to contribute but would learn other things together. And as the 'team' only numbers five so far, he's glad to be certain that I will participate. I was really happy to hear that, and very happy to hear that he had also had a 'thought' that I would be on the team. So

that's the official word in my view. If God tells Michel it's right for me to be on the team, as well as telling me, that's far more valuable!

That's enough for now, I'll answer Dad's letter another time.

Oh, I'm so happy to know that I'll be doing this work for certain.

'Bye for now. Love,

Su

Sunday

Dear Jim and Dad,

I shall be awfully lost when Mum's gone, I've just realised. She's super to have around. Anyway, there's no reason why you can't still come to Paris, people often have their families at Boulogne.

I shall finish work Friday 13th June. It seemed just right at that time, I don't know why. I'm hoping I can go home for a bit then, but I'm not counting on it. Michel is getting desperate because he has no producer lined up for June. We'll probably not go to Caux until late July, now. All will sort itself out by June, I expect. Then I might be needed.

Mum will tell you about what we've been up to. I hope you have managed easily. Thanks for a super long letter from Dad. I am waiting for a word from Jim.

So, hoping it won't be too long until I see you. Love, Su

Dear Dad,

Just to answer your letter. Well, really to say thank you for taking time to think so deeply of what could help me. There's no point in commenting, except to say that I understand very clearly that we have Jesus to lead us. In

my quiet times I have had some important thoughts about self-discipline. Basically, as I see it, I must do my own jobs and duties quickly and properly, and run my own life efficiently, to make as much time as possible for others.

Right now, I am really looking forward to going to Caux, and getting really excited about the whole venture. I feel really happy when I think about it, and I've never felt that before about any of my projects. I tend to start worrying about little aspects, but then pull myself up. I just tell myself that there's only one person to tell me what to do: the little voice. What a relief to know I can always rely on that help.

10 rue A-V, Tuesday 20 May

Dear All,

I'm at the laundrette again, a good chance to scrawl letters.

Today was really busy at work as I had to answer the phone all day – it's hectic anyway, as our Executive Council meetings are on.

Last night I went to see the Orphelins. I have to be at Caux on 1st July, official date for the 'team' to meet there. We will perform the show 14 July, then once or twice per week until the sessions finish, i.e. end of August. This will be the French version, in the English production; so during the first two weeks of July the English producer will be there to set it up and rehearse. In September we will stay at Caux to get together with the French producer. Our first official date for 'public' viewing is Nantes, 26 September.

I shall bring home all the stuff I don't need. I hope Janet will want to move into the flat.

The dates and times for my arrival and departure are:

Sunday 15 June	Leave Paris 18.00	Arrive Plymouth 13.55
Friday 27 June	Leave Plymouth 14.40	Arrive Paris 10.45

Will be off now. Lots of love, Su

Paris, Thursday 29th

Dear All,

My [college friend] Pat left at 7am this morning. It was sad to see her go. She thoroughly enjoyed her lunch with Cindy yesterday and came with me to the meeting last night, which she found interesting.

Michel has given me two letters to translate and type. In the meeting, he reported on progress made for the show, and I had to get up and say a quick word. I found myself babbling something about not being able to take the decision until I'd put my life in God's hands; then sat down quick.

Have things planned for this weekend - shopping and Cindy coming to make pasties. I managed to get swede again.

Have to go to work now, so must dash. Thanks for postcards from Mum and note from Dad. Gave me plenty to think on. Will comment later.

'Bye now, or I shall be late.

Love, Su

Paris, Monday 2nd June

I am going to try and remember (in order) the events of today:

7.30 My alarm rings

7.40 I remember why I have to get up, and get up

8.10 Dash out to the metro. Getting out of metro, bump into Sabine [colleague].

8.30 Arrive in the piazza and take up position behind the first row of people at the railings.

9.00 Quite warm, sun just coming up over the building. A policeman on the roof.

- 9.25 Dignitaries emerge from building, inc. Vatican delegate to UNESCO and Amadou Mahtar M'Bow, Secretary-General of UNESCO.
- 9.30 Lots of cheering from other end. Pope must have arrived.
- 9.40 Pope in sight (top of his head, at least). He eventually works his way to us, surrounded by photographers, like wasps around a jam jar. All those slightly ahead of the Pope yell at the photographers and yet grow 2ft in order to take photos. Between their shoulders I can see him. He is taking the hands of the people in front of me. His eyes are saying thank you, thank you to each individual, for your greeting.

When he's passed us, we dash on a bit further, and see him again. This time, I remember to look at him closer. He is short, strong, tanned, his skin glows, he is a picture of health. What shines from him is peace. Simple, clear, peace. Purity. I guess he knows what purity is, and he lives it. God can work directly through this man, he is as pure as the finest glass, clear as the best diamond. He is a living channel for God. We get downstairs and sit on the floor, to see all the Unesco-ites presented to the Pope, and eventually hear his speech. The speech was basically in three parts. Culture. Education. Science.

POSTCARD TO Jim, undated:

Think of me doing nothing but typing references for books, books and more books on nasty sticky bits of paper, in tiny type and every language from Hungarian to Japanese. I shall only just get the 1978's done if I hurry, never mind the two shelves loaded with 1979's! Anyway, I get used to it and turn them out like a robot. Trouble is, I have to concentrate hard the whole time. They're talking of ways to find the money to hire someone part-time to help with this, which will be after I go, of course. Anyway, behave yourself and eat lots of fish.

'Bye for now, love Su

UNESCO, 4 June

Dear All,

This is just a quick scribble, because I seem to be rather behind with my letter writing. I will tell you more about going-to-see-the-Pope when I come home, as it was a super occasion and there's so much to say.

Last night I went to Christiane's [colleague] for dinner with two of her friends. It was a gorgeous meal (crudités, Blanquette de veau, fresh strawberries), and I got to bed at one, so I'm rather sleepy today. There have already been two people for interview for my job, and more coming, so I don't think it will be hard to find someone.

Tonight I'm going to the launderette (haven't been for a while). Tomorrow I'm going to Boulogne in the evening to hear a lady from Lebanon speak.

Must go now. Lots of love, Su

Monday 9 June

Dear All,

Just a quick note, which I hope will arrive before I do. I am looking forward to finishing here, it really will be a relief in a lot of ways. Not that I look forward to a more peaceful future, but certainly a more rewarding one.

When I am home (next week!!!!) all I want is mental relaxation. That is what I feel I need in preparation for the summer. I am looking forward to staying with Gran and Grandad. I will take my photos to put in albums and any other quiet little jobs while being able to listen to Gran.

The other things I need are lots of fresh air, hopefully sunshine, maybe swims in the sea, pasties, and one proper roast.

I'd better finish now. That is all there was to say.

Bye for now then – see you next Monday.

Love to all, Su

Mountain House
Ch-1824 Caux
Suisse

Dear All,

It is Tuesday morning, about 8 o'clock so I've time to write a quick note now to get off later.

Saturday: I got a new pair of shoes, very smart, lovely soft leather and 30% off. We went to see 'American Gigolo' in the evening.

Sunday: had a lie in till 11am, left at 11.30am for the pool with Sue. Swam and sat outside, cold but sunny. Then home to pack up things to send with Annie and Florence and Cindy, in the minibus to Boulogne. Cinema again, 'Being There' – very, very good.

Monday: just ready in time and all off, late – 9.30am. Six of us in the minibus. Lovely sunny day, stopped for morning coffee, then a picnic in a field once we'd turned off the motorway, more coffee by a fierce and swollen river then through the rugged and wild Jura, and lovely mellow old towns, to the Swiss border. Then soon along by Lac Léman to Montreux. We could see Caux from afar, but the mountains were hidden in mist.

Annie and I share a room in a tower, so a super view of this end of the lake. Had a meal with others of our team, unpacked, then the musical director and producer arrived from England, so we all sat around to watch them eat. Good fun, and I picked up atmosphere. I felt 'at home' here from the first – no worries at all. (Yet...!!!) Breakfast is usually at 7.30am but 9am for the team today. Phew. Will continue later, but will post this.

Lots of love, Su

PS spent all morning working out the programme, which I will type up

Mountain House
CH – 1824 CAUX
Suisse

Weds 2 July

Dear All,

Well, since I wrote on Monday morning to let you know we'd arrived, only two days have passed. Yet it feels like two weeks.

Monday morning we got together after breakfast, and then everyone disappeared off in different directions. Annie, Claude and I worked on an invitation to be sent to Swiss 'friends' for a performance of the show. I typed it again and again and eventually this afternoon we got it down to Montreux (us three again) to get it printed. It's only A5, with both sides printed, but it took ages to get finished because everyone kept changing bits. Anyway the next step, which I typed in rough, is a programme for the summer only. That will be much worse!

After we'd been down to Montreux this afternoon, Annie and I went for a walk through the woods. It's so lovely to have fresh air ALL the time and it's so quiet. NO traffic noise – only the train going up and down. The meals are lovely. I meet different people each time and though I can remember all about them, I can't remember their names. At the moment breakfast is at 7.30am.... This morning I started typing at 8.30am!!! Next week breakfast is at 8.00am. Lunch is always 12.15pm and dinner 6.30pm. I much prefer earlier meals but for the first time in at least six months I've got a real appetite again. So I must remember to be careful. I've been quite tired because I can't sleep – far too excited. Tonight might be better because I've had fresh air and exercise. Next Sunday lots of people arrive so we will move to Mountain House for meals and everything else. Annie and I are already there, in a pretty and cosy room in a tower.

Well, now it's Friday and, instead of just throwing this in the post, I was waiting to finish it. But I can't write every little thing, so will be selective.

Wednesday evening we went to bed at 9.30pm. I felt less tired yesterday. Annie and I didn't have much to do, so I went down to the language laboratory to do some Italian (I'm restarting from scratch). In the afternoon we went for a longer walk in another direction. It's been wet, cloudy and misty since we've been here. They tell me we're surrounded by mountains, but I can't believe it!

We went to a hilarious birthday party yesterday afternoon, here in Mountain House, then to a 'Team' meeting, then up the hill to an open-air brass band concert, which was lovely.

This morning is nearly sunny. There's hope. I must dress quick to get to breakfast in time. It's getting harder getting up at 6:30am but tomorrow breakfast is later, hooray!

Right, will start another letter but get this in the post.

Lots of love, Su

Mountain House,
CH-1824 Caux
Sunday 6 July

Dear Mum, Dad, Jim,

I will try to write a letter now (9.15pm) but Annie and I haven't taken our constitutional walk today (it rained all day,) so we still have too much energy.

Right, news: Friday and Thursday we walked, poked our fingers in other people's pies and generally were under-occupied. Saturday we moved cows after lunch to another field to take a photo, then moved them back again. I have been listening to the sound effects tape - eventually it will be my job to stop and start it on cue (once we're 'on tour'). I've also been doing a lot of sitting around talking to people.

Meanwhile, great news, I have been promoted for the summer. As we're short of technicians, Gunnar has asked me to be 'corner', in other

words sit just behind the curtain (on stage) and give all the cues for lighting, sound etc. It's quite a responsibility but he is perfectly sure I'll be good at it and I think it will be great fun. So next week I'll sit with the director making the 'book', in other words a copy of the script with all the cues written in. My title for the summer is 'Assistant Stage Manager'. Very exciting.

We sat in the theatre today while photos were taken of Michel pretending to be a high-wire artist. It's all quite fascinating.

Today lots of people arrived, especially from Paris: Annette, Florence, the Koechlins, Frédéric, the Lasserres and Evelyne.

You know, I'm so amazingly HAPPY here! I keep thinking it can't last, but it does. The people are fun, work is fun, I have a nice room, the food's super and my quiet times have been much richer. Having so many people to talk to, and a good excuse for asking questions, is right up my street! Plus fresh air, rather shy mountains, and tons of flowers, is wonderful. I'm so grateful.

I've forgotten to carbon copy my last few letters but would like Gran and Grandad to see them, so I'll try and copy the next ones. Thanks for Mum's parcels, which were very cheering.

'Bye for now. Lots of love, Su

Caux Theatre
Wednesday 9 July

Dear All,

Here I am in the theatre again, with nothing to do. I feel so guilty when I'm not doing something that can be labelled 'work'. That's a reflection on my time at ICOM.

This morning in my quiet time I made a list of all the people I would like to send a postcard. The list comes to 25. So I went out and bought lots of

stamps. I think I shall be forced to write more, less often, to use fewer stamps.

Anyway, as usual I can't remember when I last wrote. Monday? Monday or Tuesday, anyway, I've just sat here in the theatre. Yesterday I did a bit of typing in the end because I wasn't needed here, but Monday I had to 'prompt' Michel. It's very hard to concentrate and keep a fraction ahead when there are long pauses for his mimes. This morning I don't think I'm needed, but this afternoon John, Gunnar and I have to 'plot'! That means me making up my 'book' of cues for everyone. So when I can buy my postcards, I'll start on that lot. I do keep meaning to get a 'circular' letter done, but it probably won't be this week now.

Every time I write I think of sending a 'dramatis personae' of all the people working on the show, so this time I'll do it:

Michel: you know

Francois: his son, doing lots of things, helping a lot technically

Gunnar

Söderlund: responsible for the Theatre – all lights, sounds, recordings, photos - very overworked

Christian

Pettersson: Helps Gunnar with everything

Sylvie: Gunnar's wife, expecting a baby for August.

Claude

Bourdin: Administration and helps with running of house.

Annie

Rabourdin: Room-mate. Corrects scripts, will run the slides.

Maria: Choreographer from Paris. Professional.

John Dryden: Director. Professional, from London

John Burrows: Musical director. Professional, from London.

Saturday

Apologies, I got busy all of a sudden, so I forgot to send this letter.

Tuesday afternoon we started plotting (i.e. working out lighting) so I sat between John and Gunnar putting it all in my script. That little session went

on until 2.00am Weds. Wednesday morning we had breakfast together but then I went back to bed for an hour. Thursday at 2.00pm we had a 'technical dress [rehearsal]', when I was in my role of 'corner'. I was terrified at first but got to enjoy it. That went on until 12.15am! So Friday morning I skipped breakfast (NB since I've been here bedtime has been 9.30pm or 10.00pm.)

Friday afternoon we rehearsed everyone together, all the way through. Terrifying again, but even more fun. Poor Annie had a terrible time with her slides. Michel was looking a bit haggard yesterday but last night we finished at 10.30pm so had a decent night's sleep and he looks brighter this morning.

So now it's Saturday 9.50am. By 9.30am Annie and I had done our washing and hung it up, remade our beds and had breakfast. Mostly Annie's doing, bien sûr. Now I'm waiting for François to show me where his sound cues come. Speak of the devil, here he is. So I'll finish off later.

Right, nearly 12.00 so I'll say goodbye. I spend a lot of time in between writing up my script (or 'book'). This afternoon is dress rehearsal, and another this evening - and tomorrow I think. Then the show's première en français is tomorrow night.

Thanks for long letter from Mum and card from Jim. Both arrived today.

Lots of love, Su

Caux

Tuesday 17th July

Dear All,

I got a super letter from Mum today: I never doubted for a moment that Gran would go to [the cliff theatre] Minack; it's reassuring to know that Mum's blood results are OK; I hope Jim has an internship fixed up now; and that Dad's business admin worries are resolving.

Right, so I'll tell you about the first show. Saturday we had two 'dresses' and finished not too late - 11ish. Sunday I was ordered by Gunnar to stay in

bed, and go for a walk, so I did both – got up at 9.45am, read the papers, did my ironing, had lunch, went for a walk with Annie, then tried to stay away from the theatre. We all had dinner together but were rather subdued (that means normal compared to other people at Caux) then whiled away the rest of the time until we were ready to go. We had a meeting first, backstage. Everyone had signed a card wishing me luck, wasn't that super? We said a prayer, then manned our stations. The audience flooded in, I let the orchestra out (the men penguins, Kathleen in a long dress) and soon off we went. I was not nervous before or during, but did panic for the first five minutes. I made myself calm down and all went fine, point of view audience.

In fact we'd all made mistakes. Mine are rarely actually visible, but are a question of timing. If I give a 'standby' too late, then Christian won't be prepared. And I have to give the 'go' at an exact second, which on two occasions were a second out. The audience doesn't know what is meant to happen, but we all do and especially me. I only totalled three or four bad cues, and John D was very pleased with me. Actually, the only person who does ever grumble to me is Christian, who often can see better than I when the lights should 'go'! Still, I enjoyed my 'world première'. But then... oh, but then!

Marketa had laid out a cold meal (meat, salad, no-rum-babas), lots of fizzy drinks and coffee and we all sat in the kitchen at a long table (flowers and all). Surrounded by pots and pans and huge steel ovens. Michel, on entering, had a real standing ovation. When eventually we'd finished eating, a piano was dragged in (right into the kitchen) and we had a sing-song, and played games (there were 14 of us.) At about 1.30am the party split up, we got the kitchen back to its usual impeccableness and went to bed. It was terrific. Six people there were non-MRA, but were no more riotous than the MRA people.

Voilà. Obviously none of us were present for breakfast Monday. In the afternoon Annie and I went down to Montreux (it was sunny at last) and wandered about, did some shopping, then sat and watched the ducks. Today it's wet, so this morning we went to the meeting. And I went at 5.00pm to a community meeting and at 8.00pm to hear Dr Campbell talk about Frank Buchman. Phew!

Now it is Wednesday morning and I must post this. Jean-Jacques Odier asked me last night if I'd be in the cast of his play about a computer. It's in French, and is a musical. I will go on as a secretary and sing in a few choruses. It'll be a good way to learn more about the theatre.

So I'll leave you now. The rest of Wednesday will no doubt to be more rehearsals for the play. Everyone is well and no other news.

'Bye for now. Love, Su

Monday 21st

Dear Jim,

Just a quick note to say I've booked you in. It'll be such fun to have you here. There's always two meetings a day, and something in the evening, but the afternoons are always free. It's cold and wet here now, but if the sun shines it's hot. I go round in jeans when I'm working but if I'm going to meetings all day I sometimes wear a skirt. Sensible shoes are essential if you're staying up the hill.

Bye for now. Love, Su

Mountain House, Monday 21st July

Dear Mum and Dad,

This really is a very quick note just to keep you up to date. Since I last wrote I have been in the cast for a French musical play. It is only a reading, with script in hand, but we have to act it out and sing a lot. I am just me, as a member of the crowd in the first act, but a secretary in the second. I don't have anything to say, but have to pass through looking secretarial. In the costume room I found a pink suit, which with my pink shoes and a pair of enormous glasses looks very funny.

Last week we rehearsed it every day, then all day yesterday and all day today, and the show is this evening. We'll only do it two or three times during the summer. Michel takes the major part, which I think was too much for him, as Saturday we also had our second show (with some important changes.) That went very well for me, by the way - I love working on our show, I really enjoy it, but this other play is an interesting experience. Must go now – enjoy yourselves.

Lots of love, Su

Mountain House
Tuesday 22nd

Dear All,

I am writing using a carbon copy, so Jim can get the same letter and I don't have to write twice. I had a letter from Jim, from Dad yesterday and from Mum (very long) today. I've no comments, except to say that I shall be praying for you all very carefully each night before I go to sleep, and put far more effort into it than I do in the morning.

Today nearly everyone else has gone on a picnic, although there are still people working in the house on planning, etc. I had no real plans to go with anyone, and tons to do, so now I can get on with things like mending, and doing my 'circular letter'. And my 25 (19 now) postcards. Also, we have a USEPN [Un soleil en pleine nuit] team meeting at 4.00pm, as none of us are going on the picnic. Did I tell you about the picnic we had last week? I can't remember what I've told you, or when.

At last the weather is nice. My (quick) entrance in the French play was appreciated Monday night, and I enjoyed singing in it. Tuesday, no rehearsals at last, so Michel, Annie and I went down to Vevey to look at the shops. It was sunny, and so hot. I'm in the Grand Hotel now, so have no telephone. Annie's planning a holiday in a chalet for us from 10-20 August.

Enjoy your holiday. Love, Su

MEMORANDUM

Date: 30 July 1980

Ref: July circular

Object: Sending of circular letter / report for July

- Please will you be honey-bunnies and distribute this letter to anyone who takes an interest in me?
- I would be interested to know who you have given it to
- I will do another in late August

With many thanks, Su

NEWSLETTER TO FAMILY AND FRIENDS AT HOME

Caux, 24 July 1980

Dear All,

Well, I've been here three weeks now, and while time has shot by, looking back it seems much, much longer. There has been so much to learn, and so many things to do, but I've really been enjoying it all.

We drove here from Paris in a minibus, with Michel Orphelin the mime artist, Annie (a French girl who is responsible for the slides that are a part of the show), Michel's son Francois who does the sound, and Peter the pianist. Here we met the rest of our team: Claude, a French man taking on the show's administration; Gunnar and Christian, the Swedish technicians; John Dryden the professional director and John Burrows, musical director, both from London. So we are rather international for a French show!

Caux is a village perched 1000m above sea level, directly above Montreux. The view over Lake Léman down to Geneva and over to France is wonderful. The Moral Rearmament centre was built as a hotel and used during the war to house refugees. After the war, the Swiss saw that they had suffered less than other European countries and decided to try and make

available a place where people from all over the world could meet, to get to know and understand one another and to rid themselves of their hate or mistrust of one another. So they managed to buy the Caux Palace Hotel, and so created a beautiful and friendly place where an amazing variety of people come every year for the summer and winter conferences.

The village is surrounded by forests, so I have been for some super walks, and have been down to Montreux and Vevey, as well as for a picnic in France. Most of my time for these first weeks has been spent in the theatre. As the weather has mostly been cold and wet, I haven't minded being in the gloom all day long.

The first show was given two weeks after we arrived, so for two weeks everybody really had to work. In the first week I worked on the programmes, translating them from English and typing them, as well as preparing notices to be passed around to let people know about the show. Then, when I was expecting to start working with the tape recorders, I found Gunnar had a better idea. We needed an assistant stage manager, and they thought I could do it. I was nervous at first, as it is rather a responsibility and I had a lot to learn. I ended up really enjoying it. So I sit in the wings with a special panel, with an array of lights, buttons and an intercom to manoeuvre, giving the light, sound and follow-spot operators warnings and their cues. As the show has only one person onstage, it relies very much on the effects of light, sound and the slides. I found it fascinating to see how an apparently simple show is built up, and was impressed by the dedication of everyone, from newcomers like me and Annie, to the professionals, who put themselves into it totally.

The first performance was satisfactory, the second one a great deal better. Meanwhile some of us also got involved in a French musical comedy, which was to be performed as an 'animated reading'! It was tremendous fun, I just sang in the chorus dressed in a ridiculous pink suit as a secretary, but it was nice to see what it's like being actually on the stage.

So now, in week four, I have no more rehearsals, and just one or two performances a week, and am able to join in the running of the house, helping with the room service (making beds, emptying bins, doing flowers) which takes all morning but is not too tiring.

Now I'm looking forward to Jim's visit in August, and hoping everyone is well,

With love, Su

Mountain House, Wednesday 30th July

I've been trying to write since Monday, but it's just as well I haven't, as this morning I had a call from Jim and a long letter from Mum and Dad, explaining that Jim and girlfriend were possibly not coming and so it's a relief now, to know that just Jim will be here.

I'll briefly get you up to date with my news, and will try and answer your long letter. Also, I think I'm missing a lot in my letters about what I'm learning from being here. So stand by.

Since last Weds I've been housekeeping every day, which starts at 8.00am (breakfast at 7.30am) till the meeting at 9.00am, then from 11.00am on. My floor-mate fell ill, so I've had to manage alone. She'd taught me the basics, but you learn twice as much from having the responsibility of a whole floor of rooms yourself. Luckily the fourth floor is all elderly people and invalids, so it's very tidy and peaceful.

We did USEPN again on Thursday evening and Sunday afternoon, and 'Pitié pour Clémentine' on Monday. The programme Tuesday was a walk up the mountain, but instead I went with a few girls in a car down to a swimming pool at Vevey and when the sun came out, it got really hot. It's been super weather the last few weeks with the occasional thunderstorm at night. I'm very tired, because I get up at 6.30am and go to bed at about 11.00pm, but a couple of early nights will fix that and I've plenty of energy. The other week was more dangerous, as I was mentally tired, and just couldn't cope. Fortunately it passed. Here, things can get very intense. Now although I'm working all morning, and busy with people all afternoon, it's relaxed but stimulating and I'm happy again. I even managed to glimpse at the newspapers. And I'm eating far too much....

Now, perhaps I'll reread your letter. When I heard that Jim and

[girlfriend] had doubts about coming, I thought about your concern for them, and went to bed troubled. Sometime during the night I knew that I mustn't worry, and had a sense of guidance to pray directly for you and for the whole family. Then, I realised I was frightened that Jim wouldn't come, and decided to leave that to God.

So, since I heard from you, I trusted God would do whatever was needed without my interference, and refound my calm and confidence. I didn't even ask for that support, He just sent me it. I thought the most valuable thing I could do was pray, so I did when I got to bed, and then I knew all would be well. That was really my first experience of the use of prayer and the peace it can bring.

Anyway, this morning I realised I was afraid of them not coming because I had shared the news of their arrival with all the USEPN team, and other friends, and I realised I'd find it embarrassing to have to say they weren't coming. I asked God to help me face telling people plans had changed, and asked him to help me think only of what was good for others. So when I got Jim's call I only felt "Good for Jim" and not "Thank goodness, for me". God did it again - He works in me, if I ask!

I will keep Mum's words about being strong and fearless handy, to be reminded. Please don't think I'm strong, I constantly have doubts, and am easily led by what others say. I am too concerned with what others think of me, and with how I look, act and speak. I am struggling to be free of these weaknesses, which seem my most urgent to solve. Strength is in being individual, being free of others' opinions, and making up one's own mind.

Right now, I'm genuinely glad I am free of emotional ties, so I can give all my heart and time to the play and the people I meet through it. Absolute love includes every person on earth. So, I'm going to have a chance to learn to love people. When I've managed to love many, different people, then I shall feel vaguely qualified to love one person specially. If I can't love everyone, then how can I be trusted to love one? That's an enormous task, quite beyond me alone.

Anyway, enough of my lofty aspirations. If you think some of these thoughts are not right, let me know. I'm finding how little I know about faith,

and seeing how long is the road I have to travel. I'm afraid I may start enthusiastic, and get tired soon. I hope that by keeping things in a worldwide perspective I can balance the personal perspective.

This is all terribly easy here at Caux. Back in Paris, back to city life and my friends, it will be all too easy to forget: to lose sight of the goal, to lose my sense of the importance of God's work. Mountains are inspiring places. Please, can you help me remember? I know God will keep me heading the right way, but I'm so afraid of losing the joy, the freshness, the peace, I have found here.

More important, if I stop making you laugh, if I stop wearing pink shoes, then worry. Something'll be very wrong! And above all, write letters. Short if time runs out, but long and varied when possible, please. Right, I'll go now....

Lots and lots of love, Su

PS Carbon sent to Jim

PPS Excuse heavy earnestness of letter, my brain is being forced to think 'deeply' and is struggling. I'm still just as silly as usual between times, and have been delighted to discover that so are many other people here. I think I'm having more fun than I ever got out of the nasty or mucky jokes my friends used to laugh at.

Mountain House
Monday 4th August

I am now in the theatre, but I have nothing to do for a minute or two, so am grabbing a chance to get a quick note to you, before Jim's arrival. The usual problem, when did I last write? I think I wrote a long letter at the beginning of last week, so I'll take it from there.

Thursday morning I'd just finished the work on my floor and gone to have 'elevenses' when a lady came dashing in to say she was taking an older French couple on a sightseeing tour at 11.00am, and had a spare place. Someone had suggested the "girl who used to work at UNESCO". So I went

and changed, grabbed my camera, and off we went. She was an elderly Swiss lady, with a nice little car. We went first to Gruyère, looked around the castle, then drove south-east and stopped for lunch (a picnic). Then we went on, with various stops, to get out and look around - to Saanen, Gstaad, Col de Pillon, Glacier des Diablerets, and lots of places I've forgotten. We got back just in time for dinner. It was a fantastic day.

Friday was Swiss National Day. Meals were all Swiss, there was yodelling and Alphorns on the lawn at teatime, a bonfire with folk dancing, and speeches in the evening. Corinne arrived after lunch. Saturday afternoon we sat in the sun and in the evening was a concert by a Japanese youth choir, which was very, very good. Thursday night there was a string quartet concert – again incredible. Sunday, Janet [college friend] came from Geneva and we had a picnic lunch together. She left early afternoon and I had a full USEPN rehearsal at 8.00pm. We have another this evening, and I am writing a spare page of my 'book'.

Meanwhile: last week, the girl I was helping with the fourth floor housekeeping got a cold, so I went on doing the floor alone. It was simple, just checking rooms and doing flowers. Then I discovered she wasn't coming back, and that this weekend there would be a great changeover (200 leaving and 300 arriving). All rooms have to be cleaned when people leave, and beds remade. We had help from Swiss ladies to clean, but I was automatically expected to go on being responsible for the whole floor. I never realised I would be alone until it happened, though I had people to ask about procedures. It all came out all right, luckily this floor is for older people and invalids, and not too full. I really learnt a lot.

Tuesday 5.30pm: Jim is upstairs sleeping. He arrived in time for breakfast, exhausted. He went to a meeting this morning and has slept since 2.00pm. What a joy to see him. More in next letter, love, Su

Sunday 10th

Dear Mum and Dad,

It was fantastic to hear your voices this morning. I'm so glad you had a good holiday. I will be glad to go Tuesday until Sunday with Annie for a holiday in a flat near Lausanne. I have lots of letters and postcards to write, and things I want to read. Life's such a rat race here now. Working in the morning in between meetings, until lunch. Then there are lots of people to think about, meetings after tea, and always something on after supper. As my room's up the hill, I never do any washing or ironing. Still, it will be quiet again soon (I hope). I will answer your last letter properly now.

It was great to have all the news of your holiday. I really wished I could've been there. I like your idea of filtering coffee into a flask. Brilliant. I appreciated your postcard, the stamps, the pretty envelope, and thank you for the scarf, it's super. I've been sharing a room with an Australian girl called Sallie Wood, she's very nice, though she's been ill for a week or so. Now there is a South African girl, but I haven't seen much of her.

When housekeeping, I only clean a room if it gets grubby. When people leave, paid staff clean it thoroughly. I empty bins, do flowers, check bathrooms, and keep an eye on the linen. I'm still alone on the 4th Floor, which is rather a struggle but I have occasional help and anyway I'm going to be off for a few days.

Clementine is a computer in the play. It runs the country (well, makes decisions).

I don't get as much sleep as I could use, but I'm OK. I can't sleep long ever, as we meet at 8.00am to sort out before starting work. Discipline is what's needed. Afternoons and meals are the only times to talk to people and the afternoons always seem to get filled by some scheme or job or person.

On to Dad's letter. It's now Tuesday morning, and Jim's looking for the Corcorans to say hello, while I finish this. I have made him a picnic. I think it's not enough, but he won't take any more. Thank you for sending the shirt – it's really super. I've been wearing it all week. And thanks to Mum for getting me that skirt – I'd love to have it. I'm reading a book on John Wesley, which I'll let you have when I've finished it. That's a long letter from Dad, so I'll have

to read it more carefully. Please thank Gran and Grandad very much for their letters.

Today, for the first time for weeks, it's pouring with rain. A shame, as it was a free day for everyone and there were excursions and picnics organised. I don't mind as all I want to do is sleep. I have lots of interesting articles on people I've met, but I'll send them when I've read them. We had pancakes for breakfast, with maple syrup. Yum. Jim has been really super here. I would have liked to have concentrated more on him, but he's been much better off without me. He's met some super people. I could never have organised things so well, isn't it good to know Someone is doing it for you? The USEPN team are all well. Gunnar and Sylvie have a little girl, born Thursday, called Signe, a Swedish name. They'll be up in about a week, I'm looking forward to seeing her and Sylvie. I can see Jim still talking to Mrs C. which is good, as I've been able to write a lot more.

I promise to answer questions straight away in future. Will go now. Thanks for so many letters all the time.

'Bye for now. Love, Su

Savigny, near Lausanne, Friday 15th August

As Jim may have told you, Annie and I are taking a break, staying in a girl's flat in a tiny village. It's farmland all around, and the village has one Co-op, one restaurant, one Church, and that's it. Oh, it does have a post office. The flat is one big room, bathroom and kitchen, and has French doors onto the garden, so I am now sitting in the sun writing letters. It's quite a relief really, to get away from all those people for a bit. We've done nothing but eat and read. I have done a bit of embroidery and written letters and we have been for walks, but we've read, mostly. I'd got very tired at Caux. I never had any time to read or even do my washing. When I get back, I hope things will be easier. For one thing, the industrial and political conferences will be a lot duller, so I will have more time. The family and the youth hosted sessions have been tremendous fun, but also hectic.

Anyway, it was super to see Jim, and to have him at Caux. Also, it was a

great pleasure to see the care people took of him, and their interest. I have a few people in particular to find to thank, when I get back. I hope that they'll still be there, as many people are leaving on Sunday.

We've had super weather up until this week, but now it's forecast bad for tomorrow. Tuesday and Wednesday were overcast, so yesterday and today we've been out making the most of it.

Someone is writing an article on USEPN for New World News, so if I can get hold of a copy I'll send it to you (should be about September it'll come out). By 'us' I mean the team. We're wondering if we ought to have one or two more people, as apparently we can't manage as we are. So an appeal is being launched at Caux, but no doubt God will provide enough and no more. We don't want too many people, from a financial point of view. I think we'll probably form the basic team, but we'll have others with us from time to time.

Will go and eat lunch now, so will leave you. Dying to know Jim's [A level] results.

Lots of love, Su

Mountain House

Thursday 21st

Dear All,

Another handwritten letter, I'm afraid. The machines are far away and busy. I will try to write in a civilized way. I am writing on my knee, as I am sitting on my balcony in the sun. Thank you for the relief parcel. I'm so glad to have this skirt, the colours are so lovely and I wear the other one a lot as I like the style so much. And thousands of sincere thanks for getting that film developed so quickly. I've no doubt it cost the earth. It's super to have those pictures of Cornwall. Like the idiot I am, I left all pictures at home. I had lunch with the Joughin's. They said you looked very good after your holiday. Housekeeping is busy now, as there are short sessions with people coming and going constantly. The Orphelins are coming back today.

I cut my fringe yesterday, it's looks nice. Lots of people have commented. Funny, what difference a little can make. Did you like Jim's hair? A great relief, I thought, much, much better. Shows his ears off nicely. Annie is well, Cindy has a cold. Signe looks the same as any other baby only more so. There are quite a few babies or families here. I gather this is unusual. It's teatime now, so you'll have to make do with this. Have seen two plays last week, "The Real News" and "Keir Hardie". Both were very good.

Can't think of any more news. I am thinking of buying a portable typewriter, as it would be useful travelling. If so, may be it should be a French one, for the accents. Will look at prices in Paris. Should have enough to get a good one. We'll see.

'Bye now then. Lots of love, Su

Mountain House
Weds 27 August

Dear All,

I'm afraid I can't type this letter, as I'm in my room at the Grand, waiting for the other housekeeper to come up, so that we can start.

I hope Gran had a good stay. When you talk about local things like the Stithians Reservoir Open-day I really wish I could have been there. I imagine Jim is now working?

I'm beginning to look forward to moving on. It's been a super summer, I'm so grateful, but I do feel stale and in need of a change. The conference finishes on Sunday, so there'll be cleaning up to do.

Jane Joughin introduced me to Lucy Corcoran. So I had tea with them both, and Duncan Corcoran. How did you get to know Muriel Carrant? Something has worried me for a long time – how come you never told Jim and I about the ideas of MRA? I've always had a faith, of sorts, thanks to you. Yet I didn't know how to apply it or how to broaden it. I know lots of people like that. Without indoctrinating people in MRA, but using the ideas of silence and

absolute standards, is there a way to help people find a deeper Christianity? I feel many churchgoers pray like mad, but never listen – like me. I was even lazy about praying. I shall send the book on John Wesley back to you. He tried to rebuild the church, as did St. Francis. Neither wanted to break from the Church, but work with it.

It's our last show tonight. I still feel I should buy a typewriter of my own, but don't know if it's what I should do with my money. It would be of very great use to me to have a machine I was used to, always handy. I try to let God tell me what I should do with the money I have, but it's terribly hard to let go the reins.

My roommate now is a girl called Margaret Cook, who lives in London and is a secretary at the MRA office there. She also acts in Keir Hardie. I've told you all this once, I think. Anyway, she's great fun. Everyone will be gone in a week's time. I shall move back down to Mountain House. Oh, I forgot. I had guidance (against my will) to offer to leave the fourth floor and come up to work at the Grand. A nuisance, as I have to go down there first to breakfast and our team meeting. We are two people for all six floors and I don't get time to go to the main meeting. I still enjoy it. For one thing, going up-and-down hundreds of stairs, cleaning the rooms and making beds has made me much fitter; and a change did me a lot of good. I'm off to lunch now, so will bung this in the post.

It's raining cats and dogs, so I have to get dressed up to go down the hill.

Lots of love to all, Su

CIRCULAR LETTER

Caux, August 1980

Dear Everyone,

Time here has shot by so fast, I can't believe that in only a few weeks I shall be back in Paris. Yet the summer has been so full, looking back.

Our show, “Un Soleil en Pleine Nuit” was very well received by everyone who saw it here. People are often struck by one part of the story in particular that applies to their lives, or some particular worry they may have, and they always seem to have been given something to think about and work on themselves. At the moment, the choreographer is here to polish the show, her husband has also come to look at the text to see where it can be made more French, and also to tidy up loose ends in the show and improve its flow. Next week I shall have to retype the whole script, over 40 pages, because so many changes have been made this summer.

Meanwhile I have been helping with clearing up after the conference. Everyone disappeared on the last day of August, and the housekeepers have to take all the linen out of the rooms, which is very tiring work. I have also found time however, to go for some good long walks as the weather is beautiful. It is very sunny but also very clear so the mountains look lovely.

I have had the chance to go on a few outings during the summer. We had a super picnic in the French Alps, in a meadow by a very fierce stream, building a bonfire to cook sausages – that was with the whole USEPN team. Then a Swiss lady took a French couple and myself on a day trip in her car. We went to the hilltop town of Gruyère, and looked around the castle. We drove through Gstaad, then through a fantastic mountain pass to the Diablerets, a group of peaks with a glacier, where there is a very popular holiday resort town. I was taken to Gruyère a second time, and this time we were bought raspberries and cream (one of the main attractions of Gruyère) and you got far more cream than raspberries!

It was super to have Jim here. I have met lots of very interesting people, young and old. With 600 people here at a time, it is only possible to speak to a few, I remember in particular an Indian lady, an Australian couple looking up some Cornish ancestors, a New Zealand farming family, and a Laotian girl who has been adopted by a French family. I shared a room with an Australian girl, who fell ill with jaundice, so I had to have a horribly big jab against it. Then I shared a room with an English girl who has been touring with the play ‘Keir Hardie’ and my present roommate is a very funny Canadian girl, who will be staying in Caux for the next year, having decided to give up her job as a laboratory assistant, at the same time I did.

In a week or so, we shall be heading back to Paris, and then soon onto Nantes, to give our first professional performance of the show. It will be a test on many counts, trying out other equipment, in another theatre, and with the team together properly for the first time. Our next definite date will be back in Switzerland, near Lausanne, at the end of October. Meanwhile, we are thinking of all the equipment we will need to buy, which is sophisticated and therefore expensive, and of some form of transport, such as a van, which will be essential to move about. So there is plenty to pray for.

I hope I find everyone well – bye for now – love Su

Caux, Thursday 4th September

Dear All,

I haven't posted you a letter for a week, so I hope it's not too long before you get this, which I will send with Sallie.

I hope you get a chance to meet Sallie, as she's great fun, and is very interesting. She's lived in India for quite a while, and is quite musical.

Anyway, I don't think I have much news now. Everyone left Sunday or Monday, and by Wednesday morning we were very few. Today we are moving back to the Villa Maria. I helped Mieli clear up at the Grand, all Monday and Tuesday morning. It was very active work, and Tuesday afternoon I went for a long walk with the Joughins, which they can tell you about, so I think I've had plenty of exercise lately! Yesterday I worked all morning, and went for a walk in the afternoon with Annie and a 16-year-old girl from Laos who's living with a French 'full-time' family. This morning was much easier; I just pottered about helping tidying the house up. It's quite a job, getting Mountain House sorted out and cleared of all linen and debris. I should now be helping the moving, so won't write for too long.

I'm definitely needed to stay here until the end of next week, as the script has to be completely retyped, and we will have to help the photographer when she comes to do the slides. I don't know when we'll leave for Paris, but if I've only a week, I don't think it's worth travelling to Cornwall.

However, there's a big gap between Nantes and the next date, hopefully 29-31 October in Switzerland, so if nothing else crops up, we might all take a break. However, I suspect it's safer not to make plans as I never know what's going to turn up next.

My English is terribly hard to coordinate this afternoon, I'm so sleepy. I will have another go at this later....

I've been to see if help is needed, but there's hardly a soul around. However I still can't think of any news, as life has been so uneventful. Nobody's made any intelligent conversation since the conference finished. There were a few meetings to start up next years youth hosted session, which is to be entitled "Everyone counts" or "Chacun compte". Oh, I know what I wanted to say. I wished Dad (and Mum) could have heard some of the people speak at the industrial conference. I only went to 2 or 3 of the meetings during that and the political conference so missed lots, but I felt it would have interested you very much. I'm sorry my writing's worse this time – I'm sitting in the sun again and getting drowsy.

When I realised the Joughin's were going back to Cornwall, I really wanted to go too. This was Monday and I'd really got fed up with Caux, with MRA, with USEPN, everything. Then we had a team meeting, and it was clear I was needed here. The next morning, my guidance was "You're going to stay in Caux, and you're going to enjoy it." Well, I was really angry and upset for a few days because I couldn't leave. I don't mind now, as I am working hard at enjoying it and trying to think more for the tour. Also, there is hope I might get home in October.... Funny, people going back to England didn't worry me, but the minute I imagined the train getting to Plymouth... oh dear, imagination's definitely a dangerous thing at times.

The brand name "Olympia" is stuck in my head. I wonder if there's any way you could get me a description of their range, both electric and manual portables, and price lists? I've still got that bee in my bonnet.

Right, it's teatime, so I'm off for buns and tea. I'm wondering what Jim's doing on his work experience

Pass on my love to Aunty Judy, and to G & G.

'Bye for now. Love, Su

22 Avenue Robert Schumann, 92100 BOULOGNE BILLANCOURT

Paris, 16 September

Dear Mum, Dad, Jim, etc.

I'm afraid it's an awfully long time since I've written, since the Joughins left I think. I'd been wanting to reply to your recent letters properly, and now I can't find them. Anyway I do remember that I wanted to say that it was only a temporary wish to get away, and was a symptom of a bout of laziness and selfishness, and lots of other things. Times like these are tests.

I don't think a great deal has happened lately that I have to tell you. Last week I retyped the whole script for the show, because there have been so many changes during the summer. Only Annie, Michel, Claude and I were at Caux. Gunnar, Christian and Peter are in London buying equipment. Michel and I travelled to Paris Saturday night, arriving for Sunday breakfast. We all go back to Caux next Monday for rehearsals, then to Nantes about 24th or 25th. On Sunday afternoon, the Tates, Cindy, Irini (from Cyprus) and I went and walked around the 'Hameau' – farm – at Versailles and the park. All day yesterday I typed up a new programme. Today Cindy and I are meeting Sue and her parents for lunch. Cindy leaves tomorrow evening.

So those are the main points. It's sunny here today, and chillier. I am quite happy now and enjoying getting to know this house.

I have to dash off now, but promise to continue later today. This afternoon I have to go and type again.

Thanks for the info on typewriters. I'm leaving it for the moment, but will look here. I'm still thinking about it.

Everyone is well – Sue's parents are here for a week.

Right, 'bye now. Love, Su

P.S. Thanks for super letter from Jim

Nantes

26 September

Dear Mum, Dad, Jim, etc,

In a near-black theatre, as near to the orchestra lights as possible, I will try and get down a quick summary of the last few weeks' activities.

13 Saturday left on 22.22 train from Montreux with Michel

14 Sunday 7.00am arrived in Paris (Boulogne)

French Protestant church in morning

Hameau, etc, at Versailles in afternoon

15 Monday Day at office, typing programme

16 Tuesday Mostly at office, retyping programme

17 Weds Went to agency about flat in morning

Can't have deposit refund until later

P.m. walked around Latin Quarter with Cindy and Irini

Cindy left at 10.00pm

18 Thursday Did a translation of a letter. Showed slides for some ladies.

19 Friday We visited Franciscan brother about books on St F. Made lots of other 'phone calls. Typed translation. Bit of shopping.

20 Saturday Shopping in morning. Put scripts together. Met Sue and Janet in afternoon, in M&S. Saw a film.

21 Sunday Repacked stuff all day

22 Monday Left at 7.30am. Arrived in Caux in time for lunch. After supper, typed customs list until 11.00pm.

23 Tuesday Wrote 9 or 10 letters. Repacked.

24 Weds Left at 6.00am. Driving all day (well, not me) in minibus. Stopped at Claude's home – farm (they make a good wine) to finish picnic, supplemented by a quick soup, pâté, cheese, all typical of a French welcome. We were seven in the minibus, and two are coming on later in the lorry with equipment. They stayed

overnight with Claude. Arrived Nantes 10.00pm. Taken to families for stay.

25 Thursday At theatre at 8.30am. Helped unpack, did some shopping, tried to be useful. (9.00pm slight bump with minibus. No one hurt. Bus not too good now.)

26 Friday Ditto [tried to be useful]. Also had to change one page of 1,000 programmes. We all worked on it. Still hadn't touched sound equipment. Met a group of young people at Cathedral, in evening, to discuss our aims, etc.

27 Saturday Went to Nosley's to rehearse on tapes there. Got your telegram.* Super. Read it to everyone. In afternoon all had a rehearsal. Tapes were awful. Dreaded show. Grabbed a sandwich and show started half an hour late. However, it went very well. My sound cues weren't always exactly right and sometimes I forgot the volume, but in general it was OK. It was a miracle, it really was, that we did a good show, as no one really knew what they were doing.

I am staying with a very nice family, but I only see them in the morning as we're out all day and back late. We eat lunch and supper in a hostel, and the food is really good and a good choice. The atmosphere in the team has been super. We've only been working eight hours a day for union reasons (there have to be technical staff present, it's all very red-taped) so were really behind schedule. Hence the panic. But it's been very calm, and fun. A real miracle, all along. The whole Orphelin family are here for the weekend. We have another show this afternoon and one next Thursday. Tomorrow we are going to see the SEA!!!! Oh joy.

Thank you very, very much for your telegram. It meant an awful lot to me, and cheered the others up.

'Bye now. Love, Su

PS Sunday show not so good. Got tapes in the wrong place at one point. Rather upset, especially as it unsettles Michel. As Christian says, no matter what we do to it, it's a very powerful show. Just will concentrate better next time.

Had a fantastic day at the sea yesterday (Monday). Swam at La Baule. Oh bliss! Picnic on rocks near Le Croisic. Super. Visited Guérande, and a funny marshy area full of weeds and canals. Evening was a meeting on MRA at someone's house. This morning (Tuesday 30) wandered around Nantes (and got lost on the bus.)

**LIKE ST FRANCIS STEP FORWARD CONFIDENT OF GOD'S LOVE
OUR THOUGHTS ARE WITH YOU AND THE TEAM LOVE
MUM AND DAD*

22 Av. Robert Schuman, 92100 B. B.

Dear Mum and Dad,

First, could you send this letter on to Jim, please? When I have his address I will always send him a carbon copy directly.

Now, I have to catch up on the end of the Nantes trip. I think I left off the day after we went to the sea.

TUESDAY Wandered around Nantes all day with Annie, and met up with a friend of hers. Evening – went to Annie's hosts to see lots of super slides of Assisi, etc.

WEDS In the morning went to museums in castle.
Afternoon: Performed extracts from the show for a Poor Clare community. They are not allowed to leave their convent, so we went there - Peter played the piano, Frank played the cello and Michel explained the show as he went. The nuns were delighted with it and we had a good exchange afterwards. We were thrilled by the visit.

THURSDAY At theatre at 8.00am. Had problems all day (Gunnar had gone back to Caux, so Christian was responsible for everything). It was headaches all day, and after the show we should have cleared the theatre (in $\frac{3}{4}$ hour, i.e. before midnight). 20 minutes before the

show, there were still problems with wiring, but we got done in time to meet together.

There were still queues of people waiting to buy tickets. So we waited and started half an hour late. The theatre was nearly full! A real gift. The boys had to leave later than planned Friday morning and do the packing then.

FRIDAY We were off about 9.00am. We found a lovely field to picnic in, and stopped at Chartres to look at the cathedral. We got to Boulogne in time for tea. I started to unpack.

SATURDAY I unpacked more, and took a Canadian girl, Francine, and Irene, the Cypriot girl, sightseeing. My cold was very heavy, causing me difficulty in hearing.

SUNDAY I lazed in bed all morning, then went with Francine to have lunch with Evelyne Seydoux, a teacher who lives at Meudon. She took us for a long walk in the forest of Meudon. It was a sunny day, so super. I went to bed after supper as my cold was just as bad.

MONDAY Today. The cold is fractionally better, and still in my head, mercifully. Francine brought me breakfast this morning, quel luxe. I pottered around in my room. After lunch I went shopping and bought a file to stick postcards in. I'm in bed now, but by the time you get this letter I will be better, so you won't be able to worry. Now I will leave you and get on with my postcards.

Bye for now. Lots of love, Su

Mountain House,
Sunday 26 October

Dear Mum, Dad, Jim and anyone else who reads this letter,

You have the honour of receiving the first letter typed by me on this machine. Mistakes and all. My corrector is packed and I don't want to start turning my bag upside down before we go to Pully.

I had a very good flight yesterday, delayed by a fault from French air traffic control's radio. I ate all my grapes and the apple, and we were served plastic nutrients in flight. Rubbercoldmeat salad, ediblesandapplepie and dustcream, parts of which I ate, plus crackerscheeseandbutter and a rubberroll, neither of which I ate. And a cup of nottoobad coffee. Very generubberous.

I got here in time for supper; with delicious freshly baked brown bread, cheese and apple muesli. Annie and Gunnar came out to greet me and I had a very warm welcome from everybody, which was really special. This morning we were each handed an envelope containing some postcards of Pully, a card with our address, telephone number and other useful telephone numbers in case of emergency, 100 Swiss francs, a booklet of what's on in Lausanne, and a good map of Pully and Lausanne. Very well organised. I had imagined that Pully was north of Lausanne, therefore away from the lake, but it's just to the east, very close, and near the lake. There are some lovely views over the lake to the mountains on the other side. As you know, all the north side of the lake up to Montreux is flat (or gently undulating) but the mountains fall steeply to the lake on the west and southwest sides. Now that they have snow on them and it is blue sky and sunny this morning, so I wish I was in Mountain House to take pictures. Just as well I'm not...

I am going down to English Church in Montreux later with many others in a minibus. Then I will see more of the mountains.

It is super to have this typewriter to write letters. It will be faster than writing by hand when I'm up to speed on mechanical keys again. Another advantage is that I can glance up the page as I go along to see what I have already said.

We will move to Pully some time Monday afternoon. Some stuff has already been taken to the theatre, even installed. So it shouldn't be such an awful rush this time.

(I am stopping now to go to church....)

Church was very good. It was at Vevey, the vicar was quite young and preached a very clear and down-to-earth sermon about God judging people in a different way to the way we judge one another. For lunch we had venison!

We did not have ice cream to my great disappointment, but had a nice dessert which was just as fattening.

Aggravatingly we have not had any rehearsal today. After lunch Annie and I went for a short walk, then cleaned all the slides, then had tea. It's been a relaxing day, but I'm frustrated as I would have preferred to be able to stay with you longer.

Thank you again very much for a good holiday and I am very grateful for your paying my flight, thank you very much indeed. Thanks also to Jim for welcoming us so warmly. It was so lovely to see Jim and be able to picture him in Cambridge. Again, I'm so sorry I forgot to phone last night. I was very tired, and very muddleheaded, and went to bed at 9.00pm. At 9.45pm I remembered but there was no one around to show me how to get a line. Bye now. Lots and lots of love, Su

PS The Collect today started "Stir up thy heart..." Christmas pudding making day.

Pully, 12 November

Dear All,

We have just arrived back from Paris, it is 5.30pm. I have been using the French typewriters all this week, leaving my beloved new one here, and as you will notice, have become too used to the French keyboard. I was looking forward to getting back to my own little friend. Hundreds of times in Paris I wish I had taken him/her back with me, for lots of little things but also to write letters. I find it much easier to write letters on a typewriter.

News first.

1. First two shows in Lausanne (Pully) went OK though the theatre was just half full each time, and the sound mixer suddenly went wrong just before the first show, so we had to use the theatre's equipment. Gunnar was at hand to do the volumes for me and direct Christian on the lights at the same time so it was all right. I just had to stop and start the tapes at the right time, which was much, much easier, and gave me more of a chance to concentrate on the right

timing. Hopefully all will be sorted out for Friday's show.

2. Annie and I were invited to people's homes several times for meals and were generously fed and very warmly welcomed always. We had a chance one day to wander around Lausanne, so walked through the old cobbled streets and through the cathedral. Lausanne is a big sprawling town, pretty in parts.

3. Annie and I travelled back to Paris with the Orphelins, and arrived on Saturday evening in time for dinner. I discovered, as soon as I arrived, that a meeting was planned that very evening for young people concerned with the invitation for next summer in Caux. There were about 10 of us who sat down together to start discussions. Despite the fact that I was unprepared and had been sitting in a car all day and was exhausted after Friday's show, I decided to join them, as I have a lot of a conviction for this project. It aims to spread the build up to next summer's youth hosted session over the year, to increase communications within and between countries, to follow individual inspirations and to work closer with each other. Nothing very concrete emerged in terms of what we are to do together, but everyone had ideas of areas in which they wanted to do a bit of exploration. My thought was, I have trouble knowing how to help people's interest in going further, after the show. I might think of a way of keeping up contacts (and finding the courage to go out and tackle total strangers in the foyer) if I use the excuse of this project. The theme for the summer session will be 'Chacun Compte', roughly translated as 'Everyone Matters' (nobody agrees on the best English title) a theme decided at Caux at the end of the summer. The invitation itself is soon to be printed, and there will be meetings at Caux during the New Year conference. A newsletter has already been prepared in Paris to let friends in France and abroad know how the invitation is going and what the French have been doing. So I spent yesterday afternoon typing it on stencil in French, and polishing the English translation before typing it.

Now news of the week spent in Paris.

Arrived on 1st, meeting over at 10.00pm. Unpacked and went to bed.

Sunday 2. All day picnic in woods, with everyone from the house. It was a terribly cold day, and Irene thought it is totally crazy to picnic in such weather. We found lots of chestnuts (the official goal of the mission) and played volleyball to keep warm. It took me all evening to thaw out I think.

Monday 3. First thing after breakfast, a ladies meeting to share work. Then a USEPN team meeting to discuss production of invitation to Paris show, it's

dates, who to invite, etc. Set tables for lunch. Irene and Florence were going to the waxworks museum in the afternoon, so I joined them. Great fun. Back in time to finish unpacking, eat and dash off to a very unusual requiem with Michel and François, in a church in Paris, for jazz musicians who have died in the past year. There was a famous French jazz pianist who was impressive, and a clarinettist – both really super. Now I'm on the subject of jazz, I noticed a concert I'd like to go to in Paris, but after a bit of a struggle decided there were more important things to do with money at present (90F was the starting price...)

Tuesday 4. Went to office. Found some good old files and cleaned them, and wrote 'Monde et Théâtre' on them. Found a box to make a file of addresses and cleaned out a whole desk for our use. Filled desk with paper, envelopes, etc. and arranged all bits and pieces to be kept, too. By the end of the week all the drawers had something in them - very satisfying. In the afternoon we went to see the theatre in Paris. It's horrible from outside but very cosy and attractive inside. It has a very 'music hall' flavour, though it's not very big. About 250 seats. Evening in (thank goodness).

Wednesday 5. Went to office, laid table, etc. The invitation is taking shape and we have found a cheap way to get it nicely printed then photocopied so it looks quite decent. Went to Sue's for a fondue in the evening. She likes her new job very much, and is busy with friends she has made from the old place, so at last has created a bit of social life of her own.

Thursday 6. Went to the office and had lunch there. There's plenty to do, writing envelopes, making lists, supervising operations. I've not done several things well this week, and I see the cause as my lack of responsibility. I am used to being told what to do, and how to do it. Now, I have to start thinking about what to do and how to employ people keen to help. I also must learn to be more careful about how things are done, as I am the one who has the final say on the work. Someone needs to keep an eye on the way things are going and the way things are done. It's all quite different from working before. I did ensure a good supply of tea and coffee, of course!

Friday 7. Laid tables for lunch. Office. Tried to get in touch with my previous housing agency to get my deposit back. Free evening. Spent it painting a card, which wasn't very good but was colourful. Afterwards, remembered I had a better brush, so am looking forward to trying again.

Saturday 8. My turn to do breakfast. Means getting up to do it at 7.30am to be ready for 8.00am. Didn't think I'd need half an hour but I did. Have to heat

up milk and water, put out yoghurts, cheese and butter. Then you have to pour the water and milk, which leaves little time to eat, so you have to gobble quickly in the lulls when everyone is drinking it. We don't have coffee for breakfast, as they found it too expensive I think, so we have 'Chicorée'. We do have very good coffee after lunch. Anyway, in the afternoon I dashed out to buy more wool for tapestry as I'd run out of certain colours, then came back to make the yoghurt and cook the evening meal. Rather a tight squeeze as I could never find the ingredients or utensils, and had to phone Véronique every so often. The menu was soup (packet mixed with leftovers), oat rissoles, tomato sauce and salad, and Petits Suisses, so the most complicated thing was frying the rissoles (two pans going at once.) I have been constantly afraid of cooking a meal on my own ever since I thought of living in this house, but seemed to have no problems because I learnt a bit at school, we catered for ourselves when we were hungry students, and I've cooked for myself in France. So I shan't worry again. Then it will probably go wrong. Oh, and there were only nine to cook for, so it wasn't too bad. I have done the cooking several times since with someone else, so will slowly get into it. I watched the telly in the evening.

Sunday 9. Intended to get up in time to go to church, but woke at 9.30am, when I should have left, so that was that. Was invited to lunch chez Annie's mother, who doesn't live very far away. Had a super meal. In the afternoon one of Annie's brothers called with his family, and we had a marvellous cake for tea covered with thick chocolate icing which I should like to try making, as it wasn't too sweet.

Monday 10. Went to the agency office and got my deposit cheque. Then thought I wouldn't be able to pay it in at the bank because I have a 'compte étranger,' but laws have recently changed, so you can up to a certain sum. Being close, went to visit ICOM [place of previous employment] but all were in at a conference in Mexico, except for Suzanne, who was very pleased to see me and sat down for a good chat. She asked a lot of questions, and I said I would send invites for the Paris show. I didn't want to go back, but was glad I had, as she was so friendly and interested.

Same letter: 68, Boulevard Flandrin, Paris-16e

Monday 17 November

As you can see, this letter is taking me weeks to write. So to continue:

Tuesday 11. A day off in France. We worked however. I came to the office in the afternoon, and spent all my time doing a translation and typing stencils. Oh well, it all has to be done somehow or other.

Wednesday 12. We left for Pully at 8.00am (Michel, Peter, Claude, Annie and I) and arrived in Pully in time for me to start this letter, eat and then go to the Lausanne team meeting.

Thursday 13. There had been lots of snow on the way through France, which slowed us down a little. Annie and I were invited to a family for lunch, and where they lived was all snowy. Afterwards, we had to walk down some very slippery slopes in a wood, and the greatest danger to falling over was that we were laughing so much. We ate with a family in the evening as well, spending some of the day in the theatre re-decorating the tree [part of the set].

Friday 14. Annie and I spent the first part of the morning handing out blurb about the show to people in the market at Pully. It is a very hard thing to do, as you have to say the right thing to make people take the leaflet. Their ears pricked up most when we said the show came from Paris. We only stayed about an hour because it was so cold, then went and had a cup of tea before going into Lausanne to do a bit of shopping and have lunch with a lady. I started to feel rather unwell as we went around the shops, but felt better after we'd had something to eat. In the afternoon, I was getting worse, feeling very cold and weak. I knew I had a temperature coming on, and managed to sleep for half an hour before the show. Gunnar was doing the volumes again, so I didn't have so much to do, and survived. Afterwards, we were taken home, and I just collapsed on my bed at 11pm (it had been an early performance) fully dressed, feeling too ill to do more (I did take my shoes off.) I woke up at 1.00am and realised I'd better try and at least get out of my working clothes and wash my face. I managed that, and after another little rest, finally got pyjamas on, with two jumpers on top. I felt really terrible. In the morning I woke up absolutely boiling with a temp. of 37.8 and was told to stay in bed and not try to get up for lunch (we were invited out again).

The night before I had phoned Morag [college friend], and she was meeting me at the theatre about 3.00pm, so I had to get up for that, but by then my temperature was gone. It was lovely to see her. She couldn't stay to see the show, as she has to work evenings this week (her organisation have a conference on at the moment).

The theatre was full for the first show, but technically it was not very good. Saturday night's show was a very good one. Everything went well, and the theatre was nearly full again. We were packing and taking down until 1.00pm, so by the time I got home and to bed I was terribly tired. In the car Sunday I couldn't read, or anything, I just wanted to doze. This morning I stayed in bed until it was time to leave for the office. Then after a meeting to plan the week's work, I dashed off to meet a group of English ladies with Jane Joughin, who were then three quarters of an hour late. We all got a bus from the Madeleine, which brought us almost all the way to the house. They had had rather a rough crossing but were thrilled to be in France, and were delighted to do the final part of the journey to Boulogne in a bus, allowing them to really feel they were in Paris. We arrived in plenty of time for lunch, and they are now resting. The main party arrives this evening.

I am on telephone duty this afternoon at the office, as booking has started for the Paris shows. I decided to do my stint at lunchtimes, as that way I can do a bit of dieting, and the others can go back to Boulogne for lunch. Everybody happy, especially me, to get a bit of peace and quiet! Apparently the phone rang a lot this morning, but it's only rung once this afternoon. I will be able to get the file of names and addresses typed now, I hope, but I thought the most important thing was to get this letter finished.

I'm afraid my typing and my English are awful today, but I'm still feeling exhausted and can't be bothered to try harder. I will check it all makes sense before I send it.

So, that's news up to date, thank goodness! I am determined to keep this week quiet, because the last two weeks I slept very badly, as I think I was constantly wound up. So I never got proper quiet times, and then got even more wound up. I must make a new decision about priorities, and health, and see if I can get both organised and relaxed.

Thanks for your description of growing apple trees. Has it worked? I was very jealous when I saw the Nankersey Choir programme. I miss things from home like that. It's interesting what Dad said about communion - it means different things to me from time to time. I'm sorry Dad hasn't been winning his sailing races!

Now, I will try and write a circular letter, and will post it separately.

Bye for now. Lots of love, Su

PS

We may be invited to do a few shows at the New Year Conference at Caux, which doesn't start until at least the 26th December, so I should still make it home for Christmas. I'm not banking on anything. In case I have to face priorities about being home at Christmas, would you let me know what you think, especially in regard to Gran and Grandad who are my chief concern? If it means a lot to them, I'll be sure to be there. Let me know soon, so I can let the others know. Thanks. (There is a certain attitude in MRA that you don't automatically go to your family at Christmas, especially as some go to Caux. I suppose that's the French way, but I find it extremely irritating...)

Anyway, next May and/or June are hopefully going to be kept free for everyone to have a real break. It's my dream to be able to be home for more than two weeks at once. Is that greedy?

January looks like being booked up for USEPN already.

CIRCULAR LETTER
18 November 1980

Dear Friends,

I have just got back to Paris from Lausanne where we have just finished a series of four performances of 'Un soleil en pleine nuit'. Then we had a two week gap before the next two shows, this last weekend. The theatre was not very well filled for the first two performances, but was nearly full for the second two. We had a few technical problems again but they were all resolved by the last show, which made the technicians happy, as they had worked very hard trying to get it all right.

For many meals, Annie Rabourdin and I were invited to people's homes. We will never forget the generosity and hospitality of the Swiss. Every meal was a

special occasion, and it was good to be able to meet the Swiss in their own homes to get to know them better. I really feel I have learned more about Switzerland from this time at Lausanne.

The theatre we had was very, very new and very smart. It was very wide, with about 450 seats and a big stage. It also had all the latest equipment (which did not necessarily make life any easier.) It was still a joy to work in such a lovely theatre, and to see the mountains and the lake not far away.

In the free time between the two sets of shows, most of us came back to Paris to start preparations for the three performances we are going to give here in Paris on the 11, 12 and 14 December. The idea behind this is to invite people who may be interested in the show and either invite it elsewhere, or be willing to do some propaganda for it, or publicise it. So all three occasions will be by invitation, and also be open to everyone's friends in the Paris area. This looks like filling the theatre and gives us a chance to invite our own friends and relatives. In the last two weeks, we've got started on taking bookings, as people are asked to reserve seats in advance. We're all taking turns to answer the phone from now on.

Apart from that project, the secretarial work is beginning to get underway, as we need to keep files of all the people who are interested in the show. A newsletter needs to be sent occasionally, and in general everything is starting to move faster. There have already been invitations to go back to Switzerland, and some dates are being set for January.

Our next problem is to find a minibus, as we still have no means of transport, but we do have a van to carry the equipment. Also, in two weeks' time we are going down to Lyon to give two performances (also by invitation). I am very much looking forward to it as I have never been to that area of France, and it means our time is well occupied.

It is nice to get back to the house at Boulogne between times. I very much enjoy living there, and help in the kitchen if I have time. The number of people staying in the house varies all the time. At the moment we are 10, but there are two on holiday, four in Lebanon visiting the MRA team.... There are quite often visitors, coming for meals or to stay a few nights. At the moment we have one of a group of 16 English ladies who have come to France for a week

to find out about the country and to discuss our common problems and hopes with French friends.

I am still hoping I shall be able to get home for a few days at Christmas, but not sure of anything as it is difficult to see very far ahead.

I hope I find everyone well, with my best wishes,

Susan Richards

Dear Mum and Dad,

As today, Sunday, maybe the last time I see Jane J. before she goes, I've just slipped away from the tea ceremony to scribble a note.

It's been a good, very interesting meeting this afternoon. I prepared a short speech, and as usual all my French seemed to desert me. Otherwise, all is well here. Not so cold; all very jolly.

Bye now. Love, Su

POSTCARD: Lyon

Dear Mum and Dad,

We arrived safely and in time for lunch. In the afternoon we went to the theatre, and spent the afternoon and evening setting things up. All my sound effects have been redone on cassettes, with two newly bought cassette players, so that makes life easier for me than the old reel-to-reel machine, and should avoid clunks and clicks every time the tape starts and stops. We'll see tonight. Lyon is a very nice town, with two rivers. So, I hope all is well with you. Su

Boulogne,

Tuesday 2nd December

Dear Mum and Dad,

Just a quick note, this, as it's now late - I forgot to say one thing on the phone earlier. It is very kind of you to offer, but I wonder if you can really afford to pay my fare to Caux, particularly as Christmas is an expensive time, and you paid my last fare. So I want to bring something back with me towards the cost of the journey. I've plenty of Swiss francs, so getting from Geneva to Caux is no problem. I can help by about 500FF. Perhaps you only ought to offer to pay half, as normally I would go back to Paris and not to Caux.

News to date: Lyon was a success, in spite of technical hitches (again.) All of a sudden hundreds of people are phoning to get seats in Paris, so it's now difficult as there are very few left.

Yesterday was Sue's birthday, so Annie and I went to see her. She didn't do anything special. I wish I'd taken a cake, I've got tons of cake candles. I will bring a circular letter back with me. I've written you all postcards from Lyon, but haven't even got them in an envelope yet.

Bye now. Lots of love, Su

Boulogne

[Note: My grandmother died suddenly on 9th December. I decided to stay in Paris for the USEPN performances we had scheduled. This decision was influenced by the fact that my grandmother had stipulated that her funeral should be according to a local tradition of her time, where only men attended. My brother Jim came over to Paris for a few days to keep me company.]

Friday 12th

Dear Mum and Dad,

I have half an hour to write to you, before seeing Jim off on the coach. So I doubt I'll have time to do the circular letter I'd hoped.

Peter came with me to pick up Jim, in a car, which was super. Jim can tell you what he did, but I think he was very happy to be here, and was much appreciated in the theatre when he could be of use. I was so, so glad to have

Jim here just now, as often when something happens at home I feel very isolated and frustrated. And that passage from the Bible that Dad quoted is very helpful. It's reassuring to be where God wants me and if that's not where I want to be, then I must trust Him. Oh, a lady (MRA 'full-time') lost her father a week or so ago, and she brought me a rose yesterday morning. She said it's at times like this that we can appreciate the support of God. (A bad translation – 'porté' was her word.)

Anyway, having Jim here I felt nearer the family, especially as I had someone else's sorrow to care about, and not just my own. Wednesday, Annie came with me to the office and ate there, and it was good to have peace and she talked a lot again of the loss of her father (she was 17 when he died of a heart attack). I didn't do much, I think I must have been in a rather shocked state, as I didn't react much to the loss of Gran. Last night after the show it finally hit me. I shall miss her so much, as she was a person I really looked up to and was just beginning to want to get to know her more. In a small family like ours, someone gone leaves a bigger gap. I shall always treasure those last few times I was at Camelford.

I was wondering whether to change my ticket for an earlier date, and thought in my time of silence, that I would only if I could be of real use, leaving you both free to do whatever needs doing.

This morning after sending Jim off I shall go and change my ticket, but don't worry about picking me up. I have to go and do Jim's picnic now, I wish I could have more time, but I've given you all the essentials anyway.

Bye now, and see you soon. With lots of love, Su

Mountain House
Caux

Sunday 28th December 1980 (4.30pm)

Dear Mum and Dad,

Claude picked me up Geneva last night. I had a good flight. When I got here I meant to go straight to bed, but chatted with a roommate for a while, showered and unpacked, and felt better. I went off to sleep at 10.00pm. I have been in bed all day today, feeling no better but swallowing Benylin [a cough mixture] and Vit C in turn. I'm in the nice room up in the tower I was first in last summer, looking out on the same view. When I got up this morning I dashed out to see the snow (everything, nearly, in white) and Annie came in just then and told me off. My roommates are very nice and both about my age – one is Dutch, the other Canadian of Dutch origin. They both speak English - which is nice because French is tiring all the time.

I hope I can get up for the rehearsal this evening, but as I've only just found strength to write or read, I don't know. The Benylin makes me very dozy. Anyway, there should be a full dress (i.e. rehearsal) tomorrow too. And I WILL be better for the show!!!

Bye now. Lots of love, Su

22 Avenue Robert Schuman, 92100 Boulogne Billancourt
Thursday 8 January

Dear Mum, Dad and Jim,

I have to get you up to date on news from the second half of Caux. By the time I was able to go outdoors, the weather had changed and the last two days at Caux it never stopped snowing. Once I got up, I joined the housekeeping team (back on the same floor as in summer). I really enjoy doing that. I went to some of the morning meetings, but not often. We had two good meetings with 'Monde et Theatre' [newly formed production company for the show] and the French team. Lots of questions were asked, problems aired, etc. The show went well both times.

I liked my two roommates - a very jolly Dutch girl and a nice Canadian. I had quiet meals with French girls mostly. The majority nationalities at this conference were German and French, with only a handful of English people.

Annie and I stayed on at Caux until Tuesday so that Monday we could help

empty rooms. We worked on it all day with several others, yet there are still lots of odds and ends to clear up. We left for Paris Tuesday after lunch, and yesterday I unpacked; did a lot of washing; went to the swimming pool with Annie; bought two cotton blouses in a sale on the way back; this morning there has been the weekly meeting; and here I am.

There is work to be done in the office, not only for USEPN but also help is needed for other things. We leave here on the 17th, will spend the night at Caux, then go to Yverdon on the 18th. The show there is on the 20th, so on the 21st we pack up and go straight to Melun, where we give the show on the 23rd. So we should be back in Paris on the 24th. Letters can be sent to Paris, as it won't be long. The 31st and 1st there will be a national weekend meeting, being held in a chateau near a village called Bourgueil, not far from Tours. Claude comes from that village, also a girl I know who is now at one of the MRA houses in London. Then on the 6, 7 and 8 February we'll be at Thionville in the east (where I went to a conference the autumn before last). Then there are lots of ideas but nothing fixed for sure.

So that's all my news up to now. I hope Aunty Judy is mending fast. Please keep Grandad up to date, and give him my love. I'm very interested to know how Jim got on at the beginning of term, and hear about his time at Tirley.

Bye now. Lots of love to everyone, Su

PS Dad's letter has just arrived, and I'm glad his traditional Christmas sail took place.

PPS Looks like June will be kept free to come home. Depends on invites for show.

22 Avenue Robert Schuman, Thursday 15th

Dear Mum, Dad, Aunty Judy, Jim, Grandad,

I was very glad to get letters from Mum and Dad at the same time on Tuesday. And it's great to hear that Aunty Judy is moving without crutches at times, and has been able to get out.

When I came back to Paris after Caux I was planning a week of gentle typing, sewing, reading, etc. Instead I have done a lot of typing, at the office doing things for M&T [Monde et Théâtre, production company formed to handle USEPN admin] or for MRA. I cooked supper last night – liquidised soup, onion tart, salad, fruit. Not very complicated and only for 7 but it took me three hours.

On Sunday I went to a museum with Elisabeth (a French girl newly come to live in the house) in the Marais, a really old part of Paris, and we had a very good walk, though it was very cold. Saturday we all went for a walk in the Bois de Boulogne. Tuesday night I was invited to supper at the Orphelin's, as the author of the show Hugh Williams and his 13 year old son Oliver have been staying there for a few days. We went to see a film – a play by Molière, set in Naples. The sets and costumes and authentic details were marvellous.

Today is Friday and it's Annie's birthday. For dinner we had fondue, fruit salad and chocolate cake. Today we also had chocolate cake as I had lunch with Annie at her mother's. Anyway, last night Florence and I had fun setting the table as we set the places backwards or upside down and tied the chairs together under the table.

The other day there was mackerel for lunch, so I made no fuss and ate one, but it was not easy – I had trouble finishing it.

Then today Annie's Mum gave us Coquilles St Jacques - funnily enough on the way Annie and I passed a fish stall and I nearly said how I thought eating shellfish must be horrible, but decided not to open my mouth. Just as well, as the Coquilles were full of mussels, and other horrors I didn't recognise. Fortunately most of it could be buried in the white sauce and anything squidgy I simply imagined to be a mushroom. That got me through most of it, except for something round and bright orange, and something else white and mushy, when I'd run out of sauce, but I felt I'd really done very well up until then, so gave up. Next time I think I could swallow the lot, but enjoy, never. Then we had white sausages made of all sorts of horrid things. From then on, everything was really lovely – endives cooked with cheese and bacon, cheese, chocolate cake, roast chestnuts – all washed down with cider, and we had started with popcorn and fruit juice. Annie's mother is another of those who like to send people away fit to explode.

I still haven't packed or cleaned my room, and I have a long translation to type, and it's nearly suppertime. Most of the day has been spent translating or at Annie's, so I'm rushed, and my guidance this morning was to relax and let things take care of themselves. We leave at 7.00am tomorrow morning. So I'm hurrying this more than I would like to. The rest of the week I have typed here or at the office, have been very busy with my work and helping other people. So that's been very satisfying. Annie's retreat with the cloistered Poor Clares in Nantes was fascinating. She was allowed to live with them and followed their lives in every detail. It sounds terrifying to me, but she came back very relaxed and sort of very spiritually alive and strong. I can't describe it now, but ask me about it sometime – the lives of those nuns are amazing.

Now I will have to leave you. Tomorrow we go to Caux; Sunday we go to Yverdon. Tuesday is the show there; Wednesday we come back to Melun; Friday is the show there again and my birthday (the day last year I was full of a silly idea of giving up a few years to a show; and the day this year I am with that show!)

Bye now. I love you and appreciate you all very much, pray for you always and you are all very often in my thoughts and my conversation if anyone's listening.

Su

PS I forgot to say we had snow, Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. It's very rare that it settles in Paris as it's warmer here, but we had several inches.

POSTCARD: Tuesday 20th

Dear Mum, Dad, Aunty Judy,
Here we are at Yverdon, for the show tonight. We travelled Saturday to Caux, arriving at 9.30pm in spite of two breakdowns, lots of snow (including one blizzard) and having to put on chains to get up to Caux. On Sunday, on the way here, the car broke down, so we had to wait for someone to come from Yverdon to rescue us. I am staying with a very sweet old lady who never stops talking, and looks after me really well. The other night I couldn't sleep, and

when she heard me moving about insisted I had a cup of milk. Last night for supper we all had a fondue. Tonight we will dismantle and pack after the show. Then tomorrow Annie, Gunnar and I will go by train to Paris and the boys will bring the car and lorry. Then we go to Melun for the show there on Friday. Then back to Paris until the 31-1st National Weekend. We're keeping busy. Bye now, lots of love, Su

Wednesday

Annie and I got back to Paris this afternoon. I had a long bath, went to bed to read, and now the others have arrived. The show went okay last night in Yverdon. We finished taking down by 1.00pm. Annie and I left on a 7.00am train today. The people I spoke to in Yverdon last night after the show were very full of praise.

Bye now. Love, Su

Boulogne Billancourt, 24 January 1981

Dear Mum and Dad,

You were really generous with presents for my birthday - thank you. I was impressed by the card Dad made, and did you write the poem yourself Mum? Things like that are really touching and make it easier to be away from home at times like my birthday.

Yesterday we had croissants for breakfast, and at teatime at the theatre had a special cake made by Catherine Koechlin. They all signed a card, sang happy birthday, gave me chocolate and it was all very jolly.

I do not like being 22. It sounds very old and serious, neither of which I feel, but Annie assures me I have become both since yesterday. Yet when I think of the massive changes that have taken place in the 22nd second year of my life, I'm grateful and joyous to be so lucky, so blessed.

Lots of love to you both and know that you are always in my thoughts and prayers.

Su

22 avenue Robert Schuman, Monday 26 January 1981, 17.50h, Cold

Dear Mum, Dad, Jim, Aunty Judy, Grandad,

Now to try and revise all the goings on of the last week in 10 minutes, and in chronological order.

17th – finally got to Caux

18th - retyped the customs lists and in evening moved to Yverdon

19th - in the theatre all day setting up – it went very fast which is encouraging

20th – in the theatre all day, but not much to do while experts worked so had a snooze, etc. Show at 8.15pm. Was good. Made one mistake.

21st – Annie and I travel by train to Paris, others come on slower.

22nd - off very early to Melun. A good set up again. I can put the sound corner together myself now. Home just in time for supper.

23rd – Annie came and sang happy birthday at 6.00am. Croissants for breakfast. Lounged around the theatre all day. Meeting at friends' house in afternoon. Birthday cake in theatre at 5.00pm. Show at 8.30pm. Went well. Made another mistake (In both cases at a time of pressure missed a cue – luckily less important ones.) Take-down afterwards, home by 2.30am. All too tired to be jolly.

24th - Slept then read till lunch. Read in afternoon and pottered. Celebration meal in the evening. Pancakes. Streamers. Songs. Games.

25th – Church with Peter, Christian, and Dean. Phoned Sue who is coming here with Janet Tuesday. Walked with Annie in Bois.

26th – Breakfast, ladies meeting, typed long letter for Michel. Went to Boat Show with Christian and Dean. Afterwards I had a nice feeling as if I'd been to the sea. Very refreshing.

Well, that's all the news really. Sue and Janet are coming to dinner Tuesday. I will sign off now to get this in the post. I'm so glad you phoned, I like to speak to you from time to time because it makes me feel nearer to you.

Bye now. Lots of love, Su

22 Av Robert Schuman, Friday 30th

Dear Mum, Dad, Jim and all,

Last Tuesday I went off to the FNAC (a sort of cooperative store that sells electrical stuff, records, books etc cheaper than elsewhere) to spend my birthday present from everyone in the house on a record and I knew the FNAC has a very large selection. There was so much choice – the new Aretha Franklin, the new Donna Summer and a selection of Roberta Flack. Well, I was in agony as I only had enough money for one. I think I will use my birthday money from you to get the other. The other thing I could do with is a proper winter coat. That is the exciting news of this week, and overshadows anything else that's happened.

I will force myself to talk of something else. Sue was here on Tuesday night. She is much happier in her new job. She has recently bought a new record player, amplifier, speakers, cassette deck and commented that she hadn't told her parents who think she's saving.... I sometimes realise that if I was still working, I could buy this, buy that, but I see that I couldn't buy freedom and I don't mind at all, for what I've learned in the last six months has given me so much more satisfaction. Anyway, Sue looks very well, has maintained her weight loss and has a few new friends.

This afternoon we washed the lorry! It looks clean now, but just as old and patched. Last night I cooked. It didn't come out very well - the soup was so thick it stood up on its own, the bolognaise sauce cooked too long and was an insipid sludge, and the pasta got overcooked because we started late. Partly my fault, partly fate. As cooking is an agony for me here, maybe failure was a good thing. It'll teach me to forget my pride but just do my best.

It's been a very quiet week. The sun has been shining the last two days. Tomorrow we're off early to the National Weekend at Bourgeuil. We'll be back Sunday night and go to Thionville on Tuesday until about the 9th. The address of the theatre I can't tell you, I will when I know. In case you know

anyone in the area. Shows are 6, 7, 8. Write to me here though, it's not a long enough time there.

Annie made a comment the other day that I would be more useful if I could use my French shorthand. I'd be willing to try, but all my books are at home and I'd have to revise the shorthand.

Yesterday afternoon Florence, Elizabeth and I had a walk in the Bois. I haven't been to the swimming pool recently, which is stupid as I feel I need it.

A letter arrived from Dad today. I must answer your letters but don't have them to hand. Will leave you now anyway.

Bye. Love, Su

POSTCARD

Dear Mum and Dad,

A picture of the scene of our latest success – Thionville in the eastern corner of France. It is an interesting area because it has been continually swapped between France and Germany, and suffered very much during the two last wars. Many young men were forced to fight with the Germans when they took over; yet they are for reconciliation. Those who fled, remain bitter against the Germans. They're all bilingual and many have family connections in Germany. It's also the steel-producing area and unemployment is very high. The people were super: generous and very jolly. More in accompanying letter –

22 avenue Robert Schuman, 92100 Boulogne Billancourt
Monday 9th February

Dear Mum, Dad, Grandad, Jim, Aunty Judy, etc.

Here I am back in Paris, and will start with a rundown of the last week's activities in chronological order.

Monday 2 – went to Sue’s in the evening. She took me out to a crêperie for supper.

Tuesday 3 – Left after breakfast, for once. Had a picnic lunch in a ‘buy a drink and you’re allowed to bring in your picnic’* café. Took some main roads instead of the motorway and so we could stop off at Verdun to visit a museum of WW1, all the trenches, etc. There were lots of photos, a life size reconstruction of a few trenches and uniforms, guns, a canteen, all very well labelled. Interesting and moving. We had supper at Thionville in the Danguy’s flat. They work for MRA there and have a 14-year-old daughter and have adopted a Laotian girl of 16. They are a relaxed family full of fun - just as well with us lot invading them. Then we went off to our families. Annie and I were with an older couple out of the town. Annie has stayed with them several times before. They have several married children and live in only part of their house, so we had a self-contained flat. We made our own breakfast which was good, as we disturbed them less and could please ourselves but as we went in and out every day, we saw something of them. They were bilingual, lived very simply, but so generous and committed Christians. The lady was a constant talker, and if her husband wanted to say anything he would raise his voice a bit and she would stop, then start up again as soon as he’d finished. She had a lovely round face and jolly smile; both of them were quite small and round and happy. Annie and I had a room with two beds, which were rather big, pushed together, with separate sheets and covers but one blanket across the lot, which meant that if one pulled they’d bring across everything. Annie claims that I moved around so much at night that I was always swiping the blanket. We did have fun. They were deep, soft beds that you sank into and were lost to sight.** After we’d switched the light out we swapped notes on the day.

Wednesday 4 – We arrived at the theatre at 8.15am. As usual Annie and my first task was to dress the tree, which takes all morning. We get it up and have a coffee break, then try again and again to get it to look ethereal, and not like something found washed up after high tide, and finally when we have created the usual messy mass, it’s time for lunch. We ate lunch in a canteen for young workers. Plentiful, varied, but wishy-washy. Please excuse my typing, my fingers are horribly stiff. After lunch I got my sound equipment set up. Some seats had to be taken out at the back to make room for that and the follow-spot and slides. One big empty box as a base, and my box on that. I have 3

amps in the bottom of my box and the mixer on top with part of the box cut away so I can plug it all in without taking anything out of the box. Clever. Also it looks neat, important when you're plonk in the middle of the audience. A little bridge sits on the mixer to support the two cassette machines. All the sound cables are wound together in what is called the sound snake. At one end is a board to plug in lines from the speakers, the mikes, etc. That is on stage. The other end is a mass of plugs all numbered so you know what is attached to which. I put the board on the stage, then run it up the side of the stairs and across a bar on the ceiling so it just drops down nicely to my sound box. I can barely lift the whole snake at once, as it is incredibly heavy. When I take it down I really struggle, but I can ask Annie to help me put it up. Then I plug in the ends and find a plug board to put the power lines in. There is one power line in the snake, one from the amps, one from the mixer, two from the cassette machines, one from the bell, one from the work light. Someone finds me a socket and an extension and I'm in business. I put up the cassette machines, find a work light that works, get out the headphones and cassettes, bombard everyone with my choice of music for a few minutes to see if it works, then unplug everything but one cassette machine (they have no speakers of their own, they have to be amped to work). I put in something I like, attach the headphones, and I'm in my own little world. If I want, I can just take the cassette machine and phones off to a dressing room and disturb no one, because only I can hear. What bliss to hear Aretha properly, as my own cassette player is past it. Before we leave, I lock up the cassettes, the players, the headphones, the mikes in a box – all the easily pinched things. That evening Annie and I ate with our hosts – a raclette, which is melted cheese with potatoes, etc. We managed not to be too late to bed.

Thursday 5 – In theatre at 8.15am again. We were supposed to rehearse in the morning and give a show in the afternoon to the pupils of a nearby convent school. The rehearsal didn't happen, things to do. Then we heard that Michel's cold was affecting his voice badly. He sang with Peter for an hour – it should have cleared his voice but it got no better and he really couldn't sing at all. In the end we had to cancel the show and hope that Michel would be better by the next evening. So we spent the afternoon in the theatre pottering. I had a lesson in how to set levels on the mixer. I mostly sat and listened to tapes. Michel went to bed. It's the first time in his life he's not been able to sing at all. We had been looking forward to having a young audience and were very disappointed at not doing what would have been a

very useful experiment. It was not possible for the school to put it off to another time. We had lunch at the foyer again and dinner was a cheese fondue at the Danguys'. Since June I've had so many fondues I've lost count. Lots of raclettes as well. I still like them, so far. We were quite early home and got an earlier night.

Friday 6 – didn't need to be ready until 10.00am. Visit planned for Luxembourg. Others arrived late as they'd waited to take a decision together with Michel on whether or not to do the night's show. His voice was better but he was knocked out by all the drugs he'd been swallowing to try and get better fast. They decided provisionally to do the show, as people were coming from some distance, yet it was important to go ahead with guidance.

It took an hour to get to Luxembourg city from Thionville. We had an appointment at 12.15pm outside the tower of the European parliament buildings with a friend of Charles Danguy's, a man who has worked with the Parliament or Community for 25 years and is now responsible for liaison between the Treasury, the Council of Ministers and the Commission. What these two latter are I didn't grasp, but they sit either side of the President at Parliament sessions. He organises meetings with deputies to further the conception of Robert Schuman, of a real community. At these meetings delegates can talk about the things on their minds and hearts which never get onto the agendas of official meetings, and they are so grateful for this opportunity, especially Africans who feel they cannot trust Europeans. Anyway, we wound our way past the expanses of shiny new buildings scattered above the city, among woods and lawns, and met him at the base of the tower which houses Parliament offices. Separate buildings exist for other purposes, like the European bank, the courts, etc. Other agencies are in Brussels and Strasbourg, it's all spread about. He took us to the empty 'chamber' - a beautiful room in a semicircle, where the left sit on the left of the President and the right on the right, not according to country but according to politics. Here we sat on MPs plushy swivel chairs as he explained the parliament, the buildings, the organisation, his views of its value, its future, his work, what he is trying to do. We asked intelligent questions and were all very interested. Then he took us to one of the cafeterias where we ate a beautiful meal and he paid for us all (we were seven and he wouldn't let Claude contribute – keep it for the play, he said).

Then he took us on an interesting route into the old part of Luxembourg city. We saw the cathedral, the local government buildings, the ramparts and old streets. Then we had to hurry back to the theatre to set up and rehearse a few extracts. I've wanted to go to Luxembourg for so long and our few hours there were fascinating so I was especially happy with that trip. Michel was better, so the show went ahead.

It was a good show, more tension because of Michel, and also Gunnar had gone back to Caux (we needed him to start with, but we all have to get used to managing to do the show without him – in May he will be moving to Sweden).

Afterwards, we had good chats with people very interested and asking lots of questions. We were in bed rather late that night.

Saturday 7 – didn't need to be ready until 10.00am again, such a blessing. We all had lunch in Thionville homes which hadn't been able to have one of us staying. We ate with a Belgian/Swiss couple who had been in Laos as missionaries. They didn't talk about it much, but we had a very interesting lunchtime. That went on into the afternoon, so we didn't manage the walk we'd hoped for, as we had to get back to the theatre again. The night's show was also good, a full house again. The theatre only held 120 people, but apparently the concierge had never seen it really full and was amazed we had managed it two nights in a row. We took down the following morning so weren't too late that night. That's still after midnight though.

Sunday 8 – all at theatre at 9.00am. Take down didn't go so fast as it does at night. Yet we all kept up a good pace. We were all to have our last lunch with a family. The father of this family is a trade unionist and knows MRA, Caux, etc. very well. They were both bilingual and there is one son still in the house. François O stayed with them. They were super people, warm, simple, jolly. We ate soup, beef and carrots, salad, cooked ham and peas, cheese, doughnuts, apple cake, coffee and chocolates, separately one after the other in that order. We had to drag ourselves away. We heard Mr. Forthoffer's account of how he had tried to escape fighting with the Germans by getting to Switzerland, but unfortunately he was handed over to the Germans and had to fight with them. He was, at one point, in Russia in an air-conditioned (not heated) tank with equipment only for heat as they were to have gone to Turkey – but where they were, it was -40°. After a month, they learned to live

way down metres deep in the snow, as that's warm, the way the Russians do. Anyway, after the war he was taken by the Americans and/or British to be a German, and it took a long time for them to realise that the Lorrains had been forced to fight and hadn't joined up as mercenaries (though some did.) So when they'd sorted that out, he was freed, with a pompous pardon, though having already done a stint down a mine alongside German prisoners. When he arrived in his home town, he was wearing part of his German uniform still – with nothing else to change into – and as he was walking to his home, a very bitter compatriot crossed the road and hit him. He was so thin and so weak, he just blacked out and woke later at home, where some American soldiers had carried him. He reckoned roughly only about 25% of the German soldiers he met were committed to Hitler or Nazism, the rest were very dedicated to their country, so only patriotism made them put their hearts into the fight. He has always been concerned that there should be a thorough reconciliation to prevent further confrontation in this long-embattled area. He commented that men who escaped into free France to avoid fighting for the Germans still are very bitter against them. A very interesting point, that.

Well, we were all quite content with the time in Thionville. The journey back was mostly in the dark but we took the motorway despite the cost, and it was quicker.

Monday 9 – I stayed in bed for most of the morning. I come back from a trip like that totally exhausted. Someone here pumped us all full of Vit C at lunchtime to prevent flu, as one person here has it. Yesterday afternoon I wrote letters, and did a few jobs. This morning I wrote cards and letters and set the table. Tonight I am going to the cinema to see the latest Agatha Christie film. Should be good.

I will go to the office later in the week, have lots of jobs to do here and want to see my old friends. My passport expires in July so I think I'll renew it now I have the chance. I still haven't cashed your cheque and must choose a bank to open a new account. We're here now for five weeks with no show, would you believe. Maybe we'll be busy as now is the time to set up the possible month's run in a Paris theatre in October. I'm cooking two suppers this week, as everyone is hectic here. I dread cooking on my own... The 7 March is a youth meeting here for next summer's Caux.

Future shows – 14 March, Orsay near Paris; 17 March, Sens not so near Paris; late March, Metz near Thionville; 20 & 22 March, Moutiers in Swiss Jura (then Metz); first part of April, no show as Peter will be in Tunisia; Orleans, 21-24 April; other ideas coming for Lille, Dinard and Lyon. Nothing in June as Peter would like to go to Egypt, Christian to Sweden, Su to Cornwall... July 17-24 is the Youth Hosted Session at Caux, the only thing I feel particularly important to be there for. No mention has been made yet of doing the show again, as we did last year. Dinard is highly unlikely, as the only person there is an 80 year old lady who, however enthusiastic, cannot do it alone. With the help of the Nantes team, it might happen. I vaguely wonder, if the timing was right, if you could hop over via the ferry, stay with the Crenns, and come and see the show. Probably quite impracticable. If ever the project looks more likely in Dinard, I will hint again, as I'd like you to see the show so much. Oh, I forgot the deep south, Nyons, Montpellier, Montelimar are also trying to get organised for the spring. I really hope so, because I've never been in the south of France at all.

As usual I haven't answered your questions, so keep asking them and one day I might.

Bye now, and love to you all, Su

PS I hope you are keeping all my letters. I haven't time to do a proper journal, so my letters are the only full record of this time. If you just keep them, I'll make a space in my cupboard next time I'm home, I promise. Thanks. Thanks for your regular and super long letters. I read them three times before chucking them out. Bye again.

22 Av Robert Schuman, 92100 Boulogne-Billancourt

16 February 1981

Many thanks for all the abundant recent letters, press cuttings, etc. I will reply in detail later, as there's not much news this week. The last week has been dry and sunny here. This weekend, Janet and Corinne were over from Switzerland staying with Louise. So Saturday I went there to lunch, Carey was also there, and I spent the afternoon with them catching up on all the latest

news.

Saturday night everyone in the house got together to relax and play games. Sunday morning I went to church with Peter, and we found Sue there who invited us back to coffee. In the afternoon I met Janet and Corinne and Louise again [college friends], and we went and wandered around Beaubourg and the postcard shops around. It was good to spend time with them to keep up the contact. I notice none of them asked questions about what I am doing, but got quite interested if I talked about it a bit. I realise they don't really take much interest in anyone and talk of very general, silly, things. Yet if you push the conversation a bit you can get them to think on a deeper level. Sue, Peter and I on the other hand had a good discussion about the EEC and Anglo-French relations. I am always so afraid to talk of 'serious' things with my friends but I find out a lot more about them if I do.

Last week I cooked supper twice. Irene came and gave me a hand the first time, and it was a really nice meal. The second wasn't too bad. Irene appeared at the last minute again and it's so reassuring to have a second opinion and another pair of hands, I was very grateful.

Now it is Thursday: the last two days there has been some snow but it hasn't settled in Paris. Tuesday was Claude's birthday and we celebrated at the evening meal, with a special chocolate cake made by Irene, eating with kitchen implements, and everyone dressing up. Annie was dressed as the Statue of Liberty, oh there were lots of funny things, I'll send you the photos if they come out. I dressed as a clown. The best thing was eating with giant ladles, or huge things for serving vegetables, or mustard spoons, etc. First, we had pumpkin soup, which was eaten through plastic straws, then a sort of bread pudding (with cheese) and salad and Irene's Cypriot chocolate stuff.

Last night Annie, Claude and I went to Orleans as they are organising the show there for after Easter, and had a meeting. The car we took kept struggling, so we'd have to stop and start again to clean out the carburettor but we got home by 1.00am, after having run out of petrol on the périphérique and being towed to an all-night garage by a breakdown truck which fortunately was very close when we ground to a halt.

The days are quite busy now, with going to the office, or typing letters here or helping in the house. I went with Annie to the supermarket Tuesday. This afternoon I'm 'hôtesse' (answering the phone, opening the door, making tea at 4.00pm). Tomorrow I'm cooking Quiche Lorraine for lunch and in the evening there is a big meeting here for all the Indo-Chinese of the area, and I've volunteered to serve.

Now I will go through all of the recent letters from you lot, which I happened to lay a hand on, when tidying my room. There have been crocuses here for about a week now, maybe more, and for ages there've been those 'things that look like primroses but aren't and sometimes they are red'. There are also now some snowdrops, and for a long time we've had a bush in bloom, spindly with very delicate yellow flowers. Many thanks for the copy of NS report, idea for embroidery, piece of squashed cake, postcard of Mylor. I had no idea Mum was going on holiday, a shame she wasn't very well but I hope it did her good. I still haven't done anything with your cheque, will it wait? Mrs Lamond sounds nice. I have written a note to Jane Joughin. Glad to hear the end of your toaster saga (it was getting monotonous.)

I am running out of ideas now of what to talk about. I have to be in the mood to ramble in order to write an 'atmospheric' letter and I'm not feeling very chatty right now. I had a super letter from Cindy, who is happy, and is missing us and Paris. Its nearly 4.00pm, time for tea. I'll finish this later.

Answering your questions:

- *'You can eat your picnic if you buy a drink' is a type of ordinary café, where one of us goes in, and smiles sweetly, and asks if we can eat there. They're not very common. Formerly, working men would have eaten their midday meal in a café like that.
- **The mattress could have been feather, I wouldn't know. The huge eiderdown certainly was.
- When we eat in canteens, we tend to ignore the rest of the world. When we're on the road we're thrown together and there is a lot of tension and hard work, so mealtimes and out of theatre times we have really let off steam, so there is a lot of joking and laughing, as balance, very necessary to prevent bad feelings and pressure, etc.
- I can't use the theatre's 'control rooms' as often they are glassed in, and there's no way of knowing the 'feel' of the sound of the theatre through

a loudspeaker link. Sometimes there are open platforms in the ceiling at 'front of house' or at the back for the lights, which is good.

- I lay the cable/snake out on the floor where I want it (usually most of the distance down the side of the hall) then any bit where it has to be suspended I get help, usually from Annie. If I carry the whole lot on one shoulder it practically bends me double.
- A raclette is melted cheese and potatoes and pickles, and is Swiss!

I made Quiche Lorraine and carrot salad and fruit on Friday, and enjoyed doing it. It was good, too. I made a Cornish ginger cake at the same time, it all went at tea time. I got tons of compliments on it, so I shall make cakes again, it would obviously be appreciated.

Right, I'm fed up with this letter, and have not started a new page so I can get it off. Don't worry about not writing, Mum, get better first.

Bye now. Lots of love, Su

23 February

Dear Mum and Dad,

I'm trying to arrange to see Claudie, but I always miss her. I saw Sue and Janet Sunday, we went to an exhibition of the works of Pissarro, an impressionist, at the Grand Palais. I enjoyed it.

It is snowing here now, and has several times in the last three or four days. I really need a woollen coat. Perhaps I'll look in the sales.

Sunday we have a meeting to talk over the future of the show and particularly the possibility of a run in Paris in October (I already explained, I think, it's the start of the year of celebrations of the 800th anniversary of St Francis' birth). Sue is coming, with enthusiasm, which I'm delighted about.

Right, will be off now. Lots of love, Su

Boulogne-Billancourt, Shrove Tuesday 3rd March

Dear All,

Lots of exciting news this week but you'll have to wait for the exciting bit while I catch up.

I wish I could remember when I last wrote. I think I got to Sunday 22nd, when I saw Sue and Janet and went to an exhibition of Pissarro's work with them. Monday nothing happened - I suppose there was the usual ladies meeting on the tasks for the week, and then I must have gone to the office. I go to the office every morning now, and do various things in the afternoons.

Tuesday night (24th) I went to meet Christiane [former colleague] at ICOM as she had invited me to dinner at her flat. She asked me tons of questions about what I was doing, and the house, etc. and would like to come here and find out more. I don't think she sees the true value of what MRA does but is simply curious. She may find something if she comes here, so it will be worthwhile inviting her. She says the atmosphere at ICOM is now very bad, some people don't get on at all and the tensions are great as there is too much work and not enough money. There are two secretaries in the Doc. Centre now – about time. Otherwise all the people there are the same. When I went to meet her I only saw Béatrice, but she was very glad to see me, which was nice.

Wednesday night, Annie, Claude, Michel and I went to the theatre. The play was presented by a 'Christian' company Michel had heard about, and was performed in a cultural centre. It was a sort of musical, a bit like a pantomime, aimed at a family audience, and although there was little moral message it was good entertainment. Michel is going to meet the director to find out more about the way they work, etc.

Thursday – in the morning we had the weekly team meeting. In the afternoon we copied and sent the newsletter. In the evening Annie, Claude, Peter, Elizabeth and I went (in the new minibus for the first time) to dinner with the Sentis family – they have three little boys. After the meal, Michel Sentis told us about his long experience of trying to build trust between MRA and the Catholic church.

Now, the interesting bit. This weekend I was in Holland. The occasion was a weekend for young people, for reflection and discussion. I had known about it, but had not thought of it, as Sunday here a big meeting was planned between M&T and the Paris team, to discuss the October launch of 'USEPN' in Paris. However, about the beginning of the week it began to occur to me that I should be going to Holland instead. Two mornings guidance said so, and that I should talk it over with the others. So Wednesday afternoon I mentioned it to the M&T assembly, and nobody could see why not, so that was that. I was a bit astonished that God wanted me there and not here but was thrilled to be able to go and meet a new set of people and see a new country.

So we set off Friday morning at 9.30am. Florence, Frederic, Phieng and I in the 2CV. The north of France is quite different. National roads until Arras to avoid paying. Then on motorway all the way. Skirting Antwerp and Rotterdam. First Belgium, very different from France. Ate picnic lunch there. Then, really exciting, into Holland. Water everywhere, a bridge over some of the Port of Rotterdam, different again from Belgium. We arrived at Wassenaar at 5.00pm in time for tea, a tour of the house, and a good chat with Lotty, Annemiek and Willette (I know them all from Caux) and some of the de Pous family.

Newsflash: there has just been a big pink jay on a branch right outside my window.

Then more people started to arrive. We had a filling meat and vegetable soup and bread for dinner, which reminded me of home. As do their milk bottles, marmite, peanut butter, housing estate, and brown bread.... In the evening we had the first meeting. Our car-load from Paris introduced ourselves. I was struck how on our arrival everyone sat down to chat, and then everyone was invited to help join in the meal preparations (I forgot, we had apple crumble for dessert). The meeting started, and everything was very calm and relaxed. I soon felt at home, as if I'd always lived there. We had peanut butter, brown bread, a meal soup of veg and meat, bread and cheese meals, goulash – oh, it was lovely food.

It is now Wednesday afternoon and I am typing from bed. On the Saturday I started a really heavy cold and my head is still bunged up.

Saturday morning, we had all considered three questions in our time of listening – Jesus’s questions to his disciples: ‘Who do people say I am?’, ‘Who do you say I am?’, and a third ‘What does the Bible say Jesus is?’ It was a very different type of discussion. I was a bit lost, partly as many people spoke in Dutch, so we had a translation. There was one older person present, a Jesuit priest, a very nice man, who said little but added weight to the discussion. After lunch we went for a walk – to the BEACH! There was a lot of snow that day so we walked through the dunes and to the beach in a snowstorm. It was terribly cold, and curious to see snow on a beach. East wind. Dunes, with pools of fresh water in them. My only disappointment was that with a cold, I could not smell the sea air. Oh, but it was lovely.

After that was another meeting, a time to exchange. Then tea. Potatoes and cheese baked and salad and a La Hague dessert made of egg whites and raspberry syrup, whisked. Then an evening of music. Phieng sang Laotian songs with his guitar, Florence played the flute, Frank (who has come to play with USEPN a few times) played the cello, Willette played the piano, the Father read a story. I went to bed at 10.00pm before it was over - unfortunately I had not had a chance of early nights before and with the cold wasn’t too bright. Sunday morning we went to church. Lotty couldn’t always translate but I didn’t mind, as I just enjoyed a time of meditation and prayer, unravelling the intricacies of Dutch pronunciation by reading the hymns at the same time as they were sung. Then was another meeting, general again. Lunch was goulash, brown rice, ice cream and butterscotch sauce. Then the last meeting when we talked of ‘Chacun Compte’, the theme for the Caux summer session, briefly. So by 4.00pm all was over and people slowly started to leave. In the evening we sat around and chatted after tidying up (I was struck by how people made a priority of giving guests all their time). Tea was pizza. Then we played a good game, impossible to describe, the idea being to get wooden blocks through four holes at the end of a long slippery board. Bed was early.

Monday breakfast at 8.00am, we left at 9.30am for The Hague where we had a short sight-see – the International Court of Justice, the parliament building, the maze of shopping streets, then to the MRA offices for coffee before setting off at 11.00am for home. It was very sad to leave our friends, and especially sad to leave Holland for dirty, hectic Paris.

The journey went peacefully until 100kms from Paris. Then the top of the car finally gave up the ghost – one of the soft-top types, it was held together with tape. Suddenly, there was an almighty explosion, and rain was sweeping in. I've never seen Florence laugh so much. We stopped to put an old blanket over ourselves but even with pins, those at the back had to keep it taut and we in the front had to push it up to prevent flapping. We tried a couple of times to buy a new top, but couldn't. So we finished the journey like that, each person hanging on. Great fun, for between 80 and 100 kms, and the good Lord mostly held the rain off until we were just leaving the Péripherique. It was a super weekend – spiritually, physically and mentally stimulating. I was really glad I went.

Now, to finish hurriedly. Tuesday I stayed in bed in the morning, took a film to be developed, answered the phone in the afternoon then did the cooking with Anne-Marie but wished I hadn't had to, as I was exhausted at the end. She sent me off to bed at 8.00pm so I went gratefully, but am not any better today in spite of periodic doses of honey, cider vinegar, oranges, rosehip tisanes, nose sprays, etc. This morning I went to the office but have spent the afternoon in bed. Please excuse my typing, I'm a bit fuzzy and will give up for now.

Thanks for letters. Good to hear from Mum again. Hope you are all well.

Lots of love, Su

22 Av RS, 92100 BB, Wednesday 11th March

Dear All,

It is still very warm here, and from early in the morning the birds are loud in the trees around, nicely of course. Now, the first thing I am going to do is to look over your last letters. I've noted your holiday dates. I don't know when I have to be in Caux, it depends when we start doing the show there – it seems we will do it again this summer. I want to be there from 16-24 July as that is the youth hosted session.

Dad, have you been able to ask if there is an instruction booklet for this typewriter? I would like to know about maintenance and there's one lever I think must be for a carriage lock, but I can't work out how to use it. I often use it to type letters here. Last time Claude had some letters to write while we were away, so it will be worth taking it in future. Did I tell you we have a minibus? I must have done, it's so exciting. If not, write for details... Anyway, now we have to pay off the loans, hopefully through the show's profits.

Imagine you having arsenic in your garden; many thanks for the local newspaper, read from cover to cover as usual including all the adverts; Dinard's off, until next year. Paris in October is going ahead, but we are having trouble finding a theatre – they're all booked up until next January. I didn't realise Mum's illness was still hanging on. Take it easy Mum - if you can't do something rely on the Almighty to get someone else to do it. Jim, if I travel home in early June I could pass by your way. Véronique cut my hair again yesterday, she does it well. Lovely to hear from Grandad – please look after your chest. If it's warmer there now, I imagine you can do a bit of gardening. The daffodils have come out in our garden in the last few days. The crocuses are gone, but the snowdrops are still going.

Now I will get down to the events of late. Last weekend this house hosted a meeting for this Summer's youth hosted session. On Friday Lotty and Annemiek arrived from the Hague and I met them at the Gard du Nord and took them to Beaubourg, Notre Dame, the Sainte Chapelle, St Michel, then home with all their bags. They were delighted. The Peters came, two Swiss girls, three from Britain. A good time was had by all, good meetings, lots of ideas. Peter and I had a lot of continuous translation to do, which I enjoyed but was exhausted by the end. Irene and I cooked one meal (for 35). Soup, cheese gnocchis, salad, fruit. The least complicated, it went well. Most of the people left on Monday. Yesterday I typed the draft report, compiled by others before they left.

Monday night a few of M&T went down to Orleans to participate in their planning meeting for 21-23 April. Including two matinees for schools, which will be really interesting. Last night there was a reception here for the launching of the French translation of 'Listen to the children'. The Campbells are here, plus the translator Mme Chavanne and her husband. I was passing drinks around. Tonight (Wednesday) I am cooking supper, which is making

me miserable because it is for 14 people including the Campbells, there is a dessert to do, and I can find no one to give me a hand. I shall have to have a quiet little think about it in a minute because I'm unhappy about it.

Confirmed future dates for shows are – 21-23 April, Orleans; 29 April Montélimar (in the South where I've never been); 1-3 May National Weekend (no show) at Vigy (a conference centre in woods in the Lorraine, where I went in the autumn of '79); 8-9 May, Lille. Geneva is off. Before Easter we do extracts for Third Order chiefs gathering at Orsay near Paris on Saturday, Sens on the 17th, Moutiers (CH) on 20 and 22. We will probably do Bourgeuil at some time (Claude's village near Tours). Some people are reworking the programme at the moment, it needs re-editing completely, so it can be used as advance publicity as well. Annie is working on contacting big organisations, particularly schools, which are her particular interest. Someone will have to take on marketing for October. Claude is busy looking for suitable theatres, as well as administrating like fury. Michel is busy as usual. Christian is back from Caux and tinkering with the vehicles. Peter has gone to London for a funeral. I think he has piano lessons here. He is always busy with his other concerns, like the Middle East, Britain, or foreigners here. Gunnar and Dean are arriving Sunday, Dean is still around because Keir Hardie is still grounded. François might be with us next week as his job seems to be finished.

I haven't been too happy these last weeks because I feel a bit left out. Annie and Claude do all the things I call secretarial, I think because at first I was very unsure and wasn't used to looking for things that needed doing. I waited for things to come my way, as I had at ICOM (where I had to resist all the things people tried to get me to do, as I had too much, a totally opposite style of working.) The weekend at Wassenaar was good because I felt part of something and this last weekend I felt responsible for small details as well as the cooking, laying tables and translating, and guests, and was very happy because I was useful and busy.

These last weeks I'd been getting really bitter and blaming Annie and Claude for not giving me enough space. One night when I was crying about it because I thought I was little use to the team, I realised that I was just making myself unhappy, so I could only blame myself. So what if I think I 'demean' myself and my pride by only doing the typing? At least I can type well. I have plenty

of time, so why not try taking things down in French shorthand - I would be learning and improving my job skills.

Then what I do in the theatre: OK, it could be done by anyone, but I can still learn to do it well and look around for more things to learn. So I don't talk in meetings. Well, I have said more recently and often I contribute things from a more human angle than others.

I can learn to look for the needs to fill. The Good Lord obviously isn't too worried about the situation – maybe he's got something in mind for me to take on of my own, meanwhile I must give up worrying that I'm not busy every moment and leave it to Him. He's chosen me to be part of this team so I must have my part to play, there's no need to prove that. I feel a lot more confident now but I'll have to remember that decision not to embitter myself. Life is what you make it.

Anyway, tonight I think I could manage on my own. I will have to start at 4.00pm (for 7.00pm) or even earlier. I take on cooking once a week but I always get het up about it because it's a high standard here, and also I have to time it exactly for 7.00pm. If I try to amuse myself doing it - adding herbs, little special touches – that takes away some of the strain. Well, I think I'll leave you now. I must nip out to collect some photos and change what's left of my English money.

Oh, one more thing. Last Thursday Annie and I went to the shops. I went into Marks and Spencer's and there was a smart duffel coat. I thought about it for a while, and then decided I'd be making a good investment so changed some money and went and bought it. Since then the weather has been warmer but I've insisted on wearing it, and feel like I'm sweltering. I'm sure I've not been warm enough, which has contributed to all the illnesses I've had this winter. I've sown a small bell to the tip of the hood to Annie's horror.

Bye now. Lots of love, Su

Entre Fontainebleau et Sens, in the minibus

Monday 16th March, 7.55am in the morning

Dear All,

We left Boulogne at 6.45am this morning, in the minibus. I have been embroidering up to now, and have just decided to try and type. The typewriter is on my knees, it is very stable and very easy, the only problem is limited elbowroom. I can type and look at the scenery at the same time. In front of me some are playing scrabble, and we have Mozart playing, though at the back it's hard to hear. Oh dear, now where did I leave off last time. It must have been the day I cooked supper and was so worried about it. In the morning I thought I should ask Annette, the German girl, to help but she was in bed, not very well. I was still convinced I should ask her, so mentioned it and she was only too happy to get up and help. I kept asking her if she was tired but she said no, all that had been wrong was a headache. I really got to know her then, enjoyed doing the cooking, and made a good friend. I'm convinced she was feeling more mentally low than physically, so it was just what she needed too.

Thursday afternoon and Friday morning I was at the office, typing Claude's letters then getting out an invitation to the Paris friends to come again to follow on planning for USEPN/October/Paris. Then instead of going back to lunch on Friday I went to the swimming pool and did 20 lengths in exactly 30 minutes. In the afternoon I was on hôtesse duty in the house, answering the phone and door, making tea. Then I laid the tables for supper. I had done a thorough clean of my room, Thursday, but Friday morning the men went in there and knocked holes, to put in an aeration pipe for the bathroom below. There was plaster dust absolutely everywhere, so I had to clean it all again.

Saturday morning, we had a M&T meeting, then I set off with Annette for the Grand Palais to see an exhibition of works by Gainsborough. It was really lovely. I had a true migraine that day, so went to bed at 3.00pm and slept solid until Annie woke me at 4.30pm. Then we left for Orsay, where the French and Swiss leaders of regional Fraternité Franciscaine (the Third Order) had a weekend meeting. We presented a 'reading' of the play, with the songs, Peter playing the piano, and Claude adding a bit of description to pull it all together. It still lasted 1 hour 40 minutes, rather long, but I think they understood it well, and recognised the overall message. Afterwards we talked with them – very friendly people, some were very enthusiastic, said how marvellous it was, etc. I talked about how I live. I was asked several times

how we live without salary. I explained how I gave what was left of my deposit from the flat towards the minibus before Christmas and a few weeks later someone who had also travelled with an MRA play gave me the same sum without knowing, because he himself had benefited so much. I just told it like that, and they were fascinated and understood not only how we live, but how when one gives, one also receives. It was a very rich evening, and we pray now things will come out of it.

Well, we were back late, midnight, and the next morning, Sunday, we left at 9.30am for church, with Peter, Christian, Annette, Irene, and the Campbells who were invited to speak. They all enjoyed the family service, where kids stay in, and we sing songs with actions. The Campbells said some very interesting things, and we had good conversations with the congregation afterwards. In the afternoon I watched the Pope on telly, a film of when he was in Paris. In the evening we had a discussion with young people and the Campbells. Unfortunately only the doctor spoke, and not many questions were asked, but he is fascinating to listen to. I had a very spiritual day, you will note. I was asleep by 12.00pm and up at 5.00am, but only out of bed at 5.15am, so I only had time for a prayer before dashing down to help get breakfast, and eat it. Aiming to leave at 6.30am, we were a bit later. However, we have just arrived in Sens, are now parked outside the hall, it is 8.35am so we have made good time. It is a huge barn of a hall, like a hanger. Now I will stop and tell you more later. The game of Scrabble is still going on.

Thursday 19th – now I am in Moutier, in the Swiss Jura, and first I must finish telling you about Sens. On Monday we plunged straight into work, unloading and setting up as quickly as possible, as we couldn't be in the hall in the afternoon – they were filming a television quiz game. We had it again from 5.30pm to 10.00pm, so the boys stayed on, and we went to eat with kids from the school, then had a discussion with them afterwards. Wait a minute, I've missed that we had lunch in this school, a boarding school right in the centre of the town, with the teachers and after that we dropped our luggage, boys staying in rooms in the boys part, Annie and I in a room in the girls part. Very old buildings, not really adapted to a school but cosy. After lunch we went up the hill and walked, it was lovely and warm and sunny, and there was a good view of the town in the valley. It's a town of about 25,000 people with an old Cathedral, lovely old buildings in the centre, and a river running through, in a valley surrounded by woody hills.

I was very grateful to get to bed at 10.30pm as we had worked hard and walked. We were only given one blanket each and when the heating went off I got really cold, so I dressed up a bit but didn't sleep very heavily, whereas usually I sleep like a ton of concrete. Then we had to get up 6.00am, walk a mile to the shower, and get to the other part of the school for breakfast at 7.00am, so as to get to the theatre early. No you couldn't call it a theatre, the Salle Polyvalente. Once again we had to be out in the afternoon.

This is Tuesday now, the show being in the evening. We wanted to rehearse in the morning, and had to wait for Michel to arrive from Paris, but then we weren't ready. So we had no time to go all the way through as hoped, but did the first part, the most difficult. When we've not done the show for as long as this, a month, it's important to rehearse. In the afternoon (lunch was in the school again – tons of food) a few of us went for another walk, in woods and fields. There were some white flowers in the woods, I think they might have been wood anemones – possible? And a couple of larks above the fields – I don't remember having heard larks before. I could have slept, but reckoned a walk would do me more good in the long term.

Well, we were back in the theatre about 5.00pm, having had a meeting as we had the time. A general meeting, but on the agenda the possibility of doing Montreux at the end of the summer at Caux – it would be the first MRA show ever to be presented in Montreux. The team there will be thrilled if it happens, especially as it would be with the help of a local Pasteur and the Municipality. Anyway, we ate a cold meal before the show in this barn of a hall, half of it curtained off but the other half really big. The stage was very high and narrow, and it needed to be, as the seating was rows of chairs set out for the occasion. Some boys from the school came to do that, and some of the girls sold programmes. We started at 8.30pm and all went well. At least, Michel was in good form, the music sounded good, and the balance was good. There were a lot of very young children in front and in the mimes they laughed and laughed, so Michel played up to it, exaggerating them, which was fun. My sound effects went OK in spite of a few near disasters (as usual), like I take up the wrong volume fader and wonder why no sound comes out, or I switch off the tape too late or too early. I narrowly avoided a few of these. It's when I'm nervous that I do them, and the mixing desk was situated at the side of the hall in full view of everyone, which I hate. Usually if I have to be in

the audience I'm at the back, but this time that would have been too far away.... The audience really enjoyed it, and many chairs had to be added as lots more people came – about 600 Claude reckoned! Fantastic. They'd really done their work beforehand, 'they' being the ecumenical council of the town.

After the show, I talked with some of the girls from the school, met the night before. One wanted to know what we understood by purity... I had a good chat with her. I just recount my experiences, like how I decided to join the team, and how I was honest with Mum and Dad – they lapped up these stories. I hope they think more about them. We are going back next week to meet people who saw the show, one evening, at the school again. Anyway, then we took everything down. Annie and I had to be back at 1.00am. The others got to bed at 2.00am.

Breakfast was only at 8.00am Wednesday, and we left straight after for Moutier. We stopped for lunch by a lake. When Christian went to turn the truck, and moved to the side of the lane to let the minibus pass, two wheels were on what looked like solid ground, but turned out to be soft mud. So when he tried to move again they sank down in. We all got out to help (awkwardly this was right by a ditch). We pushed and pushed, even got the minibus to push, but nothing happened. We dug one wheel out a bit, put in some pieces of wood, and tried again. Christian was counting, 1, 2, 3, and I prayed really desperately "Lord, this time it's just got to move!" and whoosh, the truck was out, off the mud and on the road. What a relief! The alternative would have been to unload.... What an experience, to pray from the heart and to see a result. Of course it might have happened anyway, but I believe we were 'helped'.

Well, we had our picnic by the lake, and then were off again, stopping on the way in the home village of Charles de Gaulle to see his grave in the little churchyard. Very plain, just white marble inscribed with his name, his wife's, and one of his daughter's. Close by were some memorials on a special stand, but nothing grand. Except that on the hill above the village is enormous Lorraine cross, dominating the countryside for miles around, in his memory (far too big I thought). We were late arriving here in Moutier as the truck wouldn't start and we had to get someone from a garage to repair it, and we were a long time at customs. We ate with the Carrards (the couple leading the invitation for the show) then went to our families. I had a chat with the

lady but they were warned we would want to go straight to bed, so I did. This was at 10.00pm and I slept straight away. Now it is Thursday, I had lunch with my family and am now at the Carrards having tea. We will unload soon and this evening we meet then the Mayor. More later.

Monday 23 March, road back to Paris

Right, I think I left you Weds/Thurs, so I will start from lunchtime Thursday. I ate with my hosts, a surveyor and his wife, who have three sons, one in the USA and the other two in the last year of school. They have a lovely house, big and modern, with a view over the town and to the mountains which encircle it. Lots of pines, and a bit of snow still lying in the town. In the afternoon we went and looked at the theatre and unpacked the cases from the lorry. I had supper again at home, then we went to meet the Mayor who made a speech, Michel O made a speech and we spoke about ourselves a bit, and about the show, and he talked about the town and the area and his job. Then he took us to a hotel for a drink. Bed. Friday. In the theatre at 8.00am.

Tuesday – had to stop then because with the bends of the Jura, and sitting in the back of the bus, I started to feel queasy. So, Friday: with the help of Michel Koechlin who I am ‘teaching,’ I set up the sound stuff, all the mikes, and loudspeakers. We had a picnic lunch there, the few who needed to stay, and sat outside in the sun. In the afternoon we managed to have some rehearsal, very important, it’s really helps. The show was at 8.30pm. The hall was nearly full, my hosts were there. The show went OK. Saturday I didn’t need to get up too early. At 10.00am we were all at the Carrards for a chat together, then we all set off in cars for a day’s excursion. Lunch first, at an inn high on a plateau, called the Franches-Montagnes. It was lovely there – at 1000 m but quite flat. After lunch we walked for a long way and had a long snowball fight. We later visited a few villages. It’s nothing but fields and farms up there, and lots of woods and forests. We were back in time for tea, then at 8.00pm a few of us went to meet a group of young Catholics who meet regularly. We talked a lot about our own convictions and Michel O told how the show had come to be. Sunday. Up at 9.00am. Slow morning, lunch at 12.00 (very Swiss) with all the family. At the theatre at 1.30pm to set up again. Show at 3.00pm. Went OK. Afterwards, we took everything down,

packed and went home to tea. I spent the evening talking to my lady. She was really super.

Monday. Up at 6.30am to be at the Carrards at 8.00am. Time of discussion then a more serious meeting on finances. I mentioned that I felt guilty at not being able to give my share to the house at Boulogne. Then off to Délémont for a quick look at the old town, while Claude and Michel talked with a Capucin who is instigating a tour of the show in Suisse Romande (the French-speaking part) next Jan/Feb. He has thirteen towns in mind. Looks like it will go ahead. Then off for Paris. At lunchtime we stopped to look at the Le Corbusier chapel high on a hill, with the most glorious view. Had lunch there (in the car park). Back in Paris about 9.00pm. Tried to phone you, but realised you might be swimming.

Tuesday – stayed in bed until 11.00am, folded programmes in the afternoon with the others, helped get dinner. Wednesday – things are piling up already, so much to do and no time, no time. I don't want to live like that. This letter has been hurried, because I have other things to do this morning. So, will go and lay the table now...

After lunch. I realise that I get angry because I feel I'm not really useful here, yet whenever there is something that needs doing in the house or someone needs help at a time that I'd planned something else, I feel bitter. That's a huge contradiction so I want to experiment this week with being very open to the lives of the others in this house, giving them more of my time. This morning in a quick M&T meeting Michel K said he saw the play as part of the MRA team's action in France and the house expects to feed and board the participants, and so I feel I don't need to worry about that. Maybe my guilt on the financial side hid guilt for not giving myself and my time and my heart to the activities or day-to-day life of this house.

Thanks for long letters from Mum and Dad this week. Please could you book me in at the dentist. It's very interesting to me to hear what goes on in the church. Sad about the tilers, but it sounded a very healthy departure. Will let you have the pumpkin soup recipe sometime. Right, that's all you're getting for now.

Bye bye. Love, Su

22 Av R-S, April 13

Dear One-and-All,

I really don't need to open another bank account, and have no other way of cashing this, so could you put it into my bank account or building society? Thanks. Sorry it's taken me so long to decide. I want to buy another record when I get home!

I didn't write at all last week, I am sorry. It was basically a quiet week, with work at the office in the first half, and more cooking, etc, later. Friday afternoon Annette and I took a trip on a Bateau Mouche, up the Seine around the Ile St Louis, then back down to near where my old flat is. It was a warm and sunny day with a little breeze, but warm enough to sit on the deck in a light skirt, T-shirt and bare feet. It was really relaxing, and so pretty, the trees just green, and many picturesque old barges. My camera jammed again. I was so disappointed (it fell out of the car at Moutier, and the film won't advance). I'll have to try and get it looked at, but I so wanted to take pictures that day.

Saturday I went round to see Carey and Louise. I saw Sue one evening. Yesterday we took the minibus full of young women and the Koechlin's to Chartres Cathedral. We arrived in good time for the 10.30am mass. As it was Palm Sunday, everyone was buying or carrying sprigs of a bush, which they called 'rameau' (branch). The congregation collected outside the cathedral and the priests blessed their 'rameau', which was held up by each person. A lady next to me gave me a bit of hers and I was very touched. Then we processed into the cathedral, waiting first for the priest carrying a cross (also decorated with 'rameau') to knock with it on the big central cathedral doors, three times, each time asking to be allowed in. This symbolised something about bringing Christ in. Anyway, it was unusual to be able to enter through those big doors. The gospel was read, from Palm Sunday to the sealing of the tomb during which time everyone stood. The mass had trumpets and choir, not of very high standard.... After that we looked about the cathedral. It has lovely windows, with many amusing or touching statues.

It was 1.00pm when we'd finished, and we drove three quarters of an hour to the Forest of Rambouillet, where we sat on a thick carpet of dry leaves in near-silence (except for birdsong) and ate our picnic. It was still lovely and warm and often sunny. We went for a long walk and I picked heather, which I have here in a pot. Then we played ball. I tried turning cartwheels. We came back to Paris for tea. It was a lovely day.

Thanks for the turtles, Jim, where do they come from? I enjoyed the beautifully calligraphed envelope by Dad. I was interested by what Mum suggested about Bible study, I do feel it lacks here. The quotes on St F that Mum wrote are interesting, about humility. True faith is meaningless without true humility. Yes, they play scrabble in French! I only ever go to one church – St Michael's. Thanks very much for booking me in at the dentist. It's been a long time....

The second part of the show was inspired by a book by Père Eloi Leclerc, 'Sagesse d'un Pauvre.' He has written several books on St Francis. When eventually he saw the show, at Thionville, he was thrilled by it. That meant a lot to us. We met him here at Michel's too, and it was very interesting.

Last Monday we had a ladies' meeting, and I was able to share some anxieties with the other women. I also had a good chat with Anne-Marie Tate about my dissatisfaction at times with not enough to do. It was very helpful - last week I had not been sleeping until 12, or 1am, or 2am. Anne-Marie encouraged me to help more in the kitchen, as well as doing the yogurts. Office work picked up too. Also, I decided that in spite of short nights I should discipline myself to get up at 7am for a good quiet time, and to be in bed at 10pm, lights out 10.30pm even if I don't sleep. Since then, I've been sleeping as normal.

Right, that's enough now. 'Bye, lots of love,

Su

Boulogne-Billancourt (DON'T add Paris)

GOOD FRIDAY, 16.00ish, in the garden in a very bright sun and sheltered from the very cold breeze.

Dear mumdadjimgrandadandall,

Today I received a long letter from Mum full of very interesting things. All your letters recently have been remarkably long but no less interesting and I have been in great need of contact. I have been feeling a bit restless the last few weeks, whilst remaining terribly grateful for all I have and the super life I lead. In the last few days though, all of a sudden for no reason, I have been very low and couldn't take the slightest problem without bursting into tears. I have been sleeping well, and it wasn't a normal time of depression. It was very odd and I have never known such a thing before. I wish I had gone home but knew that was partly escapism – running away. I could find no answer, my morning quiet times were confused and prayer didn't bring immediate relief. I guess I was simply exhausted with all the questions running around in my mind recently like 'am I really useful in the team and in the house'; 'why can't I think more of others and love them better'; 'how do I find a true purity in all my relationships'; 'I don't like the idea of being two months in Caux'; 'I want to go home at the end of May, not after 7 June'; and more that don't spring to mind right now. Oh, and particularly the question of money.

I have received 100FF from a Swiss lady and £20 from England (an English lady gave money for full-time workers and they thought to send me some). I was so touched, it meant so much to me to be included. Now I have only 100FF left, which I will give to the house. I have been writing down every centime spent and can justify most of it, but it goes so quickly. Of course the records took a lot, but they have given me so much pleasure this last week and I will repay myself from the building society. So you see I always have enough but have not yet learnt to use every franc properly so I have enough left for other things. I have learnt a hard lesson there.

All of a sudden Tuesday I woke up feeling really desperate for no apparent reason; more than reaching the end of my tether. Have you come across the saying I heard from Saidie Patterson, 'when you reach the end of your tether remember that God is on the other end'? Well, I just trusted that things would work themselves out and didn't worry about it too much and tried to keep busy (not difficult). Yesterday I was in the garden all afternoon in the sun. Wednesday I took Annette to the department stores, and walked to the Madeleine; then walked to the Champs Elysees to have lunch with Sue, and

walked to the office for 2.30pm to type letters for Michel K.; got back to the house at 4.15pm and prepared dinner (although Annette cooked the pancakes, which were the main item on the menu). Whilst chatting to Annette, I copied her recipes, got her address and generally pottered. As we were only six, I could afford to. Yesterday I typed letters for Claude in the garden, then we had tea, and I read a bit. In the evening I went to the 8.30pm service at St Michael's (my usual church) for communion, with a different service for a change and super hymns which everyone sung with gusto (they made all the 50-odd people move to the front – I sit there anyway.) A tramp was sitting behind me – I could smell alcohol very strongly – it was such a sharp contrast to this house and the church, I think it made me see things in the service very realistically. I came away feeling very refreshed and joyful and today I feel a strange mixture of joy and sorrow, and a need to put much more trust in God. I am really living this Easter, step-by-step, imagining I am present watching the original Easter. I don't understand it really, but as each step unfolds I live it and it takes shape. The communion last night, on the night of the Last Supper, woke me up to the responsibility it entails. Tonight there is prayer and meditation at St Michael's, but I am going with Joanna d'Hauteville to her church, St George's (I have only been there once, the first time I was in Paris, with Sue – it happened to be a confirmation service). The d'Hauteville's are staying with us for a few weeks while they wrap up the sale of their shop and the lease of their flat (Mum met Gérard here once at a meal with Cindy.)

EASTER MONDAY, in the theatre at Orléans:

Friday night's service was very symbolic and the music of a high standard; the gospel was sung, all standing, terribly long. Everyone went up to kiss the feet of Christ on a cross (except me – too much of a shock). It was so long, from 7.30 until 9.00pm. I don't really like that church, it's too sophisticated.

Saturday was the day Annie gave Claude her answer of Yes [to a proposal of marriage] so I didn't do much more than sit around chatting. In the afternoon Florence had a Togolese girl round and I spent the afternoon talking with them. Sunday I went to my usual church in the morning – it was very full, I had to sit on the balcony. After lunch the Koechlins, Irene, Jean-Louis and I went to Malmaison, the house of Napoleon. We got back in time to see the d'Hautevilles off, then we packed. We left this morning at 6.30am and have

been busy all morning. Now I must stop because Claude wants me to type some letters for him. I am listening to music with the headphones so can't hear anything of what's going on around me. It was really super to hear Mum and Dad on the phone yesterday.

Well, bye for now. Lots of love, Su

Orleans, Friday 24 April

Dear all,

I am running a test, typing in red as it would be economical to type in red as well as the black.

Thank you for the pen, I use it to write notes in the morning. Now, a chance to describe the week. As you know, we worked in the theatre all day Monday and Tuesday. We had a show Tuesday afternoon for schools. Tuesday afternoon's show was a nightmare. The theatre was so overflowing with kids, one or two chairs had to be added. Aged from 13-14 up, they didn't stop rustling, whistling, giggling, and chatting, all through. At the first moment for applause they went wild, making all noises possible. There was a constant hum from them, but I guess some listened sometimes. Maybe some watched most of the show but I was really afraid at first that there was going to be trouble. After the first half hour they began to get bored with being silly, but the whole two hours was really tough, particularly for us, and especially for Michel who had to face the howling mob, without knowing how to silence them. Christian reckons a lot was lost because we had not rehearsed in the morning, so weren't at all slick and together, and therefore it was not possible to cast the usual spell. It's true, when we're really together it's a faster moving, more compelling show.

Well, I was still feeling pretty low myself then, and couldn't take any aggravation without reacting, wanting to run away, or cry. Looking back I think I reached a point of nervous exhaustion, then sank into a ditch that I didn't know how to get out of. Prayer didn't bring an immediate miracle but it was a time when I put all my worries one after the other before God, until I had given Him all I had, had kind of bared my mind, my heart, opened to Him,

destroying the walls of the house until the foundations could be seen, but the foundations never shifted, they are on solid rock. So, I couldn't run out of a show. It means everything to me, it's my *raison d'être*, the team is too precious. I was obliged to stay and suffer in the ditch. Then I started to listen again to the show, and it began to get easier to bear, and by the end I was exhausted but feeling brighter. The next day I felt stronger, and yesterday I was my old self again. Then, with the contrast, I saw how low I had really been. The Lord was using that time, and his timing was logical as ever for putting an end to it.

ANYWAY. Tuesday night I ate with my hosts, a young couple with a baby that I've already met at Boulogne, as Madeleine is Véronique Gigand's sister.

Wednesday we had an evening show. There was another group from a school, who rustled a bit, but not enough to really disturb anyone. Yesterday for the first time, we did two shows in a row. It was tiring, but not too much. Michel was funnier and brighter the second time. I forgot, before, in the morning we saw the Mairie (very old) and had lunch with a lady who works there. Wednesday afternoon we sat in a garden, in the windy sun. After yesterday's show we took down, so were at home by one, the others maybe a bit later. So that's it, folks.

Today I am joining the team for lunch, to celebrate François' birthday, Annie and Claude's engagement, and the miracle of surviving this week. In the afternoon, most will go back to Paris, save A and C, Christian and I, who are staying to help Françoise with her 'catéchèse' (pre-communion classes) tomorrow morning. Michel will return for that, we'll go back in Tagazou (the lorry) and Claude will take Annie to Bourgueil for the weekend. She only barely knows her future parents-in-law. Claude met hers, and the whole family, Easter Sunday, as they were all together for the first time for ages – Annie, her Mum, and all her sisters, brothers, nephews, nieces, in-laws. Claude's family is similar but bigger, he says.

Monday morning, 27th we are off at 8.00am to Montélimar, way down south... Show is Wednesday 29th; will travel Thursday to Vigy (near Thionville) for 1-3 National Meeting; 4th back to Paris. All mail to Boulogne as usual please, as many people will be able to pass it on to us. 7th – 8th show at Bourgueil (near Tours). Next date is Lille, 19-22, possibly 23rd. Then, if nothing

else crops up, I can come home. Right, I have said all I want to for a bit, so will get ready to leave. A bientôt....

Sunday 26th – back in Paris – I'll briefly close this and get it in the post. Friday we had lunch, then went to visit an Abbey, St Benoit, where there are relics of this saint. Nearby we saw the oldest church in France, I've forgotten its name. In the evening I had a good chance to chat with my hosts. Saturday morning, the Catéchèse went well. Two groups, third and fourth years. They asked interesting questions, and listened well. They had seen the show Tuesday. I was full of hope, seeing that a bit of the show had penetrated. I hope we have more chances to do the show for kids. Just not 400 at once. I came back in the lorry with Christian and Michel. We had lunch with a family first, so it was about 5.00pm when we got to Paris. They dropped me at a metro, so I could go to the FNAC to get that record for Dad, but they didn't have it in stock. I tried another shop, but none there either. I got back in time for supper.

Many here are in bed with flu. I pray none of us catch it. Went to church this morning, helped at lunch, phoned Janet and in a minute I'm taking Irene to the swimming pool. Then I must pack, as we leave at 8.00am tomorrow morning. I had to do tons of washing at 9.00pm last night, as we will be away for a week. It's better than being bored.... So please excuse my writing.

Bye now, lots of love, Su

POSTCARDS: Montélimar

Friday 1st May

Dear Mum and Dad,

When I woke up this morning, I thought of Padstow [1st May tradition]. I will start a quick account of the week, on postcards.

Ha! Sunday 3rd... so as you know Monday morning we left for Montélimar and travelled all day. Left two hours late, as we had a puncture on the lorry on the Périphérique at rush hour Monday morning... then the lorry wouldn't start... however we arrived in time for supper.

After Lyon the landscape became more Midi looking, and after Valence very much so. Lots of cypress trees, different houses, etc.

Tuesday we were preparing all day, in the theatre. Here the hills seem hilly, and black, yet all is very green – hedges, fields, woods, little stone farms. The old town has tiny, ancient streets and narrow recent ones, all well mixed.

Most of us are staying chez Michel Koechlin's sister and her husband, a farmer, description later.

Monday 4th... try again. A lovely old theatre, painted ceiling, balconies, but recently totally remade, so full of super new equipment. The 'regisseur' wouldn't allow us to use our stuff, so we used what was there. Awkward to switch to different machines but it was OK. I was in a little room at the back and couldn't hear properly, a bit annoying when you need to hear well. Only 143 people, just enough to cover costs, a shame but the 'cream' apparently, so a useful spearhead for a future attack on the whole area, I'd say. Left Thursday morning.

Boulogne B, 4 May

Dear Mum, Dad, Jim, and Grandad,

Briefly, quickly, inefficiently, I will now resume the week's events. As usual, I don't know where I got to last time. I think it must have been last Sunday, when I did hundreds of things including going to the swimming pool. Monday morning (27th of April) we left at 8.00 (bleary). On the Périphérique, one of the tyres on Tagezou got a puncture, a jolly event on a busy multi-lane road, luckily near an exit. When the tyre was mended, it was found Tagezou wouldn't start. So while the minibus went to get the tyre mended (on a long journey you can't take the risk of having no spare tyre) a breakdown lorry towed Tagezou off the 'péri-culeux' (as someone called it). At least two hours late, we got out of Paris, and off down the autoroute du sud, near which Montélimar is situated. It was then an easy, if expensive, journey. We arrived at eight-ish in the evening, in good time. Most of us were staying with Michel K's sister and her husband. He is a farmer, through whose land the motorway runs, a shame as the house is noisy on that side if the windows are open. For

about 20 years, he has been looking after delinquent boys. It started when the authorities tried putting frequent offenders to work with farmers, rather than in prison. Mr Carmichael had a way with them, and the number increased. This grew until the motorway was built, meaning less land for him to cultivate, so hostels were built on his property and now there are 60 boys based there, but only 40 at a time on average, as many have apprenticeships. There is a regular staff of cooks, cleaners and teachers, but it still takes a lot of their time. Four of the boys came to the show.

It is a very pretty area, at the moment very green. A good sun, but there's a lot of wind – the mistral – so it was always cold and difficult to get away from the wind.

On Tuesday morning we were at the theatre at 8.00am. It is a very old theatre that has just been totally transformed. The old painted ceiling and curling balconies have been left, but all the paint, seats, carpet, equipment, stage, curtains, boxes, are new. Because of this the manager wouldn't let us put our equipment in, afraid we would scratch the paint. So we had to adapt to theirs, not easy. The worst for me was that the control room was at the top of the theatre at the back, and out of the auditorium, so even with the windows open it was only possible to hear the level of sound by sticking my head out of the window. My tape machines were miles from their mixer, the window would only open halfway so I couldn't lean out, and the mike operator couldn't hear if things were too loud... but still I think it was a good lesson in doing the best in spite of adverse conditions.... I think the show went quite well, but not so smooth as it could be. I hope we'll do better in Bourgueil as I don't like to think we are slipping.

One day we had lunch with the organiser's son, a colonel of the local regiment, in the officers' mess. We were treated as honoured guests and ate very well. Fun. Straight afterwards, we crossed the road to look at a nougat factory, a swift change of atmosphere which had my head reeling. Another day we went out to a pretty village on a hill, with a view over the countryside and tiny, tiny streets of stone houses. How I cursed my camera being stuck.... I still haven't had a chance to take it to be looked at.

Thursday we left there at 9.00am and headed straight for Vigy, between Metz and Thionville, and the National Meeting. We arrived in time to get an early-

ish night. Friday we could lie in. In the afternoon we had the first meeting, then mostly meetings all weekend, apart from one visit to see how factory workers houses have been renovated. The girl I was sharing a room with was really nice, called Denise, from nearby but works in Thionville and lives in a foyer there. She saw a poster for our show in the foyer, so went and was really grabbed by it. She took the Danguy's address, and has seen them several times since. She is coming to Caux in the summer, and appreciated the weekend very much. Funnily enough, she found her parents have known MRA for a long time. They came on the Sunday. She writes super poems, has done secretarial training, but works in a horticulture shop, which is also what her parents do. I found it very interesting to talk to her.

We got back to Paris in good time last night. I was asleep quickly, soon after 10.30pm, and woke at 8.30am, so that was a good night's sleep. Then I did my washing, unpacked, and we had a M&T meeting. Then I went to have lunch with the Sentis, and talked a lot about Cornwall. It was nice of them to take such an interest in me. So then I got back to write, and have tea, and have no time to go to the pool after all, which is disappointing but does save walking in the rain. Now I will re-pack my bag at top speed as tonight I am taking Florence and Irene to Sue's, and we leave tomorrow morning at 8.30am.

Excuse the style of this letter, a sort of 'stream of consciousness', but it's much, much quicker.

Bye now, lots of love, Su

PS It's not raining now, which is a shame. Thanks for the instructions for the Olympia, which is now worth its weight in gold, as I often use it. Thanks Mum, for your card. Thanks for your letter Dad. I could be free to come home in three weeks' time - it depends on the 'Boss' as He pulls the financial strings. I am trying hard to stay 'free' on that, and trust that He understands how much I'm looking forward to being home.... So expect me when you see me.

POSTCARD: Bourgueil

Friday 8th May

Dear Mum and Dad,

The building marked with a cross is where we're giving the show. The Abbey is still used by a community of nuns, but the building where we are is now a cinema. It was the refectory, so has a lovely vaulted roof and walls all in pale stone, but there's not much space above the stage to get the right height for the lights, and the stone gives the sound too much bass. Yesterday's show went well in spite of two channels not working on the mixer, which reduced my possibilities even more. The kids were better. Tonight is a public show. This is a lovely quiet country area. Notice the vines.

Boulogne B, Monday 11th May

Dear Mum, Dad, Jim, Grandad, Aunty Judy, whoever,

First, thanks for all recent mail – a funny card from Mum, and long typed letter from Dad. I was glad to speak to Dad briefly on the phone, and sorry Mum wasn't there. But I will see you soon.

Now, I'll get straight down to a report of last week, before I lose courage. Left here Tuesday 8.30am for Bourgueil. A four-hour journey. Arrived for lunch at the Bourdin's, Claude's parents. There are hundreds of Bourdins in Bourgueil, which only has a population of 3,000. They are viticulteurs, farmers/wine producers, making a red wine, well known as a good one. The Bourdins have turned the old stable of their farm into a space for receiving clients. There is a long, massive table, a big fireplace and benches. This is where we ate lunch every day. The first day we grilled steaks over the fire, the second day turkey 'escalopes', the third day 'boudin' (black pudding) which I didn't eat. We also used this room as a waiting room. The afternoon was spent in the 'theatre' – a cinema with a tiny stage, and not much room above it to hang lights. As it was previously the refectory of the Abbey it was solid stone (bad sound) and vaulted (pretty). There was no real dressing room – Michel had a gas heater and a broken mirror in a room off the stage, and washed in a bucket of cold water outside, in the courtyard.

The first show was Thursday afternoon, for schools and OAPs. The kids were really too young, but better behaved than at Orléans. The OAPs were well behaved, I didn't see any asleep (at Moutier an old man in the back row nodded off....) The second show was Friday night. A lot of Bourdins were

there, the Curé, and people from around: a very useful audience as their seeing the show will help consolidate the work Claude has already done in his town, and also helped some to understand MRA better, or from a different angle. My hosts were a couple with a baby girl, old friends of Claude's. Rather anti-MRA. Nice people. I ate with them in the evenings and saw them at breakfast. I got up for the latter, taken at 7.15am every day, even when I could have slept in, because I wanted to see the couple, even if the previous night had been late. And at the end I felt less exhausted than I usually do.

So Sunday I also got up for breakfast. I am still tired but have had no headaches or the usual post-show exhaustion. Friday we had a day free, so went on an outing. First to a church by the Loire where a group of kids happened to be acting out the local 'event' – the stealing of the body of St Martin. It must have been a class exercise, as no one was watching but us. Then we had a picnic on top of the hill – with a lovely view of the river and area. Then we visited a famous Abbey, whose history is entwined with that of the Plantagenets – Henry II, Eleanor of Aquitaine, Richard the Lionheart. We took down Friday night, and left at 8.00am Saturday morning. Dropped the piano at Tours, Annie and Claude stayed in Bourgueil, we got back in time for lunch, then a discussion with the Williams, who came with us, by the way. Then I did some washing, unpacked, stuck photos in a book, had a long bath, had supper, went to bed at 8.30pm and was asleep by 10.30pm. Sunday was church, with a good sermon on the Christian life.

I hope Mum had a happy birthday. I have lots to do this week. Tomorrow I hope to get my ticket and renew my passport at the same time (one after the other.) Today I must try and write letters and wash some woollies, and do some sewing, then by Wednesday I should be able to start packing all my stuff for summer storage.

We leave for Lille early Monday 18th. I should think we'd be back Sunday 24th. We have an M&T meeting at 17.30pm so will discuss the whole thing, the summer I mean. Now I will leave you, in order to go and lay the table. I am dying to get home.

A bientôt, Su XXX

Dear Mum and Dad,

I am writing from Lille, it is Monday 18th May. I haven't much to say, so I'm not getting my typewriter out. I will send Jim a postcard. This is really to confirm my proposed date of arrival – Thursday 28th May at Plymouth Breton Side Bus Station at 13.45pm. Hooray!

Last week was very dull. Cooking, office, passport, FNAC (I got the record), packing my stuff. Thursday, six of us went to see 'West Side Story' - it's a real classic of a musical.

We left yesterday afternoon for Lille. Annie and I are staying with a lady with a 17-year-old daughter and 15-year-old son. Lille is nice, the North is industrial and reputed to be grey and smoky, but I like the Flemish feel of the buildings and the countryside is more interesting to me than the flat plains around Paris and area. This theatre has been none too easy. It's only a hall with a stage, but it'll work OK.

I've run out of things to say. I have a niggly headache. Last week I slept well all week by getting to bed in time to lie awake for an hour trying to sleep, yet still get in eight hours. It worked very well. It is still cold in Paris and here, although the sun shone today, the air and wind are cold. So please order lots of sun for when I'm home.

Bye now, love, Su

PS As you asked, when I'm home I'd like to eat:

Pasties every two days

Toad-in-the-hole

Anything made with brown flour (I miss that very much)

Baked beans

Fish and chips

POSTCARD: Lille

Saturday 23 May

We are in the theatre, waiting for Tagazou to come back from taking the piano home. Ah, here they are. Now all the boxes must be loaded in. Then

we will be off to Paris, stopping for a picnic on the way. Today it is very grey and chilly. I wanted to find a card which shows the very different feel of the architecture here, this doesn't do that very well. Bye again, Su

Friday 22 May, 11.50

Dear Mum, Dad, Jim, Grandad, and all,

As usual, a report of the week. Monday we were up early and in the theatre setting up. We had lunch in a student canteen. In the evening we were with our families. Tuesday we only got to the theatre at 9.00am, late for us, to do the more detailed work. I typed most of the day. Lunch same, but in evening had hot dogs in a café opposite the theatre. Show at 8.30pm. Some nasty crackling in the speakers –something to do with the control of the radio-mike.

Wednesday, all came to lunch with our family. Then to the theatre, for a 15.30pm show. 100-odd audience, many more than the day before.

Thursday, yesterday – we had a picnic in Belgium. We visited the (odd) Cathedral and old town of Tournai (on your map, 30km to the right of Lille) then went up a 'hill' for the picnic. It started to rain just as we were finishing. We had a lovely spot at the top of a field with a view over the countryside, and sheltered in the trees just behind. Someone started blowing, or 'playing', a blade of grass, so soon we had an orchestra of grass-blade players, conducted by Peter. Unsuccessfully, as we were all laughing too much to be able to blow. Then as it was still raining some went off to fetch the car and minibus. So we created another orchestra with empty bottles, Tupperware boxes, etc. which was also a failure.

When the vehicles arrived we went to a café at the top of the hill, a little village, and looked at the church. Some went back to Lille and a few of us took a nice walk through a wood, and fields, and the sun was shining again. Ate at 6.00pm in a Chinese restaurant - nice – and the show was at 8.30pm. Show OK. Tonight there is a show at 8.30pm.

Today most of the team are eating meals with different people who wanted to meet us. I wasn't invited to join one of these parties, so am spending the

day at home – I don't mind a bit of peace and quiet, the next few days are going to be hectic.

We pack after the show tonight, and leave tomorrow morning, not too early. Some are going back earlier for an Industrial Meeting. We have had some fantastic articles in the papers here. There was a press conference before the shows on Monday with Michel O, who knows the director of a local theatre. That must have helped a lot, and they were photographed together. Journalists were present from all the major papers around. Then a journalist was at one of the performances, and wrote a very good review. This one will be extremely important to us.

The weather has been very hot and close the last few days, with sudden heavy rain. Today it is colder but just as changeable. Summer is taking a long time to arrive.

This seems very short but I don't know what else to say right now. Anyway, it's nearly lunchtime. So I'll say goodbye for now.

Lots of love, Su

Boulogne, 2nd July 22.00

Dear Mum and Dad,

Please excuse the greasy marks. This is a quick scribble before I write from Caux. I was glad to hear your voices last night.

I repacked yesterday afternoon, so today first went with Michel O to copy Press addresses from a friendly theatre company. Then had the afternoon to potter around doing the half dozen remaining jobs, going shopping for toothpaste and having a long bath. We leave after normal-time breakfast tomorrow.

I have piles of boxes and bags of stuff stowed away here for the summer. I must reduce it when I get back, it's not all essential.

There are only the Koechlins, the Tates, Irene, Florence, Elisabeth and Annie here. Tomorrow Annie, Michel O, François, his friend and myself will be the few in the minibus, but will carry stuff for other people.

It's warmer here than it was there, but chilly by Paris standards and it rained all afternoon. Most unusual...

Yesterday, I was so sorry to have left the calm, the sanity and the beauty of Cornwall. Whenever I thought of the beach, I wanted to cry. I didn't find it too hard to be back, the changes of attitude I longed for have been given me this past month. I expect when I arrive at Caux I shall find the same.

Thanks for all you did for me.

Lots of love, Su

Room 626, end of Mountain House, in a tower

Wednesday 8th July, 18.10

Dear Mum and Dad,

I'm sitting on my bed relaxing so don't want to get up to type. I'm "housekeeper on call" but haven't been called out so have had a few calm hours, reading in the sun. It's been warm and sunny since I've been here so I've made a point of sitting out for at least half an hour each day.

It hasn't been half as bad as I expected, coming here. We spent Saturday and Sunday in the theatre, preparing for Sunday's 16.45pm show. At the beginning, the German translation was coming out over the loudspeakers, even louder than the proper sound. All through apparently, there were troubles with the translations. Otherwise it went very well – Sunday morning we had a full rehearsal, so worked the rust off.

Monday, I joined the housekeeping team, breakfast at 7.30am, meeting at 8.15am. All is quiet at the moment, as there are only a few hundred people here and a high percentage of them are looking after their own rooms. With

few arrivals and departures, we only need about an hour to do a floor. I spent the rest of the day, apart from a short time outside, in the office typing and translating letters for Michel O. and Claude. Yesterday I finished off all that and had a quiet afternoon. In the evening there was a 'Chacun Compte' (youth hosted session) planning meeting. Things seem to be taking definite shape, now. Today I've started typing a film script as extra English copies are needed. I got to the morning meeting, about France. A lot was explained about the political changes and their implications so it was really interesting. Tonight there is a meeting on USEPN/Paris/October.

I have been approached about interpreting, so those concerned do know I want to try. Maybe I'll start slowly, reading a film translation. Anyway, nothing more's been said but I must make a point of seeing the person coordinating again to remind her. I've offered to help the secretaries but don't feel I can take on responsibility up there in the office yet.

There is thunder rolling around, I wonder if the weather will suddenly break. My room-mate is Lotty, a Dutch girl.

Thursday 6.30pm – Just a few seconds before supper (6.45pm). I have hardly seen the Joughins. Tonight I am eating with a girl from Papua New Guinea. The meeting this morning was on the Pacific area – Australia, NZ, PNG, Japan, etc. It was interesting and very warm, relaxed and jolly.

It's got cloudy this afternoon, and mist has come up here now.

Saturday – how long it's taken me to finish this letter! I had supper with the Joughins last night. Today all the overseas visitors have been on an outing. Some went to Lausanne, others to Berne. I went to Yverdon as when I went there in January with the show, we did not have time to look at the town and also I hoped to see the lady I stayed with. A coach went, 27 people, 12 nationalities. We were shown around the Town Hall by a councillor, who presented us each with a book on the town, and we had a cold drink. We visited a museum, then went out to the forest to a chalet where we ate grilled sausages and rice salad, black cherries and cake. The ladies who look after Annie and I in January were there. So nice to see them. We went for a little walk, and saw the lake through the trees. Had a lovely drive home. A relaxing

day, and nice to make closer contact with many people I hadn't met. Will stop now – hope you're relaxing and enjoying yourselves. Love, Su

Monday 13

As I've still not got this in the post, I thought I'd add a bit more. It's taken me all this time to remember to dig around to find leftover stamps from last year.

Saturday night a clarinet quintet did a concert here. Sunday the weather was cloudy and grey. I had to move up to the Grand Hotel. I thought, well that's a nuisance, but at least the view is better up there and I'm enjoying seeing the lake, etc, it helps me be here. Only to find I have a room looking out the back of the building, onto walls, a car park, and a little bit of mountain. I was so depressed when I saw it. So I had to think I am lucky to be in a room with only two beds, and I should be a bit humble and accept what I'm given. I had a lie-in this morning – although I had a relaxing weekend, I felt quite tense, fed up. So I just stayed in my room all morning and feel really refreshed, it's quite amazing. Apart from making some beds I haven't done much 'real' work either – no typing. At 5.00pm there was another study group, this time a Maori speaking about NZ but especially on the Maoris.

10.00pm – I must go to bed.

Bye, lots of love, Su

Friday 17 July

Dear Mum and Dad,

I have just a few minutes to start writing to you on a rather strange machine, which makes large gaps between the letters.

The last few days have been really hectic. Today, for example, at 7.30am I had breakfast with others to plan one of the morning meetings for next week. At 8.00am I went up to meet with the housekeepers, then worked fast (with a Swiss girl) to get it all done by 10.00am, for the main meeting. Then I missed going to the 11.15am discussion group in order to type a stencil – a sheet of

information on St Francis, to hand out to English-speaking people instead of the programme, which is all in French. I decided to go without lunch as I ate lots of cake and chocolate yesterday, so went and read the papers.

In a minute when the meal is over, I shall go and look for Josephine – a girl from Malta who has found I haven't been out for a walk since last Saturday and so is taking me. At tea I have got Michel O to help me tell three Chinese (from Taiwan) girls about St Francis, as they have seen the show and want to know more before seeing it again tomorrow night. Then from 16.30pm to 18.30pm I am on duty at the front door to welcome new arrivals. Supper is with my new roommate Denise and Annie, and some of Claude's cousins. There is a play on again this evening, 'Bishop's Move', I would like to see but don't know if it wouldn't be wiser to go and rest, if not sleep. I had to do that last night, although there was another good play on, as I'd had enough. When Denise came in I was asleep. I got up at 6.00am this morning and took a whole hour of quiet. It wasn't long enough. No wonder I have found this week difficult – I'd only been taking a quarter to half an hour in the mornings....

Yesterday the youth hosted session opened with a meeting at 17.00pm. Denise arrived about 1.00pm when I was supposed to be on duty at the welcome station but there were two others there, and few arrivals, so I abandoned them to look after her. This is the girl who saw a poster in her hostel in Thionville announcing the show, went with some friends, and was interested listening to Michel O talking to people after the show. She got in touch with a couple working "full-time" there, the Danguys, met them regularly, and came to our national meeting in Yutz in April. She seems to have found a lot in MRA that she is looking for – she takes great care of people and is Christian. I have not had time to talk to her much yet, so I don't know how far she has got really.

Last night's supper was with the housekeepers to celebrate a birthday. There was a cake - I had already broken my rules and had cake at teatime, and with coffee this morning, so I thought lunch would be too much. The meals here are really quite rich. I have been having cereals and apple purée for breakfast, to try and balance all the fats and sugar and trying hard to eat small helpings and NEVER take second helpings – I reckon that's disgustingly greedy anyway, I only need one plateful.

Thursday morning, I had my first attempt at translation. There were two films on Caux instead of a meeting. It just meant reading the English script - not as straightforward as it seems, but a great experience. Tomorrow morning I will do the meeting if there is no rehearsal, and if anyone speaks French. Anyway, I'm starting....

Now Josephine and I are going for our walk.

I have just found why the letters looked so odd on this sheet – I had the wrong golf-ball in. I've typed a whole stencil with it this morning, which is a shame.

I had a super walk – it did both of us a lot of good. And I'm still not hungry.

Michel O has been away for a week with Marie-José and Marie and they are all here now. Annie is hoping the next person who comes from Paris will bring the engagement ring which has been made for her. She has not minded not having one from the start, but is finding it very hard as many people here have asked her why she does not have one – “I thought you were engaged”. As she says, “People know how we live, they should be more sensitive.” She's looking forward to wearing it. There are about 500 here now. The noise in the dining room is frightful. I have barely seen the USEPN team. I will tomorrow, I suppose, as we have a show... Excuse the usual mistakes in typing, the Z is where the W should be and the Y is not where the Z is, which is where it should be, etc. It's a Swiss machine.

Now I'll be off tea-wards. Tomorrow I have less commitments and I'm going to keep things quieter from now on.

17.10 – I have hardly seen Denise at all today. Other people have taken good care of her, thank goodness. I'm on duty now, by the way, to welcome people, show them to their rooms, etc. but no one is arriving. Tea was good, the Chinese girls are super. I love the way they laugh, and giggle joyfully. They are most interested in the show. At supper I'll see a bit of Denise, thank goodness. I do feel very responsible for her but must learn to be guided and not too much of a mother hen. Time will teach me. It's not easy.

I am a bit hungry now (no cake at tea).

Just looking over your letters (so far one each since I've left – and thanks for the elastic.) The last play was very fresh and good. I hope tomorrow's will be inspired. Everyone here is now getting weary with rushing about. I am mostly glad to be here. Every day is full of excitement and I have plenty of people to care for, which I like.

I hope Dad's back is better. I also had a letter from Jim. He said, "I feel you are doing what God wants, try not to get disheartened." That really helped me, when I felt fed up a couple of times. I remembered his words and felt stronger. Yesterday I was so low, I started telling a few people how I felt. It helped, though I see no reason for it. Perhaps I need to find a new commitment, 'why I'm here'.

Monday 20th: I have climbed all the way up to my room, and am going to write here, I can't go back down to type. I have no money now for a stamp, so please excuse the gaps between letters.

Saturday: skipped around housekeeping fast to get to the 9.15am preparation of the meeting because I was to do French-to-English translation. It was very helpful to hear in advance who would be speaking, and the content of what they'd say. Meetings are at 10.00am at the moment, to leave time for a discussion group at 11.15am. There were several French speakers. I started OK, but one person spoke very fast and I started to get lost, so Pauline jumped in taking it from the German. I picked up again after a few minutes and in all had about four speakers to translate, mostly all in a row unfortunately. I felt awful about not keeping going, but Pauline said I was very good, and merely should have asked people to tell the speaker to slow down. Coming out afterwards, many people came up to me to say I did well; I felt so pleased and truly enjoyed doing it. I can see I need a lot of practice. So now I'm glad I've dared.

It was all such an event that I didn't care about doing the sound for USEPN that evening on different equipment. Normally, that would have thrown me, but with only a brief rehearsal first, I sailed into the show without any qualms and dealt with the problems as they came up. Why am I so timid normally?

Sunday: The morning meeting was on “How to change hearts”. I joined the preparation group in March, as I thought it the area I most need to develop in. Months later, here, I had no definite ideas of what I’d say on the theme. The others thought of good tales to tell, and special people to ask to speak. I was convinced I had nothing to say until I expressed rather vehemently my idea of the family having a lot to do with it. Someone pointed out that that was obviously where my conviction lay, so I worked out something on that line. I had to get it all written out in my notebook and really tried to wriggle out of getting up to say it. But Jean-Louis announced it, so I had to, and I had put so much of my heart into the story that I hope it came out as a valuable contribution. Especially as I spoke slowly and with real feeling, which I didn’t know I could find. I’ll type it out for you all to see. I hope you don’t mind me talking about you to all of Caux. I had to describe your part too, to make it a family story. Thanks, though, very much, for giving me something to contribute.

Next: Sunday afternoon I was asked to translate for a drama group. I found myself talking in French (much harder that way) playing miming games, shouting, jigging about, then being part of an African village with a serious epidemic and a crazy witchdoctor. I just can’t describe it, it was incredible....

Supper: translating again, for Grace and another Taiwanese girl and a lady from Cambodia, living in France, whose husband was vice-president of the National Assembly before the war. He is now presumed executed, and this lady lives in France with her children. It was a most interesting meal, and very moving.

So then I got an early night, after all the excitement.

Today is a free day. Most people have gone on picnics, in spite of the rain. Yesterday snow fell high up. I ‘housekept’ until 12.00, as there was much to do - thank goodness it came today, when I was free. I will at last do my washing, I hope, later and enjoy some priceless peace and quiet. Later I will type out what I said at the meeting. There may be some slight inaccuracies, but you have to summarise and be brief. A letter came from both of you yesterday.

Enjoy yourselves, lots of love, Su

SPEECH BY SU, SATURDAY 18TH JULY 1981

(Theme of the meeting, "How to change hearts?")

I feel that in our own home or family, we can each do something.

Last autumn, I realised that although I am very close to my parents and younger brother, we didn't know each other. It occurred to me that my parents didn't know who I really am and there was a side to my life they didn't know about. I thought, they should know fully what their child is like and it may put our contact on a more honest footing. Also, they should know a bit of what the 'permissive society' means, through me.

So I uncovered the lies. They were shocked. They were very hurt. My father told me a thing or two about himself. That hurt me. My mother blamed herself, and had a long fight with bitterness. My brother later did the same as I had, writing to tell the truth.

During the past year we have started to support and help one another. When I was at home for the last month, many tensions between us were resolved. A girl, Debbie, working in our home area but whose home is in the north, came to our house to talk. She said, "When I see you, a united and Christian family, I feel I've missed a lot in my home life." We shared our experiences with her and she is working on a new relationship with her parents.

Even though I live away from home, it is good to feel that Mum, Dad, my brother, myself, all have something more to give the world.

Friday 24 July 1981

Dear Mum, Dad and Jim,

Really, I am so stupid! In the middle of the week several people went back to Paris and I could have sent my letters with them – I have plenty of French stamps. So I'm sorry you had such a long gap between letters, and hope you didn't get too worried. Now I have changed my French coins into Swiss money

and have some English money left I can change – I had been hoarding both as it's useful to have a few coins in advance. Then I thought of the line from USEPN, the part taken from St Matthew's Gospel, which speaks so strongly to Francis, "...take with you no money in your purse, no coat, no sandals, no staff..." Which is why I'm going to try and find good homes for any of my possessions that I never use but keep 'just in case'.

Third letter from Jim today. Yes, it's so easy to forget to pray. Yes it's such an obvious thing to do. I'm always forgetting or not giving it enough time. I'm glad you've had time to read and time to enjoy yourself as well as peacefully absorb the course. Lucky you, going to the theatre – I do have chances here but not to see Shakespeare!

Also a card from Dad, making me very jealous of you camping by the sea. I hope you have better weather than we're having here at the moment. Plenty of thunderstorms, clouds, and rain, this last week. Maybe by August the sun will wake up. No, no shorthand yet. This week has been hectic despite my thinking I could make it quiet. My roommate has left this morning at 5.00am and I have another tomorrow but I think I shall get away with just being a friend and not having to think for and look after her 100% of the time, as German-speaking people will look after her. I think she will be German, which will be interesting if she doesn't speak much English or French.

Now: 1) Denise; 2) Events of week; 3) The State of My Soul.

1) I told you already about Denise, she saw the show in Thionville where she works and lives in a hostel, where she saw the poster, was interested and contacted a local couple (Danguys) then found her parents knew and approved of MRA. I thought her very dreamy, living in a dream world, wanting to help people but not giving them any spiritual help because she hasn't developed enough yet for herself. Many people who met her in Yutz at the National Meeting felt she could end up working full-time in MRA for a while and many here are convinced she would benefit most from doing the ten-month programme. I shared with her a lot, often late at night, telling her many of my deepest experiences, even when it was hard to open up to a comparative stranger. I listened carefully to all her thoughts and problems. I introduced her to interesting people and tried to stimulate her to a

wider vision. I organised a meal so she heard all about last year's ten-month programme. She didn't listen, but kept dashing off to telephone her boyfriend. I finally told her I thought she might like to do the ten-month programme, as she seemed so blind to the idea. Don't imagine we've been trying to push her into something she shouldn't do – she just couldn't think beyond her relationship with this boy.... So I let it drop, and decided to make her last days fun and see if praying hard would help. On her last day, she discovered that part of the ten-month programme would be at Tirley (which I had actually told her, but anyway....) Before she came, she'd had a dream of a blackboard with 'The North' written on it in English. At one of the first meetings here she had a thought, in the quiet time, to learn English. On the very last day, just before going to bed, she told me she'd just realised the significance. Giving me no time to get hold of the information sheet and application form for her, so I will have to post them. Annie said she thinks Denise knows very well what she should do.... She's a super kid, but lives in an unreal world, has the makings of a great faith but lacks the will to search for it. I'm sure God wants to use her and with time will show the way. Maybe all this has helped her open her mind to other possibilities. There's a lot of the former me in her, so I really care about what happens to her. Especially as the first show seems to have been the call for her. I'm praying specially for her now.

Monday 27 July

A long gap, you will see why later.

- 2) My new roommate is a very nice German girl who has been here before, so I don't have to look after her at all and she is 'changed' already. I hope we will have more chance to chat and share a bit, she speaks good English. I have seen the films 'Freedom' and 'Crossroads'. Interesting from the historical point of view. It is exactly two weeks today that I last slept later than 7.00am. I hope to make Wednesday a lie-in day. The youth hosted session lasted until Friday 24th. It was a very full time for everyone and very fast moving, covering a lot of different points. I think for young people especially who only come for a short time, it is good to keep them thinking at a fast rate to make the most of their time and they can assimilate new ideas faster than older people. I translated in

several meetings last week. Since Friday I have only done housekeeping, as it has been a weekend of huge changes. About half a dozen rooms, or more to prepare every day, which meant in most cases not only making the beds but cleaning too. On Friday Marie-Agnès (Bourdin, Claude's cousin) and I worked until teatime, Saturday too. Sunday we worked all morning and today the same. I am now skipping lunch because I have been eating tons of chocolate, and bread and butter, and cheese, so I am having an apple and peach to compensate. Many people have sore throats, which so far don't seem to have developed, but I have one too, so I hope it's nothing serious (taking Vit C!) Nearly every meal I have lately is booked in advance but now all of a sudden I have no dates. So I can look around to see who there is new to meet – I think I have gained an awful lot of confidence in approaching new people, but haven't put it to the test at meal times yet. The Joughins have gone on holiday. Sallie is here with a friend, and housekeeping. The family session starts today. It is STILL cold and wet. Sunday we had some sun, I had hoped it would last.... I DO hope you have better conditions there.

Right, now I can tell you about the best event of the week: Thursday night, the last evening of the youth hosted session, a programme of fun and music was organised. Apart from a rock ensemble and classical combinations, there were sketches making fun of various aspects of life in this house. There was a description of how to cook a meal with sound effects (vocal) by Gérard. There was a mock television interview of someone describing his time at Caux (Patrick Turner) using all the jargon we use and trying to explain the conference, so it came out totally vague and meaningless! There were announcements every now and then, "I am sorry to disturb your meal, but..." Very funny ones. There was a description of how to find your discussion group, who tend to meet in every corner of the house, which left people passing through the dessert fridge; or 'the blue group meeting in the green room, and the green group meeting in the blue room'.

Then there was a sketch on table service. I came on as a hostess wearing a HUGE yellow flower. Ginny and Jim came up, looking for a table, so I sat them down at an empty six table and went off to find Sam, who is African and who sat opposite Jim and they spoke in Swahili. I brought in Camilla who misunderstood everything Ginny asked her, and then they all went on talking loudly at each other across the table. Meanwhile, Peter and Alison were passing around bread, which Pete

(Vickers) kept stuffing in his mouth all the way through. They forgot to bring the soup, so brought the main course which Alison had to dump on the floor while the soup was served. Then a Swiss German couple joined the table, dressed as hikers, which added another language. The main course was served, with Peter and Alison sticking their fingers into the dishes on the table to see if it had gone cold. Cutlery got dropped on Ginny, the apples rolled all over the floor and got dumped back on the table and at the end Peter poured coffee (cold water) down Jim's neck. Everyone loved it.

The Joughins were in a super sketch. First a Japanese couple arrived at Caux with the TINY wife carrying tons of baggage and the big husband striding on carrying nothing. Then the Joughins arrived, a European couple, with Jane marching stately ahead while John crawled along behind with all the bags. Then we saw a couple leaving the conference, with all their packages strung on a pole which they carried between them. Really simple but good. So those were just some of the highlights of a fantastic evening. I was amazed at the variety of bright ideas people have. It did us all a lot of good to laugh a lot at the end of a rather serious session.

So, I have no idea what is planned for this week. At 5.00pm there is another 'select invitation' (i.e. young people) study group, to hear from one experienced person here. I don't know the theme today. I have an awful lot of typing to catch up on and haven't been getting outside for walks.

- 3) So to point three. I'm feeling a lot happier. Last week I had an experience where suddenly I had to do the third floor alone, had to translate, see to Denise and go to sketch rehearsals and special meetings about the show, and it all got too much. So I didn't do housekeeping one day, sorted out the other things during that morning and talked it over with the other housekeepers, because I had realised that I cannot do the third floor alone – it is a heavy workload there, so Marie-Agnes came to help me. I must talk about it too - today I realise that other floors are easier and I have a lot to catch up on, so will ask if I could be transferred to something lighter, if there are the right people to take over on the 3rd. That, I see now, is one thing I did wrong last year. I struggled on alone often because I thought I should, but we're a team, ready to support each other, so I must share my needs and let the others know how I feel when things get too much.

I really desperately need to sleep too – I've been given extra energy and strength day after day, but am now finding it hard to care for other people, I'm so worn out myself. Today you see I can't go up to my room because I must type a few things for Claude, then later go to this meeting, then the opening session is at 8.00pm and I'd like to be there. OK I can get an early night, but I don't get a good eight hours because I can't get off to sleep. I'd like to be up at 6.00am to get an hour's quiet but that never happens, it's usually half an hour. But I mustn't tell you all this, I must go and talk to someone else. I promised Marie-Agnes she could lie in tomorrow, but I don't know if I'll be able to miss Wednesday morning either, as I may have to go and help Rosie (Sallie's friend) on the 2nd as she's new, and so it goes on.... So, having noticed how much I have to bore you with on the subject, I can see I desperately need to talk to one of the other housekeepers for their help. I wouldn't have thought of that if I hadn't happened to be talking to you.... This false responsibility, my difficulties in meeting people, all must have had a big effect last year which were some of the causes of my not wanting to come back. Working them out, and finding I can be very useful and more important finding (not from myself) a love to give in each task I do and trying to do each thing in a Christ-like way have made a new reason for being here at Caux. Not just because the show is here, but because this is where I am myself called to be. Also, last week the others in M&T had a series of meetings about making a record of the show's songs. They were quite informal, and rightly no one had asked me, as I could not particularly help. But I was so angry, bitter and resentful when I first saw them all at tea (Annie didn't need to go, but being with Claude she finds out what goes on). I still feel a little sad that I wasn't asked. But the point is that I immediately felt so bitter. Then I realised that I had often felt left out before, but it was wrong of me not to trust them totally to be guided, to work out certain aspects of our decisions as a subcommittee, knowing they could look to guidance to see what to do. I can trust the Lord that they will take the right steps. Without me, it is the Lord running this show, whether I'm there or not. I told Annie about this, and that I had often been jealous of her and Claude being so useful, and me so useless, but from now on I will leave it to them, leave it all in God's hands. It hurt a lot but I've learnt a precious lesson. I'm still afraid of the coming autumn in Paris, but coming here has worked out, so I will be confident that the next step will work out too. Instead of

waiting for the others to come and tell me what is going on, I must stop and ask them from time to time how things are with them, and what news there is. I wonder if they think I'm not interested because I never appear to take an interest. I think I will make a point of hunting out all the USEPN people, starting from today, and actually stop and converse with them instead of saying hello and passing on.

Another long letter from you today. I miss you to talk to. Mum had a dressing gown idea for me – it would be nice to be confident going along the corridor to the bathroom. I'm praying your holiday really sets you up for the rest of the year.

With lots of love, Su

Thursday 30 July 1981

Dear old-folks-now-back-home,

If I start writing another letter after only a few days then maybe news will be fresher when it hits the paper.

I do hope you could listen to the Wedding [Charles and Di] on the radio – the music and words were good. Anyway, I watched the whole procession and service, then left to grab a bite of lunch.

A letter from you today about Dad's first attempt at windsurfing for a long time. I hope you get (got) more chances, and the weather picks up. It's been great here since the first day of the family session (Monday). Hot sun. Today is picnic today, and Lotty and I are going down to mooch around the shops in Montreux and maybe swim. I haven't been down apart from that trip to Yverdon, so I'm more interested in 'civilisation' than climbing mountains today!

Someone has offered me a chance to go away for a week's break in August but it is just the time when we have rehearsals for reworking the show and anyway I don't think I should expect to get away this year – June was an adequate break and I can relax here quite well at some stage – spend a few

days reading and walking before September to make sure I'm relaxed and rested. Unfortunately Michel will have to return from holiday a few times for shows, but otherwise the whole family will be away most of August in a chalet not too far from Caux, so I really hope he gets the full break he needs. Annie and Claude are going to Lourdes for a week. Not a real holiday, I would have thought.

There are many new people here now, and kids all over the place. I am skipping meetings and discussion groups at the moment, just to recover from the recent hectic time when I overheated my brain. I'm feeling fine though – I need to relax but otherwise am quite happy and content. There is a mysterious sore throat going around Caux – mine is nearly gone but not quite, so I'm still sucking antiseptic pastilles and swallowing 500mg Vit C tablets. I'm glad I had the sense to go down to the Infirmary and get stuff after the first 12 hours, it's a very stubborn bug. I haven't done any translation for ages, and hope I don't need to tonight so I can go to bed. I must start up again soon though, it's a week since I did any. The main topics of this session are marriage, family, money. I hope I can catch some of the meetings, as these are basic topics and it would be good to get other people's thoughts and experiences on them.

Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday were hectic housekeeping days. Tuesday was nearly normal again, and so was yesterday. Wednesday I stayed in bed until 9.00am, got up in time to get down to the TV and at 2pm had a rehearsal, all the way through, of the show. Had tea, watched more TV, did a little typing, then supper and the show. Not a particularly brilliant show – I was woolly, Michel missed a few lines, the lights were a bit muddled, etc. It was hot, which we're not used to, and we are all tired – after a month of conference everyone starts to wilt, and those involved in the youth hosted session are only now beginning to come round.

I have plenty of typing to catch up on – Tuesday I meant to have a good bash, but couldn't find the energy, so sat in the sun most of the afternoon. Tomorrow, perhaps... There is a singsong tonight, I don't know if I'll stay up. John Dryden, our show's director, arrives this afternoon to spend a week working with Michel, Hugh and all of us on shortening the show for Paris – it will be one and a half hours with no interval. So half an hour must be

removed. John Burrows, the musical director, comes with his whole family on Sunday.

I mentioned to Lotty the other day that I had no money to go down to Montreux and incidentally none for stamps, so she promptly whipped out a 20F note and told me off for not mentioning it before – I felt ashamed, then realised I'd do the same. So this morning I have bought 10 stamps and can now get down to writing letters and postcards. Time is going fast now, that's a good sign to me because it shows my time is filled enough to go past without me noticing. I am afraid of going to Paris, but feel full of trust in the Lord, that he has a place for me there and will need me to fill certain needs. It looks obvious, but it's not obvious when lack of self-confidence and lack of faith combine.

We had beef burgers, ketchup and chips for lunch yesterday. The day before, we had thick American pancakes, with bacon, maple syrup and ice cream all on the same plate. I have gone back to counting calories. It's frightening; I'm going to have to sleep through the odd meal occasionally. I can't miss breakfast because I have to get down for housekeeping and can't get through the morning on an empty stomach.

Tuesday 4th

I am sitting in bed, so would rather finish this and send it off, than type it. Anyway, one copy will do you all at the moment. My sore throat became a stuffed nose and head from Friday to yesterday. Yesterday it cleared up in my head but descended to my air tubes. So this morning my voice has been most peculiar. At 2pm I saw the doctor who gave me more Vit C and told me to rest, so I've been in bed ever since. I feel fine apart from a tightness in throat and chest. I'm staying here for the rest of the day. Will just nip out for a quick supper in the cafeteria, if I don't find anyone to bring me food. I have read one whole Agatha Christie this afternoon... it's so nice having a library here. We had meringues and a creamy whip for lunch on Sunday – unusual. Even more unusual – yesterday's lunch was sweetcorn salad and brown (wholemeal) rolls. Today was brown (!!!!) rice and grated cheese and salad. Gorgeous. The best meals of the summer. Such a change from meat, cheese, and potatoes. Dessert yesterday was crumble and custard. Incredible. And orange jelly today. Bet it won't last, the Swiss and French couldn't survive....

Thursday last – a good day out (with Lotty). Swimming pool 11.30 to 2.00pm, and lunch (quiche bought by Lotty). Then shopping (and ice cream) in Montreux. Home for late tea. Lovely warm day, also plunged into the lake - no colder than the pool I reckon. Many windsurfers on lake. Relaxing day.

Thursday night – an evening of song, dance, items from all over the world in a kind of concert. Friday night the housekeepers had a fondue together. Yum...

Friday I was on duty to translate but few spoke in French. Same on Saturday.

Saturday was 1 August – Swiss National Day. Brass band on the lawn at 6.00am (I was still at the back of the Grand Hotel, so heard nothing.) Yodelling and accordionists at teatime (on a grassy square with the whole village of Caux included). Also, Scottish and French folk dancing, a sack race and games. Organised by a committee of people from Caux and Mountain House (the theatre team set up mikes for speakers). Supper was on our lawn: Swiss sausages and potato salad. At 9pm a parade with lanterns walked up the mountain to a field where a HUGE bonfire was burning. A speech was made by a VIP, the Swiss constitution read out and the national anthem sung. We could see fireworks and many bonfires in the distance, along the edges of the lake. There are many kids here of course, as the family session finished on Sunday, and they loved it all.

Sunday

I moved back down the hill, to be with Lotty again. So nice to be in a nice room with a balcony and she is such fun. I must create a relaxing environment for her. Oh, it's just lovely to be back here.

People are slowly starting to leave, including Sallie and her friend Rosie.

Monday, the old housekeeping fun started - diving into rooms as soon as people were out to clean, make the bed and bung in flowers so new arrivals could come in later in the day. Actually, I had four temporary volunteers so my time was spent telling them what to do, running to help people doing their rooms themselves before leaving, etc. Great fun, bossing people about! Got a quick walk in the afternoon on my own which I mostly spent climbing up a

sheer, crumbling bank to get at the mass of wild raspberries. I regret not being able to return this afternoon (I wonder how many calories there are in maggots?)

This morning was quieter, I was virtually on my own but had plenty to do which got done. Empty rooms should have been done this afternoon and I had only one quick-change situation, which the cleaning lady did. So I created massive, pompous flower vases. Claire Dunn is here – arrived last night I suppose. Anyway, she was in the thick of the housekeeping battle with us this morning.

I have cancelled housekeeping from Thursday on, as this is 'production week' for the show – Michel, Hugh and the two Johns are chopping it about. Lots of material will disappear, I gather. I'm praying hard that the message will be strengthened and they will create exactly what God wants. Also, the English, French and German programmes will need adjustment – to the tune of six stencils. So that's four for me and hopefully someone else will do the German.

Tuesday 8pm - after supper, which I ate on the terrace with Marie Orphelin, then back to bed. I feel really weary and tired since the first few hours sitting here in bed this afternoon – I could have pushed myself on but now I'm so glad I've stopped. Tomorrow I shall have to be up at 6.30am as usual as there are only a handful of housekeepers. I'm not coughing now.

Peaches are served often now – I really enjoy them. Apparently the Joughins are coming back today.

It's great to have someone to share guidance with – neither of my previous roommates wanted to (except at 11.00pm). I feel happy here now. I don't know how it would be if I didn't have the justification of the show but that's no problem yet, it's now that matters. I try to remember to praise the Lord for all he can do, and does.

How did you react to what I said about us in a meeting? I had one long talk with a Chinese girl who wanted to know more.

Wednesday 5th – long letter from Mum today so I'm glad I can add more to this before it goes. I heard about the end of your holiday. You have such simple fun, it sounds super. I need to be more conscious, during the day, of my priorities. Often I set them at the start then forget and "just do this now". These days in housekeeping I've really had to keep priorities in my head.

Other people are sometimes really broke – I heard Claude say he's at times not been able to send letters and I know Christian too often has little. I think we need to look at this together with the younger people in France. I've an idea some of the friends we have could help more. I've no idea how to put it though.

Housekeeping – there is a need for people who know what to do to stay for longer periods, and be a continuous link between sessions. Only a week's training will do but no one stays long enough. Mum, you could do this job really well. You would have the right attitude – some people don't care about details and it can be hard physically at change-over times like this. It's a middle-aged ladies' job by tradition but in reality there is a complete cross-section of all ages. It is good for shy people. If ever you and Dad come to Caux, I'd love having you, Mum, working with the housekeeping – I'd really enjoy that.

GREAT letter from Jim – what a terrific idea you have of getting people to Paris for USEPN, I'm stunned.

So long now then – back to flowers and beds and bins.

Lots of love, Su

Caux, 11 August 1981 (Tuesday)

Dear All,

My feet ask to be put up so I'll try and write legibly from my bed. It's very dull, grey weather. Last week we had sun, but it was too hot and going out wasn't pleasant.

Towards the end of last week we had a technical run of USEPN, then Saturday a dress rehearsal, to learn the new cues and a few new things. The dress rehearsal was awful – I did nothing right! The show, Sunday 14.30pm, went well. Everything fell into place and the new shortened version was highly acclaimed. It is one and a half hours with no break. I think it's much better.

This morning I bumped into Joyce Trehane. She had been looking for me for days, apparently. I must meet her again, I'm not too clear how she knows you so well.... I rarely see the Joughins. I rarely see any of my friends...

Saturday night, Annie and Claude took me out, to Glion for an ice cream. Annie is away now on a week's holiday.

I have virtually lost the cough I had. The inhalations helped. I'm forever tired here - I hope I can get a bit of peace and quiet to sleep before Paris.

I've not done any translation for a long time and there are plenty of others to do it. Housekeeping is generally much busier this year – more people changing rooms. Apparently the 'Allocation' office has had a struggle to fit the right people in the right places (yet I know there are plenty of free beds). Sometime I will have to retype our USEPN script but not until the alterations have become final.

Thursday – yesterday a picnic was organised by and for those who were responsible for the youth hosted session. We left at 10.30am (so I did housekeeping first and finished in time.) We walked to the Col de Jaman (about 25 of us). It was a cool day, with the odd patch of sun. Perfect for walking. The first half hour or more was a constant steep climbing, and for those like me who've had no major exercise for a while, it was horrible. Puffing and panting! Then an hour later, we took a path which went around the mountain, more or less flat. That was beautiful. Woods, flowers, meadows... We had a picnic lunch at the head of a valley, then turned back for Caux, taking the road, arriving at 3.00pm. By then I was exhausted – but at the USEPN/Paris/October meeting after supper my brain was working very hard, and even had some ideas. Today I'm stiff from the hips down.

Friday – Thank you so much for the “care package”. Thank you particularly for the money. I have learned whilst not having any that I need to use what I have

in a responsible way, and that I must wait, be guided, before using it. That's new to me really, I was so impulsive with money. Vit C will be very useful. What a treat – peanut butter! I brought bread to my room last night and breakfasted here, so I could eat it in private. Amazing how much I ate in just one sitting.... I will give Annie hers at the rehearsal this afternoon. The photos are good, they remind me what a super time I had at home in June. It really was good. Thanks too for the local newspapers, I like hearing what's happening in the town, to compare with what's happening elsewhere.

Great letter from Jim – good luck with the rest of your internship. How could you eat fish and chips, and Chinese, in one evening? I envy you all the swimming in the sea. I want to try and get down to the lake again but the weather's not too good. It's sunny now though, so I must go for a walk before tea.

Mum – keep praying. Can you pray for health and strength for Michel, peace in all our hearts and for all the French embarking on the project of USEPN in Paris in October? Thanks.

I'm glad Dad is getting help with work. It sounds like you had a good day in [the boat] Gypsy, catching all those fish. Are you keeping up the windsurfing?

So, another show tonight, our second in the new version. I hope you are coming to Paris in October. Claude says money is coming in steadily. We have a weekly meeting here, and ideas are taking shape.

I think I'll leave you now. Oh, I had a fondue last night with some friends that were leaving. We ate the fruit salad with impossible kitchen implements. A good idea for a fun meal...

The “care package” really was a thrill – thank you again.

Bye now, lots of love, Su

Caux, 19 August 1981

Dear Mum, Dad, Jim, Baggy, etc,

I am trying different balls in this machine, it is one of the smart ones with a built in correcting device, that is so quick, easy and clean, like magic. What has happened since my last letter? Nothing much. A show last night, which went better than Friday's. Did I tell you about that? I think not. I did everything badly. The first time we did the new version everything miraculously happened right. Friday, though, the miracles didn't happen and I didn't do so well. Last night was mostly better. I take a long time to get used to new things. Then, we haven't rehearsed so much. Still, I am determined next time I will get it ALL right.

That last paragraph was using the Gothic ball. This one is Script. The bad punctuation is due to the signs on the balls not corresponding to the keys on the machine. I can't find apostrophes. I had a meal the other day with Joyce Trehane. It was a particularly friendly table. There was a lady here quite a few weeks ago who asked to meet me. She spent some time looking after the Corcorans as children when at Porthleven, and I've forgotten her name now. She remembered the Dares and Dyers too. Jill something. She also remembered our house. And me, when very small. She asked to be remembered to you and also to the Dares and Dyers.

This morning, I followed my practice of taking a morning off after the show, and someone kindly brought me breakfast at 9.30am. I had a really slow and peanut-buttery breakfast (the second, a special treat). I stayed in bed to read, did some sewing, then got up, had a shower and ate lunch in the cafeteria. This afternoon I sat and read in the sun, and at teatime ate three buns – small ones, my favourite sort. So today has been a holiday all day.

Today is the end of the Africa session, and the beginning of the political one, which lasts until the 23rd, then it's industry, and then three days of something vague called "post conference" (when you post people home?) I hope to go back to Paris on the minibus. Yesterday was exciting. First Claude handed me a gift of CHF20, then I'm English lady gave me 150FF. So I'm getting rich. Especially as I still haven't got down to Montreux, so am not in a position to buy anything apart from MRA books or chocolate from the station.

What a boring letter. Nothing exciting. Life is generally quieter for me now. Although housekeeping continues to be heavy, we have a good team to cope

with it. The script needs attention. I'm producing an emergency copy of the new version this week. The raspberries are wormy now. I am battling not to eat too much, as usual. The moment of truth will be arriving back in Paris and getting on the scales. I seem to eat very little compared with most people.

A "cultural evening" is on the program for tonight, a sort of variety show. They're always fun.

Bye now, love, Su

Friday 21st

I couldn't go to the 'cultural evening' as there was the USEPN/Paris/October meeting. A lively meeting, the topic was who else to invite to help us in Paris with this project. Lotty is coming. I hope to move back to Paris soon after the last show here on the 27th. It seems that the secretarial work is bound to increase enormously during the show's run. The MRA full-time secretary, Florence, is playing the flute for the show in Paris, so only wants to do a minimum of secretarial work and Elizabeth is hoping to get a job again, so I hope other people will be around to help. I will also have my sound effects as usual – so will be well occupied, I imagine, from now on. I had that thought at home, that things would be different here at Caux, and also in Paris, and that I should trust and not be afraid. Things have been very different here this year and they look like being so in Paris too. Of course I'm a little afraid of that. I love challenges really, so I'm looking forward to it too. I'm not looking forward to living in Paris in general. "Trust..."

Annie has her engagement ring at last. Two diamonds, very plain and delicate, just right. They've gone off this morning, bound for Lourdes with Claude's parents.

I was delighted yesterday to receive a triple letter a piece from each of you.

When are you coming to Paris? I would like to see the new show in London, "Gavin and the Monster." Maybe I will go via London at Christmas, so I can see it and the theatre. I really feel I should start more touches with the British team.

My biggest battle here is keeping up the caring for people, especially now we're all getting weary. I feel I've come out of my battles well this summer. I think I could come to Caux of my own accord. That's a big step.

Bye again, lots of love, Su

PS I just got a letter from Mum, with £10 enclosed for the team. Thank you so much for your thoughtfulness for us all.

I did broach the subject with the others. Apparently Claude is better off these days and in fact Christian gets good support from his country. So I may have to look a bit further than the USEPN team to find a good home for this, maybe a young person

from France. You know, looking around, it seems most people get regular gifts, especially those who've been full-time for a year or so.

Please don't feel obliged to help us regularly. It's only now and then someone's stuck and you do enough and more for me, what with my National Insurance, fares, and all you bought me when I was home. I think I need to be capable of getting other people to want to give, as a gift for God. When I was working I thought I couldn't afford to give anything away. Looking back, I wish I'd helped Cindy financially. I could have spared a little. If someone had asked me directly to help with a need then, I would have happily done so.

I find it's terrifying to have the responsibility of knowing what to do with money. It's a stiff exercise in guidance that I fail at because I want to control it. I think I might help Annette who has been in Canada for a year. She is my age and has worked full-time for 2-3 years.

Bye again – much love – Su

Caux, 27th August 1981

Dear All,

Hand written again, I'm afraid. Actually, I would rather be snoozing on my bed (it is 3.30pm) instead of sitting on the balcony but it's been sunny the last couple of days and I've only been out for half an hour a day, so I feel obliged. I've gone back to being very pale, so need lots of sun. I will have tea on the lawn later.

We had a special lunch today – the housekeepers and flower team together. The idea came from Chou-mai and Grace from Taiwan who wanted to cook us a Chinese meal. It was lovely and different to restaurant dishes - lighter, dryer, gingery. They showed a film about Taiwan at 2.00pm but I couldn't be there as we had a rehearsal just then. I am doing the mikes too now – I don't have enough hands sometimes and not half enough brain. Tonight is the last show here.

I am trying to get to the main meetings of this session (Industry). Last year, I found it the most interesting time. The meetings are more about topical subjects. The Joughins are leaving Monday, I will send a note with them. Housekeeping has been quiet since the weekend, just as well as I've been busy getting the script together. Then all yesterday I worked hard on the programme, having a quick lunch and then tea in the office. In the evening was our last meeting on USEPN/Paris/October here. About 30 people came.

I don't know when I'm going back to Paris, because I haven't found a lift yet.

Friday 28th, 20.00

The show last night was a mix of good and bad. Only one slide machine could be used, so the slides weren't the same. Michel was good – very much on the attack. I did the whole sound on MY OWN for the first time - effects, orchestra and Michel's mike. It's more interesting and keeps me on my toes. I need three hands though. I have to think movements through, and then it's OK. I didn't do too well, but I did try my best.

This morning I had breakfast with Lotty, Veronique, Annette, Lyria and Florence, as we'll all be together in Paris in October. It was good to look ahead to that time from our particular viewpoint, and together – Lotty's idea. She is full of bright ideas. I will appreciate her being in Paris very much. From my room I can hear a goat bleating but can't see it. I only hear it when I hear the cowbells (from the field below) so I guess it lives and travels with the cows.

I housekept and missed the meeting, so ironed instead. This afternoon I had lunch on the terrace and sat on my balcony from 2.30pm to 4.00pm, drying my hair and learning from a magazine cutting how to do a face massage. Now

I have a colourful and shiny face. Then at teatime I had an offer of a lift down to Montreux, which I jumped at. The noise and bustle of the town after all this time up here – it seemed crazy. I received more money today. I suspect someone has been doing propaganda.

Saturday 29th, 2.30pm, balcony

A gorgeous day again, we're getting our summer late. I really hope it lasts until Thursday as I have been invited by Mme Fiaux, an elderly but energetic Swiss lady, to go and stay with her and some of her family in a chalet, somewhere in the flat bit of Switzerland. I have a lift with the Tates Friday 4th to go back to Paris, am sending my case Monday with the Gigands, and have been let off by the housekeepers for the few days in between so have gratefully accepted this chance of a complete rest and break.

This letter will go with the Trehanes tomorrow. I will also give the Joughins some bits and bobs for you.

I am happy now, and finding a sense of adventure for Paris, knowing it will be hard, and gaining conviction to carry me onwards. I haven't asked about finding you beds in Paris yet but don't worry about that, we'll find you just the right place.

Jim - how can I explain the different show in only a letter? Briefly – the first two songs have been replaced by a new one about being a rich man's son. The dream sequence is shorter. The building mime is faster, with music that gives a Chaplinesque feel. Some slides have been added and a sound effect of a printing press, to show newspaper cuttings. These are headlines of the growing number of Francis' followers. The prayer is gone at the beginning but comes in to link the first and second acts. The "so you want just one paperback" sequence has more added – electronic gadgets, travel, etc. Those are the major changes I think. Thanks for all the details of your internship, I was very interested.

Of course I envied you all on the boat trip in Jubilee. I feel quite at peace though, myself, that God has asked me to lead a different life and I am happy to be here in his service.

This morning's meeting was particularly interesting – much about marriage (as link between house life and work life.) One person told how she had ideas in her quiet time of the right way to choose and serve a meal for a guest, as she realised she hadn't put enough love into it before. Couldn't this work the other way too, to make things easier, or better, or both?

Anyway, I was going to say more about October before getting side-tracked. I don't know about beds for other people. It would all be a question of guidance to know what is right and what is necessary. There will be an English script with us, so come in time to study it, see the show, study it again and see the show again. Having a good, if brief, knowledge of St Francis' life helps enormously. I will drop all other responsibilities when you come, except the sound of course, to be your official guide.

That's enough for now – with lots of love – Su

Sunday 30th August

Dear Mum, Dad, Jim,

A note of explanation:

- The sweets are for you, maybe to take out in the boat
- The marzipan is for Jim, or to share if he doesn't like it
- The biscuits are for Grandad
- There are notes or cards for Debbie, Joyce, Sue, and Pam. I hope they'll be no trouble to deliver – there's no hurry
- I'm returning the book on St Francis, having read it once through, it really helped
- There are some articles on the show
- A Garth Lean book for Jim which I thought might help him prepare himself to deal with his friends or sceptics in Cambridge

Sadly, I don't have time for a full letter. I hope these things will keep you going until my next letter. The trouble is, I was meant to go away tomorrow morning but we're going instead this afternoon at 2.30pm and I've had to pack my big case this morning. Am also feeling I ought to do housekeeping and go to part of the meeting. I can't tell you much about where I'm going

either, more than that it is a chalet at a higher altitude than Caux, surrounded by pasture. It's not touristy, but farms. I'll be with Mme Fiaux, her son and daughter, and their wife and husband and I think that's all... Anyway, I'll have plenty of time to write to you there and am very much looking forward to it. I will be back in Caux on Thursday I hope, leaving Friday fourth of September with the Tates, for Paris.

So, I hope I find you all well. I also wanted to write specially to Jim, but will do that there too.

So bye for now, and lots of love to all, Su

Friday 4 September, Boulogne-Billancourt

Dear Mum, Dad, Jim, etc,

Opening my diary, I realise I haven't looked in it all week. If you don't see the Joughins immediately they get back, there may be a gap, as I sent my last letter with the Trehanes, then a note with the Joughins.

I imagine you know I was invited to stay in a chalet with Mme Fiaux (a small and dynamic elderly Swiss lady) and her daughter and son-in-law. They were very jolly people, very relaxed and we got on well. I went Sunday evening, overjoyed to be out of Mountain House and its pressures. We drove up into the mountains – BIG mountains, to a little village called La Forclaz, with chalets inhabited by farmers and retired people, not holidaymakers. Their family chalet is just above the village, 10 minutes' walk away. It was built by the grandfather, and belongs to a niece of Mme Fiaux. It has every modern convenience – smart fitted kitchen, open plan living area with fireplace, five bedrooms which can sleep at least 12. A big lawn in front, sprinkled with mountain flowers, surrounded by trees, a seesaw, a swing, a sandpit, a swimming pool (not filled), a ping-pong table, etc. Oh, and a bathroom with shower except that the hot water wasn't working so it was cold the whole time I was there. I never had the courage to shower! It was chilly when there was no sun (at an altitude higher than Caux). Sunday night it was just Mme Fiaux and I. We had a simple supper, told the stories of our lives and got to bed. Monday the daughter and son-in-law arrived and we had a late

breakfast, went for a walk (stroll really) and back to lunch at 3.00pm. The rest of the afternoon I did some sewing. After supper I was so sleepy I went to bed at 9.30pm, struggled to read for half an hour, and gave up at 10.00pm.

Tuesday morning was wet so we sat inside with a log fire. By after lunch it had cleared, so we went shopping but found the village shop unexpectedly shut, so went down to the tiny town of Le Sépey. There we found the most marvellous shopkeepers – they told all sorts of stories whilst serving us really slowly. After that we took the car high up into the mountains, above the trees almost, to a tiny deep lake of brilliant green. It was like being in another country – so remote, so bleak. The drive up was splendid, seeing the ranges of mountains around. Back in time to prepare supper – a good fondue. Fondues are best in Switzerland, partly because the cheese is right, partly because they're made right, but also because the scenery is right. The wine came from the son-in-law who grows and makes it (near Geneva). That evening I had a sad phone call to say the Tates wanted to leave for Paris a day early, so I had to be back at Caux Wednesday evening instead of Thursday evening. I had to fight to stay grateful for what I'd had and not bitter for what I'd miss. Wednesday we decided to go for a good long walk and take a picnic. The path we chose was rather unfortunate – it started badly, being slippery and on a steep slope. We kept thinking it would get better, then we thought we'd find another way back, but never did. So after lunch, we had to come back the same way.

I got a train back to Caux from Aigle and missed a fondue at Caux, which was the evening meal, and a lot of larking and entertainment accompanying it. Still, I was so exhausted and aching I was glad of a bath and my bed. I said many fond farewells yesterday morning and we were gone about 8.15am - just the Tates and I. We arrived in Boulogne at 5-ish (my watch went on the blink Sunday so I never know what time it is – quite nice) after an uneventful journey.

It is odd to be back in this house. Familiar, and yet strange. I'm different again, so I see it differently. I am apprehensive at facing life here but remember the promise I had in June, "Trust me, I can make you happy in Caux, happy in Paris." The first came true – Caux was difficult but bearable, with a lot happening too. So I feel things will be different this year, but also I received a lot from France and from the French and this year I will plough a lot

back. A lot of what? Love basically, but particularly knowledge, faith, confidence, discovery, effort... I'm determined to stay relaxed about things, to keep them in perspective. Also, to "give back" to God the difficult things and pray for a way out (instead of sweeping them under the carpet). I've decided too, to enjoy France.

Saturday 11.15am-ish

Yesterday, my first day back in Boulogne, was very busy. I had the script to correct, and things to do in the office. Then in the evening I was invited by Elizabeth to go to some friends house for a bite to eat and see slides of their recent trip to India. The 'bite' was a super meal – melon, Indian chicken and rice, cheese, chocolate 'Charlotte'.

Today I've worked on scripts and now I'll get some letters out of the way before lunch. I've just phoned Sue Lark and am seeing her next week. So I have a totally free weekend. Tomorrow those in this house are planning a picnic and as the weather is beautiful and holding, I will certainly go. Maybe this afternoon I will sit in the sun. I don't feel like dashing into Paris yet. After Swiss mountains, everything yesterday seemed crazy to me – so many cars, so much rush, everyone looks unhappy.

This is long enough, and I have no more news. I will be in the office next week. A good triple letter arrived again yesterday – I enjoy hearing from you all at once, even more than separately. I love Jim's cartoons, all his sailing and typing sound great.

That last walk I had in the mountains – I saw lots of what must be rare flowers because they were so different.

I'm sorry I didn't write to Sue H sooner as I had some thoughts which I have put in a letter to her, about teachers passing on morals through their teaching and through the way their own lives are run. I'm a bit worried about how she takes my preaching but I thought I was guided, so am trusting.

I am trying to take on jobs without asking too many questions. I seem to do many things wrong so I may be branching out and learning. I am so grateful for your (all of your) detailed letters.

Now I am going to lay the table.

Bye for now, lots of love, Su

Dear Mum, Dad, Jim and all: it was a great surprise to hear your voices on the phone last night. I was very grateful though as I'd begun to think of you as being incredibly far away. The show starts here on the 4th of October and finishes on either the 31st or Sunday, 1 November (All Saints Day). On the 17-18 October is a National Weekend, so lodging you will be difficult then and other people will be less available. The English party will come either the weekend before or the weekend after, but will stay in hotels and not trouble your stay. The 24-25th weekend looks like a very good one, also 31st-1st. I hope you can see two shows. It may happen that we go on for a further two weeks, in which case on the 2nd November we won't be removing our equipment from the theatre. I am looking forward to this opportunity of getting you familiar with the faces behind the names. I suspect Mum will wonder what to bring, so I suggest a fruitcake. We have a tradition of teatime cups of tea and biscuits, so a good English cake would be welcome and would be enough. Of course, you may think otherwise.... I wouldn't mind a tiny tin of black treacle, personally... (I wonder if I can find that here? I will look around.)

What would Jim like for his birthday? Today is Friday. I went to the swimming pool at lunchtime. I am now more or less settled in my old room at 22 Av RS.

I have been full-time at the office every day since Monday (with one shopping excursion Wednesday), working fast all that time. It was getting worrying, so I asked Nathalie to give me a few hours help today, and I can now write to you whilst waiting for the car going back to 22. Next week starts busy too. Sunday we have a Paris team meeting to talk about USEPN/Paris/Oct but also to catch up after the summer. Tomorrow I am cooking a couscous for lunch with Véronique. It is still sunny but getting chillier.

Thursday afternoon we had a close-team meeting on the terrace. When you phoned, we were all having a dessert in the Tate's flat – they have turned the

third floor of the house into a flat – it has two rooms, a bathroom and a kitchen plus a landing used as a dining room. That is a change as they are now only having lunch with us (before we all ate together and the third floor was inhabited by some of the young ladies). At present we are 12 in the house but all the young men are on holiday.

I feel very fit and glowing after my swim. I am fitter than this time last year, I swam very well. Also, I have lost a few kilos, assuming the scales are correct.

A farmer in Bourgueil gives us potatoes every year, if we go and help dig them up. A party is going down there to do that just before we move into the theatre, and I am hoping very much I will be able to go too. A day or two of backbreaking work in the wind and rain would do me no end of good and would be a nice change. I will have to wait and see. A trip to Brittany doesn't look hopeful yet. This morning I had an unusual thought – I had in mind going to a good hairdresser in Paris – my thought this morning was to ask Veronique to touch it up and give the money to the house.

It's nearly supper time now, so I'll be off.

Bye for now – lots of love – Su

22 Av Robert Schuman, 92100 BB

Thursday 17 September 1981

Dear Mum, Dad and Jim,

A good long triple letter today, the most important news being Dad's great sailing win at Rock. 'Félicitations' [congratulations], you deserved that! Also, you're booked to come to Paris. Hooray! I'm ever so excited already; that means several days off work for you – I'll start praying now that things will have calmed down by then. I'm glad you're here Monday and most of Tuesday as they are days off (and I will be calmer those days, not having a show in the evening.)

In brief: Monday 21st – my days are so full, I've not even been able to finish this letter. I saw Vanessa G at church yesterday. She is taking part in a street

theatre group, one of the church's activities. I had to see the minister who said I could put a poster for the show in the entrance. Sue Lark was there, and helped me. She and Janet came to dinner last Thursday. I was brave enough to ask if we could all eat late – 8.00pm. It was a good evening. I took Annette to Sue's, last Sunday night, after the Parisian meeting, for supper. Sue has the newest Sony Walkman – I could use one like that well...! I didn't have a chance to go to the pool last week – stupid.

Last Tuesday we saw the Franciscans at their office to get some addresses to send them posters. Wednesday I spent the day with Véronique tramping around 'foyers de jeunes étudiantes' giving out posters and tracts and talking to the various 'Directrice'. It was a nice day in an interesting corner of Paris, so I enjoyed it. We cooked supper after that, so I ended up quite exhausted. The other days I spent full time in the office.

Saturday I cooked lunch – carrots, mashed potato and liver. I was very late and the potato was watery, but the liver got much praise. I didn't enjoy doing it, but want to serve in the house so had a healthy attitude. In the afternoon I did lots of sewing. Sunday morning church, afternoon walk in Bois de Boulogne with Koechpins and Annette. So that's a quick account up-to-date.

Thursday 24 September 1981

Dear Mum, Dad, Jim,

17.00 hrs

Another letter from Mum and Dad today. An exciting sail for Dad on the reservoir – I must re-read it slowly to try and really imagine what it was like! I heard on the news there were big storms around Britain last weekend, and I wanted to phone to know if you'd been out sailing in it but decided to economise and rely on 'no news is good news'. Yes, I got Grandad's letter and will write to him tonight.

Mum's injury sounds very painful. I do hope by the time this reaches you it will be a lot better, if not healed. Do take it easy and don't rush using it too much until it's 100%, will you...?

Do book the bus, I thought you had. I will be responsible for finding you beds. Anyway, I have told Lisbeth Lasserre, who is responsible for lodging all visitors to Paris during the run of the show. If you want to bring more people do and we'll find a cheap hotel if necessary for them (I still hope you can stay here, it will all depend on who else decides to come that weekend, but you will have something, don't worry). Please could you find and bring my own cookery book? The one I write recipes in. I'm back in my old room here – I like it very much. It's this weekend we go spud-collecting, leaving early tomorrow morning. We'll be digging them ourselves, on our knees.

So to news. Monday night I had a meal with the Orphelin family. Tuesday evening we had another Parisian meeting to continue action for USEPN/Paris/Oct. Wednesday night I cooked supper – minestrone, bread and cheese and fruit. A simple menu but I was still afraid of doing it for 12. So in the morning I made a general list of everything I was afraid of then prayed and asked that I would be given peace. In the evening I found I did have peace as I prepared the meal. One big help was the thought, "Serve the others by cooking for them – care for them in every action you do in cooking." That made it an interesting experiment and the meal was a great success, so I controlled the panicky feelings. A great step achieved. The other fears seem to be taken care of too. I will remember now to deal with worries that way; writing this I've just remembered a new one and prayed about it. I'm trying to pray three times a day now as I have such a list of things to pray about. Today is Michel and Catherine Koechlin's 15th wedding anniversary.

We leave 8.15am tomorrow for Bourgueil and will return Sunday evening. I hope you're all okay. Will be off now, lots of love to you all, and everyone else.

Su

PS: another decision is to love the French as individuals. Hadn't before, it's about time.

SPECIAL PS TO MUM: I am torn between a desire to look fashionable (because it's fun and I like a change) and knowing I should not expect to buy more new

clothes than those that fill my real needs. I have decided to sew and use what I already have.

The Office, 29 September, 18.40h

Dear Mum, Dad and carbon-copy Jim,

I have just tried to go to the pool, but it was closed, so instead I shall fill this spare half hour before the weekly meeting starts by starting a letter to you.

Friday morning, Véronique and Gérard Gigand, Annette and I left at 9.00am for Bourgueil. We arrived in time for lunch, with Isabelle and Jean-Louis Thouet who fed us for the whole weekend. They had planted these potatoes for us. We ladies got along to the potato field about 3.30pm. It was dry and sunny, though chilly, but jumpers, etc, were soon taken off. The ground was being turned over in furrows, churning up the spuds. The ladies went along picking up the spuds that were visible, the men followed with forks digging up whatever was left. There was no set position for bending – sometimes I shuffled along on my knees, sometimes crouched, sometimes bent over double. We covered the whole field by evening, leaving about four furrows not turned over by the men with the forks. The earth was light and sandy, so we were not too muddy. We went home for a snack then set out for the swimming pool, in a neighbouring village. We were there about 7.30pm. After an hour in the water, we went home for supper. It was about 11.00pm when Annette and I crept into the house where we were staying.

Following morning, up at 8.30am, met young couple and kids, breakfast and away at 9.30am to fields to get the rest of the potatoes. It was raining so we waited until it stopped and I did get a bit muddy that time, but I needn't have if I hadn't knelt from time to time. After that we bought sausages for lunch and ate them. About 3.30pm Marie-Agnès, the girl I worked with at Caux, and another, Laurence, came to see us, so we chatted. At 5.45pm we went to pick haricots verts (French beans). The owners hadn't had time to pick them so we could take as many as we liked. Knees in the mud again. We filled a sack. Home to supper late, evening long, bed 11.00pm. Sunday, leisurely breakfast, others went to Mass (I have to be in the mood to go to Mass as I can't catch

much of what goes on). I went and helped Isabelle peel apples and prepare the beans.

Continued - Wednesday 11.20 – After a huge lunch, we went for a little stroll, I ate a few blackberries (my only ones for the year apart from the little bit of jam that Véronique made last week). Then it was time to leave for Paris, arriving in the evening about 8.30pm. The weekend really did me a lot of good – physically but particularly to get away from the rush and speed of life here and to be in the beautiful countryside of that region. A marvellous preparation for the weeks of showbiz ahead.

So, Monday morning, back to the whirl with a vengeance. Yesterday morning the Lasserres, JJ Odier, Florence and myself went to the SICOB (Salon international d'informatique, télématique, communication, organisation du bureau et bureautique) [ie office equipment] trade show. The world of the office is incredible – it was good to get a taste of the atmosphere of commerce and offices. We looked particularly at typewriters, as there is a possibility of buying a new one. The best for quality, silence, etc, was the IBM. We also looked at Gestetner copiers (stencil) – they are automatic now – you don't have such an opportunity of covering your hands with ink like I did this very morning. We also saw an offset machine – I was most interested to see how they work as I had never seen one. They are good but incredibly expensive – much more so than a stencil copier. Interesting to re-enter the world of offices in general, both to look at the people and the machines.

Monday night we had a 'family gathering' – they are getting richer now (this was the third). Tuesday night we had a meeting of the larger team. Tonight, Lotty arrives. Gunnar and gang arrived last night and are now setting up in the theatre – I am not needed yet, so have done a lot here at the office this morning. People are still writing for more tracts, posters, etc. I shall go back for lunch though (which rules out the pool again – oh dear.) This morning I saw my new mixer – the equipment which controls all the sound levels of everything – mikes, cassettes, etc. It is HUGE. My arms won't be long enough. I'm not afraid of not doing a perfect job anymore. I know I can't, but I'm going to try to get it perfect all the same.

Well, I can't think what else to say now, so will leave you.

Lots of love to all, Su

Memo: I forget if I told you this anecdote or not – when we were at Orleans, I stayed in the neighbouring commune of Olivet. We left on the Saturday, and my set reading that day started in Acts 1, verse 12. This is the verse...

“Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day’s journey away.”

A Sabbath days’ journey indeed, except that this Olivet is no mount but very flat! It made me laugh though, such good timing.

POSTCARD: Boulogne-Billancourt, Monday 5th October 1981

Dear Mum and Dad,

I’ll just send you this postcard of the cross which ‘spoke’ to St Francis as there’s nothing else in the post at the moment. It was lovely to go to the theatre yesterday knowing you were living the action closely with us, although so far away. I was very sad about the noises in the loudspeakers, but we could not have known it would happen and now we must hope to cure it for the rest of the run. I won’t forget to book you seats for 24th & 25th – only three weeks away now. Cooking and office and pool for me today and tomorrow. Keep well, lots of love, Su

Saturday 10 October 1981

Dear Mum and Dad,

I will enclose a typed report of this first week of USEPN/Paris/October, as I think it might interest a wider circle and if I keep news separate from answering your letters, it will substitute for the long abandoned circular letters.

Firstly, thank you Mum very much for the £5 note and the stamps. I will use it to buy wheatgerm, bran and cassette head-cleaning fluid. The stamps are very welcome.

Thanks for letting me know about the Crenn's grandpa. Claudie has phoned me and is meeting me at the theatre tomorrow afternoon. I think she will be gone again when you're here.

More thanks for saucepan cake recipes, I'm going to try them.

I will see if I find any ideas for a stewardship form.

I envy you all your fresh mushrooms, blackberries, etc. Any mackerel yet?

I hope Dad's head is mending. How long will the windsurfing season last? I'm glad you'll be freer from office work. Then you'll have time to care for all the people you work with. I also had a letter from DHSS with yet another brochure. It would be nice if you let them know how and when you'll pay them. It's a huge relief and security for me to know this is taken care of, for the future/pension, etc.

It is Saturday afternoon, I am sitting in bed. It's cold and wet out. I've music on, and have been reading. I tried to sleep but couldn't.

Tonight, I am going to the theatre in a Falmouth sweatshirt and Cornish tartan scarf, as I did this morning. I must have subconsciously had Saturday morning homesick blues when I dressed this morning.

Your telegram arrived on Monday morning and I read it out on Wednesday to all. I hope we can always be inspired by the spirit of St Francis. He leads us to Christ.

Now I must go and shower. Tea/dinner is at 5.30pm.

CIRCULAR LETTER

22 avenue Robert Schuman
92100 Boulogne-Billancourt
France

14 October 1981

Dear friends,

It's a long time since I wrote to tell you about new developments in this adventure – but as a big step is being taken now with the show “Un soleil en pleine nuit” there are lots of new things happening.

We spent the summer again at Caux, the MRA centre in Switzerland, presenting “Un soleil en pleine nuit” about once a week so I had time again to join the housekeeping team (looking after the bedrooms). It's not a glamorous job and is often hard work and at times I resented that. Then I realised it was my pride getting in the way and decided that I would accept the lowest, humblest jobs in order to serve others. I discovered a lot of joy in giving everything to do things really well. At the same time, we started preparations for opening the show in the autumn in Paris – I typed lots of letters. I started translating meetings too, quite a challenge that – perched in a little cabin above the meeting hall with a headset on, and French coming in my ears which I had to turn straight into sensible English for all those in the hall listening through earphones.

A Swiss lady invited me to spend a few days with her in a chalet in the mountains and those few days were a wonderful preparation for the weeks ahead in Paris. I was back here early September and from then on for the rest of the month spent all my time at the office, working up to the launching of “Un soleil en pleine nuit” in a theatre in the 16th arrondissement, starting 4th October. We have performed five shows a week for four weeks and will hopefully do more. During that time, I typed letters for the administrator, and sent out thousands of leaflets, hundreds of posters, information about the show, all over the place.

It was difficult to get time in the theatre for rehearsal and the technicians worked overnight until 6.00am once to get everything set up in time. We only had one full rehearsal before the Sunday opening and as there were several new people (on the follow-spots and in the orchestra) we could have done with much more. I have a big new sound mixer and as the orchestra has grown to six people, the mixing needs constant attention. A Dutch girl is helping me by controlling the actor's radio-mike. My sound effects are basically the same, but I have found it difficult to do the two things at once. The basic levels of each instrument are plotted for each song, but musicians are very human and don't ever do the same thing twice. I've had to learn to

listen to the music and get the feel of how it should sound. I've found it much more difficult than I expected but at last am getting the hang of it I think. The composer of the music was here this weekend and she gave me a few pointers, so I'm confident now that she is basically satisfied with the way it sounds.

We have shows at 8.00pm Wednesday to Saturday evenings and at 3.00pm Sunday afternoons. The Sundays have been full but the first weekday evenings we had a rough average of 70 people every night. Things are moving fast now though, and it looks more hopeful that we can break even by the end. The theatre seats about 240 people and we need 150 people every time to cover our costs.

The theatre is used to showing films and giving concerts and not long runs of one show (they still show films in the daytime and after us in the evening) and the receptionist is overcome by the constantly ringing phone, so someone now has to go and give her a hand, as she double books seats and forgets to allocate seats.

We had two real gifts from heaven in the week before we started. A big Catholic weekly published a long interview with Michel Orphelin and included some huge photos. Sunday 4th October, the day we opened, was specially chosen as it marked the opening of celebrations for the eighth centenary of Saint Francis' birth. There was a special televised mass in the morning and some news and interviews beforehand. The journalist responsible for this saw the article in "La Vie" and invited Michel to come and be interviewed on the programme – a nationwide broadcast. These two 'miracles' have already played a huge role in bringing us audience. Everyone here has been hard at work tramping the streets putting posters in shops, visiting parish priests, schools, staff associations, students' hostels, etc. There has been brief information in 'Pariscope' and 'Officiel des Spectacles', weekly publications which simply list all that's on in the cinemas, theatres, galleries, etc in Paris. None of these things have been enough on their own, it was the article in "La Vie" and the television interview which have had the greatest effect. Once people come and start talking about a show it brings people along too. Apparently the 'démarrage' [take off] is the essential time – once a show is known, it can carry itself. I hope that will be true and we will be able to cover our production costs and carry on for a few weeks in November.

Michel Orphelin, the actor/mime artist, seems to be in good form, but to perform alone for one and a half hours takes a lot of stamina, and to do it so that the message of Saint Francis really comes across will take a lot of faith, and all the conviction he has. It is incredible to think that he is the only professional among us (apart from the musicians we pay). The sheer cheek of this undertaking has been commented on several times! The money needed at the start to produce the show was raised by gifts and loans from many French and Swiss people and all the earnings from the show will go to repaying those loans, hiring the theatre, paying the three professional musicians and the attaché de presse. If we make any profit, then it will help repay the loans we made to buy the minibus. This past year we have always had enough to pay the bills as they come in and all our needs have been met so we're confident the Lord will provide the essential in the future (as the bookings have been below the average necessary to break even so far, we need to cling to that assurance with faith).

As well as myself and Lotty, the Dutch girl helping me on the mike, there is still the old crew from last year – Annie on the slides, who is engaged to Claude (both French) the administrator. Phiengsavanh (from Laos) is doing one of the follow-spots and Christian (Sweden) is still the Boss, handing over the lights to a new teammate, Adrien (from Switzerland). Peter (GB) is our musical director still, and a young British couple have joined us just for the Paris run – Bob on the organ and Lyria doing another follow-spot. Then Florence, a French girl, is playing the flute and we have three young musicians for the drums, double bass and cello. A lot of people for a one man show, and a very international team. Not to mention all our friends selling programmes at the book stall, helping in the box office and cooking us meals.

This is a big step for the French, to have a show with a big and powerful message thrust upon them. Both our team and France as a whole need your best wishes or prayers – this show was born of Franco/British collaboration and is proving that together we can create something positive, a 'success'.

I'm still hoping to be home at Christmas time, so look forward to seeing you then.

With 'salutations amicales' - Su

Friday 16 October

I'm finding it very difficult to try and serve properly in the house, at the office, whilst knowing I haven't even written properly to you. This will only just get to you before you leave.

This has been a very tough week. Once Monday and the press show were over (a special extra free show by invitation only – terribly important) rehearsals stopped, then there were many other things to do. I can't get to sleep after the show, so have to make time to rest in the afternoon and I'm getting fed up with wasting the morning in bed.

Quiet times are only a quarter of an hour and I need lots really. So I hope I can get sorted out soon.

We had a good M&T meeting this morning and Michel talked of discipline – self-discipline so we lead balanced lives.

More very big thanks to Mum for the £10 note – I have an idea that someone needs help with money for petrol.

A long letter from you both this morning. I would like Grandad to read it.

Off to lunch now. See you in a few days!

Lots of love, Su

1 November 1981

Dear Mum and Dad,

Sorry to be so long in writing. Things have seemed rather hectic since you left.

First, thank you very much for all the stuff you carted here and back for me. It's a big relief knowing you've taken all my excess home. Thank you again Mum for our stamp money, and for the £5 shampoo fund. That, I used the other day for wheatgerm, bran, brewer's yeast, honey, peanuts and almonds (all to complete the refined diet here, not to wash my hair.)

Thank you for all the things you brought. The second pasty I had for lunch at the office on Wednesday. I haven't broached the saffron cake yet, I think I'll take it this weekend. I don't know, it would go straight away... should I be mean and hoard it? I need to bring a knife up to my room, otherwise I would have started it ages ago.

I was delighted to see John [my French teacher] and Lily Grose, Vanessa and Heather at the theatre last night. We had a good chat afterwards. I am now going around saying that five people from Falmouth have seen the show this run.

Thanks Mum, for the lovely card and note inside. Your stay here was so precious to me. I'm so grateful you both saw the show and got to know all the people in this house. Thanks for news of Jim. I hope Dad's well again. Take it easy now, if you can.

Tuesday after I'd got back here, I just read. I was exhausted. Wednesday I went to the office and typed lots of letters for Claude. Thursday I couldn't survive any more, and simply spent the day in bed. I felt a different person afterwards. Friday I typed 17 letters for Claude, which took me most of the day. Yesterday morning, Saturday, I did my cleaning and washing. In the afternoon I went looking for a skirt. I didn't know what I wanted but found a lovely skirt for the exact price I'd thought of – 200F to the centime. This morning I am delightedly wearing it with a blouse I had nothing to go with before.

After the show this afternoon we're all off to Christiane Mallet's house in the country, until Wednesday afternoon. All Monde et Théâtre, plus the Gigands. Monday we're going to Chartres. Lotty and I are planning a Hallowe'en party too.

So I must leave you now in order to pack my bag.

Lots of love to you and to all you see. Bye now, Su

PS Dad's card was greatly admired by all.

Boulogne-Billancourt, 6 November 1981

Dear Mum and Dad,

I remember in my last scribblings telling you that M&T etc were off to the country for a couple of days: chez Christiane Mallet-de Watteville, in Normandie. We left Sunday, having a quick supper after the show then setting off straight away. The journey took a couple of hours and we were there about 9ish. It was too dark to see how the place looked but we kept turning off onto narrower and narrower roads as we drew closer, seemed to be doing a lot of climbing and descending, and the road was very twisty. We finally drove up a steep hill between a handful of cottages and stopped in front of a pair of big gates. The house was long and old and we walked straight into the huge ancient farmhouse kitchen with soup, bread, cheese and fruit spread out for us on the table. After we'd eaten, we all went to find our rooms, look at each other's rooms and remove the socks, etc, that Christiane's grandson and little friend had hidden in everyone's beds! So we got an early night; we girls were in the roof, pretty rooms all wood and tile floors. The next morning we had to be up and leave at 9.15am as it was the day fixed for Françoise Caubel to meet us at Chartres cathedral.

Françoise took us over the most important aspects of the cathedral. Statues and windows mainly but we also visited the crypt. It was fascinating to have all the figures and symbols pointed out and explained. It made all the difference in understanding things; people, scenes, etc. We had a picnic by the cathedral and left about 4ish. We had a peaceful supper all together, read, embroidered, or played games for a while, then got another early night. The little monkeys had this time mixed up all our belongings – I never found my soap.

Tuesday I had a long lie-in. Went for a walk with Lotty before lunch. The little hamlet lies below a big château, Christiane's house is just outside its gates.

There are magnificent trees in the park and we walked outside the park wall, exclaiming at the incredible autumn reds and golds of these trees. My camera had no film in it, but I think I could never have captured the brilliance of those trees. We came back past flat fields, picking late blackberries. After lunch we had a special treat – a meeting. Luckily it didn't last too long and the others played volleyball while I made comments. We had tea and I went for a short stroll with Florence, down the hill past the river and the mill. After supper, I asked Lyria if I could try her violin, as I wanted to see what sound I could produce after 12 years? I was amazed, it was better than I hoped, and I managed to play 'God save the Queen' in under ten minutes. I only put it down because the others wanted to play guitars.

During Tuesday night I was up about half a dozen times either being sick or with diarrhoea and spent the time in between in agony. I lay in bed until 10.30am, then had to get ready to leave at 11.00am. I don't remember much about the journey, but couldn't eat a thing. I got to bed as soon as I arrived back here – I could hardly walk. At 4.00pm I decided to try and get up and felt better but so weak. I ate some biscuits and just had enough strength to get me through the evening. I spent most of yesterday in bed, getting up only for lunch. This morning I still feel very weak, but have eaten very little. Yesterday, Lyria, Annie, Christian and Véronique also suffered, but none as badly as I did. I'm up, but not really well.

This week there've been far less people in the theatre – a bit worrying but then this is a holiday week. We still have not found a theatre to move to after the 15th.

I don't think you need to be of use at Caux. What it gives you that you take away with you, matters most. Going there can help you see your life, your situation, your country, the world, in a new way because you have more distance and can see clearer. It must have changed a lot since you went there and you need to see the new style, meet the new faces. There's no problem about being of use there, there are too many people who need other people's time. I hope I don't have to go for the whole conference this year, it's such a drain on reserves.

I'm lunching with the Orphelins. Marie is on holiday this week.

Bye now, lots of love, Su

11 November 1981, Boulogne-Billancourt, 3.30pm

Dear Mum and Dad,

Much time has passed since I last wrote. Last week attendances for USEPN were low because it was the half-term holiday week. From tonight though they're up again – a full house tonight. Monday we went for a walk in the forest at Meudon. Last night we had a big table so we could all eat together as today Phieng is leaving for India for three months – he'll be working on the farm at Panchgani (he is a qualified agricultural technician.) Yesterday afternoon we had an extra performance for a girls' school. Some stayed afterwards to meet us, about 30. It was fun, as we showed them lighting effects, how the sound works, etc. They didn't stay very long.

Today I cooked lunch with Annette. The menu was liver and cheese, mash and courgettes, and fruit. I did the liver, it was a bit dry as I had to put it in the oven rather than under the grill.

Friday 13th

Yes Dad, Michel Koechlin had the money. He was going to write to you. I'm delighted my circular letter has been so useful. I have no copy.

We're still hoping to find some theatre to continue USEPN but there are no bright lights. Michel O is ill with a cold and is hearing noises, which the doctor says is due to fatigue. So maybe we're meant to stop now and not be greedy.

We had to cancel Wednesday evening's show as Michel had lost his voice. We had a fully booked theatre, too. So we all went to meet the audience, and most in fact changed their booking to another day. So we're doing an extra show next Monday night. People took it very nicely and seemed very, very sad if they couldn't come another time.

Yesterday morning I spent at the office again. This morning I had a lie-in, then did my cleaning and washing.

I think I'll leave you now and write to Jim.

Bye now then, and lots of love, Su

18 November, Boulogne sur Seine

Dear Dad (and Mum too!)

I hope this gets to you by Monday but have little hope.

I hope Dad has a really good birthday and doesn't feel any older.

I'll use this opportunity to get up to date on news. An extra performance on Monday finished this year's USEPN run in Paris. After the show, we came back here for food and a few games with the musicians and all the others from this house. It finished about 1.15am. I spent the day making a chocolate cake (which wasn't really big enough.) I'll make the same for you when I get home, though the cake was a bit heavy, so must do better. Last Saturday I tried a recipe from Annie's Good Housekeeping cookbook: Fruit Cobbler. I used pears and it's just a scone mix on top, like a crumble. It was very good. I also made some extra scones, which rose rather well and were very popular at teatime. Today I cooked supper – packet soup, cauliflower cheese and a suggestion of mine – lemon cheesecake. Everyone was enthusiastic so I felt very pleased with myself. It didn't take long either.

Anyway, Tuesday we were at the theatre at 8.00am (getting up was not easy) and worked hard until 12.00 to get everything taken down and packed. In the afternoon I had a bath and read the Sunday Times. Then there was a 6.00pm meeting at the office. We had a special dessert and evening upstairs, after supper, so we could all be with Lotty on her last evening with us.

This morning I had to get to the office in good time, even more of a struggle to get out of bed. This afternoon I typed two more letters for Claude then cooked supper. Now I am going to leave you to get to bed – it is 10.10pm. I'm going to the office again tomorrow morning and in the afternoon will go to Prisunic.

I'm leaving for Brittany Friday 11.41am. I'll be there until Tuesday, arriving 19.20 at Montparnasse.

A super long letter from you both today. Thank you very much for the 100F – I'll need it as the train fare will take all the money I have. Thanks for the present ideas. I'm very glad of the report of your meeting at Fowey. I'm dying to see Dad's new suit. Please open the doors of my Advent calendar in preparation for my arrival. I will get home as soon as I can after A&C's wedding on 12th to see as much as possible of Jim before his departure on 19th. After that I can help you prepare Christmas. I will desperately be needing a haircut.

I will be able to sleep from tomorrow, on! Now it's 10.25pm, I must go.

Bye for now, lots of love, Su

St Pol de Léon, Monday 23rd

Dear Mum and Dad,

I hope Dad's card arrived on time. Here I am at long, long last in Brittany, where it is raining. Sometimes the sun tries to come out. It is very mild, there's a very gentle wind. Makes me feel quite at home, rain and wind.

Saturday Claudie and I went for a walk by the sea, via the new sailing school and Roscoff. Yesterday we all went to Bodilis to meet up with Michèle and family. She phoned this morning having received Mum's letter. Today Claudie, a friend, and I are going to the Ile de Batz.

I have had some long nights' sleep here. My neck and shoulder muscles took a day or two to soften up. I feel fully recovered though from the strain of the past weeks. The rest of this week we'll be busy in the office. After Villepreux I don't know how much I'll be able to do as Claude will be in Bourgueil. At least the pace should be slower from now on.

Bye now then. Lots and lots of love, Su

PS : We've been to the beach too – I picked up some pebbles and seaweed to take back – only a small handful. Kenavo! [Breton "Goodbye"]

Boulogne, Sunday 29th November

Dear Mum and Dad,

I've decided not to go to Church this morning in order to write letters. I owe a lot, and I don't see another chance to get them done for a while.

First of all, I'll run through my past week:

TUESDAY. A last look at the sea, a quick lunch, then to Morlaix to catch the train. Very sad to leave! Back in Paris in time for supper.

WEDNESDAY. At the office all day.

THURSDAY. Same.

FRIDAY. Same again. In the evening M&T were invited to meet a group of Focolari (I'll explain when I get home if you've not heard of them) and saw a slide show on 'unity'. I am most impressed by these people and their warm welcome – they live rather like we do.

SATURDAY. Washing, cleaning, an M&T meeting, a walk, rest of cleaning, etc. Went to the "The Iron Man", the film that Jim saw. Very moving, very good.

SUNDAY. Today. A meeting this afternoon – Parisian team. There's a good film on the telly this evening, a funny one.

We go to Villepreux on Wednesday, have a show Wednesday and Thursday.

Enclosed is an order form. I've just read Garth Lean's book on Wilberforce and found it challenging and fascinating at the same time. I'd like to give it to Jim for Christmas.

Thanks for this week's long letters. I'm so glad you invited the African students at last. Dad, you can't expect to win dinghy races and fill the deep freezer with mackerel fished along the way! It seems the cat's now becoming the centre of the household.

Someone has offered me the fare home so I'll be able to come. When, I don't know. I must ask Florence if she's prepared to cover my work when I go.

Well, I've nothing more inspired or inspiring to say this time.

Bye now, then. See you soon! Lots of love, Su

Bd Flandrin, 4 December

Dear Mum and Dad,

I am not going to write a letter now, just start it. Typing a letter for Claude, I remembered some things to ask you: Christmas presents?

5 December

This morning I have done all the chores: washing, ironing, cleaning, and writing to you.

This week I've been at the office every day except Wednesday and Thursday when we had shows at Villepreux. It was organised by a young priest responsible for chaplaincies for schools over the whole area and people came from a radius of 20/30km. So two full shows. All went well. It was a well-equipped, modern theatre: we mostly used their equipment instead of setting up our own. So the set-up and take-down were very quick. The audience was mostly young people, school kids really, but they came by choice, concentrated, and kept quiet.

I'm lost for ideas of what to give Grandad for Christmas.

A long letter from you both Thursday. Lots about tree felling, and sailing. I was very moved to hear that Grandad is helping Jim so generously for the

Sudan trip. All the discussions re Church seem to be digging deeper than normal conversations get, true?

Please do get tickets for the Nankersey carol concert. Hair 11.00am Friday is OK. Good, you've reserved an evening with the Jams. What you wrote Mum is not muddled!

MONDAY.

The Sudanese ambassador is here to dinner tonight. There are quite a few people eating with him, so I shall probably be seen and not heard. I shall listen with interest, though.

Bye now. Please excuse my bad writing. I could have typed this, I have a new ribbon.

Lots of love, Su

Boulogne, 7 January 1982

Dear Mum, Dad, Jim and Grandad,

I've only been here a few days but thought it wouldn't be a bad idea to write to you now or there'll be a very long gap before a letter arrives. Maybe I will have spoken to some of you on the phone before you read this.

Sunday. Not a bad journey. We got from Paddington to Charing Cross quickly and in plenty of time and got Vanessa's ticket with no trouble. The train and hovercraft were very full. Being used to ferries, it was funny – you feel the hovercraft run off the slip and into the water. It's more like being in a plane than a boat. It's not too uncomfortable. The conditions were 'medium' they announced but any more bumps and jolts and I'd have been queasy. It's odd to travel so quickly on water (it was dark so we couldn't see very much.) I phoned the house from the station and Philippe Lasserre met me at a Metro station. Lisbeth welcomed me with a tisane and a snack (which I couldn't eat) and had prepared my room, opening the bed, etc. That was SO nice, it really makes you feel welcome.

I slept in a bit Monday morning. I phoned Vanessa in the afternoon. She was touched I phoned: I thought she might need a friendly voice but I was glad to chat to her because I felt jolly homesick. I have all week. I miss things like the cat, the beach, the house, the town, my bedroom and you.

I was occupied Monday repacking, stowing away all I'm not taking and helping get meals. Tuesday morning we had the usual meeting. I laid the table for lunch and in the afternoon I took my shoes to be mended, which gave me a bit of fresh air and exercise. The Gigands, Nathalie and Annette arrived from Caux and Monique arrived from Bourgueil. I cooked supper, which only meant reheating soup, ravioli, washing salad and putting out the apple purée. The others were most grateful to have it all done as I laid the table too. All was simple as we ate in the kitchen, being only 6. It's lovely – it seems more relaxed too.

Wednesday we had lunch in the dining room, as we included the Tates. I did lots of little jobs during the day like sewing wooden buttons on my duffel coat and going to pick up my shoes. I cooked supper. Leftovers of soup plus leftover peas liquidised in. Hot pot of rice, courgettes, leftover ravioli and lots of cheese, all thrown together in the oven. Apple purée again.

Today I am writing lots of letters. This afternoon I am having tea with Marie-José Orphelin. The Bourdins will be back this afternoon, no one knows when. I phoned Annie's Mum last night to thank her for the cheque, but couldn't get many thanks in, for the flood coming back in my direction.

So as you can see, life is ultra-quiet and slow, and I'm enjoying it. More activity when Claude gets to the office, I suppose. I don't know when I'm leaving yet.

I will finish this letter when there is more to tell you....

Latest version of Swiss programme (m = matinée, e = evening)

January

12m, 13 m, 15e, 17m	Fribourg
19e	Bulle (very near Gruyère)
20e, 21e	Neuchâtel
28m, 29m, 30e, 31m	Sion
February	
2e, 3m, 4m	Sion
6e	Le Châble (near Bagnes, below Verbier)
10e, 12e	Lausanne
25m, 26e, 28e	Delémont) near each other in the Jura
March	
2e	Saignelégier) “
4m, 5e	Porrentruy) “
10e, 11e, 12e, 13m	Genève
19e, 20e	Montreux
22e, 23m	St Maurice

The 27th March we're playing at Lons le Saunier in E. France and 1 April at Besançon; I forget if they're just one show or more.

Monaco may be 1st week of June. Other dates are getting clearer, mainly in East.

The Orphelins had a good Christmas. Yesterday at tea I asked Marie-José if she was dreading Michel being away for so long. She said yes.

The new bag is super, I could happily stuff it with far more and with more weight than one of the light nylon ones. It looks like it'll be averagely filled for this trip. I'm taking my orange round bag too, so will have fun getting to Fribourg. Claude, Annie and I are leaving Sunday morning for Fribourg on a direct train, leaving 7.00 something....

And then you phoned. I was just thinking I'd wait until 9.00 then phone!

I'm listening to music on my Walkman in the evening in bed. It sounds so good, it's hard to concentrate on other things when I have it on. It really is a wonderful thing. I don't regret for a second buying it. I listened a lot in the train. I know I'm not disturbing anyone. My next tapestry project will be a bag. The last 4x4 inch took 6 months – I'm just finishing it off now.

I was really glad to reread Dad's thoughts. Next time I'm low I'll get them out and they'll help a lot.

It is 9.10pm and I'd like to go to bed and this is quite long enough.

I spent today at the office - not rushed, just occupied. I found it hard to work all day after such a long break. We have to go back tomorrow morning. In the afternoon I will pack, write to Grandad and clear out my room. I do hate early morning departures so must be totally ready before going to bed (yes Dad, I have managed it once, maybe twice....)

Bye then, now it's 9.15pm. Lots of love, Su



Wednesday 13th January

Dear Mum, Dad, Jim and Grandad,

Last Sunday Annie, Claude and I left by train arriving here, at Fribourg, at 3.00pm. We were met by M.et Mme Carrard, a Swiss couple who are travelling with us for this tour. We all met up for tea with the Father/Brother organising the tour and the others arriving from Caux. Eventually we split up among varied lodgings, many in different religious orders. Florence and I are staying with an order of Franciscans who run a school. We had supper with the nuns the first evening, with the boarders (only 15-odd) the other nights, and breakfast always with the nuns. After supper we watch the news on the telly then go to bed to read a bit before an early night. The nuns are very caring and cheerful. We have a room each – small but very comfortable. We had to be in the theatre at 8.00am Monday and Tuesday but 9.00am this morning. It is a semi-circular theatre with a shallow but wide stage and it has been difficult for hanging lights and acoustically. We've had to string up two bars of lights from the high ceiling. The sound booms, it is very bass-y. We had no time for a rehearsal before Tuesday afternoon's show (for 16-20 years olds.) It went well, though, and they were obviously gripped by the show as they kept quiet. This afternoon is the same, a 'collège' matinée at 2.00pm.

Tomorrow we've a free day, so will visit the old town. Fribourg has about 35,000 inhabitants, and is a mixture of old and new.

Thursday 14th

Yesterday afternoon's show went well again. 500-odd kids each time. Yesterday I was writing in an empty moment before the show. Are you still keeping all my letters, Mum?

This morning we're free. I'm going to write letters and work on my French shorthand again. Claude is planning to try it out soon....

You can write to me at Caux, (c/o Villa Maria, 1824, Switzerland) – they have the forwarding addresses and dates and will do what is necessary.

Next week will be a marathon. From here we dash to Bulle for two days then straight to Neuchatel*. Then we've nearly a week free and I don't know whether to go back to Paris for the National Weekend (23 & 24) or go to Caux (I'd then attend an USEPN meeting in Lausanne on 23rd evening.) So I'll either be at Caux or in Paris for my birthday with a meeting guaranteed either way. I'll have to phone you because I haven't decided yet where to go. It's not fair, last year we did a show on my birthday! Then the next day, we celebrated at the evening meal, but there were many people I didn't know as it was an Industry Meeting Weekend and the atmosphere was a bit formal.

Tomorrow is Annie's birthday. Tomorrow Christian's parents arrive to spend two months at Caux. The 10-Month Programme participants will be back in Caux soon and are coming to see the show at Bulle, then help pack up afterwards.

I'll say goodbye now. Lots of love, Su

*Enclosed is a little map for Jim and Grandad.

POSTCARD: Bulle (which is very near Gruyères. It has over 6,000 inhabitants.) Delémont, Saignelégier and Porrentruy are near each other in the Jura. Le Châble is near Bagnes, and with Sion and St Maurice is in the 'Vallée'. I'm looking for a map to plot these for you!

Sion, sometime in January 1982

Dear Mum, Dad, Grandad and Jim,

This time I will start writing the account of the next step in our travels at the very beginning.

First, thanks to Mum and Dad for a long letter which was brought from Caux today. I hope you weren't disappointed I didn't phone on my birthday. I'd forgotten I said I would, I'm sorry. Thanks Jim, for the long letter about the Sudan exchange trip. I have heard a lot from Peter but it was much better to hear you tell me about it yourself.

So, today is Thursday. We came here early yesterday morning about 9.00am. We set up the stuff yesterday and had a show for schools this afternoon. It wasn't so good, they whispered a bit and started walking out about 4.30pm when a few had buses to catch. I don't know why, maybe they were younger and/or there weren't enough teachers with them. Sion is high in the Rhône Valley and on either side there are very high mountains. The valley sides are covered with vines, then further up where it's steeper, there are trees and in the distance are the rocky peaks of the mountains – splendid when the sun catches them.

Florence and I are staying in a convent again. This time it is very small. There are only seven sisters now, so four years ago they moved from the school they ran in the town to a villa (i.e. a big house) on the outskirts. The school is now run by the state but three of the sisters still teach there. Another is the Abbess or Mother Superior (I never know how to translate titles). There is a sister who is the cook and the others are older so I suppose they can't do much.

The Bourdins and the Carrards are each staying with couples and the boys and Michel are staying at the Capucin monastery.

My watch is gaining half an hour in a night and my alarm clock won't start. I have shoes to be repaired and money, but no time to go into town. I have my

typewriter at home, as tomorrow morning I have work to do – letters for Claude. There's a lot to do, so I won't finish it.

Friday 5 February

Now to finish off the report of Sion, which we left this morning.

We had many matinées for schools, which didn't go so well as there was a bit of chattering and Michel finds it very difficult to concentrate in front of an audience who don't seem interested. We all find it hard to give our best.

The evening shows went well though and the Franciscan Fraternities who came Sunday afternoon were delighted. We had many meals out all together, a few times in the Capucin monastery but mostly in the homes of those responsible for inviting the show to Sion. Twice we all drove high up in the mountains to chalets for a 'raclette' – melted cheese and potatoes. Which meant a super day out too. Both times we had sun and a blue sky. The first time we had a terrific snowball battle. Each time all the 'welcoming committee' came along too (four couples, a Franciscan priest and our Mother Superior) so we got to know them all quite well.

It was a very nice modern theatre in a school and properly equipped, though we always use our own stuff.

Wednesday morning we had a TV producer come from Geneva with a cameraman and soundman to record the 'paperback' sequence and a song ('Il est là'). I hung around by the mixer, being helpful, because the soundman plugged directly into it to record. They came about 9.30am and took an hour to set up. Then it took about another hour to film, then we were away by 12.00. It was all so simple and easy. They will have four minutes on the 22 or 23 February – part of a religious show I think, and on French Swiss TV. I hope we can see it. We'll be at Caux, after Lausanne.

I'm in good health, have been sleeping well and I'm enjoying myself this time. It can be a tough school, living in such a close team, always having new people around but I'm learning.

Now we are in Le Châble, in the Val de Bagnes. We can't get into the theatre until 4.30pm, so will be working late. Tomorrow we can't get into the theatre in the morning, so only have the afternoon. The show is at 9.00pm. This town is like a chocolate box. Mountains close all round and chalet-style buildings. Florence and I are staying with an elderly lady.

Now I must go. I've had lots of letters from you. Sorry for the long delay in my letters. When I have time to write, I'm just too lazy.... I've done many hours typing for Claude this week, mornings for an hour or two and all one afternoon.

Lots of love, Su

Caux, Monday 25 January

Dear Mum, Dad, Grandad and Jim,

I'm sorry the silence has been so long – I have saved writing to you until this break at Caux.

First of all, many big thank you's. Thank you to Grandad for his card, note and letter. Yes, you did give me an envelope at Christmas, so thank you very much for its contents too. I must admit to having opened it then as I wanted to buy a 'Walkman' before I left with money I had for Christmas and also for my birthday (in advance) from Mum and Dad. It is a small but fantastically good cassette player with headphones – maybe you've already heard about it. I really enjoy having it. It means I can listen to music when I like and find that the quality is so good I get very absorbed in the music. Often I listen and do my tapestry at the same time, which is very relaxing. Thanks next to Mum and Dad for the immensely generous birthday present, for the cards (Dad's is very ingenious, Mum's is touching) and for the writing paper. As for Jim, his present came to me via Peter and is a gorgeous inlaid box and a camel brooch. Thank you so much Jim, they're both lovely and I presume they come from the Sudan. The team had got together to collect money for me for my birthday, which I will partly use to get a 36 exposure film developed then keep the rest as pocket money. I was amazed so many people thought of me.

I had breakfast in bed on my birthday, lunch with Monde et Théâtre, including Gunnar and a lovely birthday cake. There was a meeting in Lausanne in the afternoon as preparation for the play, which we all went to. Annie, Florence and I had a fondue at the Café de la Gare in the evening. It was a good, calm day, I felt surrounded by very good friends. My cold developed fast though, during the day.

I last left you Thursday 14th. Friday was Annie's birthday. At 9.30am we were all invited to meet the Bishop of the area. He endorsed the shows in Fribourg but couldn't see the show himself. So we suggested he came to the Capucine convent Saturday where we would be giving a series of extracts for the nuns. They are a cloistered order and it was a big privilege to be allowed into their convent. Michel sang and performed a few mimes. We took the electric piano for Peter to accompany him. The Bishop came and was very moved by what he saw. He wouldn't hang about afterwards - I think he wanted to get away fast to think about it. We had a talk with the nuns and there was a marvellous atmosphere with them – indescribable. I felt a big contrast with the world outside when I left. On Friday night we had a public show, also Sunday afternoon and many of 'my' nuns came. They were delighted with the show. I have enjoyed staying with them.

Early Monday 18th we left for Bulle, to a good modern theatre in a secondary school. I stayed with an elderly couple whose three children often come to Caux. They were very nice. Monsieur talked cheerfully about his cold and with my slight fatigue I knew I'd get it. It started Saturday. Annie tells me I must take Vit C all the time from now on (as bad as Mum).

Tuesday, the show in the evening in Bulle. So far we have always had nearly-full halls. Then Wednesday morning we were up at 5.30am to get to Neuchatel and set up the show in one day for an evening performance. All went well, an 18th century theatre this time, but no problems. Electricity installed since, for instance!

I have now got the hang of plugging up the new mixer. Thursday night another show. We had a long meeting in the afternoon. We took down after the show.

We had cold fog in Fribourg, sun in Bulle and fog in Neuchatel. Friday we came to Caux. No snow. Saturday was my birthday and it had snowed in the night. Sunday I spent most of the day in bed, I felt rotten with my cold. Monday I felt slightly better, so typed a lot. Today I feel even better and have letters to write, washing to do, and repacking. It's lovely to have time to spend with Cindi. Last night we had a Chinese meal cooked by the two girls from Hong Kong, in honour of the Chinese New Year.

In Neuchatel Florence and I stayed with a lady and her cat. A funny cat, who sniffed all our stuff, and sat on us in bed. Her house was full of catty things people gave to her.

I'm running out of paper, so will go. This is very summarised, I wish I hadn't left it so long.

Bye now, lots of love, Su

Tuesday. Have finished the main letter this morning, so this is a PS to answer your letters.

I have given a lot of thought to Dad's suggestion of a covenant. This morning I had a clear thought, "it's no use looking at the future, accept the covenant now and trust". I've no idea what will happen to the play now, or what my part in it might be, but I HOPE I'll be with it for another year. So, I'll stop looking ahead for myself, though we have to think ahead for the play.

Mum's letter: I've not taken any letters in shorthand yet. The ten-month programme people are 17 altogether.

Dad's letter: one afternoon at Fribourg I typed about a dozen letters on this machine. So it's worthwhile having it here. I'm very sensitive to seeming cut off by the Walkman, I don't use it in someone's presence if I think they might want to talk.

I don't have the dates now, but the show is invited to perform in Caux in July only, apparently. For the America/Europe and Family conferences, especially. So perhaps I'll have a holiday in August this year. So it looks like no Tall Ships

Race watching for me. I shall be very sad about that, but it will be a worthwhile sacrifice.

It's been a good breather here. I felt really tired, but haven't had to do much. My cold is lifting slowly. Tomorrow (Wednesday) we're off early, 8.00ish, for Sion.

So bye for now, lots of love, Su

Sunday 7 February 1982

Dear Mum, Dad, Grandad and James,

I'm going to go back over some of the events of the last few weeks, not the usual diary but highlights.

For example, I forgot to mention in my last letter the serious event of the scenery tree falling over during the last performance at Sion. Luckily it fell onstage – causing a terrible break in the show. Thank goodness it didn't fall on the audience though – it's made of iron pipes. It tends to swing a bit, then loses its balance. It's been sorted out since, a bolt was found to be missing. Now it's safe.

The 'theatre' here at Le Châble (Valle de Bagnes, below Verbier) is a gym, with a stage at one end. It was very difficult to set up there, not helped by a mess up in the arrangements. The organisers hadn't been told we needed so much time to set up, so we got into the theatre at 4.30pm Friday night and we couldn't set up the mixer or front-of-house stands (lights) because people were using the gym Saturday morning. We only got in again 2.00pm Saturday and were working – at least Christian and François were – right up until the 'green room' (our half hour of chat before the show). It went OK, and there were 450-odd people.

Claude had been getting fed up doing the radio mike, as he thought he could use the time doing other work, and it's not much to do. So he made me take it for the second part of two shows at Sion which I found hair raising. I'd got the mixing well sorted out by then though, so could concentrate on it. Then

he said he thought I was making a mountain out of a molehill and could do it all with no trouble. So last night, I did the lot with only piano, organ (Peter), flute (Florence) and cello (Michael) so I hardly had to adjust much. The overall result was that I did nothing well, made a bad mistake with the sound effects once, had the mike set wrong so I kept getting feedback (and didn't realise until 'Il est là', two thirds through) and dread to think what the music sounded like. Mind, in that gym it all sounded rotten anyway. So I was sorry for the audience, to have only given them my second-best. I was happy though to have conquered the 'mountain' and will be glad to free Claude in future.

The convent where we stayed at Sion was so small it was really friendly and seemed more relaxed. We got to know all the sisters more or less well. I hope we can keep in touch with them and possibly visit Sion one day next summer from Caux. This afternoon we're moving to Lausanne where the same Franciscan priest had the arrangements wrong again, so we'll be desperately setting up in the theatre whenever it's possible. This time it's not basketball, there's another show in the afternoon before our evening performance on Wednesday.

Lausanne, Wednesday

I think I'll post this today, instead of keeping it until after the shows. Next week I'll be staying Wednesday with the Carrards at Moutier until the next show. Just go on writing to Caux. They know where to send things on to us.

This afternoon we have from 5.30 – 8.30pm to get our equipment set up and adjusted, while the show before take down their enormous solid set – the inside of a house, like a life-size dolls' house. We were able to do some set up yesterday. The mixer is in place, for example.

So it'll take a miracle tonight to do a decent show.

Bye for now, lots of love,

Su

Moutier, 15 February

Dear Mum, Dad, Jim and Grandad,

Our first day at Moutier, chez les Carrard, having arrived last night about 6.00pm. I'd better pick up the tale from Lausanne.

The three hours we had to finish off preparations for the first show were just enough with a few people from Caux to help. While I set up the mixer completely, the others helped the other troupe take down their dolls' house and put up lights, set up the orchestra, etc. The show seemed to go without mistakes and we only started 15 minutes late. That was Wednesday. There was quite a good audience. Thursday, Annie, Florence and I took a circular letter for over 250 people, over to Evian (in France) to post. You take the ferry over the lake and go through Customs (a journey of 35 minutes) then you're in France in the spa town of Evian. The lake was as smooth as a mirror, there was a thick mist and it was a warm, sunny day. We found the post office and went to a café to stick on the stamps. Then we wandered around the town – absolutely dead, being out of season - and along the lakeside. It was a lovely change although not particularly interesting, though going back there was a red sunset reflected in the lake. In the evening Florence and I were invited to supper with Paulette Burnier, a retired nurse, who gave us a raclette.

Friday, Annie, Florence and I had lunch with the daughter of the Pasteur of Montreux, a girl Florence met at Caux at Christmas. In the afternoon we wandered around the shopping streets of Lausanne then back to the theatre to set up for the evening show. We had slightly more people than the last time. The show went OK. Wednesday's show, this detail rather forgotten in the excitement of the set up, was our 100th in public. We had a cake to celebrate, made and decorated by friends at Caux. After Friday night's show we took down, rather slowly, as we were all exhausted.

Saturday morning we all moved to Caux except the Carrards who picked us up there Sunday. I was delighted to see Cindi again. I'd sent her a note to say we'd be coming and said I'd 'lend her my ears'. I was pleased to find I'd be sleeping in her room and we didn't stop talking for two days. I also did my washing, a whole machine load by myself. I ironed it all here this morning.

We slept late – me until 9.30am. This afternoon some friends came in then we went down to the town. The ‘horlogerie’ was closed so I will have to go back down tomorrow with my alarm and watch (which can now gain up to 1.30 hours a night....). I received a generous gift from the Lausanne people so am OK for money. We all did, it was quite something.

I was interested by your ideas for the summer. Maybe I could join you in August in Brittany. This is just an idea that feels like it could be right but I never ever really know until the last minute. Though finally, everything I do is up to me to decide. Also, I know God appreciates I don’t find it easy to be away from home for long periods. So he’ll look after me on that.

I hope you’re both very well. Bye now, and with lots of love, Su

Moutier, Sunday 21st February

Dear Mum, Dad, Jim and Grandad,

It is 10.00am Sunday morning. Nobody has gone to Church and I didn’t fancy going alone, especially as I find services in French difficult. So Jean is writing letters, Emmina is in the kitchen starting lunch and Florence is practising the flute in our bedroom. The flat is small but has big windows with views of the hillsides above Moutier.

Thanks to Jim for his letter and to Mum and Dad for a long one. Sell the piano, or give it away, I really think we’ve had it too long. I don’t see any hope of it being in regular use. I would like to go to Tirley, I’m wary though. What with the trip to Assisi and summer hols, I’ll need money for travelling. I’d like to see Tirley and have a feeling that this year I’m meant to get to know Britain. I really hope I can join you in Brittany this year.

Thanks for your confidence in me on the radio mike. It was a great step for me when I did it and although it’ll take me a while to get slick at doing all three things, it helped that I made one awful mistake the very first time. Now I’m humble again, and must remember to always pray, not just when things are harder. Mum, you talking about all that happens at Church made me want to say how, when I’m with ‘new’ people, I’m always desperate to find

inspiring things to say. If I give up trying, and just listen and understand, before we part I often think of some comment to make, or story to tell which they might find 'inspiring'. I am now following a policy of making friends with people, not 'trying to help them'. I am discovering prayer too, as a way of life. It seems the more often I pray, the easier I find it to stay in contact with God between times.

I shall have to leave the account of this week for now as Florence and I are going out soon. Mme Koller is taking us out for lunch and to visit a town. So see you later....

Now, to get down to the Journal for this week. Now it is Tuesday 09.45, so we're at the beginning of our last day resting, at Moutier. We have to be in Delémont at 18.00 but the others won't arrive from Paris and Caux until later. Tomorrow morning we meet at 09.00 at the 'theatre'.

We had breakfast every day at 08.00, so woke around 07.00 but as we always went to bed early and I slept very well here, I have had a good rest. Yesterday morning I allowed myself a lie-in and woke up at 08.30. We all helped Emmina with the cooking and turned her out of the kitchen, so we could do the washing-up.

Wednesday. Yesterday I took my alarm into be repaired. They couldn't tell me how much it would cost, but anyway I felt it was important. After lunch, we set off for the hills, so Jean could take Florence and I on a ski-de-fond track. This is skiing on the flat, the skis are smaller, and you wear shoes in them. Florence has skied before, but as you know I never have. You just have to push one foot in front of the other, and when you get more clever you push with the poles too, so it's faster than walking. This part was easy but I was still struggling to keep up with the others. Once you come to a slight downhill slope though, you don't need to push, you take off. As we were following other peoples' tracks, we were travelling on hard packed frozen snow. If you move on the fresh powdery snow it holds you up. I found that important for going downhill, as even the slow descents were too fast to me. The first long descent, I fell over three or four times. It's difficult to get up again too. Going uphill is hard work for the arms and mine were aching but today it's my legs that ache most. Still, it was fun and I'm looking forward to trying again. The region was so beautiful too, though I hardly glanced around.

After that, we called in on some friends of the Carrards, a Menonite (i.e. Protestant) preacher and his wife. We talked about the show, etc. They were a genuine, pleasant couple, in their big farmhouse/barn with a friendly St Bernard dog.

Then it was home to supper and a jigsaw - a map of the Jura. I slept very well. This morning I am writing letters and have done some washing.

I'll put this in the post when I go out to buy more postcards.

Bye then, with lots of love, Su

Where did I get to last time? Summary – arrived here Sunday 14th.

Monday 15 – Lie in, shopping, ironing (or did I do that Tuesday?)

Tuesday 16 – Ski-de-fond, hello, I remember describing that.

Wednesday 17 – in the morning I visited the lady I stayed with last year. I saw her husband but all her sons are away now, at college. We had a long and friendly chat over coffee. In the afternoon Florence, Emmina and I went for a walk through the woods on the hill above. There was a hazy sun, so it was lovely.

Thursday – second excursion for ski-de-fond. I found it a bit easier but the others were soon miles ahead of me and we kept going for two hours. I was always trying to catch up because I was afraid they'd go back another way (they were generally out of sight) so I got VERY exhausted. A shame, I would have been happier knowing I could go at my own rhythm. We visited another farm for tea, delicious freshly made brown rolls and cheese and cake. I really needed that, I'd had a light lunch and gone far into the red, energy wise. The farmers were a young couple, friends of the Carrards. Then we had another twenty minutes or so to get back to the car, which was more enjoyable. Also that day the snow was very icy, which made it harder for me, as you've not much control of your skis. That last 20 minutes was off the beaten track so

the snow was less compacted and easier. You follow the tracks of those who've been before, it's like being on rails.

Friday 19 – Another day of calm around the house. It was snowing, I think, because my only outing was to the supermarket with Florence. I spent the morning rewriting directions in my script, complete ones this time, in case anyone else ever has to take over. I only glance at it now. I think it out in my head just before each cue, so really I know it off by heart.

Saturday 20 – A couple came from Luzern, the Utzingers, to have some time with Jean and Emmina and stayed until Sunday afternoon. We all had lunch together, then they went for a walk. Friday, I discovered on a shelf 'Man from a Far Country' by Mary Craig, about Pope John Paul II and finished it Saturday. It was very readable.

Sunday 21 – Mme Koller, a widow, semi-retired midwife and good friend of the Carrards, took Florence and I to her home for lunch. Then we went to see the carnival (carnival) in her village. This is for the Mardi Gras celebrations, now held on Sunday afternoons because everyone works on Tuesdays. It was like a carnival with floats and also many bands, with all the members in costume, with big masks and wigs, playing slightly out of tune on purpose. People threw confetti or strands of paper over each other and apparently after the procession it all ends in a big confetti fight, then a dance, etc. The village is very small but the procession was long and goes around it twice. The beginning had got back to the start before the last had left. It was a sunny day, and the atmosphere was super. People who dress up have free entrance so there were many people with costumes or masks (the roads are blocked off, you have to pay to get in). I only had two photos left. Then we visited the Jura around, especially a beautiful mediaeval town in the Doubs valley, called St Ursanne. Then home to tea.

Monday 22 – finished the jigsaw of the map of the Jura for the second time. After lunch (not too big or too small) went off for a third ski-de-fond trip. This time, Emmina had borrowed some skis and kept up (or down) with me. It was fresher snow and a flatter route, so easier and I was fitter and better at it, so was much happier. It was grey and misty, but that has a magic effect on the trees as the mist freezes on them. Some look as though they are covered with white blossom. All are white or grey, the sky is grey, the snow was very pure,

the effect is that everything is in black and white, and the trees are made of ice. No film in my camera, I was so cross, but have some marvellous memories.

Tuesday 23 – I asked if we could eat pancakes, so I'm making them for lunch. We will have them with cheese, lemon, chocolate and leftovers.

The next little while will be tiring but I'm so glad to be already in the area, so will have less to adjust to, especially as we have already heard a lot about the political situation.

I'll be off now. Lots of love to you all, Su

POSTCARDS: three this time. I found it really lovely here. The Jura is a long chain of hills. The towns are small, peaceful and pretty. A shame it's known a lot of bitterness and trouble.

Porrentruy, 4 March 1982

Dear Mum, Dad, Jim and Grandad,

It is 9.30am and I have come to the theatre a bit early, where my typewriter is, to start writing to you.

I want to whip through the accounts of our doings first, to get up to date:

DELEMONT. Arrived on the Tuesday, Mardi Gras. Went straight to families and watched extracts from our show on TV – 4 minutes is quite long.

Wednesday. Set up, in a freezing hall. Also, I am cold in bed at night. I have decided to stop eating chocolate for Lent as an experiment to see what it's like to 'fast'. I miss it very much.

Thursday. Show in afternoon. Still cold in hall.

Friday. Type in afternoon, then a meeting of M&T, then show in evening. All my concentration spent in the afternoon so I don't have enough for the evening.

Saturday. Day off. Lunch - a fondue at the Franciscan centre (where we eat many meals) then a walk in the hills, with the traditional snowball fight, then tea with Mme Koller at her house, home, and TV.

Sunday. Late breakfast with family (middle aged couple and son, they have a hardware business), show in afternoon (always full halls). Take down, home to supper and bed.

SAIGNELEGIER. Leave Monday morning in time to unload Tagazou before lunch, set up in afternoon, supper in families. I am on a farm a little way out of the village (which is small anyway). A real farming family, five kids (only two at home), a niece living there in the week as she works in the village Coop, Grandma upstairs, I only saw Monsieur once or twice to say hello. No ceremony, if you don't help yourself you don't eat, but refreshing to be so relaxed. Watched film on TV in evening. It is so long since I saw a film or watched TV that I drink anything in, fascinated. Especially on huge, glorious colour sets. A warm bed, with the wind howling outside – lovely.

Tuesday 2nd. It has snowed. I haven't got a film in my camera and there's a long unspoilt valley outside my window. Not that I see it this morning as it's still snowing and the wind blows it into my face if I open the window, so I can't see. One of my shutters bangs shut. Help myself to breakfast then decide to invite myself to visit the cows and horses. Play with the little cats; at least five come to see me. One is playing with something, so sweet. Go to help him play then see his toy is a dead mouse. Abandon little cats with haste. Madame comes along and shows me the day-old calves, still bleary and furry. Then she takes me down to the village. The car only has one seat, for the driver. The others have been taken out to accommodate the milk churns, but the wooden boards are comfortable and there is a handle to hang on to. We can't see out the windscreen, it's covered with frozen snow, but Mme knows the track off by heart (just a dirt track between fields). She comments that it would be better to stay on it or we'll have to dig ourselves out. Oh, there are 30-odd cows, three horses and a foal. I type at the theatre in the morning rest in the afternoon and get ready for the show. The roads

are better by evening so many people come. We take down afterwards - bed by 1.00am.

PORRENTROY. Wednesday morning we arrive as before, in time to unload. Lunch with families and set up in afternoon. Also do some typing for Claude. Family with three kids, boy of 17, girl of 15, boy of 11. Nice, as usual. Monsieur works in a bank – good job, judging from the house. Have a little cold but everyone in M&T has. Michel too....

Thursday. Here we are. Now I'll be off to set up my equipment. I have woken up a bit now. Show at 14.00h, for schools, yuk. More later.

Friday 5th. St Piran's Day [Cornwall's patron saint]. Show for schools was as ever – whispering enough to be a bit of a nuisance. In the afternoon, I went to Florence's home to read and drink a cup of tea with Mme. Evening meal cooked for the team by ladies of St Francis Fraternity. Home by 9.30pm, straight to bed, read a bit then slept until Mme woke me at 9.00am this morning. I was fast asleep dreaming I was on a cliff sitting on a sheepskin. Earlier on in the night I was chased by crocodiles and a polar bear.

I ironed and wrote cards this morning then had lunch with the others at the 'Soupe de Carême'. The Protestant and Catholic parishes get together every Lent at Friday lunchtime to make a meat and veg soup with croutons, bread, an apple, and coffee. It is a good lunch. Afterwards everyone contributes what they like and the money goes to missions. The ingredients are donated too. There were lots of people there – I guess more than 150. This afternoon Florence and I have walked around the town – it is sunny and warm. Now we are in the theatre where it is not too cold as the sun is coming in the window. I don't feel very well, would have been better off in bed today but don't want to miss anything. I think I will stop here and prepare this for the post.

Bye now, lots of love, Su

GENEVA, Wednesday 10th

Dear Mum and Dad,

My typewriter is miles away so I will write you all a short letter and am sending some pictures.

So, did I write Friday last? We had an evening show, 200-odd people. Saturday we had a 'day out' with a group of young people, 10 or so, from one of the churches. We went to St Ursanne, a picturesque village by a river, and had lunch in a bistrot then visited some 'grottes'. We went for a walk and in the evening ate fondue in the Catholic parish hall.

Sunday I went to Mass as this same group was singing. All my family went along too. We did an afternoon show. Friday, Michel's voice was a croak, and we sought guidance whether or not we should play. I felt strongly we should, although he had little voice. We did, and although he had to speak some songs, it was a good show. I hadn't been very sharp the last few shows but that gave me back the necessary adrenalin. Sunday his voice wasn't perfect. He's taken his car back to Paris so I hope today we'll find he's better. Sunday we took down; fondue with family.

Left for Geneva early Monday morning. Lovely drive down, sunny. Set up in the afternoon. Staying with a lady, but only B&B, so had supper with the Mottus (who live in Geneva, he is President of the MRA Foundation, a very warm couple). They have another 'older' couple staying with them (she is a sister of Michel Koechlin).

Lunch and Tuesday supper in theatre's restaurant. Tuesday lunch with lady (and Annie) who does the flowers at Caux, Miette Cape.

So far as I know none of my college classmates are here at the moment. Really, really sad.

Tuesday afternoon Annie, Florence and I walked around the old town and by the lake. We went to the theatre, but nothing much to do. Show this evening. All the others are at the Motor Show this morning. Florence felt too tired and I don't want to go with the boys. Annie wasn't interested either; Claude is in Paris too.

The fountain in the lake isn't working. I wanted to see it! We are playing in a modern theatre, not too big.

The Carrards brought my alarm clock back from Moutier yesterday so at last I have some idea of time. I'll get my watch done in Montreux.

Florence and I had the chance of going to Paris next week for three days to learn how to work the new computer. She's going, I had clear guidance not to. So I'll learn at Easter, when we put the M&T files onto it. I'm dying to try it so can't wait.

After weeks of poverty, I am now immensely rich!

Letters. Mum: do ask questions, lots. Dad: yes, we got your letter, much appreciated. I wish I could see the daffodils... crocuses here.

I have given up chocolate for Lent, as I was an addict. So far, so good. Silly decision to take in Switzerland – best chocolate in the world!

Bye now, lots of love, Su

CAUX, Wednesday 17th

Dear Mum and Dad,

Just a quick note. Dad's cassette arrived this morning and I've already enjoyed listening to some of it. I'd been wondering if I could home for a few days at Easter, but it doesn't look very hopeful, and my thoughts are repeatedly 'be cheerful about not going home at Easter'. As I'm feeling particularly homesick and don't fancy being in Paris, this takes some effort. The trouble is, I know there's a lot to do in Paris with the new computer. All the files have to be put on it, a long job. So I think I should be there to do as much as I can, especially as Monde et Théâtre will be using it.

I think I'm very tired now, not physically perhaps, but mentally and definitely spiritually. But I wouldn't want to be anywhere else than where I am now.

Our time is going to be full, up until June, and the Assisi project is looking more hopeful.

Geneva finished well with full theatres and appreciative audiences. We had a lunch Sunday with the organisers and hosts and came to Caux after that. I have a lot of typing to do before we go down to Montreux tomorrow afternoon (we'll be staying there). We're checking all our cables to be sure plugs are tight and sound, yesterday afternoon and today. I help lay tables and peel potatoes too so am busy. Monday I did nothing, though. Stayed asleep until 10.00am, went for a walk in the afternoon. It was sunny and very, very warm. I listened to the birds singing. Yesterday it got greyer and today it is snowing.

The beginning of this letter sounds a bit sad. Don't worry, I'm quite happy really and am able to share and talk with Florence and Emmina.

I had a letter from Jim yesterday! I also received long and interesting letters from you (and £ from Grandad) at Geneva.

Bye for now, lots of love, Su

PS Gunnar and Sylvie's little girl is adorable, with a mischievous grin but a very friendly personality.

MONTREUX, Saturday 20th

I have reopened this letter to add a bit more, plus the confetti I was saving from the Carnaval.

I am much happier about Easter now. Whenever I see primroses I feel homesick but I think of all that needs to be done in Paris with the computer. I am sure it will be fun. Another reason I wanted to come home was that there's a loose connection in my Walkman. I didn't drop it or anything – I've treated it with excessive care. If I push in one place it works – obviously just something loose or bent... I will stop grumbling.

I am staying with a widow, a very warm and friendly Italian lady, who has her ancient mother living with her.

The first show last night got a full hall – a theatre in a school, but old. Well equipped, though. Gunnar recorded it on video.

By the time you get this we'll be in St Maurice. Straight after, we leave for France. Lons le Saunier on 27th March and Besançon on 1st April. Both are in NE France. I shall be so sad when it's over, I've enjoyed being in Switzerland very much.

Right, I am going now. Off to lunch with a housekeeper from Caux.

Bye now, love, Su

ST MAURICE, 23 March 1982

Dear Mum, Dad, Jim and Grandad,

Recap for Jim and Grandad: I spent a good, if busy, few days at Caux before going down to Montreux. There I stayed with an Italian lady, and we did two shows. Both shows went well and although the theatre was not full, the organisers said the quality made up for the lack of quantity, with many friends and people they hoped would attend. That is just as important as a full theatre.

It made me so happy to speak to Mum and Dad on Sunday as it was the first day of Spring. It was warm and sunny, even smelling very springlike, and was a very happy day. We had lunch with a lady and many of the hosts and organisers came to coffee. We arrived in St Maurice at 17.00h for a cup of tea with the Capucin monks, then had supper with our families. I am staying with an elderly lady – retired schoolteacher – who is very sweet and tells all her friends how 'gentil' I am. She saw the show last night and was enchanted. As she is a member of the Third Order and knows St Francis and his message well, her opinion was good to hear, especially as the parts which struck her most were not the most obvious, but the Stigmata scene, and Francis' despair at his brothers.

It is a big theatre, 9m underground, within the big secondary school. Although the town has a population of only 3000, the school has 900 pupils,

because they come from the rural area around. We are in the Rhône Valley again so there must be lots of little villages hidden behind every mountain, whose kids will come to this school. The theatre has 873 seats, and last night about 890 people were present... Our previous attendance record was 600 at Sens. The stage area is huge and the big cloth backdrop was lost on it. The slides looked enormous! Michel seemed very far away from the back of the theatre but not too small as the proscenium arch is well proportioned. I was right at the back and had plenty of room for once. 600 seats were sold before the performance, most of those to Third Orders scattered around. There were lots of young people too – I must find out how they did it.

We were afraid too that people would be out of touch with Michel, as it's a show in a style better suited to an intimate setting. Yet he held their attention from the start – it helped that he moved rapidly and didn't add too much detail, or draw things out. They reacted well, laughing and clapping. My hostess this morning couldn't get over either the show or such a big attendance. She phoned all her friends to discuss it.

The theatre, in spite of being in a small town and under a college, has a good reputation and many foreign troupes or well-known European artists have played there. The set-up went very fast because we were helped all Monday morning by half a dozen boys from the school and the theatre technician, a biology teacher dressed in overalls, who afterwards shocked us all by donning the 'soutane' – robes – of a 'chanoine' (some sort of monk – have no dictionary to discover what he could be in English). There is a community of 50 or so 'chanoines' in the town and they run the school, although it is State owned as are all schools in Switzerland. The two we'd bumped into earlier in the morning were really severe and wouldn't let us pile boxes in the corridor, but the theatre chap was very nice, and professional too.

We ate lunch yesterday and today with the Capucins. They are 20-odd in the mostly elderly community but with two or three younger ones who are trying to inject new life. One of these younger ones said, 'Maybe the community (monastery) has to die in order to be born again', referring to the lack of spiritual life there. This is a common problem with all Swiss Capucin monasteries – most of the brothers are of retirement age, or are nearly there, but also somehow their lives have lost the sparkle the early Franciscan communities had and there are no young men entering the order. It is the

same with other Franciscan orders but the sisters seem to live more closely to the Franciscan vision, maybe because they had less liberty and kept to stricter rules. The Third Order too seems to be largely composed of old ladies.

I wonder if they haven't gone just the same way as the churches – concentrating on the shell and not the nut of Christianity. Another interesting comment was, that there was a time when many men became Franciscan priests simply because they did not have the means to become priests any other way. So they are not so committed to the life in a community and this has led them to involve themselves too much outside the monastery. Until recently, there was a policy to move monks as soon as they had too many attachments in one place. We sense in two of these younger monks – in their 30s – that they are really searching for direction for their order, not blaming the past but planning a reconstruction. One of them is already the 'guardian' or superior of this monastery, and can work on reviving the community now. The superior of the Capucins in Switzerland is a very good man who has organised this tour for us. Or rather, he has motivated his brothers in other towns to take on the show, despite their fears.

TODAY. Fear and trepidation, we have a matinee for the school and with so many we are worried it'll be a nightmare. The Capucins have done a fantastic and previously unattempted job by personally taking each class for three quarters of an hour preparation.

Later: there were about 700 kids, fortunately an older age group – the college has 15 to 20-year-olds and I think those I saw must be within that bracket. It made a big difference. Total silence! All the way through. Except for a bit of wriggling at the end as many had trains or buses to catch. Laughter in the right places. Good applause at the end with the majority staying to applaud and calling Michel back – we'd got into the habit of only doing one curtain call for school performances as usually they'd dash off as soon as they could.

So what a fantastic finish to this tour. Maybe it means just as much to have the small hall full of politically hot Jurassians at Saignelégier as this huge success. For the morale and the accounts though, it seems a miracle. Probably financially the result will be just breaking even – we don't ask for more. Though we are now buying a trailer for the minibus as it's been discovered that Tagazou is illegally overweight.

Tomorrow, Wednesday, we will stay here and have lunch with the Capucins and the Chanoines, who traditionally eat together two or three times a year. In Lent, poor people and the Capucins used to be able to only afford to eat snails. The custom has persisted and they are on the menu tomorrow.... I swallowed one once, since then I've learnt (from Annie, who used to help her grandfather do this) that they are put alive in salt, so they disgorge all their slime. Cruel. I could not eat anything that had been treated in such a way. Not that I'm very enthusiastic anyway in this case....

Before Easter we perform at Lons le Saunier 27th March and Besançon 1st April, both just the other side of the Jura, the French side. The next show is not until 17th April near Paris so I will let you know our programme next letter. We'll be doing these next two shows on our way to Paris. Some will go back to Caux for three days to record the music. Not me, I'm going to work with Clementine, the computer. Clementine is the obvious name – remember the first summer I was at Caux, I took part in a reading of an old musical about a computer?

Wednesday afternoon. Snail meal went well. I just ate the accompanying 'choucroute' [sauerkraut.] All the others ate them, though Christian only ate one. They all laughed at me.... Before that we visited the abbey and its treasure. Very interesting. Later we're going to talk to the chaplain and some kids from the school.

We're off tomorrow morning, stopping in Montreux to see the video recording of the show. Lunch in Montreux, then off to Lons (and parting with the Carrards).

So goodbye from Switzerland. When you get this I'll be in France.

Love to all, Su

PS Cassette giving great pleasure, thanks

PPS Some joker has put a snail shell in my handbag

POSTCARD: St Maurice, Valais. The last postcard from Switzerland for a while. It will be sad to leave this lovely country.

BESANCON, Wednesday 31st March

Dear Mum, Dad and Jim,

I haven't got my typewriter here but want to make the most of a free morning by starting a letter anyway.

I think I left you in St Maurice. We travelled to Lons le Saunier on the Thursday and were all lodged there in the Franciscan convent. We ate all our meals together too. It was very relaxing and an important chance to spend time together as a team.

We had only one show, on the Saturday night. We had two days to set up but on the second day found a fault, which made the fuses blow when certain lights were plugged in. Poor Christian and François spent all day trying to find out what was wrong and never did. So we did the show on the half of the equipment which worked. François managed well doing the lights in such conditions. They will sort things out while at Caux at Easter.

Sunday and Monday were free. Sunday afternoon Florence and I visited the town and its little museum. Monday we all went for a walk along the lake and up the valley to some fantastic waterfalls. One of them had a path which went around the back. Annie held my hand! The noise and force and spray was terrific. I'd just dried out when it rained, so I got wet again. No colds however.

Both evenings some of us watched films on the TV - not very good but a nice change. Sunday we caught the end of BBC's new 'A Winter's Tale' in English.

Tuesday we came here, that's yesterday. Florence and I are staying with the ex-head of the École Normale (College for primary school teachers). We ate supper in a family. These are all Third Order people.

Today we can't get into the theatre, so will visit the town. It has tons of forts and a river and is very old and preserved. It is snowing. At Lons we sat outside in the garden. Spring....

Friday 2nd April

Just arrived in Paris. Nothing is different, I am in 'my' room. Opening the cupboard and looking at my stuff I thought, "gosh, is that mine?" After two months living with an efficient minimum, it seems senseless to have so much that I don't fully use. I shall have a ruthless sort out, I think....

Wednesday we visited the zoo (and museums) in Besançon. Animals are fascinating. Thursday we set up and did an evening show. We used much of the theatre's equipment so it was relatively easy. Annie, Claude, Michael and I came to Paris by train, left 9.40am, arrived 1.30pm.

We had to go to a 'reception' after clearing up last night so weren't in bed before 1.00am and up early. So a quiet weekend is essential. Next week I have Clementine to tackle and the script to work on for Michel O.

I had a letter from you all Thursday, yesterday, brought by Marie-José from here. And found another long letter waiting today. Poor Dad's back. Poor Mum's cold. I laughed at Mum comforting Baggy [the cat], rather than Dad, after he sat on Dad's suit.

Programme enclosed. It was very useful to get your timetable for the summer. I'm so glad you're coming to Caux.

I am planning to do some kind of fast on Good Friday. I haven't eaten any chocolate, though I did drink a hot chocolate and had some chocolate flavoured biscuits. My hostess at St Maurice gave me an Easter egg, so it's waiting for Sunday next.

All the young people here will be either at Tirley or with their families from Easter Friday to Tuesday. So I will be alone with the Koechlins and Tates unless something comes up (which I'm hoping for.)

I hope you have waded through all this successfully. I haven't written to Grandad, so pass on my love if you speak to him.

Bye now, lots of love, Su

APRIL

Sat 17 Chambourcy (near Paris)

Sun 18 “

Wed 21 Dijon

Sat 24 Lyon

Sun 25 “

MAY

7th & 8th Metz

Tue 11 Strasbourg

Thu 13 “

Fri 14 Drive to Geneva for night

Sat 15 Drive to Rome

Tue 18 Drive to Assisi

Sun 23 Back to Paris for next show

JUNE

Tue 1 Monaco

Wed 2 “

13 April 1982

Dear Mum and Dad,

Thank you very much for your phone calls. This weekend was better than I expected. We had Marie-Helene and a sister of Michel K's with us and Phieng was here. The day with Anne, the Swiss girl, went well (Sunday). We walked in the Bois de Boulogne in the afternoon and the evening at the Lasserres was very nice. Yesterday I did some sewing.

Florence and the Orphelins came back yesterday. Annie and Claude return today, the rest Thursday and Friday. I don't feel so tired now, though I don't feel very rested. So must keep life calm until Friday. I had a list of things to do which I can't finish (e.g. a record of the Swiss tour, and darning socks!)

I've enjoyed this break here, though. I have obviously done a lot of cooking – Catherine and I have done most of it this weekend. As well as every other breakfast. But that has been quite relaxing really – not the agony it used to be. Mind, six is different from 12.

I am now thoroughly pigging on chocolate.

Bye now, lots of love, Su

Dear Mum, Dad, and Jim,

This letter follows hard on the heels of my last.

Please Mum, could you send me two large/medium hooks and eyes, to fasten a skirt.

We're putting names and addresses into Clémentine. She can print on paper or stickers (for envelopes). She will also show the state of subscriptions for 'Changer'. (Maybe accounts one day....)

Rome – we're going there to put Assisi into perspective and simply for its own sake. I want to see St Peter's and the Vatican. We will do the Catacombs too. We will travel straight to Rome, then go to Assisi for the rest of our time. There will be 14 of us. We'll go together again one day, Mum... to Venice and Florence too.

I wasn't too sad in the end this weekend, as this house is very familiar. I do miss spring in Cornwall....

I won't get my parcel until Friday but thanks in advance for all I know it will contain.

Did you receive a letter written in Jan/Feb where I said I would not come home in June if it would help you come to Caux? As I never had any response, I wonder if it arrived. I do want to come home in June and thought this morning that a fortnight would be right this time. But you have guests from 20th. I'm not free until 5th. And should I save some of the money you send, as you thought I'd not be home in June? Say a 50/50 split would be right I think, so you don't worry about my return fare.

People do collect stamps here, I don't know what for. There is a pot to put them in. I keep pretty ones.

I read of all your socialising, dung digging, chapel services, etc, with great interest and, as always, twice through. I'm grateful for your 'thoughts' and 'sharing' so keep it up please. I write too much to have time to comment on all of it separately. My new strategy is to underline all I notice on my first reading.

News of Tirley today from Natalie. She said Jim talked about the Sudan trip – she said “Being funny with a straight face and in bare, unornamented style”. Very Jim!

This is now too long... 10.15pm, late night. So I'm off to bed.

Night, night, bye. Lots of love, Su

The Office, 10 to suppertime, Monday 19 April 1982

I am just waiting for Claude to finish his work, to nip back to Boulogne (late) for supper. I have just finished a massive job for Michel O. I just got done in time. I have been working on it all weekend – Saturday at the theatre until 15.00h, Sunday morning until laying the table, eating lunch, dashing off to the

theatre, then this morning and this evening. All day today we have had meetings – with M&T, the Koechlings, the Lasserres, the Tates, JJ Odier, M Sentis, on the future of “Un soleil en pleine nuit”. Very good talks. Subjects included invitations received for the USA, Lebanon, Germany, Holland, etc. All of these are doubtful but we have agreed on Belgium (a tour like Switzerland) for this autumn.

I had a remarkable experience of guidance the other day. I was to meet a friend, Anne, at 12.00, and went at 10.30 to church at St Michael’s. Communion still hadn’t got round to me at 11.30, when I should have left. I prayed that if I waited for my turn Anne would be looked after, if I was 15 minutes late. I ran to the metro and when I got there she had just arrived, having lost her way. There are often situations in which I act on a hunch or pray and things work themselves out.

Now I’m writing from Dijon. Shows were difficult at Chambourcy. We played in a gym.... The stage was put up in the afternoon before the show. The sound was terrible and the blackout non-black, on Sunday afternoon. Also, we had very small audiences, Saturday night 250, and Sunday only 60-odd.

Dijon is a very pretty town. Old buildings and lots of parks. We arrived Tuesday morning. Florence and I are staying together in a nice family with an 18-year-old daughter. I slept well last night and my cough is better. We set up yesterday afternoon and this morning (Wednesday). We’ll have a rehearsal this afternoon, and also visit the town. The show is tonight – 600 seats to fill. It’s a nice, normal, theatre. On Thursday we go to Lyon.

I’ve had a terrible cough since last Thursday and couldn’t rest. It’s a bit better today. It was a nuisance during the shows at Chambourcy – and kept me awake at night.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH for the money for Assisi, for the team and for me. Having money for the team makes me more responsible for their well-being, a good exercise.

This is a very scruffy letter, due to this pen, and writing on a pile of programmes.

It's the end of the page, so goodbye! Su

POSTCARD: Saturday 24th

Tristesse, this letter will now be at least a week old when it travels. Dijon is over, a small audience. Now at Lyon, show tonight. Small theatre. All staying in a convent. Cough still a nuisance and stops me sleeping. Your letters of 18th here today. Thanks for menu and picture of moped. Dad, record some gospel and listen to it in the Walkman. I find it quite a heady experience. Would like to hear the Russian choir very much. Moped has two seats for taking Mum to shops too? I hope Aunty is better. Take it easy Mum now. Convent here in the country. Cock outside crows at 5.15am, cuckoo cuckoos later. Haven't yet seen the donkey the others say is next door. Will go and look now. Fruit trees in blossom, hens everywhere. Bye again. Sorry about delay. Su

Dear Mum and Dad,

This is in answer to your letters, separately from the general epistle.

Thank you very much for the lovely photos I received this morning.

I think all you're doing with 'Mr Brown' is marvellous.

Thanks to Mum for the quotes from Proverbs.

I think I should be free to stay here and tie up secretarial loose ends before coming home.

My cough is ALL GONE, either due to sudden massive doses of honey, or cleaning up dust in my room, or both, or neither.

Right, a break to go to the cleaners to pick up my dry-cleaned kilt....

Back again. There's a big chestnut in the avenue, I can see from my window, with huge white flowers. Prettier, much prettier, from up here than down below.

I have just stuck up the photos above my table. The sunset is GLORIOUS. The daffs too.

FRIDAY NIGHT, 30 April

I'm exhausted... got back from the office 5ish, sat down and read through your letter properly.

I would like to be at the first Minack performance, because of the Service first.

Somewhere in my cupboards is the Walkman's box, with blurb in it. It might not be good to use the headphones in your machine. I am JUST surviving without my little friend.

I have recently discovered a few recipes for gooey desserts I'd like to try out... can I do that in June?

TUESDAY 5th

Sorry, I was going to type a letter to you, Jim and Grandad but have just not had the time. The same for the article you asked for. I will try to do that in the coming days.

I don't know if I finished off the Lyon week properly. A 350-seat theatre was filled twice, and all went well.

This week I've been pulled between the office, kitchen and sewing, re-doing the hem of a skirt I need this week. I tried to get some rest too, but not very satisfactorily. Still, I am in good enough shape for the next step. I hope to study some Italian in the minibus this afternoon, on the way to Metz. Must dash now, sorry.

Lots of love, Su

Dear Mum, Dad, Grandad and Jim,

As I'm in Rome without my typewriter, I am going to write by hand.

STRASBOURG... is a lovely city of old wooden beamed houses and willow-lined rivers. The shows went well with good audiences. We stayed in various religious institutions and left for Geneva Friday 14th.

SATURDAY 15th

Left Geneva at 07.30h. On journey saw: Mont Blanc, Chamonix, Mont Blanc tunnel, Valley of Aosta, rice fields, wild and rugged Mediterranean coast, the motel where Mum and I stayed outside Florence (recognised by funny church next door) arriving at Rome for 9.00pm dinner. Motorway mostly. We are staying in a hostel run by nuns. It is very comfortable and there is good, real Italian, food. Lunch starts with pasta and sauce, then come the meat and veg. Dinner starts with soup full of pasta. I had my first ice cream today (Monday).

SUNDAY 16th

Breakfast at 9.00am. At 10.00 we rushed off to catch the Pope talking out of his window on St Peters Square. I didn't catch much of what he said and all I could see was a distant white blob with expressive arms. We quickly looked into St Peter's. After lunch, a Capucin Father took us to the Coliseum, Forum, Capitol, St Peter in Chains (opposite hotel where Mum and I stayed) and Santa Maria Maggiore. I was exhausted that evening especially as it was quite hot yesterday and the sun rather dazzling. We are staying near the Coliseum, which is convenient, as it's central. We took a bus to the Vatican.

MONDAY 17th

This morning we went to the Vatican and saw the tombs of the Popes and the Sistine chapel. That took all morning.

This afternoon four of us took a cheap bus tour for three hours, which showed us tons of things I'd not seen before. Of course it did the obvious, but lots more too: the Circus Massimo, the Emperor's Palace, the Baths, but also beautiful churches, and lots of Roman remains. Everyone took a pamphlet of all the places to be visited, in their own language, and the driver shouted out the name and the number as he pointed to each thing. Then you read it up yourself. We only got out three times but I was delighted not to have to walk. We saw the smart streets too, and big palaces and gardens.

TUESDAY 18th

Yesterday. In the morning we visited the Catacombs. Marie and I ate a real ice cream (strawberry and chocolate). After lunch we took a long and winding path through the hills to Assisi. It is beautiful, rugged, dark and steep, with villages perched on mountainsides. Then you come out onto the plain and follow the mountains along until you come to Assisi, crawling up a hill. We arrived about 8.00pm, ate and went to bed.

WEDNESDAY 19th

We are all staying in a sort of pension/guest house run by a priest. We four girls are the worst off as we are all crammed into one room. As some of us sleep longer than others, I am afraid I'm not going to get the long nights I hoped for. Lotty wakes at 5 or 6.00am.

We all climbed up to the fort on top of the hill, after breakfast. The fort is called La Rocca. We looked at the view of the plain and the hill, then sat down to chat and plan our days here. We decided to go our own ways but to meet once a day to discuss a topic. So after that, we wandered back down into the town, then after lunch had a siesta. Marie and I slept until 4.00pm.

Then we (Marie and I) walked down the hill to visit the little chapel of St Damian, where Francis had his first direct call, "Francis, repair my church which is falling down." He thought the voice came from a Byzantine cross hung over the altar. The church became a convent where Claire and her sisters lived and you can see their little chapel, their dormitory and refectory, an amaryllis placed on each spot where Claire sat and where she died. It is all very small and their furniture is still in the refectory – very rough and simple wood trestles and benches. On the way back we stopped at the Church of Saint Claire where the original cross from St Damian hangs. You can also see a bible and habits of St Francis and St Claire, and St Claire's embalmed body.

In the evening we had pizza in a little restaurant, to celebrate a birthday.

THURSDAY 20th – Ascension Day

In the morning we visited the double church where St Francis' simple tomb lies. The churches are full of beautiful frescoes showing the life of Francis. We were guided by a friend of Michel's, a Franciscan from Malta.

In the afternoon I read (I slept well the previous night, as Marie gave me some wax earplugs. So well, we almost missed breakfast.) Then we all went by car a few kilometres to the Portiuncule. The first Order settled around this little chapel in the woods. It is now protected by an enormous Basilica, and is within a town. A lot of imagination is needed, especially at the spot where St Francis died.

It is sunny and warm here, not too hot, just right. After supper we met to discuss the bible reading on the Ascension. It was a bit simple, but good.

FRIDAY 21st

This morning we visited the Carceri hermitage. In Francis' time, it was a spot he loved to go to, for peace and reflection. It is high in the hills and very beautiful, and the 15th Century convent built around the original chapel is simple and poor. Monks still live there. Originally, only three or four lived there and slept and prayed in cabins, or in clefts in the rock. These are very small and would only have kept the rain off. Some of us walked back, I went in the car. The walk up had been so hot, and uphill all the way... pretty though.

After lunch and a read, Marie and I went to look in the church (St Rufino) where Francis and Claire were baptised. Claire lived next door to the remains of the houses owned by Francis' father, including the spot which is said to be the stable where Francis was born. Then we had our daily ice cream and walked by the house which belonged to Francis' first companion, Bernard. The town seems to have stayed much as it would have been in Francis' time and every time I see a pretty alleyway or a wall covered with roses, I want to take a picture.

In the evening, Marie, Annie, Lotty, Florence and I all strolled around the town, from one end to the other; the main churches were floodlit, it was very warm, lights twinkled out in the plain below, the atmosphere was very relaxed and you could imagine Francis and his friends as they might have been in these streets.

SATURDAY

I slept like a log, last night. I felt the need to be alone this last morning and, parting company with the others, went down to the Basilica of St Francis. I wanted to look at the frescoes in more detail. There was a wedding in the upper church, which I stayed to watch. The church had seemed, until then, only a monument and it brought it to life to see the community using it, as it was obviously a local couple who were getting married. After a while I went downstairs and stayed and looked for a long time at some of the frescoes there. Then I wandered slowly back for lunch.

This afternoon I tried to sleep, but couldn't, so washed my hair, went with Marie to eat a gelato, then we went up to the Rocca to take a last look at the whole town. It was lovely and I didn't take my camera. Stupid. There was thunder rolling around so we came down again. There are always lots of swallows, wheeling over the town.

After supper: we all went out for an ice cream then heard Mother Teresa of Calcutta speak in the church of St Claire (I was too short to see her.) It was a very simple and direct speech. Lotty took it down in shorthand so when I get a copy I'll send it on to you. She seemed so close herself to St Francis. It was an uplifting end to a week of profound spiritual experiences, which I will tell you about at a later date.

In summary, Mother Teresa, St Francis, St Claire were all so FREE OF SELF, that they were/are TOTALLY AT LIBERTY to LOVE GOD, TO LOVE AND TO SERVE FOR HIM.

Sunday we returned to Geneva, spent the night in a hotel and have just arrived at Boulogne safe and sound. Thanks for your contributions (which all went for the trip), which helped not just me, but us all. I aim to travel home 12/13 weekend, but am not sure. Two letters today.

Bye and lots of love, Su

Tuesday 25th May,

Dear Mum and Dad,

I'm glad of your flight details for Caux. Will you be there for your wedding anniversary and is it the 25th? Silver?

I am grateful my Walkman has had Dad to love and care for it and he has been able to enjoy it in return.

Please pray for our team. We're sorting things out between us but we need to learn to pull together and to rediscover a spirit of service.

More on June, when I have travel details. But I aim to travel 12/13 weekend. I wish I could be around to help you in French, when Paul and Yvette come but I see they leave on 3rd and I will only be back in Paris on the 4th.

Yes, I can be with you in Brittany all the time. I think the last show at Caux is 27th July so I can be free to leave after the Family session. I will travel by train to Paris, then to Brittany unless someone is going to Paris by car.

I will post this before my letter on Assisi and Rome as I want to photocopy it first. So be patient – a long three-pager will arrive in the next few days. Mum'll have to wait for her present though. Today I sent a card to Grandad, for his birthday.

Bye now, lots of love, Su

Monday 31st MAY

Dear Mum, Dad, Jim and Grandad,

I am sitting in a deep, wide, bucket armchair in front of a huge window looking out on the port of Monte Carlo. The harbour doesn't hold many boats – there are medium sized yachts and a good collection of gigantic and sparkling gin palaces. I see a handful of simple fishing boats. Houses are perched on the steep slopes around the harbour. They are rather elegant and there are palm trees everywhere.

I am in the lounge of the Théâtre de la Princesse Grace, a beautifully equipped and lavishly furnished new small theatre with, I guess, 350-400 seats. There is not the same fear of filling them this time as our first performance tomorrow night is by invitation (a gala in aid of a new hospital for the Lebanon) and the second is for schools (ugh!). The Casino is nearby and opposite is the Palace of the Grimaldis.

Most of us are staying in borrowed and empty flats, except Florence and I, who are in a holiday/ language school centre just outside Monte Carlo. Some others, the boys, are in flats as far away as Nice. Our room is rather bare and basic – not even as comfortable as a convent cell. The loos and showers are a

bit far away. The cafeteria is open air, so it's a little like camping, but is fun I think.

We left at 7.45am this morning for the theatre, before breakfast, and it was hard to find a café open. The nearest was on the waterfront and rather expensive for a simple, small portion of coffee, bread, butter and jam. The others all had to fend for themselves too this morning. It made the boys late arriving to pick us up.

We travelled down in two stages: to Lyon Saturday, where we stayed the night in the same convent we all stayed in a few weeks before, with the cockerel, cuckoo, donkey and foal all present. On Sunday, it took all day to get here. Look at a map – it's a very long journey. I had lots of good things to read, so it passed.

I had a hectic week at Boulogne. Four letters to prepare, copy, get the envelopes written, filled and stamped on Friday afternoon. It was just done in time, then packed and ironed Friday evening. Plus, Thursday evening a sit down Lebanese meal for 80 was held at Boulogne, in aid of Lebanese wishing to come to Caux this summer. About 16,000 F was collected, as even people who could not come sent money. I helped with the meal service and had to leave after the slides, before the speeches, I was so tired after my day in the office. Thank goodness I have discovered earplugs. Last night there was talking and music until late, but I went off to sleep quite quickly.

We are mainly using the theatre's equipment here, which is why I have time to sit and write to you. But it will make the show a headache a) because I will work from a box cut off from the theatre by a double-glazed window; and b) I will not be able to do things automatically, without thinking, on equipment I know.

Tomorrow we should have all day to rehearse, to get used to the different equipment. The equipment is very good, so there should not be much of a problem on the technical side.

Tuesday 2nd JUNE

We had the orchestra rehearsal in the morning and I was sometimes able to be in the auditorium, to hear how it sounded. In the afternoon we did a full rehearsal, with someone telling me how it sounded below. I was too busy with writing things down to get the sound effects right, although I desperately tried to for the sake of the others rehearsing. Afterwards I was afraid I would not be able to cope, it would be too much for me in any moment of crisis, and I would panic. That is the greatest danger, as it paralyses you.

Before the show we changed into our smartest clothes, to be ready for the dinner afterwards. It was funny to see us all looking so formal.

The audience didn't make 100 people (350-odd seats). The show went well, a miracle. I concentrated like I never have in my life before!

Then (once Michel had changed) it was off up the road to the Hotel de Paris (just opposite the Casino, one of the best in Monaco) and up to its seventh floor Grill. Lots of elegant people, mainly middle-aged. We sadly had all been put at the same table. A posh menu and a violinist floating around. The director of the theatre was with us, so those near him and his wife were able to have an interesting conversation. I was too far away with a musician we'd hired, and a silent Florence, so I just ate and searched desperately for conversation. Afterwards, we were briefly presented to the Princesse de Lobkowitz, whose initiative this had been.

Michel O was seated at the table d'honneur with the Prince and Princesse de Lobkowitz, a Princess (sister of Prince Rainier), her niece, a Baroness and the Archbishop of Monaco, plus a rich Lebanese couple and, I think, the lady who organised the gala, a Mme Olivier. Poor thing, I think he was panicking inside but I'm sure his discretion and grace carried him through admirably.

We were in bed by 2.00am. There was, therefore, no morning left when we got up on Wednesday. In the afternoon, we did a public show to which 30-50 people came. Obviously no thorough publicity had been done. Still, some terrific links have come our way and quite a few hearts touched. I believe that's what matters.

We left on Thursday at 10.00am, and arrived in Lyons in time for supper. We spent the night there again, and arrived in Boulogne this afternoon at 4.30pm.

More of this, in much more detail, when we meet. I have to decide how I travel and will book tomorrow or Monday.

I hope you're all well, the Crenns' stay went well and was fun.

Sorry, no postcards. I just never saw any. I'll get your map up-to-date, Mum, when I get home.

Bye now, lots of love, Su

Caux, 8 July 1982

Dear Mum and Dad,

Well, we got here. It took two days, but we got here.

Jim slept a lot on the way. In the afternoon, yesterday morning and during the night. I think the last week or so must have exhausted him.

I only slept lightly during the night and from 7.00am on couldn't sleep any more. By the time we got to Montreux I was feeling rotten, and Jim kindly carried my heaviest bag for me but I wish I hadn't been so irritable.

The connections were bad from Geneva to Caux, which meant we didn't get here until 3.30pm. Jim survived on peanuts and apple and cake. He's in a room with Philip Boobbyer so was met by a friendly face.

I am with a Norwegian girl who I only knew from a distance and Nathalie (who you met in Paris).

Cindi has rung me but I haven't seen her yet. The others are busy preparing the theatre for the English version but I am not required for rehearsal yet, so will take a day off. I went to see the housekeepers earlier and there was nothing much left to do, so I am also let off from that. I thought in the end I should do housekeeping again, as last year I realise I put work before people, so this time I want to get it the other way around.

This afternoon the team are meeting to discuss the 'open day' we are having on 18th July for our hosts of the Swiss tour. I had breakfast with Emmina and Jean Carrard, who are looking forward to meeting you.

Friday 9th Had breakfast with the housekeepers and only had one room to look at, so a slow start. It's good to relax a bit and get up to date with old friends.

Jim seems to have been finding people to eat meals with and is a bit worried about not having enough to do. I wish he would believe me when I try to tell him the first few days are always different. Soon he will be fully stretched. People are looking after him though, like Edward Peters and Matthias (who has got Jim working right away in his service shift). Jim said doing service last night was fun.

It's lunchtime so I'll finish here, so I can pass this over to Jim.

Bye now, I hope you are both taking life easy and will be relaxed before you come here.

Lots of love, Su

Hello. As Su's told you all the news, I won't add much (good excuse, eh?) I'm beginning to find my feet here (two, so far!) and I'm sharing a room with Philip Boobbyer. It's teatime now, so this had better be all! Lots of love, Jim

July 1982

Dear Mum and Dad,

A letter from Mum yesterday, from Dad today. Thanks for the £10.

I don't have your flight times with me, I don't know why not. I will end this letter with details as I must see Jim and find out train times.

At the bottom of this letter is a drawing, which I guessed might be a cuttlefish, done by my new roommate. She looked it up in her dictionary, and indeed it is. She gave me a piece to try – it is dried and shredded. Fishy, and it smells very strong – I've put the packet on the window-ledge, I hope she won't mind.

Her name is Yung-Fang, she is from Taiwan and arrived Tuesday. Her English is limited but she is fun.

Jim has moved and is expecting a Lebanese student as a roommate.

He still seems happy and enjoys his service shift. They are a fun team, I think. Led by Matthias and Monique (who is very jolly).

Interesting, Mum's insights on being house-proud. I wonder if you can dig out the reasons why you care so much?

There were so many things I should have shared with you while home. I got miserable after a week or so at home, at the thought of leaving again. I'm afraid of the team; of the worry, strain and hard work of recent times; of my heart. I decided then, and prayed, to enjoy each day at home and never think of the day when I would leave.

I expected that it would all come out on the journey but I felt optimistic enough to stay cheerful.

I've been happy here. You know I was most miserable last year. Yet I'm enjoying life this time.

The team spirit is better and we are all trying again. I am ever ready to battle for it.

I have been strict and have only done what I felt right. Enough rest; saying no when I feel something's wrong (in the face of 'do your duty' persuasion); saying yes happily when I feel a request is right (even when I don't want to). Both cases bring only joy and strengthen me.

I have been busy all meals and free and available to be with particular people exactly when they needed it (especially walks). I have made new friends and got up to date with old ones.

Take it easy Dad, I don't like the sound of that headache.

Sallie Wood is working with me, which I find real fun. Bob and Lyria have just arrived. Annie and Claude are well, also the Orphelins. Lotty too. And Cindi. They will all be here when you come.

The two shows in English were very well received. The first one was technically bad but the second all round good.

Next, we'll be preparing for the French version again – 24th and 28th.

I'll leave this to Jim now. We went for a walk this afternoon and ate lots of strawberries. The walk did me good. As we made five beds this morning, I should sleep well tonight. I was up late chatting with Yung-Fang last night.

So, bye now. With LOTS of love, Su

From Jim:

Hello! I've two minutes before breakfast, thanks for the info last night. The reason I want the French book is I'm making a serious effort to learn it again and have borrowed a tape and some books to practise (a proper "respond and listen" machine, which can play back what I said).

It's now after breakfast, and I've got times for you. The best way to get here is bus to Lausanne, and then train.

<i>Bus leaves Airport at</i>	<i>16.30</i>
<i>Arrives Lausanne railway station</i>	<i>17.20</i>
<i>Train leaves</i>	<i>17.28 – this is the Brig-Milan train</i>
<i>Arrives Montreux</i>	<i>17.47</i>
<i>Leaves Montreux</i>	<i>18.00</i>
<i>Arrives Caux</i>	<i>18.30 (we'll meet you)</i>

Caux train leaves Montreux on the farthest side of the station away from the lake.

I'll tell you the news verbally, I think, when you arrive, as Peter R is waiting to see me.

Lots of love, Jim

WEDNESDAY, 1ST SEPTEMBER

Dear Mum, Dad and Jim,

A quick note, to get you up to date. First, though, thanks for a really super holiday, and for all the fun we had together. Thanks too for all the various funds.

The days at Michèle's [Breton friends] were very quiet. Friday night we, and Yvette and Paul, were invited to Claudie's flat for supper. It was Michèle and Mitou's fifth wedding anniversary. Then I went back to St Pol with Claudie.

Saturday, we went to the sailing school and went out in a Caravelle being sailed by a friend of Claudie's. We had to hurry back for lunch eaten in the garden. Then back to the sailing school where a weekend regatta was organised. We did two turns of the bay near St Pol with a blue sky and a good, steady, strong wind. A beautiful day. In the evening we went out with some of Claudie's friends (with much yawning).

Sunday after lunch, off as before to the sailing school. Sunday the sky was as blue as before, but the wind gustier, so often we were all sat on the windward gunwale. We sailed around and over to Roscoff. In the evening, we had a couple of crêpes in Roscoff and came home earlier.

Monday, I stayed in St Pol and read and walked and went to Claudie's in the evening. I slept there and Claudie took me to the station on the way to work on Tuesday, yesterday. So I was back in time for tea. Today I've helped in the house and sorted myself out. Life is calm here, and I feel so fit and well and all seems so different to a few months ago. I hope I can keep calm and happy, then the time until Christmas will go quickly.

I hope you're settled down again and looking forward to hearing from you.

Bye now, and lots of love, Su

Monday, 6 September 1982

Dear Mum, Dad, Jim and Grandad,

How nice it was to hear your voices on the phone last night. It was a lovely start to the week. Today I got a letter from Dad. Nice to hear of Grandad staying with you at home.

I had a good laugh at Dad's account, "The cat came out of jail..." and how he now eats the cat food he didn't like before. Sounds like his holiday did him good. Now to Mum's letter. You still got home at a decent time, it seems to me.

Tuesday 7 September. I had to stop there to go and cook dinner. We're only the Koechlins, the Tates, Nathalie, and a visitor. Jean-Louis and Phieng left for holiday this morning; Frederic is back for 'Changer' but will be off again next week; and Nathalie will be away this weekend, so we will be four here. I've forgotten, also Michel Nosley, Jean-Louis' younger brother. Our guest is Elsa Vogel, a French lady married to an Englishman working 'full-time' in South America. She knows the Lamonds very well, so next time you see them mention we met here.

I'm doing lots of cooking – nearly a meal every day. I had to go to the office twice and am going again tomorrow to do some letters for Michel K.

In between, I have dyed two pairs of old shoes, made a skirt out of an old dress, and thrown out another load of useless stuff.

Sunday, we left here about 11.00am and drove three quarters of an hour to the Forest of Rambouillet. We walked a bit in the sunny woods, and had our picnic under a massive beech tree. We lazed and walked, then it was time to head for home in time for the concert so as to escape the returning weekend traffic.

The concert was by the French Youth Orchestra with a young but well-known conductor, in one of the best concert halls in Paris, the Salle Pleyel near the Arc de Triomphe. Evelyne had the tickets free from a friend. The programme was classical – Brahms and Messiaen. We were Evelyne and I, Nathalie and Michel. I was the first to spot their French minister of culture there. Not too hard as I saw a photographer buzzing about, then recognised the curly hair and big nose.

When you rang we'd just finished clearing up supper and I was off to bed. I slept well that night.

Last night I watched an old film. I especially enjoyed it because it was in the original, with French subtitles, which I sometimes needed to read to understand the accents of the characters.

I'm very pleased with my coat. It looks like it should be warm as it is long and buttons high at the neck.

I must leave you now to go and start fish pie for lunch. I am trying to use this chance to learn to improve my cooking.

Bye now, and lots of love to all, Su

PS It's cooler and overcast today but last week and last weekend was sunny and hot. We ate lunch and supper on the terrace every day. Lovely!

Monday 13 September

Dear Mum and Dad,

I have no sheet of carbon paper here, which is very annoying, as I can't write to you and Grandad together.

As nothing much has happened, I will scribble you a little note by hand.

I went to the office once last week and cooked nearly every day. Since Friday, only Alain and Anne-Marie Tate and I have been here. I was sure we would have some visitors as a weekend never goes by without and I was right. Catherine's parents to lunch Saturday, a Canadian family to supper and as they hadn't found a hotel, we put them up for the night. They know the Lamonds.

Sunday I went to church. In the afternoon I sat in the garden, and later had to go to the office to type for an hour a half, for the 'Changer' team, who were short staffed.

Last Thursday I was invited around to Sue Lark's. Her parents will be here next week. Janet is moving to London at Christmas and a very nice girl called Mary is taking her place. Sue had invited her to meet me. I met her again at church on Sunday. Sue had just sold her car in order to pay her taxes! She is happy still but thinks of only staying another 18 months or so.

No news of the show, except that I have been reading up on Belgium in the encyclopaedia.

In between times, I am reading a lot and enjoying the slow, peaceful life immensely. Phieng and Michel are back and Annette is coming Wednesday. Only another week of this delicious calm. François is doing well in the army and Marie broke her arm falling off a horse at the beginning of August.

Well, this is longer than I intended but good exercise for my handwriting. Now a note to Grandad, so bye for now.

Lots and lots of love, Su

22 Avenue Robert Schuman, 92100 Boulogne-Billancourt

Friday 17 September 1982

Dear Mum, Dad, Jim and Grandad,

I think I will start this week's report early, not that there's a lot to say, but otherwise I forget.

This week I made a highly acclaimed Ragout de Mouton (French lamb stew); Carrelets au vin blanc (fish in white wine); helped Anne-Marie make a good Crème Renversée (like an egg custard with caramel); and on Monday heated up a selection of Laotian leftovers Phieng had brought back from the pagoda (which were very hot , lots of chilli!) I have typed a much-admired invitation for our next national meeting weekend (9, 10 October).

What with visitors and going to the market and butcher's with Anne-Marie and all the washing up and little extras, I haven't had much time to myself, but have been very happy pottering about doing all these things. I do still have a certain amount of mending, etc, to do and a bit of sewing, as well as letters to catch up on so will need some time. Annette came back last night, which will help. The others start arriving from Sunday night on so this is the last weekend of nice small numbers and peace and calm. It is possible to get to know people much better when you are only few so the last few weeks I have felt much more sure of myself.

It is still hot and sunny, but I haven't been spending spare five minutes in the garden, so my tan is fading now.

A letter from Dad yesterday. Details of trip on Jubilee. Great to hear the Fabers will be visiting you. Yes, no problem with my ticket and it was only 10F extra. I do hope Mum and Dad can organise their little break.

TUESDAY 21 SEPTEMBER

Thanks to Mum and Dad's phone call, Sunday night, I now know that you have had a break. I had a super long letter from Grandad today, who is a very busy harvesting his crops and storing them away for the winter. I am very sorry he wasn't well, again. So you have had hot weather too. We had nice sunny days until Sunday when it broke with a few storms (just a bit of thunder, lightening and rain) and since then it's been hot still, but muggy, close, damp, with heavy showers. At night it's most unpleasant but today is a bit chillier and at last I need to wear a jumper and not just a shirt. It's been pleasant to stay in summer clothes so long.

This morning I cooked lunch – we're 12 now – Mushroom Potatoes (a commonly used recipe in my student flat days) and a favourite dessert in this house that I'd never made – Gateau au Poires. Like an upside-down pudding, but with a caramel made in the mould first – a bit tricky. I'd seen it done (last week with Anne-Marie), and am glad to have had to do two puddings as the second time I got the hang of it better. All was enjoyed.

So plans now should be: Belgium to 18 Oct; gap until 24 Nov; possible shows in Holland 24-30 Nov; shows in Switzerland around 12 Dec; unknown in Feb/March (three weeks); and USA in April-May. The situation for the USA is that we received a verbal but definite invitation to go to a few cities in the east (I forget which) and left it to the Orphelin family together to give the green light. Michel said today the family is generally positive that he should go but it remains to be seen whether the whole show will go (it could be some kind of reading...) and if so, who. The Bourdins aren't very keen and it all depends on Peter and Christian neither of whom are here. We can manage without Claude and Annie but not without Christian and probably not without Peter. Should either of them not go, Michel would have to do something simple in the way of a reading, along with the songs. I suppose we'll be able to talk about it soon, after we meet up in Belgium.

I saw François this weekend. He is getting on well in his military service. Annette and I took Marie to the cinema last night to see 'New York, New York' which we all enjoyed. On Saturday night we had crêpes for supper. For lunch I cooked a very interesting Greek potato cake (full of meat and tomatoes) which looked very splendid and was good.

After church Sunday I nipped into the Louvre to look at the Flemish paintings and get an impression before going to Belgium. Yesterday I went to the Belgian railway office to see if they would give me any blurb on the country and I came away with loads.

Annie and Claude are back, refreshed from their break. Nathalie, Frederic, Jean-Louis and Florence are back too and the Koechlins tomorrow. It is a shock adjusting to a full house again.

I must be off now as it's nearly suppertime.

Many, many thanks for Grandad's letter and for the phone call.

Bye now, and keep well all of you. Lots of love, Su

PS am praying for Jim.

In preparation for the touring again, am reading Leif Hovelson's "Out of the Evil Night", recommended to me.

Monday 27 September

Dear Mum, Dad, Jim and Grandad,

Mum and Dad's long letter arrived last Thursday, full of really good detail. As we're off to Belgium today and it may be a while before a letter from you reaches me, I will take it and Grandad's letter with me and read them again at the end of the week, to fill the void.

This is the last report from Paris. We will be off after an early lunch to Tournai. It is a shorter journey than to many other places we've been. Only Peter is missing now – we will meet him there – he has been marrying off his brother this weekend, as he puts it!

The culinary news of the week is: I tried another favourite here – Lemon Pudding which came out fine, except I could have made a larger quantity.... Also, I made banana custard (we had a tin of Bird's Custard Powder in the store cupboard). I gave them the old favourite Mushroom Potatoes, one day too, which was enjoyed. I also made a Chocolate Cream, which was too thick and horrid! And Quiche Lorraine, but there wasn't enough so we had to eat bread and cheese to fill up. These last two were for the same meal, on a day when I'd rushed home from the office (and was not pleased with the work I'd done that afternoon) in time to cook. My heart was not at all in what I was doing, as I don't much like cooking either of these dishes. The cook needs to be inspired!

I went to the office another afternoon and, between times one way and another, have been very busy this week, so I took this weekend quietly. Went

to church again. Sue Lark phoned and I had a word with her parents, who send you their greetings.

Monique chopped a bit off my hair the other day. You don't notice much difference, except it looks neater and tidier. It is very much autumn here now all of a sudden. I have stowed away my summer clothes and packed autumn weight skirts for Belgium.

I have yet to clean up my room a bit and help cook our early lunch so will leave you with this. I suppose I should send the next letter for Jim to Cambridge.

Bye now, then. Look after yourselves, with lots of love, Su

PS: I found life less fun here, once we were so many again. I'm looking forward to touring again, armed with a sunnier outlook and the training of the Study Course from Caux this summer.

Belgium, Gand (or Gent or Ghent), 4 October 1982
(End of 800th anniversary year of St Francis of Assisi)

Dear Mum and Dad,

It is a lovely, sunny morning. I am on the top floor of a tall, thin house overlooking a river and roofs of the picturesque Flemish town of Ghent. We arrived here last night. The others are at work in the theatre; I woke up with an attack of gastric turmoil this morning and can barely sit up.

The first week in Belgium went very, very well. I was housed in a friendly, simple and charming family of six – Belgian parents, with four adoptive Indian children, aged 8, 10, 13 and 16. They were all sunny, cheerful and ever helpful. I was taken on as one of the family and sad to leave.

The theatre was in a school and was OK. We got good audiences, one night packed. The shows here were organised by three schools, as a yearly gala (usually they show a film) in aid of several third world projects. Tournai is a

quiet town with a lovely cathedral and a few attractive old houses. The roads are wide with lots of trees, and most buildings are of red brick.

Here in Ghent, too, there is a lot of brick and again, rows of small terraced houses, like in Britain. Florence and I are together here and how grateful I am, as she has been able to make friends with the family while I suffer in bed.

It is now 1.30pm, I feel a lot better, having been sick earlier and just now eating three biscottes dunked in tea. I had similar trouble last week but was able, with Milk of Magnesia, to keep going. This time, I'm going to have to spend all day in bed, which is frustrating as I want to be out seeing the town and the theatre and meeting people. We're only here for two days. I think it may be due to the two cream cakes I ate yesterday.

We were invited to tea with a Belgian European MP. The idea was to hear about his country, but he was interested in us, and his wife asked many questions about MRA. I was already, mentally, going under, so didn't say anything. Still, with the family at Tournai, I was able to explain MRA clearly and with confidence, a great step from last year.

Michel Orphelin has gone home this weekend. This morning in my QT, I was deeply grateful for this past year, and all we've been able to do, especially our trip to Assisi.

I hope I can post this soon and find some postcards to send to Jim and Grandad. I hope to hear from you via Michel tomorrow, as he'll bring the mail.

Bye now, with lots of love, Su

Tuesday 12th October

I do hope that first under-stamped letter reaches you; otherwise I shall be guilty of causing a gap. We're now at Carlsbourg, a tiny village in the south of the country, with a big school which serves a wide area around. We're all staying in a Franciscan monastery and it's very, very comfortable. Particularly, I suppose, as the room I had in Brussels was cold, damp, dirty and dismal.

Here my room is warm, clean, and bright. It looks out over the cloister. Their dining room looks out onto a field of big, fat, woolly sheep. It's a beautiful area – near the Ardennes. Hilly, agricultural, with lots of woods, some pine, some deciduous, with now the first touches of gold and flame red on the trees. As usual, it's raining a lot.

I would have posted these cards today, only I forgot to bring them along. Now I must go and set up the radio mike and test the orchestra mikes.

It's nearly lunchtime. At last I have your letters from Cambridge. It was a long wait and I was getting worried. Michel O, just arrived from Paris, has now handed me Mum's letter. Great to hear of all you've done – the service, the Fabers, a note from Claire Dunn. I hope you have calm spells between the busy times.

I must pack up for lunch now. I hope I get this in the post tomorrow. I will thank Grandad when I receive his generosity. He is super.

Bye for now. Look after yourselves. With lots of love, Su

Paris, Saturday 23rd October

Dear Mum and Dad,

I'm late this week, as I ran out of steam with the last leg of the tour, in Brussels. Grandad has had a letter, however, in the interval and Jim gets one in the same mail as this.

It's not so terrible to be here. I really wanted to come home or at least to be in Britain, I'm going through one of my homesick crises. Good long cheering letters are coming from you, every five minutes now it seems. I never imagined Mum could be taking on a crèche – what a howl (or has Dad already made that joke?) I envy you the autumnal blackberries and apples.

I had constant tummy trouble after I was ill, always felt heavy and bloated, even when I'd not eaten much. The cure was to stop eating as soon as I'd had

enough. If I went to see a doctor here, could I claim back the cost? I think I need to apply for a special form to claim.

I wish I'd got Mum's letter before, it never occurred to me to pray often. Only once in a while, when I got really fed up. I appreciated that letter particularly, knowing that the cat had sat on it! Good job he keeps himself clean....

I have had a lovely letter from Jeanne Faber, inviting me to stay with them in the New Year. Which is just what I wanted to do and was waiting until our return to Paris, to write to various people asking for ideas. So it is lovely to have an offer first. My original idea is to know my country better and get a better idea of the activities of MRA there. Will write to Jeanne on Monday to accept and find out more precise dates.

I want to leave you here, to get ready for bed before supper. Today I've been very nervy, I think I'll only truly relax tomorrow. Thank goodness I have a quiet weekend to closet myself away, and rest.

Oh, we have an audience of 500 for Brussels 2. More on my hosts and other info next letter.

Bye now, lots of love, Su

PS Don't worry, I have found a 'meaning' for these four weeks here. I am going to work hard at secretarial work, to regain confidence. Also, there is a need for someone regularly available, so I will fix two days a week for the office, not knowing in advance if there'll be work or not....

POSTCARD: Brussels, Sunday 10 October

Dear Mum and Dad,

The first letter I sent you from Belgium, I now know did not have enough stamps on it, so I hope you get it. All is going well. We had good audiences and nice families at Ghent and Tournai. After two shows here in Brussels (one for schools and older people who don't want to go out at night; one evening performance) we spent a quiet weekend. Many returned to Paris for the meeting. I stayed here with Annie. We are coming back to Brussels on 21st, as the organisers want to do another show. Meanwhile, we will go to small

towns in the east of the country. We shopped yesterday and visited the town. Hope all is well.

Lots of love, Su

22 av Robert Schuman, Tuesday 26 October

Dear Mum, Dad, Jim and Grandad,

I will now try to summarise the tour in Belgium for you all, especially as I have written to you at different times, from different places, and said different things.

At Tournai, a country town not far from the French border where we first arrived, I stayed with a super family, a Belgian couple who have adopted four Indian children. Next came Ghent, where I stayed in a family with three girls, the eldest about my age. As we were only there two days, I had little chance to get to know them. The show here was given to a rather exclusive audience – in this town in Flanders, the Flemish speaking region of Belgium. It is mainly a bourgeois minority who speak French and as strife has been so bitter between the two communities, the organisers were reluctant to put up many posters, for fear of attracting criticism. This was the only town we visited with this problem, although Brussels is (rather artificially) bilingual. Before I forget, one more word on Tournai. A couple who had taken in hand much of the organisation of the show there, were very moved by it and our stay there, helped probably by Michel Orphelin staying in their house. Everywhere we performed after that, they either phoned or sent a telegram to say they were thinking of us and wished us well. For the show at Manage, they even came – one and a half hour's drive – to see us one last time and share with us a few things they'd experienced after our show.

In between came an afternoon visit to a Belgian MP to hear more about the country, which was interesting. Then Brussels, where we gave schools' performances and one evening show, to an audience of 1,200. There I stayed with a rather odd couple, Peter too. They often put people up who are passing through Brussels but don't want to hear about MRA and weren't interested in the show either, despite being Catholic. Afraid, I suppose.

Anyway, it made it a bit awkward to get on with them, as I felt I couldn't speak freely and had to be careful to stay on general topics. Also, if I'm honest, I missed the care and friendship we'd met in the other homes.

Next to Carlsbourg, a small village with a big school with a large catchment area. There we stayed with nearby Franciscans but were only there two days. Then on to Bastogne, a market town near the border with Luxembourg where the school shows were particularly difficult, and where we did one good public show. Some of us, including myself, stayed with a family who run a small hotel, so we slept in the hotel. The lady was very nice there.

Manage, a small town south of Brussels: We all stayed in a Franciscan (nuns this time, monks before) convent where, eating all meals together and working all day, all being tired and disagreeable, we started to get on each other's nerves. This only sorted itself out in the last few days in Brussels but many good lessons in individual relationships were learned in the process. Once I asked God where I needed to change and did something about it, then my life became easier and the problems melted away. It's so easy to blame the others but I always have my share of blame.

Lastly, the extra show in Brussels - some of us stayed with a lady from the Franciscan fraternity and her daughter and grandson. She was super too and I hope we helped them a little. Only 400 in the audience but a chance to get to know the Jesuit priest responsible for our performing there again.

Belgium is a country which needs time to be discovered. At first, it seems a mirror of the countries around it but after a while one feels the particularities of the people and their lives. I do like it much more than France and felt more at home there, but Florence said she did not feel at all at home. We came back quite exhausted. We'd had some of the fullest weeks we've ever had. I hope they were also the most rewarding. Time will tell.

It is, after all, rather nice to be back at Boulogne, perhaps knowing that the end is at hand. I have decided to go to the office Wednesday and Thursday, two days every week, to do Claude's work, of course, but also just to be available to help anyone. If there is nothing else to do, I can write personal letters – I wrote stacks in September and have had many replies so once again there are quite a few balls in my court. I realise that some friends need to be

corresponded with regularly as they want encouragement and help as well as friendship.

I saw Sue Lark at church on Sunday. I have arranged to contact her again and we'll go to the cinema together. Also, Marie Orphelin and I are going to go to see a film sometime this week – it is her half term holiday. We saw François on Sunday – he dislikes life in the army, but is keeping up a good spirit and looking forward to next year. He hopes to do a theatrical design course.

I always seem to end my letters by saying it is nearly a mealtime, and I'm off. This time the 'bag of oats' is tea. I don't really live for my stomach, I'm just too polite to leave you without a good excuse....

Oh, a letter from Cindi today. She is enjoying her studies and being back at home, is missing Europe, and finding it possible to go on living the positive things she learnt here.

So bye now, lots and lots of love to each of you. A la prochaine, Su

2 November 1982

Dear Mum and Dad,

A handwritten note to you all this week, as there's not much news.

I had a letter waiting for me here on my return from Belgium, from Jeanne Faber, inviting me to spend some time in London before or after Christmas. I'm delighted. I don't remember if I told you that I'd like to spend January in Britain, rediscovering my country, and getting to know MRA there.

Last week was office/cooking/TV/reading. A bit dull, but very full. This weekend I was tired and took things quietly. Monday was a bank holiday here so I wasted the day starting things and not finishing them. Today for the second time, I have taken some letters in shorthand for Michel Orphelin. He takes time to think, so I can cope, but typing it back is harder. It was better this time.

When I read your letters, which arrived at the end of last week, I underlined things I wanted to comment on in red.... I was upset you showed my letter describing the oil cure to Grandad and Aunty Judy, but if it made them laugh it doesn't matter! Anything's (fractionally) better than spiders. Nobody did anything for World Food Day here. Imagine giving the cat herbal tablets. I bet he costs more to run than you and Dad put together.

Before I forget again, in Belgium, our rather original hostess made a very kind effort to give Peter and I a good English breakfast. The eggs were good but the sausages were merguez [spicy]! I'd just had that tummy trouble, and anyway, hot spiced merguez at 7.30am? I politely ate one, Peter refused to even try.

I'm very touched that people want to hear my 'story'. Of course I'll tell it, as often as it's asked for. It's God's gift to be shared. I don't think I have the maturity to do much more than talk about myself, what I've lived through, and how God has used me. For an evening event, the themes are endless: calling, guidance, materialism, youth, today's problems, remaking the world.... or just plain Su (God's creation). This is where the file of my old letters will be useful, to remind me of the things I forget as time goes by and fresh experiences pile on the old ones.

What does the Youth Club you help with do? What sort of kids go?

Christmas presents already? A smallish radio for travelling with good reception and all wave bands, not expensive. What about you?

Supper time, I'm off. Later I will write to Grandad and Jim.

Bye now. Look after yourselves.

Lots and lots of love, Su

PS Billy Bray book is interesting

PPS After thought: I'm always stuck for money (after I've bought the essentials of daily life) for doing things with or for other people. Like going to do something fun with Sue Lark, or buying thank you gifts for hosts on tour. I

just wondered if there mightn't be someone at home, or a few people, who would like to (and gain faith from) giving a small amount regularly, just from now until May/June. Just a few pounds would be quite enough. If you think of anyone, what would be the best way to approach them?

22 avenue Robert Schuman

Monday 8 November 1982

Dear Mum, Dad, Jim and Grandad,

Thanks Mum and Dad for last week's letter and especially the envelope written in calligraphy by Dad. I was glad to have news of Jim's party as he tells me nothing. Where did he hold it? There is a paragraph I don't understand at all, except that you're planning a weekend away, which is a good idea. Dad – it's difficult to know at a distance, but you will be aware of pushing your Wednesday group too far, too fast? God does things very, very slowly to our way of thinking sometimes. I'm afraid they'd associate you with the concept of guidance and dismiss it as the bee in your bonnet. Why did you have scrambled egg before people came to supper? In case you didn't like the food they brought? I'm sorry if Grandad's letter and money have been lost. It is against the law to put money into letters in France and they put them through a screening process. If money is found, they confiscate the lot. That is why the carbon paper wrapping is needed – to beat the machines. Bob and Lyria are still based in London. I've just written back to Jeanne Faber. I think our last show is 16th December and I probably won't be able to get home for a day or two.

I haven't been able to do any letter writing. Last week lots of people gave me work to do and it was all late, so I inherited their panic, had a rotten week and a real migraine yesterday which kept me in bed all day. Today I don't feel too good, and the week looks busy again, but I hope there'll be no rush. I'm really fed up; I wish I could get out of this place before the next tour. I wish I could come home for a few days. I'm busy but so bored. I hardly ever see anyone else – during the day they're all busy, and in the evening doing something. I see them at meals, of course, but everyone talks too fast to ever let me get a word in edgeways and often they talk about things which don't immediately

interest me – like the work going on redecorating, or about people I don't know. If I mention something no one seems very interested either. It all seems so superficial, so general. I share with Monique, who helps keep me sane. I can't complain to anyone, it seems the fault must only lie with me, everyone else seems happy enough. But I just can't see where I need to change. I've tried taking an interest in everything, in listening attentively to everyone. It's just tires me and makes no difference. I don't know why I'm telling you, I don't know if you can really understand. I keep praying about it, but nothing gets any brighter. Perhaps I'll feel better after this headache's over. A few good nights' sleep should deal with that, I'm just now settling down to a routine again after the turmoil of life on the road.

Tonight Sue Lark and I are going to see a film. Saturday night Marie Orphelin and I went to see "Author! Author," which was good.

Poor Furry Knickers, being called a low class cat by Dad. Does he smell of garlic? Have no more to say, really, so will be off.

Bye for now, lots of love, Su

PS I shouldn't put such a depressed letter into the post, really, but can't be bothered to start again.

Boulogne en Seine, 15 November

Dear Mum and Dad,

I have far too much typing to do this week and enjoy writing by hand, so you'll have to put up with it again. I don't need to justify the existence of my typewriter either. It earns its keep faithfully.

I've just had letters from John Faber and Ginny Wigan (at Tirley). It seems I am welcome at 26 Catherine Place when I can in January, and as long as I like. Ginny suggests I come to Tirley for the 30th-4th (and she mentions it is specifically for younger people). I would like to come home again for my birthday (what an amazing idea, a birthday at home!)

This all sounds good, but it's going to add to the stress of the next six months. If only I could believe that God would give me the energy I'll need. After the Belgian tour, I just can't believe it. I hope to be able to come home before the US and Canada, partly to sort out what I'll do post-USEPN. The instability of change frightens me, my motivation for what I'm doing is old, worn and insufficient and I'm constantly worried about what I could do when the show's over. I want to find at least a faith and peace about all these things.

I hope we can be happy at Christmas, living together to bring joy to other people. I feel starved of love, of joy, of fun, of laughter, of beauty, of peace. Really STARVED. I don't want to rest; I want to work, to see people, to talk, to go out, to serve people just by enjoying every little action of every day.

I have to find out more about the time slot before America/Canada. Maybe Mum could come here then as well as me go home. Or maybe she could come in June.

THANKS for money, saved my life! We are going to a show tomorrow night and I may go to another at the end of the week. Details next time.

We've had lots of African visitors recently. I only met one, a man from Chad. They're always men, often diplomats or officials. There is little other international contact here. A couple of Scottish farmers are based here this week, darting about the country to see things and people.

Must be off to cook now. Same old routine, cooking little and office lots (too much....) and went for a lovely sunny walk in a forest yesterday. Did me a power of good. Have to move from my room. Am desperately sad. It's only for a week or so, so just means I pack up for the winter now.

Bye. Thanks for your care and thought. With lots of love, Su

68 Boulevard Flandrin, 75116 Paris
17 November 1982

Dear Mum,

During the course of the morning, I thought I could send you a photocopy of this chapter straight away. To remind you of the name of the book, it's "Instrument of Thy Peace" by Alan Paton.

He mentions the book "My Life and My All: The Life of St Francis of Assisi" by Elizabeth Goudge. I have good reports of this book, and would like to buy a paperback copy.

I hope these pages will be useful to you, and others.

I received your letters today. Wednesday.

Bye for now. Love to Dad. Lots of love to you, and God bless. Su

Tuesday 30 November 1982

Dear Mum and Dad,

A personal note to answer your many letters, either waiting for me last night on our return from Holland, or arrived this morning.

First, Peter went to the bank this morning and got out the first £50. I will be looking around for needy cases.

Letter 1: won't comment on everything, though I would like to. Letter 2: I was concerned you didn't mention my card, so was glad to know you simply hadn't opened it (I was afraid it was lost in the post). Last Sunday before Advent we had the 'stir up' collect at the English church. I am so glad you liked my poem; I thought it might be rather silly, but was proud of it too. Doing it was the only spark of light in a weekend of darkness. Of course I trust you to use our experiences, in the right context, to help others. Letter 3: especially touched by the postcard from Mum, I will keep it by me. Now I am chez the Orphelins I can send you cat news. This morning Catsy was sitting on the trolley which carries breakfast stuff; bread, cereals, etc. I gently heaved her off, only to see her back there five minutes later. I asked Marie-José if she was allowed there, and the answer was no – she loses patience with her sometimes, she says, and throws her off unceremoniously. The cat is as fat as

Baggy, but nicer. Annie has offered to help me make mince pies, if we can find the time together. I may make the pastry early and freeze it, but I am keeping the weekend free for it. I want to hear the ships hooters again at New Year in Falmouth! What can we do to make Grandad happy with us? Stay relaxed, Mum! You have an artistic temperament, proved by your creativity and artist's eye in whatever you do – this is God's gift, use it. Monique gave me a quote the other week "The artist should love life, and show us its beauty". The French word for artist implies anyone with some artistic gift, in music, art, performing, etc. What has upset me so much these last weeks is that often I haven't loved life. Just sometimes I do and then I feel there is hope.

I am happy to be here in the Orphelin's flat. Much is going on here, as there are many guests and next week, when we're gone, five shows of a play in the library – "La Fillette en Rose" by Jean-Jacques Odier.

I will go to the office Wednesday to Friday. I have made a small but noticeable progress in playing the recorder recently, and will bring it home at Christmas to play carols. Perhaps Jim could try to play again, and Mum?

Now I will type you all a report of the trip to Holland.

Bye bye, and lots of love, Su

Tuesday 30 November

Dear Mum, Dad, Grandad and Jim,

We set off last Wednesday 24 November, long before the break of day (7.10am actually) as we had to meet Christian off his Swedish train, pick up the lorry and trailer from the Franciscans and be in Bois le Duc (s'Hertogenbosch in Dutch) by 5.00pm. There we were met by Lotty and Mme Elizabeth Coymans, a very well know Dutch mezzo-soprano who had done a lot to organise our being in Holland. We had supper straight away in a restaurant (the French were horrified at eating so early – 6ish) then were dumped on our hosts. Florence and I with a widow, very jolly and speaking good French and better English. The whole week was a lovely rest language

wise, I nearly always spoke in English, so when chatting in French to Annie, Florence, etc, I found it much easier.

Thursday we were all day in the theatre, hardly having to work at all as 'they' set up everything – we used all 'their' equipment, at least for the sound. The boys had to help adjust all the lights. A show in the evening, technically rather weak. It's very hard to do a perfect job on machines you don't know. They all have their idiosyncrasies. The next night we put in our own tape recorder as theirs was hopeless for our needs (not accurate enough on stopping and starting).

People here eat bread as in Britain; lunch is always a sandwich and soup affair, with a full evening meal. Breakfast is as in Britain too. The countryside is lovely – not too many windmills, but lots of sheep, horses, pigs, ditches, canals, ponds, lakes, willows, and red brick farms.

Saturday we moved to Nijmegen, a much bigger town. There I stayed with a very nice family – a son and daughter away at university and a son still at home. Their English was nearly perfect. The theatre had the biggest stage we've ever had – big enough for an opera, or a ballet. I had a perfect position for operating – plonk in the middle of the audience at the back, not too far as it was a horseshoe shaped theatre with balconies. In both places we had reasonably good audiences, who were happy with the show and seemed to have understood enough. In the second place we used their lights, so our work was much reduced. I had to set up the sound and type a letter, so earned my bread that day. Monday morning we had a late start back to Paris, arriving at 8.00pm. Today I had a lie in and have written letters this afternoon, to have a clear head for the office tomorrow.

Su

22 avenue Robert Schuman
Monday 2

Dear Mum, Dad, Jim and Grandad,

Just two days, and we're off to Holland for a week. Three shows, I hope people will understand enough in French.... I expect everyone will speak good

English. Anyway, when I went to Holland for that weekend two years ago, I felt very at home there.

There has been nothing of import happening here. Well, comparatively....

This weekend I moved over the road to share the spare room in the Orphelin's flat with Florence. It was also the occasion to sort out what stuff I need to keep handy for the winter/spring, and what can go home/be put in store. There is one bagful I will be able to bring home at Christmas, but another small bag and a big box of books and cassettes in the storeroom here. I will ask everyone to keep their ears open for someone travelling to London or Britain by car, within the next six months, who won't have too much baggage and who could take the heavy box of books. Then I could ask in London for a dark corner, where it could wait until I can get it the rest of the way.

Many thanks to Mum for the money, which really worried me until I had discussed it with Monique and I saw that I was a bit proud about being 'still under your wing'. I was very touched that you wished to 'share your good fortune'. I hope Annie's idea of help from a Belgian girl will materialise – apparently she is willing. Also, at Christmas I hope we can see what is possible from the Cornwall friend's side. I had no opportunity this weekend to try to write a letter for this purpose. I hope I can do it before tomorrow evening.

I will try out what Dad says about 'finding the real you', though I haven't started yet.

I have been greatly helped this week by others, but particularly by Mum, whose care surpasses in quality that of anyone I know. I consider your phone calls as the best possible Christmas present.

Well, that's it I think. No need to recount the details of the office and kitchen (where I've done nothing new). I will most certainly make mince pies. Masses, if possible. What temperature oven?

Bye now. With lots of love, prayers and gratitude, Su

PS should get home four weeks today

PPS when do I stop posting to Cambridge?

Sunday night

Dear Mum and Dad,

Here are more details of my journey:

According to the timetable we have here:

LAUSANNE 23.24 Thursday 16

Arrive PARIS 6.23 Friday 17

Leave PARIS 8.10 BOAT

Or 9.20 HOVERCRAFT

Arrive LONDON Charing Cross 13.40 HOVERCRAFT

OR Victoria 14.48 BOAT

Peter mentioned the 8.10 boat train from Paris but may not have seen, or been able to afford, the hovercraft. So assume it is the boat train, that we'll come on. If not, I'll phone you. The difference is just under one hour anyway... And only 25 FF....

I have three sausage bags and one overflowing basket.

I will look out for Mum or anyone with an MRA type face!

Thanks for your help.

Lots of love, Su

PS Served mince pies today. Much appreciated by all.

26 Catherine Place, London

Friday 14th January 1983

Dear Mum and Dad,

As I am helping Jeanne with this send-out, I can add a note! I typed the letter, but there's one mistake....

We've been really busy, but I'll start at the beginning of the week:

Saturday night: Felt really bewildered, though few here for supper.

Sunday: Church with Daukes. Lunch with guests, supper too, meeting at Theatre in afternoon. So many faces I know and names I can't remember.

Monday: National full-time meeting all day. More guests for supper.

Tuesday: Tour of offices and some typing done for Jeanne in the morning. Lunch at theatre, as all week. Lyria just back, with Bob, from a few weeks in Norway. In afternoon, walk through St James' Park with Sue, to Piccadilly Circus, Leicester Square, Trafalgar Square, and home.

Wednesday: helped serve coffee to Council of Management in morning also did some typing. Have a roommate for two nights; in the afternoon go on guided tour of Westminster Abbey with her (very good). Quick look at river, then home.

Thursday: type all day from tapes sent from India by John Faber. Go to bank for money to send to Paris with Lyria, who is going to Florence's wedding. Upset that I didn't start sorting envelopes for send out, yet worked conscientiously all day. Must be slower than I realise, as I get used to things. I have a different roommate for tonight, here for a Young People's meeting at the theatre.

Friday: went to printers for letter, and sorted envelopes. Got most of way through. Will have to finish tomorrow morning. After lunch, off with Sue, Jeanne and Dorothy to see 'Gandhi'. Don't know what to say about it, it's gone so deep. And is hauntingly beautiful.

Well, it's past bedtime. This will give you some idea of my first days here. Everyone is very kind. Have slept like a log every night this week.

Jeanne has quizzed me on my money situation and given me part of a gift for the house. Still have some in bank, too. Have invitations from Jill and Clare, Sylvia is coming up one Saturday. Jim tried to phone tonight before I was back.

Lots of love, Su

Sunday, before church

Dear Mum and Dad,

I have a few minutes to start a new letter....

Listening to the meeting on Monday, it struck me that those really believing in MRA (e.g. Bill Jaeger) cannot give offence to others because what comes over is simply a fresh angle to God, not competition for Christianity.

I have found at Caux, that a good speaker gives food for thought, with question time included. Then a little later, but not much, discussion in a small group (6-10) helps develop it and it is so important that everyone can express themselves.

I'm going to Jill's on my birthday for supper and Clare will be there. I'll probably go to Cambridge on 6th February.

Will close now so, bye and lots of love, Su

26 Catherine Place
SATURDAY 22nd Jan

Dear Mum and Dad,

I am glad I phoned Dad briefly, to know more about Aunty Judy. I wonder if she's getting better or worse or neither.

Monday I did secretarial work all day. Tuesday and Wednesday there were meetings in this house all day, for about 30, and I was responsible for serving morning coffee, lunch and tea. The first day, all this took me the best part of the day as I had to learn where things were and work out how to do things. The second day, I did it all alone but it all went very smoothly and easily and I had time to type some letters too. I had to put out tea then leave, as I was invited by Joy Weeks to go with her and others to a parent/teacher meeting in a junior school in Maidstone, Kent. This school were very keen on the Day of London Theatre programme. I was included, as being part of an 'outreach' of the theatre!

Plenty of good chat with a few afterwards. We were home 11ish. It was a good evening as contact with 'ordinary' people, and giving to them does me such a power of good.

Thursday and Friday, more sec. work. Thursday another young people's group in the evening – just sharing.

No more room, so bye for now, Su

Dear Mum,

Having just put the phone down, I thought I could pop you this in the post – I don't need it any more.

Party for Sue Faber's birthday tomorrow night.

I'm busy at the moment 1) getting together all I need for my US visa, 2) writing letters to get a general newsletter out to all who took part in the Study Course in the summer 3) writing of what USEPN has meant to me, for 'Changer'.

Today I went over to 4 Buckingham Place to help Barbara hand-serve lunch. The conversation seemed high-flying... (and boring!)

Life is much more relaxing, though.

Thanks for the cheque again – you're not going on out of duty, are you?
Please feel free to stop if the conviction's gone.

Bye now. Relax and look after yourself for once.

Lots of love, Su

Monday 24th

Dear Mum and Dad,

Thank goodness you've phoned and I don't have to write all over again about my birthday – I've written three letters, no five, since 9pm this evening and am doing breakfast tomorrow morning.

I've been having trouble getting to sleep because I get no good stimulating exercise. I had no time today but will try and get a brisk walk in St James' Park after lunch.

We're still so busy with secretarial stuff that it's been 9pm supper every day and a full weekend of visiting people. All enjoyable, though.

I'm sorry, this evening when you phoned I couldn't relax and enjoy talking to you, as we were serving a meal to 20 Africans and, as I said, I'd unexpectedly also just had two phone calls, so was rather flustered and felt I was abandoning the others. My visa for the USA must be top priority tomorrow – I have a form full of very awkward questions to fill in.

So, will go to bed I think. It is 10.30pm.

Oh, between 6pm (after laying out buffet, etc) and 6.30pm (when guests arrived) I tried on my LOVELY jumper with jeans. It is perfect and I want to wear it every day for the rest of my life. I love it very much. You too.

Bye now, take care, Su

Caux, Wednesday 2nd March

Dear Mum and Dad,

I got to London OK, was met by Jeanne, had lunch with her and John at the theatre, and then they took me, with plenty of time to spare, to the station. I was in a compartment with other Transalpine people, so young. They were very friendly, though I was not much inclined to chat but I was glad of their company later in the journey. We had to wait an hour at Folkestone for the boat (I phoned Boulogne to say I'd be late), which took us to Boulogne (on Sea) instead of Calais. They got us a train an hour later and we arrived in Paris at 12.15, nearly two hours late. Michel K was there to meet me. I was very grateful and glad to see him.

We left Paris at 8.00am Tuesday morning (I was up at 6.30am to dig out stuff from the storeroom...) and got here about 5 or 5.30pm. We had a super lunch on the way. I think I forget to tell you about this place we found on the way to Nyon last December: a French version of the transport café, a pre-fab building by the main road, isolated in a plain of fields. These places always do fantastic meals for a reasonable price. The first time we had cold herring salad then mushroom pies (a little one each), then meat and potatoes (turkey, in a creamy sauce), then cheese and a dessert (a choice of pie or ice cream). There was a choice of three options for every course, except the mushroom pies. All for 40 F, including coffee. However, this time there was only the choice of meat and only one entrée, charcuterie (ham and salami, etc). I had turkey steak again (as tender as anything), cheese and apple pie. It's a jolly good £4-worth, and it's quiet and the service quick. The son serves and the parents cook. It's really French, and great fun.

It was good to see the others and today we're still catching up on all the news. Hugh Williams arrived after us: he's here to sort the play out, get rid of the dust and rust. We set up equipment this morning and this afternoon will be rehearsing once Michel arrives from Paris (at 1.30pm). We'll have lots of rehearsals and I will also be typing bits of dialogue translated into English, each line on a separate piece of paper. These will be photographed and made into slides, which will be shown above the stage. This makes a translation, needed in Ottawa and maybe Montreal. There are about 200 to do, but they're only a line or so each.

We leave here next Tuesday (8th). Enclosed is a sheet prepared by Claude who very kindly thought of giving me one for you, too. I will stop now. I have been homesick (!) but Margaret's poem helped.

Lots of love, Su

PS I will need health insurance as there's no general cover for us all. Thank you both very, very much again for all the financial help you've given me in preparation for this trip. Also, for helping me get away and giving me a very valuable rest.

POSTCARD: Freiburg Im Breisgau, Friday

Dear Mum and Dad,

We did our first show here last night. A 'hall' (not really a theatre) in a school. Rather difficult technically but all went more or less well. About 300 or more people. The slide translation looked good. I am staying in the town with a family with three children. They are very nice and they speak English, though the children don't yet. Today is free and this morning Mrs took me shopping with her and then drove me up into the mountains (the Black Forest). It is very, very beautiful. I took our first greenroom last night and people especially liked the 'Cambridge' way of praying. I hope to get us to be a bit more 'spiritual' as a team. Visiting the town with others this afternoon. Famous cathedral. Bye now, love, Su

Freiburg, 11th March

Dear Mum and Dad,

The card I put in the post this morning was an emergency measure to plug a hole. Now I can get down to business. 1. Enc BBBS form. 2. Please could you pay in this cheque for me? 3. Thanks for Currie's address. How generous and thoughtful so many people are. 4. Thanks for letter from GD. Do you want it back? 5. Thanks for doing insurance. Glad it was not expensive. 6. Thanks for long letters. 7. Love to Aunty Judy. 8. It's bedtime now. Night night....

Ettlingen, 15th

How time flies. I'd better get this off. News in brief – the show went well in Freiburg. We arrived here Saturday, had an MRA meeting (!) that day and lunch in families on Sunday. My party that day visited a castle/chateau. Monday we set up in theatre, and this afternoon we rehearse. This morning we will visit the mayor of Ettlingen. I am staying with a young woman who teaches French/German in a technical college. We speak French. She is a very 'modern' type, so it's interesting. I sleep in her box room/workroom, over the corridor from her basement flat, and get very frightened when I turn the light off. Luckily I go to sleep quickly. It has a big fireplace and is near the boiler room, so I keep hearing funny noises, and the first night was sure 'something' was coming to get me down the chimney.

Bye now, lots of love, Su

POSTCARD: Freiburg, Friday 18 March

Dear Mum and Dad,

Only postcards again, to everyone, I'm afraid. We have our time quite well filled here and it's difficult to get down to writing a long letter. I'm back in Freiburg now. We did two good shows in Ettlingen, audience medium numbers first night and good second night. I'm in a room in the attic. I was too tired last night to be afraid. We leave here Sunday and for Paris on 22nd. I hope all's well with you. Bye again, Su

Freiburg, 18 March

Dear Mum and Dad,

We are back in this terrible echoing hall in Freiburg, a school all-purpose hall. The last place (Ettlingen) was better but not by much. Now, back in Freiburg, in my fourth bed in two towns (I had to spend the first night in Ettlingen with someone else as my hostess had her parents staying). I am in the attic... My hosts' flat is on the third floor, I'm in a single room on the fifth.... Luckily last night I was so tired I went straight to sleep. Once I'm in there I'm all right, what I'm not looking forward to is running along the dark and spooky corridor

to get there. It's all rather old and dirty, and there's no one else on that floor. As we take down tonight, and won't be home before 1.00am, I think I'll be too tired to care again. (PS I got someone to come in with me!)

We don't leave for Tuttlingen until Sunday morning. On Saturday there are two meetings planned, one for the school kids (?) one for more people. If anyone comes.

At Ettlingen we ate our midday meals in the canteen of a big national savings bank, and one day were shown their computer terminal, which links them up with other branches but also to a national grid.

Saturday 19th

I am missing the second meeting of the day as I am just too tired. I've slept a few hours instead. I don't seem to be able to cope with late nights so well, or perhaps I'm not so tolerant of tiredness. I have just done a quick bit of washing – how I look forward to doing a machine load in Paris.

The show was well-received last night and there were lots of people. One of the chief organisers (a terribly pompous character) made little speeches before and after each show here in Freiburg (to our horror...) and presented the ladies of the team with flowers last night. Annie came on stage, Florence too, and Claude appeared and took the mike so I had to go dashing up to the front. The first time we've ever had flowers. Hugh Williams had flown over to bring a TV director to see the show, with the video in mind. He'll see the show again on Monday in Tuttlingen.

Apparently the hall there is the best we have in Germany – the cherry on the cake, Christian said to cheer us up.

Only a few hours to go until I can sleep again – we didn't get to bed until 2.00 last night, though I slept until 10.00 and then was late meeting the others to load the lorry at 10.30. It's 7.00 now, so should soon be suppertime.

Must be off to see a bit of my cheery family. We leave at 9.00 tomorrow morning.

Look after yourselves. With lots of love, Su

Looking forward to a letter from you in Paris.

POSTCARD: Tuttlingen, Sunday 20th March

Letter from Mum today. Glad of news. I am in a family – older couple, grown-up children away – with Annie and Claude – nice not to be alone for once. Had lunch in a restaurant all together today, up in the hills, at the invitation of the organisers. Lovely hilly forest countryside – rolling farmland too. We only have tomorrow to set up, and take down after. The boys will take the equipment to Caux Tuesday, and onto Paris Wednesday, via Mulhouse to send some freight to Canada. Michel, Annie, Florence and I meet another Mayor on Tuesday morning and in the afternoon take the train to Paris. We leave Friday 12.30 by Air France and arrive 2.00pm their time in Montréal. Christian says we should go to bed at 10.00pm their time, 4.00am our time, as you adapt quicker. Bye, Su

POSTCARD: Freiburg, Friday 18 March

Dear Jim,

Visited a castle near Ettlingen. We had two decent shows in Ettlingen and are now back in Freiburg for our second show here, in an awkward all-purpose school hall (with a flight of marble stairs to bring the equipment up). Next we go east, to Tuttlingen, and back to Paris on the 22nd. The others are all the same as ever. Love to you and all your friends. Bye now, Su

PS Am now in Tuttlingen. Hope you are still at Cambridge to get this. Have only tomorrow to set up here and take down after. Before leaving for Paris on Tuesday, Annie, Florence, Michel and I have to go and visit another Mayor. The others are taking the equipment to Caux, sorting it out, then sending off stuff to Canada from Mulhouse on journey to Paris. We go directly by train. Lucky, as it gives us another day in Paris. It still leaves only two days, to pack for three months (as we leave Friday – flying Air France). Su

Boulogne Billancourt

Thursday 24th

Dear Mum, Dad and Jim,

I'm preparing a few copies of 'Changer' for the post, with my article on page 11.

It was a super phone call – it's funny to be going so far away soon!

We did our show in one day in Tuttlingen. The audience was okay. The next day we met the Mayor at 11.00am with a glass of orange and a bread roll in the town's museum. Very odd. We left at 3.30pm and had a lovely train ride through the Black Forest and got to Paris at 11.30pm.

Yesterday I did my washing and some shopping and got my stuff out. Today I sorted it and 'made decisions' and have got to take the rest downstairs now. We had an hour together with those who have been to Canada and the US, to tell us what to expect.

It's late, I must go now. So thanks again, for the phone call.

Lots of love, Su

Montreal
Saturday 26th

Dear Mum and Dad,

Enc: first pages of my "diary". Hope you can understand the muddled rush of ideas and bad writing.

As you will see, an uneventful journey and a friendly welcome. There were many people from the team eating here last night and so the hardest thing was to overcome my usual shyness, and laziness, and be sociable.

My hostess moved here from Bern at 40 with her husband and children and plans to go back next year (one son went back to CH). She is rather old and frail looking, but seems healthy.

It is sunny again and cold but apparently we're lucky to have no wind, as it's bitter when it comes. Spring is only a little while away. The houses are efficiently heated, so my clothes are warm enough, with a vest and a good jumper. Right now I'm at the Centre again. I don't look forward to waiting for buses, it's so cold.

Montréal is a big city, like Paris but spread out. The buildings are often in bright red brick or a grey stone for private houses, with white paint. There are often exterior staircases to flats, and flat roofs, surprising in a snowy country.

I want to finish this and get it off and also I've not seen enough yet to have worthwhile first impressions. I'm glad I've been able to come here. I'm grateful to be able to discover this country and the USA. I'm grateful too for a good bed, and a caring hostess (she is MRA team, which means easier communication and she know what travellers' needs are, as she's had many visitors).

I feel very nervous and under strain, and hope a few quiet days, and caring for others, will sort me out.

Thinking of you in your Cornish spring. I am reading a book on St F. in my quiet times, it is a great help, with inspiration and motivation. Look after yourselves.

With lots of love, Su

DIARY ENCLOSED:

FRIDAY 25th MARCH 1983

All packed and ready. Leave at 10.00 for Charles de Gaulle. Check-in, boarding, etc. Air France Boeing 747, Business Class (because we also sent freight). Take off – I can't stop grinning, others can't see. Clouds and clouds – we are told we're going over Manchester and Belfast (I'd hoped to see Cornwall...) Headphones – six channels of music and one for film later. Lunch: lobster, beef, roast spuds, asparagus, celery salad, gâteau, cheese, prune-in-cognac, bread-and-butter (the latter the best of this lot). Film: 'Evil Under the Sun', Agatha Christie. Teatime: apple juice, petits fours, almond cake, and yeast bun – I don't eat it all. 6.00pm-ish: The clouds have gone; we

are over snowy, mountainous, forested terrain. We are now over Canada. Superb landing in Montréal. Flat land, fir forests, expanses of ploughed earth, no fields, sprinkled with snow. We are told the temperature is -5° C.

We have to go through separate immigration (we are 'actors' on the forms, all of us) but this goes very smoothly and the people are so nice. Met by Richard Weeks, Serge Borel and Ellen Berry. 30 minute drive – Montréal's residential areas have a wide avenues and lots of trees. The skyscrapers are 'downtown', as I see later, on the drive to my hostess' house. We all go to the Centre to meet the team and have supper, at 4pm their time, 10pm ours. I am not hungry, owing to big cakey tea in plane. I don't feel tired, the others do, I am really empty-headed though. My hostess is a nice elderly lady, Mme Ida Morf who is of Swiss origin. She speaks English quite well. She has a ground floor flat, in a three-storey house, in an arty-intellectual area near McGill University. People are very chatty and homely, talking easily on down-to-earth things. Cars are all huge. It is 7.20pm (1.20am in France). I'm putting off going to bed as long as I can bear it to pick up the rhythm quicker. Apparently it takes one day to catch up every hour's time difference. This room looks Swiss, yet is nicer (more colourful, original).

This is what my ticket says:

Montréal-Dallas, American Airways, 2 May, 09.41/13.56

Dallas-Portland, 2 May, 16.15/18.20

Portland-Dallas, 16 May, 08.48/14.10

Dallas-Minneapolis, 16 May, 15.00/16.59

Minneapolis-Chicago, 12 June, 10.51/11.57

Chicago-New York....? (Including a few days in Washington)

New York-Paris, 25 June, 19.00/08.10

No shows for two weeks. We will set up soon to be sure no equipment is damaged. So we can really rest here first and perhaps help advertise. I can't really believe I'm here, in Canada. Michel points out that I've never been further west than Cornwall before. Which is odd because going west has always meant going home to me and now would be the long way home. I'm beginning to feel real physical tiredness so will pack it in now. Tonight, it's jolly cold.

SATURDAY 26th

Woke 6.30am – put off sleeping until 9.00pm last night so had a normal night by the new time. Feel fine – will jet lag catch up with me? At breakfast (Swiss style) I got to know my hostess. I am picked up at 10.30am by Regula Borel and Annie. We go to the supermarket, which is like any European supermarket, yet has a mixture of countries and cultures. We are now at the Centre for lunch, and are expected here for meals most of the time. I will have to discover the Metro and bus to get here. It's like being in another French-speaking country bordering on France, I can't believe it's another continent yet. I listened to English radio this morning but then I did that in Germany. I'm glad to find Annette Auger here, Francine Gagnon, Paulette Burnier, all good friends from Caux. Annie and Claude went to bed at 7.30pm last night, and woke at 3.30am.

Saturday 2nd April

Dear Mum and Dad,

The post is very, very slow between Canada and Europe. The average is 10 days, but 5 or 14 are equally possible. I still haven't got your letter, but perhaps it'll come just after Easter. I hope you get my first letter quicker.

I am much happier now but the first days were tough, as I felt so lonely. Everyone at the Centre was too busy to share, Annie not well and Florence only wants to share occasionally. Annie and Claude have great news which I can tell you now, as the rest of the team know. Annie is expecting a baby, in November. Annie was often sick in Germany, but is better here. Anyway, I shared my loneliness in the meeting on Thursday, as it had been a super way to God. Reaching out in desperation and washing away a lot of selfishness and impurity. I am back on an hour-long quiet time since we are here, I feel I need it so. So I feel better now. I have good friends in Francine and Annette, who are fun. Michel O thinks we younger ones in the team are often too serious, too bottled up, too 'intense'. He says we should smile, open up, live. We need to talk, share, more often. I am convinced of this, but didn't want to burden Annie, and understand that Florence is adjusting to marriage. I felt so cross at God for leaving me alone. I'll try to yell for help, next time, and open up, and in doing so will be giving too. Michel finishes his note by saying, 'Be young, Su, be yourself'. He understands that life can appear terribly difficult,

but says that with others' help we can overcome our difficulties. I think this last attack of 'loneliness' and the 'despair' I suffered from last autumn were general 'depression', in which the latest problems got magnified from molehills to mountains. Tiredness and strain were contributing factors, but spiritual support from within and without was missing. This last week, and because of this depression, I've had a terrific experience of getting closer to God and miss the direct contact as I go back to routine. How do I stay so close? The answers that keep swimming around in my brain are, "We love God because He first loved us" and "Loving should not be a strain, and difficult. It should be as easy as falling off a log." I am reading about St F and how simple and clear his faith was. I'm sorry to force all this on you, but it's another way of getting it out. I have to arrange a time with Annie and Florence, to know how they've been getting on, too, and to tell them I love them and need them. I'm sorry my writing is so hard to read, I have tried to correct oddities.

EASTER SUNDAY

I will finish this to post tomorrow. I have just done my diary. I do hope these things get through safely. Make sure you put your address on the back of letters, just in case. They don't have airmail letters in Canada and it's the same price up to 64c, which is how I can send you such a lot.

I don't get much time to rest really as I go to bed early and I want to give time to my hostess, just to sit and chat with her. She gave me a box of Swiss chocolates for Easter, "instead of an Easter bunny".

Today I have worn my new clothes for the first time. All look lovely together, but no one noticed in Church or the dim dark candlelight of the restaurant. It was still nice to have something new and smart for Easter Sunday.

I doubt we'll have a holiday tomorrow, as we meet at 9.30am at the Centre.

I have been glad of vests here – houses are warm, but even so, one needs plenty of layers. Outside you have to wrap up too then you melt in the bus or metro, it's so hot.

Time is moving fast, now. I'm still loving it, though I don't want to live here. It's a fascinating city and all wrapped up in my eyes in the glamour of size, and 'New World-ism'.

I must stop now. I do hope you're all well. I'm looking forward to hearing from you.

With lots and lots of love and prayers, Su

SUNDAY 27th MARCH

Had a quiet day yesterday at the Centre, reading and had a short walk with Annette to post a letter. I was a bit bored but now have a good book and am staying at home this morning where I can relax more and be quiet, away from people. Unfortunately I have to go to the Centre this afternoon to meet people but have had a rest and a little walk with my hostess in this neighbourhood. It is full of varied ethnic restaurants, food shops ('stores') and wildish clothes shops. The houses are three storey, brick or stone, in mock-castle designs – steep roofs, little turrets, and towers. Some are very brightly painted.

MONDAY 28th

In the morning, I met Annette at a nearby part of the University of Montreal and spent the morning putting up posters there and trying to get a little official interest in our publicity. Not much good. Lunch at the Centre.

A meeting for our team in the afternoon and for all after supper. Between, I got to a Post Office. Traffic rules here are often odd so cars have to stop to give way at every minor junction, like a curtsy. Today it has snowed again, yuck, as it's got mushy and dirty. I get wet feet. I am struck by the nice smiles and helpfulness, and time given by the office staff in the University.

TUESDAY 29th

I got myself by Metro along to the Press Conference in the plush and elegant Ritz-Carlton Hotel. Not so easy to find and I nearly panicked. I found it, using a map. The hotel was very old and opulent, one of the original Ritz's, and we have a small room, the Salon Vert. Only three journalists came, though six had promised... sad, but no worries in God's plan. Back to the Centre for lunch, did some typing for Claude. Bravely launched myself home, alone.

Asked bus details from a lady also waiting for 51, who got very nice and chatty. People are struck, I think, by an English girl who can speak French ('has taken the trouble to learn it'). I arrived home safely, another hurdle passed.

WEDNESDAY 30th

Team and household from Centre got together at 10.00am. In the afternoon a few of us went to the theatre to check all sound equipment worked after the journey. It did. A few small repairs to be done but Christian was greatly relieved. Afterwards, I dashed off in the Metro to buy some wellies, as in the snow I get wet feet. I walked home from the shop – a long way and I was exhausted in the evening. Mme Morf was out (it's her birthday) so I made myself sandwiches and went to bed to read. I regretted my choice of boots, I should have got the nicer ones for a few more dollars.

THURSDAY 31st

We had a meeting at 10.00am, and an early lunch. At 1.30pm we were at the Town Hall of Montreal to sign the Livre d'Or, the visitor's book. We met the deputy mayor this time (makes a change from Bishops), a very nice lady, who soon called Michel O 'tu' (common here). She was enthusiastic about St F, and promised to come to the play the first night (we brought her tickets). Others went off to stick more posters in shops. Annie and I went back to my shoe shop, to change the boots. Now I have nice, shiny navy and white wellies and the snow is all gone. We walked back to the Centre and stuffed info on books into programmes. At 6.30pm we were invited to Ted and Audrey Porter's for supper – all of us, which makes 14. We had a jolly evening including watching a Quebecois musician, Andre Gagnon, on telly. (My hostess has no telly, a great frustration as there's lots of choice of nice trashy things here.) Mme Morf had guests in, so I met them. They went at 11.00pm, so it was a late night (with early morning to follow....)

FRIDAY 1st APRIL

I forgot it was April Fool's Day, but remembered it was Good Friday. I didn't have time for my QT, as I was picked up at 7.45am by Shelagh Webster (who first put her eldest son on a bus to Ottawa from near here). I had breakfast at her place – a nice big house overlooking the city from a hill. There are three other children, 13, 8 and 6. Kids do me good, they stop me being so intense and serious. After breakfast we went to the market to buy meat; grocer's and health food shop. Then we visited a big Church on the hill where many

miracles of healing are said to have occurred. Lunch was sandwiches. In the afternoon I read, while the kids played. Supper was roast chicken. I played cards with the oldest girl, then went home 9.00ish. On the drive back there was a fantastic view of Mount Royal over the city. Lights spreading far away. This city is huge, yet its population is only three million.

SATURDAY 2nd

Woke at 9.00am, went to Centre for lunch. Bought flowers on the way, daffodils and tulips (orange/yellow) for Easter. Walked with Francine in the afternoon and had tea in a café. Supper at home and catching up with long overdue writing.

SUNDAY 3rd – Easter Day

Up at 8.30am, to find surprise snow. Dashed around to get ready and met Francine in the Metro. Bumped into Michel O and Christian. Arrived at Cathedral of Notre Dame – still snowing hard. Glad of boots now, it's so wet and mushy underfoot. Nearly all others there too. A beautiful church with lots of turquoise on the ceiling and good lighting – it looked like the sky/heaven full of golden stars. The organ was loud, and glorious. Michel says taking Communion in a Catholic church depends on the priest now and the attitude of the person taking it. I interpret the invitation here as wide, and trust, as I strongly want to take it today. There was lots of music from the choir and soloists (but I missed our good old hymns). The service washed in one ear and out of the other so I just sat and enjoyed the atmosphere. I was still exhausted but recovering. It was raining into the snow, by now. We walked to a restaurant throwing snowballs on the way. It was a buffet and 'brunch', so on one plate I got scrambled eggs, bacon, sausages, pâté, salmon, beef, hot ham in maple syrup (gorgeous), salads and had no room left on my plate to try all the hot veg. That was too much meat really – I will know for another time. The plates were taken and we started again – salad and turkey only for me. Then a choice of puddings – cake, tart, doughnuts. Coffee, my first after Lent. We finished 3.00-ish. We visited a nearby church – one of the first built here - dedicated to Mary, but specially for sailors, as it's by the port. 'Port' means rows of warehouses and a few tugs. I got home at 5.00pm, to finish this for the post and had supper with Mme Morf. It had stopped snowing and was above freezing, so it could be clear tomorrow. It has been mild the last few days and is not going to be too cold tonight. Spring may be on the way but it's still winter to us.

Montreal, Friday 8th

Dear Mum and Dad,

At last, two letters from you on Tuesday (first from anyone), posted on 21 March (15 days) and another from 28 March (7 days). Wednesday I got its partner, a letter from all three of you also posted on 28 March. Thursday (yesterday) I got Mum's airmail letter of 25 March (13 days).

Two sides from Jim! Having maple butter on toast every breakfast, yum. Dad – coming here, the world seems bigger, not smaller. Nice stamps on all your letters. Hope Jim got a good break, good luck for this final run, Jim. I'll keep posting every Monday, as long as I have time to write but it's not easy. I'm often too tired. I am feeling much better today after a few late mornings.

I am sorry we are moving away from an English minority speaking area, such a nice rest and I just don't understand the Quebecois French easily. They swallow half their words, which is no help when you haven't understood the first half. And they string all these half words together so FAST. I'll let you know how I get on.

I spend an awful lot of time here just sitting and listening to my hostess. She is so nice but alone so talks a lot. It means I haven't yet had a chance to write to anyone but you and Jim. So please keep people patient until I can get around to it.

Look after yourselves. With lots of love, Su

ENCLOSED DIARY:

TUESDAY 5TH APRIL

Meeting at 9.30am. In afternoon, revisited University with Annette to stick up more posters

WEDNESDAY 6th

At theatre at 8.00am, for set up. OK for me, tricky for lights (as ever). John Nowell arrived from GB. Rehearsal in evening.

THURSDAY 7th

Stayed in bed instead of going to meeting. Afterwards I felt less exhausted, at last. Show went well, about 350 people but static electricity caused trouble in the radio mike.

FRIDAY 8th

Crackles in mike worse but did a decent show. Spent day alone here and visited big stores on way to theatre – buy nothing.

SATURDAY 9th

Phoned Fields' friends. They came, but thought it must be the wrong show because there was only one actor, so went home. If only a) I'd checked they knew all details, b) I'd prayed for them aloud (at that minute they may have been hesitating outside the theatre....) She sounded so nice on the phone, too. Lunch at Centre, show at 15.00. No crackle, as we used humidifiers in the theatre before the show. 350 people approx. Packed up afterwards – it only takes just over an hour, because we used lots of the theatre's own stuff.

SUNDAY 10th

Rushed off to a morning service at a United Church – much like ours (United = mix of Meths, Baptists, Reformed, etc). Lots of old ladies rattling in a huge Victorian Gothic church. Had a cheese and apple crêpe for lunch, in a Breton crêperie near Mme Morf's house (genuine, but for pot of maple syrup on table).

Meeting of 'local team' in the afternoon. People introduced themselves. Some would like to have the show here again....

After supper, some of us (Annie, Claude, Christian, Diane and I) went to visit a couple on the nearest Indian reserve ('Caughnawaga') - he is director of the cultural centre, she is Danish. They met in California. She is rather bitter about not being accepted by others. A good evening, good chat, tea and muffins. It has been snowing all evening. Again. The reserve is interesting though we saw little in the dark. No street names, all separate bungalows, garden space between, but little cultivated. Right by the St Lawrence where people fish. We saw a big coaster float right by the house as we sat, which was funny as you looked up at it, the river being about the same level.

MONDAY 11th

At 1.00pm we were at a TV studio to watch some films made by the lady who has done all the media work for the show here. She then gave us tea in her home. In the evening there was a public meeting at the Franciscans. Many Franciscans went, but not many of the general public. This didn't work very well.

TUESDAY 12th

We travelled to Quebec (city). We had lunch and supper in different homes. In the afternoon I did some shopping and letter writing. In the evening a few of us visited a group of young people who 'evangelise' through a half-hour play. Everyone (nearly) is French speaking here. I am staying in a family with one 20-year-old daughter. They are florists.

WEDNESDAY 13th

Early lunch, with lots of local ladies (only Annette, Florence, Annie and I – the boys went off on their own.) In the afternoon, we sat in on part of a session of the Quebec provincial government. Then we drove through the old town to take a ferry to the other shore of the St Lawrence and back (without getting off) just to see the town from the river. Quebec is smaller than Montreal and all French. It looks far more like Europe in the old town.

THURSDAY 14TH

Started at theatre at 8.30am. Set up OK, but day not easy. Sound mixer did things wrong – is going for repair tomorrow. Show at 8.00pm. 200-odd in audience but all downstairs so theatre looked full. A Cardinal was there, also wife of Lieutenant-Governor of Province.

FRIDAY 15th

Free day. Raining. Drive 90km south to Beauceville to a cabin on a hill, a 'cabane à sucre'. We were shown a big vat of the sugary liquid being boiled down. Then we ate a big meal – ham, baked beans, omelette, boiled potatoes, pancakes, all with lots of maple syrup (on pots of the table, you add as much as you like). We walked up the hill – forests and hills all around, villages only along the river. Next we tried the 'tire d'érable' syrup, which is more concentrated, poured boiling onto fresh snow. It turned straight to toffee. We dug it out with a wooden spatula. We left 4ish or later. We had

supper in someone's home. Then we all went to the local amateur dramatic production of "HMS Pinafore". Good fun, although casting and some singing was rather feeble (a big fat hero, and rather rotund heroine).

Thursday 21 April

Dear Mum and Dad,

I haven't any more stamps, so can't yet write to Grandad and Jim. I sent them postcards recently. I'm taking a carbon copy of this diary in a notebook as I don't trust the post. I've had nothing from you now since those first letters in Montréal. That's 16 days. I hope there'll be something in Québec tomorrow – we stop there to celebrate the Gagnon's three year old's birthday on the way to Trois Rivières. It's so frustrating not knowing if you've got any of my letters. I feel very close to you all and not cut off at all despite the physical lack of communication. God is very good to me. I am feeling content with life again now, the ups and downs are normal. I can say I'm enjoying myself. I'm fed up with being tired – I think its over-exhaustion that messes my stomach up. We're all tired and we all have to pull together. It's one's attitude that counts. I wonder if I won't miss out tonight's meeting if I still feel this weak but I feel I should go – called to be there. The rhythm of these next two weeks will be fast – lots of shows and moves in little time. Annie is bearing up reasonably well but she spends a lot of time at home resting. She gets very sick sometimes.

It's still cold but there's no snow except piles of the old dirty stuff. The grass is yellow, we're longing for a sight of green.

My hostess here has done my washing and ironing, leaving me time to rest and read. You see how God is good to me?

I hope Jim is getting on all right and Dad with business and Mum's health. I'm wondering how Grandad's keeping and where Aunty Judy is.

I typed a letter to be used as a 'circular' but got some facts wrong so had to scrap it. I'm desperate to get it done so might even end up handwriting it.

I hope this gets to you quickly. Look after yourselves.

With lots of love, and prayers, Su

ENCLOSED DIARY:

SATURDAY 16th

A short lie-in. Lunch at Mrs Pelletier's to meet a few of the cast of 'Pinafore'. Off to theatre for evening show. Smaller audience.

SUNDAY 17

Church (United) with an English Canadian lady. Lunch in 10 minutes. Show at 3.00pm. Take down. Bigger audience. Mixer still not fixed. Supper at Gagnon's – fresh salmon.

MONDAY 18

Francine and I are taken on a drive around a big island in the river by our host, M. Samson. Beautiful, but cold. We visit his wife's mother's house there, which they use in the summer. The house is 300 years old. In the afternoon we wander around the old part of town. Public meeting in evening – I am too tired to concentrate and slip out near the end to wander about the College until they've finished. I'm sleeping badly, the nights are short and our timetable full.

TUESDAY 19

Leave at 9.00am. Drive through National Park to Jonquiere. I have to wait in the afternoon at a lady's house. Some go to see yet another Mayor. My hostess is an elderly spinster who talks a lot, with a strong accent. I am tired and depressed but she's so sweet and spoils me so I manage to smile a lot. I understand 80% of all she says. I am too tired and sleep very badly. My stomach is bloated but my hostess forces food on me. I am too polite to refuse....

WEDNESDAY 20 APRIL

Someone forgot to pick me up. I go to the theatre in a taxi at 9.00am, having been ready since 8.00am. Most upset but can it for the sake of the others. Keep rushing to toilet before show and have stomach ache. This escalates. Call Christian who doesn't want to take over. So struggle on until the end.

Agony. Lie down and sip some lemon, and the pain goes. Take down... bed midnight.

THURSDAY 21 APRIL

Up late, long bath. Can understand hostess better now. Stomach fragile, me too. This afternoon I have skipped a walk in nature with others. A shame. Will have to go to public meeting this evening but wish I needn't. My hostess is cooking me super meals – she's all alone and has nothing else to do – so I eat them and leave my digestion to the Good Lord. This town is small and relies on aluminium and paper industries as does this entire isolated region. The country is flat but you can see the mountains we came through to get here. The houses are small and white wood, with verandas – just like in a western. People are simple but open and energetic.

Sunday 24th

Dear Mum and Dad,

I have the chance to send a letter with John Nowell who is returning to Britain today.

I am still worrying about a 'circular letter'. It is very necessary. I suppose the Good Lord will find me a way in time.

This morning I woke early but had a good quiet time and a bit of a read. I feel relaxed for it. I have to literally stop my brain to get to sleep – I am so tense at the moment.

Now I'm staying with a family. We had a big breakfast all together. Eggs, sausage and homemade Danish rolls. The baby is delightful. The eldest teenage daughter is the one I share a room with – I sleep in the bottom bunk.

I'm sorry my diary is getting so staccato and lacking in detail. I have very little time. I'll try and make more time. It's still cold here. There's been no snow for a couple of days, but it's still cold out. You have to wear a winter coat.

Marie-José arrived yesterday to be with us for a month. Marie is staying over at 22, with the Koechlins, etc. It's so good for Marie-José and Michel. She'll help us all, too.

I wish I'd thought to get a birthday present for Mum and send it with John. I'll still try and post something, hoping it'll arrive in time. Sorry....

I'll leave you now; I have to go to the theatre.

Bye again, lots of love, Su

Enc: maple sugar and Canadian print for Mum

FRIDAY 22nd

Leave Jonquière at 9.00am to have lunch in Quebec. Leave at 3.30pm for Trois Rivières, and all have supper with our hosts in a church hall (St Patrick's) and go home. I am staying with an English speaking family, who have four girls.

SATURDAY 23rd

Set-up at the theatre from 8.30am. All goes very smoothly and quickly. I am in a bad mood all day. The show is OK, but few people come. The musicians are late.

SUNDAY 24th Up late. I am now writing this to give to John.

Friday 29 April 1983

Dear Mum and Dad,

This will be my last letter from Canada. I'm getting excited now at the prospect of being in the USA. We've the visa question to resolve once and for all... it's time to start praying.

Today I found a lovely birthday present for Mum. I will try and send it registered, but from Portland, which should be quicker. I also bought a few other bits and bobs, typically Canadian, as I'm sure I'll want things to give, when I get home. It's lovely to have the money to do this.

I phoned the Henry Fields, and spoke to Mrs. She might come to the show, but her husband (Mum's second cousin) can't.

To answer your latest – where's Cowlands Creek? It sounds lovely. Dad's drawing of a cow looks like a spider... I hope all is going well with Aunty Judy. I'm glad you had such a good weekend.

Before I forget, in July I'd like to have a really good three-week rest but may have to be at Caux by 5th (or before) August. Any ideas?

This warm weather is so lovely. It's nearly summer, just literally overnight. And it's lasting too but it's late this year, apparently. It makes you feel so different, sort of lighter and freer. I'm glad to be in Ottawa, I've been looking forward to it. It's mostly English speaking here and is further (just a bit) into spring. The grass is definitely greener here and there are crocuses. Flowers, ooof....

SUNDAY 1st MAY – back at the house in Montreal, where I am staying the night. We are all back in our old billets except me. There were lots of letters from you waiting here for me dating from 13 April to 25th (the latter therefore arriving in less than a week – amazing). Just as well it did, seeing as we're off tomorrow. Have been wondering about Jim and his job prospects. Must remember to pray especially for that. Appreciated Mum's postcard of St Just. Glad of replies to my letters. Thanks for offering to keep people in Bristol, etc, informed – I have a feeling I might be able to squeeze in that circular letter in Portland. It would be good timing, as I can summarise the whole Canadian tour. I feel the Lord will find me the time – I just have to trust him for even that now.

Cindi phoned me here this afternoon soon after I arrived. She had got my letter saying I probably couldn't get down to her home and was so disappointed she wanted to tell me money mustn't be the problem. I was just about to write to her to tell her that I am now better off (a Belgian girl has sent me a lot) so I just have to find the time. I think it would be super to see Cindi in her home setting. She was a good friend to me in Paris and the least I can do is accept the invitation to her home, even if it is only for a few days.

I'm in spring clothes now, as it's warm. I'm excited to be going to the USA at last – especially after Cindi's phone call. I loved it here though, and would have liked to have seen the spring come in.

My digestive troubles are under control, through lessened tension, and disciplined eating.

Bye now, lots of love, Su

PS Thanks for such long and super letters. BIG help.

ENCLOSED DIARY:

SUNDAY 24 Cont'd

After show (15.00h) take down. Supper with family.

MONDAY 25

Try and do some shopping in morning, presents etc. Lunch in a bar altogether – next to a paper factory. Leave for Sorel. On arrival, have an M&T meeting to discuss personal grievances in the team. A big relief and start of healing. Supper with families there, in a school. I am staying with a very nice lady with a daughter at the school.

THURSDAY 26

Theatre in a secondary school (as a change from technical schools). Not bad. Set up all day. Acoustics terrible. I'm upset by demanding attitude of Peter and Michel, when I'm terrified with so many things not working (the transformer's broken down now). Do a bad show (well, a few things wrong = a bad show to me... even when the audience don't notice).

WEDNESDAY 27

After meeting Monday, digestive problems cleared up. Miracle. Now they've come back. At 11.00 we all go to visit a local carpet factory doing reasonably well in difficult times. In the afternoon, we rest, shop and then do the show. It's sunny and warm today. Summer, just like that. Yesterday, I wore my winter coat. I still don't do a very good show and I'm afraid to speak to Michel. Long take down, after show.

THURSDAY 28

Get up rather late and don't have as much time to talk with my hostess as I wanted. Feel guilty. Leave at 11.00, have lunch in a restaurant in Montreal, arrived at 4.00pm in Ottawa. Peter says sorry in car, putting last piece into puzzle from Monday. I still don't know what to say to Michel. I was so hurt. Perhaps something needs to be changed in me (first).

I am staying with an Anglican minister and family. I mainly see Mrs to talk to, young with two kids. For supper, there is a 'reception' in a restaurant in the city, mainly to meet Franciscans, etc. Early night, but can't sleep....

FRIDAY 29

A free day. Up late, wash hair and chat in morning. Trot up the road to the Weeks (full-time couple in Ottawa) for lunch. After, go to big shopping centre and at last get the presents I want. Had supper with the family. Great fun, no heavy talk at all. They're going out this evening, so I'm babysitting. I plan to be in bed earlier than early: we start at 8.00am tomorrow morning. Plus takedown after. I end up watching a good telly program (don't have enough time for watching telly here) and going to bed early, but not to sleep....

SATURDAY 30

At the theatre at 8.00am. Nice. Bigger than ever problems with mixer. Find a solution at last minute (all by myself – Christian very pleased – lots of lighting problems for him to worry about).

Show actually goes very well, helped by what Michel calls a 'talented audience'. Have quietly resolved personal problems with others now, may bring them up if need arises one day. Otherwise, God has dealt with them for the time being. But I am overtired. Not physically, mentally. During the rehearsal, when everything was going wrong I just wept, but not real crying. Like a frustrated child sobbing. Very odd. I hope the Good Lord knows all about it, because it can't go on. I keep saying things I don't mean to people and can't get out sensibly the things I do mean. Physically, I feel better – you get used to tiredness so you accept it in the end as normal. Anyway, home soon after takedown.

SUNDAY 1st MAY

Breakfast with Mrs and kids. They were a nice family – simple and friendly. Regret not seeing Ottawa properly (others did Friday morning.) Leave 11.00am for Montréal. We stay here the night (I'm at the Centre). Our plane flies at 11.50am tomorrow. We go via Dallas, Texas. Look at a map. It's one of those cheap tickets. I hope at least we see something on the way.

Lunch in a restaurant en route. Meeting in the afternoon, to collect our impressions of the tour and any quotable quotes heard. Quite good. I am sleeping in the basement here, with several others.

We have just had supper, then went up on Mount Royal to see the sunset and city lights. Beautiful, calm, walking in woods still without leaves, people around, many strollers, lots of squirrels (grey). I play hide and seek with a squirrel around a tree, trying to photograph it.

It's 9.00pm, I must finish here and toddle off to bed. It was good to see Mme Morf again. It is a bit sad to leave Canada after seeing so little of it, but it's a country you can enjoy safe in the knowledge you're going home afterwards. That's the sort of travelling I enjoy, not being stuck somewhere for a year itching to move on.

I've thought of so many things I should write, but when I sit down to do it, I've forgotten them all. Goodbye, Canada.

Portland, 3rd May

Dear Mum and Dad,

This is out of schedule, but I thought it would be good to start a letter to get off soon, as you'll be wondering how we are. No visa troubles – I think they realised we were pretty organised (though he asked me what MRA was...!) but let us through with no objection. We were so long though, we just made the plane. At Dallas we had to run miles to the next plane as we were late and only got it because they were late loading commercial freight. They wouldn't even have waited for our group of 10 otherwise. However, our baggage didn't make it, and we're expecting it to be delivered today. We

each got an 'overnight kit' free: deodorant, lotion, etc (and razors for men). Great fun.

Dallas was disappointing (Fort Worth, in fact). It was raining and grey and looked like everywhere else – green, lots of wild flowers on airfield. That was a miracle after Quebec. But here – double miracle. Trees so green. Azaleas, rhododendrons, tons of flowering shrubs, chestnut trees in full blossom. Paradise, Garden of Eden! Spring starts here in February and they have a rainy winter (with very little snow). Sounds like Cornwall. The ocean is 80 miles away but there's a river carrying small commercial shipping. I forgot: we came over the Rockies. Beautiful. Lots of snow. I sat by the window. Some terrific sights – a red mountain, dry brown hill/mountain ranges, strange formations of ranges (all this after Denver). Before, all was green fields and flat.

I am staying with a girl my age, an occupational therapist. She has a lovely flat, in a complex of flats with gardens around. Lots of trees and green between houses here again. She has all I was previously aiming for: a lovely flat, a car, independence. I have my own room so could sleep on this morning. Even three hours difference is not easy. She's very easygoing, rather shy. Not used to having guests and obviously has been briefed by her Mum. Her Mum is the MRA connection and she's just discovering it. Debbie is a committed Christian and is interested – will be coming to Conference and show. We have a terrific schedule lined up here. Not just USEPN (now "Poor Man, Rich Man") but much MRA action and seminars before the conference (many public talks given by people like H Williams, Harry Almond, etc). Many top-level people are coming for all this. I hope we will be free to concentrate on the show and any visits (like seeing the Pacific!) I will find out at the 10.30 briefing this morning. I came straight here from the airport, so I don't know who the team is yet. I hope you're all well.

Lots and lots of love, also to Jim and GD. Su

Tuesday 10 May

Dear Mum and Dad, (and Jim and Grandad),

I'm sorry I didn't phone or send a telegram for Mum's birthday, I didn't get to a post office. For the same reason, I haven't posted the present. I think I'll leave it now, and bring it home with me, if you don't mind. Similarly, I was going to post you the blurb about the conference here this weekend, but I'm trying to keep life simple. So, let's start with this last week. It's been really quite calm. The first few days we met with all the other people here at 10.30am. The first day, in the afternoon, a few of us went on a tour of the city. The rhododendron's and azaleas were endlessly amazing. We went to a rhododendron test garden, which was packed full of the things, giants 20 feet high, and in all colours. Azaleas too. The sun comes and goes, it rained a lot this weekend. That night Debbie (my hostess) took me on a drive up the Columbia River gorge. It was beautiful and we saw an incredible waterfall, in its own ring of rock, with green trees everywhere. Big Douglas firs too.

Wednesday morning I did some typing for Claude and in the afternoon 'helped' with a video recording. In the end I couldn't do what they took me to do, but it was fun to watch. It was an 'MRA' interview (Michael Henderson has a weekly programme on cable TV and interviewed a couple from South Africa here for the conference).

Thursday and Friday, we set up in the theatre and had a full dress rehearsal. Difficult to adjust to the English sound tape.

Saturday, lazed around at home all day before going to the theatre.

Sunday (oh, first show went well – nearly) had a fantastic walk in the mountains. Eight of us went, some of the team and some local people. It rained a lot but was beautiful, and the exercise felt so good.

Monday and Tuesday as Saturday. Feel really rested now, tummy not strong. I went to the morning meetings, which were really stimulating.

Wednesday – today. 200-300 people for show each night, half full theatre, but a good response.

I'd send you a postcard, but I can't find a post office to buy stamps. Thanks for another letter from Dad, and several from Mum. Thanks for spiritual food, too, Mum. Tomorrow we go to the coast – I've been praying for this. The

Pacific! Friday we set up the show at the Holiday Inn, where the conference is being held.

I just had a letter from Jeanne Faber, inviting me to join the NWN team, learning to use the CompSet machine as they have a 'vacancy', from after the summer. I guess this must be a long-term proposition as the training takes a while and they really need people long-term. I don't know what to think. I react against it and my reaction makes me think it's meant to be. But to leave the field of theatre, to have to start something new, and worst of all to live in London, all sadden me. I have shared this with Marie-José and Annie and I'm letting time work out the answer in me. Please keep this quiet until I decide. Sorry I can't let you know more now – no space. Am very peaceful about it. We will come home via Washington, New York and Allentown.

Bye now, lots of love, Su

Sunday, 15 May

Dear Mum and Dad,

We finished our run at the BPA with medium audiences, then Wednesday took everything down and I spent the afternoon in the Henderson's garden, sunbathing. We all had supper there.

Thursday, a dream came true – we went to the coast. We left here a bit past nine, and got there at around 11.00am. We drove through hills and forests, which go right down to the sea. We were at Cannon Beach, a beautiful long, clean sandy beach with cliffs at either end, rocks off the beach and the hills behind. We had lunch in a seafood restaurant right on the beach, then walked along the beach. It was warm enough to paddle but not to swim. Then we went around to the cliffs at the end, where you could see a group of sea lions sunning themselves on a big rock below. It was time to go home at 3.30pm. In the evening I went shopping with Debbie (the stores close at 9, 10 or 11.00pm and are open Sundays).

Friday, we started the set up for the show at the Holiday Inn. The conference started with dinner and afterwards I decided to try the hotel's jacuzzi and

swimming pool (which are in the open centre of the hotel). A jacuzzi is like a big bath full of hot water which swirls around, it's supposed to relax you. Then I watched the TV at the end of my bed for a few minutes before going to sleep.

Saturday, we attended a few of the meetings but also had to set up and rehearse for the show. We saw the new film 'One Word of Truth', Solzhenitsyn's Nobel Prize acceptance speech. It's very, very good. The show was difficult – we were in a big room, not a theatre. The mike crackled a bit and I was in an acoustic hole at the back. Then music started up on the other side of the partition I had my back to. There was some kind of a banquet going on next door. It stopped after about six songs, but it was still noisy. Our audience weren't bothered too much but I couldn't mix, and relied mainly on habit and knowledge of the usual problems to get through. I think it was OK. Michel didn't flinch. We took down after the show. This morning I slept in, then went to the last meeting. We all (the USEPN team) got up together when asked and a few of us spoke. I just mentioned the difficult decision I was faced with but how I felt God's love and that he knows what's best (I still don't feel ready to say 'yes' though).

Tomorrow morning we leave early for Saint Paul-Minneapolis. Debbie, my hostess here, was at the conference all weekend. We became good friends. I'm sorry to be leaving this beautiful place. On the other hand, the high standard of living is beginning to annoy me. Everything is so easy. You don't notice this at first. Food can be funny – yesterday's starter for dinner was a slice of pineapple, melon, avocado and strawberry, with a big square slab of fruit jelly, on a lettuce leaf, with a blob of mayonnaise on top. Melon, pineapple, etc often come with the main course as with our quiche today. Still, it's often good and healthy, with lots of salads. So goodbye from the Pacific coast.

Lots and lots of love, Su

Circular letter:

St Paul-Minneapolis, 17 May

Dear Friends,

Excuse me not typing this, I can't get to a machine. First of all, I must tell you about our time in Canada. The weather was cold there and spring was just arriving when we got to Ottawa. That time in Québec province was very intense with many shows. Audiences numbers were reasonable and their response to the play was good. The usual interesting cross-section of people came. It felt as though we were doing a kind of pioneering there, creating many new links between the small Moral Rearmament team and the community. I found Québec very, very French. The people here are proud of this culture and are afraid that the English American culture will take them over eventually. The country is lovely, so many trees, and people are friendly and calm (compared to the French....)

We've just finished our two weeks in Portland, Oregon. We have more free time there, so were able to relax. It seemed like paradise after Canada with all the green, luxuriant growth and rhododendrons and azaleas. After a while, though, the smart comfort and easy life began to make me react inside. The materialism is unobtrusive but you feel it softening you up, making you selfish slowly. On the other hand, we British could learn a lot from the relaxed, calm, friendly care of Americans and their energy and enthusiasm for life.

The shows went well in Portland with lots of responsible people of the city there. I stayed with a girl my age, an occupational therapist, and we became very good friends. We finished our time there with the International Conference, a great occasion. We also had time to hike in the Cascade Mountains and drive to the Pacific coast.

So I leave you with more thanks for your prayers and support.

Best wishes, Su Richards

Monday 23 May

Dear Mum and Dad,

I hope my Circular letter has arrived and that you can cope with it. Anyone you can get to help?

I can't remember what I've told you, since we've been here. I'm staying with a retired Presbyterian minister and his wife. They are very nice and relaxed. The shows went well in the college theatre we were in last week. Not quite full, a shame as it was very small, but the atmosphere was good. Next weekend we travel 40 miles to perform the play at 11.00 on Sunday morning.

The days of the show we mostly stayed at home, or met up and lazed at someone else's house. Saturday, I went with Phyll Cameron Johnson and her hostess to a craft fair in a small town. The fair was set up in the open-air, along by the river. Motorboats on the river, one little yacht and a windsurfer. Lots of people sail on the lakes here. I didn't buy anything... you'll see why later. Sunday, my hosts took me out for a huge buffet brunch, then we visited a special tree park (arboretum).

Today I am flying off to see Cindi! In her own home, in the South. The tickets cost ALL the money I have left plus I've had to borrow the USEPN team money (which I'll pay back if a miracle occurs). Cindi can give me \$50, just enough spending money to scrape through to the end. I'm praying for more help here. I'm a bit scared of taking off on my own but I'm sure it'll be worth it and it's great to be able to see a bit of the south. Also, I hope I can be of help to Cindi and her family. I wonder how Cindi lives her faith with no friends outside her family to support her. It'll be great to have her friendship and fun for a few days.

So, will report all this later. Am now going to search for an Atlas to see what I'll fly over. It's chilly here, like our June or July, but it'll be hot down there. So bye now. Got two letters on arrival here, last week.

With lots and lots of love, Su

St Paul, 2 June

Dear Mum and Dad,

June came and on cue the sun came out. It's not very warm, abnormally cool for this time of year. I have a great pile of your recent letters and cards in front of me. I'm glad of the newspaper cuttings.

I am putting a congrats card in the post for Jim, convinced he's made it through. I'm dying to know, of course! When is his graduation ceremony?

Right, work. I last wrote when I was about to go to Huntsville. Monday 23: flew 12.50, arr Memphis 2.34, took off 3.15 arr Huntsville 3.54. Met by Cindi. I had a happy evening with the family. Tuesday 24: Cindi worked lunch and supper. In between, she and I went and ate a late lunch in a park by a lake, having driven past old southern houses (with slave quarters behind!) Went shopping with her Mum and sat in the garden. Watched TV in evening. Wednesday 25: with Cindi and her friend Mark, went to Decatur to open-air wave pool (for twenty minutes, it makes big waves which you take a raft and bounce on) – there are only two in US. Great fun. Superb weather, sunny and in 80s, with a little breeze. Pool by the Tennessee river. Had to be home for Cindi and Mark to go to work. They were burnt, I had put on lots of lotion so didn't go red at all (and only a little brown.) Thursday 26: visited a southern mansion and old log cabins with Cindi's Mum then she dropped me at the Space Museum. Was there all the rest of the day, except when Cindi met me and we sat outside and had some lunch. She worked twice again. Friday 27: Cindi took me to the airport. She said I'd become myself again, since I'd been there. I'd really relaxed and felt freer than I have for a while (things had been getting unhappy again last week). I saw Kansas city on the way back. Back by 2.20pm. Lovely sun all the time I was there – it had been hot and muggy and unbearably humid up until then – had one tornado warning. South is a deep green, with beautiful, big trees. Cotton and soybeans were just being planted, into red/orange soil. The accent is funny.

Friday: evening I repacked. Saturday: drove 40 miles south to Carleton University to present the play on Sunday morning. Stayed in the home of two of the staff. Audience OK. Sunday: afternoon, packed and went to Franciscan convent to spend the evening and night with nuns. Monday: back to Minneapolis, to set up in the Cricket theatre, as Tuesday. Moved to stay with a blind lady, Mary Sue. Sleeping on the sofa, so tough, but she is so nice it's worth it. Her dog tried to sit on me one night and I had to heave him off. Loneliness even harder now, plus worry of future. Am going to share with

Annie this morning. I'm fed up with the others, who just work together but with no communication. I can't chat much with the boys and have no one to laugh with. Feel desperate but am working it out. Also, can't hear properly from my place in the theatre. Sorry this is so condensed.

Lots of love, Su

St Paul, 7th June

Dear Mum and Dad,

Things have been a bit grim around here recently so I've been wishing I could talk to you. Cindi's family and Annie have been very caring substitutes and I'm only sorry now I get so unpleasant and selfish when I'm low.

The three shows to date at the Cricket have been good, with over 300 people there. I did one really bad show and the Lord taught me a lot through it. We had an MRA meeting Saturday and stayed in a Franciscan retreat centre for it. This gave me a lot (of peace). I'd just got so terribly complicated and every little thing was a disaster, so brought back to simplicity and the self-knowledge I feel I can give again. The whole team has been feeling similar strains. We had a meeting this morning to chat, which felt good. Now I'm out in the hot, sunny garden.

Sunday: I went on a bike ride with Mary-Sue and a friend (she rides the back of a tandem). 16-18 miles! I don't ache, but I was exhausted. I did have a sore behind. I also went to a Methodist Church, and heard lots about hell. More of that when I see you. Mixed black and white – I haven't met many black people here.

Monday: I helped Mary-Sue clean up her nursery school for an open house tonight. She and I came to dinner with Annie, Claude, Kathleen Johnson and Andrew and Eliane Stallybrass. Mary-Sue sang for them, and they sang MRA songs for her. She is keen to learn more of our songs. She's a super person, simple and warm and openhearted, and intelligent. Her guidedog Taurus is as good as gold, but in the middle of the night asks to sit on me. Permission not granted.

I have just received 20 German marks, so am OK again. I'm still worried about using USEPN money for my ticket especially as some are now low like me. So am praying for that and for the video music we will do here next week, which needs lots of money (I'm not involved with the actual recording).

Praying for you all, especially Grandad and you and Jim. Don't worry about me – I'll be home soon. Might I come to Brittany with you?

Bye now, lots and lots of love, Su

Chicago, 14 June

Dear Mum, Dad, Grandad, Jim,

Got to Chicago yesterday afternoon and was told I had a brief phone message that Jim had got through. Great! Also lots of mail – a long letter from Mum and a letter and cheque from Dad. I wasn't able to ask anyone what to do about the cheque last night, they were all too busy, but I'm in a hurry to get it done as there is no name yet. Many thanks for it – I shall keep the little I need and then help the others. Mum's letters from all around the country are confusing. Good you stayed at Catherine Place.

So last week, in St Paul/Minn: nearly full theatres again. Tuesday had supper with an elderly couple who have a swimming pool and lake to row on and tennis court. All of us. Great! Saturday afternoon, we went to a lake in town and swam and sunbathed. My arms and face are getting brown. 80's this week. 90's here.

Monday 6th: had a supper with A&C, Kathleen and Mary-Sue. Lots of music. Wednesday: supper with M-S and friend Mary. In afternoon, went shopping with Eliane and MO – spent last of \$ on jeans.

This weekend, some of us much involved in recording music of show to be used in a later video recording.

In between: got up late, chatted a lot with Mary-Sue, went to Bourdins for lunch (cooked by Eliane and twice by Mary-Sue). Sat in their garden in the afternoon, and went to theatre. The show went better this week.

Chicago. This morning my hostess took Annie and I on a little tour – we saw the lake (can't see the other side) and big buildings downtown. Impressive.

Saturday 18: I didn't send this earlier, because I'd resuméd all the news so briefly, I couldn't think what to finish up with. Anyway, since Tuesday, plenty has happened.

Tuesday: we set up in the afternoon and got wet running home from the bus in the evening, in heavy rain. It's slowly got cooler since (thank goodness).

Wednesday: Rehearsal and first show. Big audience.

Thursday: lie in. Visit in afternoon to Art Institute (big museum). Smaller audience.

Friday: lie in. Lunch with Franciscans and Mary-Sue, who is here seeing friends (and brought them to the play). Shopping with Mary-Sue and Kathy.

Saturday: today. Lunch in garden, cool enough. Now we are going to go up the highest building in the world – Sear's tower.

So, last show tonight. I'll be sad to leave the US, but am glad the tour is over, really. It's the change of places that's exhausting.

I have put my name on the cheque, Dad, but will cash it in Paris. No one needs help now and I've been helped, so OK until end.

Bye now, lots of love, Su

Washington DC, Wednesday 22 June, 5.20pm, warm and sunny, Margaret Smith's flat (shared with Kathy).

Dear Mum, Dad, James Rex Richards BA and Baggy,

Did I forget to tell you what we'd do after Chicago? See above. Long letters received morning before leaving Chicago. Dying to be home, with you, Mum. Will I see Jim in July? I have been wondering if I should ask to go on holiday with you or if I should grow up and organise my own thing. I can't think what, though I wouldn't have minded staying in Cornwall somewhere with a friend. But really I love being with you and it's on route for Caux. Do you really want

me? Tried new dinghy yet? I will give the cheque to Margaret who has an account in Britain. She will give me some dollars and a cheque for the rest (no one else needs help, in fact). The next 'opportunity' is Paris and fare home. Peter is flying to London, but I never had guidance/energy to change my ticket. So will try and use the chance to ship lock, stock and barrel home.

DIARY Weds 15 June: set up Chicago and first show. Good crowd.

Thurs 16: pm Art Institute – European and American paintings

Fri 17: Mary-Sue to lunch and shopping in afternoon

Sat 18: pm up Sears Tower (highest building in world)

Sun 19: pm boat ride up Chicago river (central downtown) and out on Lake a little. Nothing weirder than floating along on a boat between canyons of glass buildings.

Mon 20: visit fixed with Mayor of Chicago, newly elected and very controversial – he is black and Chicago is a very powerful city politically. So quarter of an hour with him was a big honour. A jolly chap. We were all introduced by Peter. Michel sang 'Going on a visit' and spoke some of the text – a chat with God. Harold Washington understood the meaning. His aide's were boggle-eyed at this man singing in their office (we had carted in an electric piano!) A great moment. Two Franciscans presented St F's "Letter to world leaders". I must try to find it, it's powerful stuff. Perfect for Mayor. Then in afternoon, flew here.

Have seen the Capitol and House of Representatives and heard a journalist answer questions about Reagan, and seen the White House, and that was yesterday! Plus lots of monuments and JF Kennedy's grave. Today = Mount Vernon, Washington the original home and in the afternoon the National Gallery. Discovering American art, too. Others all went to Air and Space Museum.

Tomorrow we drive to Allentown, then Saturday morning to New York. We leave NY Monday 8.00pm-ish, so in Paris Tuesday morning. I will phone later in the day, as I will need to go to bed on arrival. So, see you soon. Sorry you never get any postcards. See Grandad, he does occasionally!

Lots of love, Su

Mountain House, 1824 Caux

Saturday 6 August 1983

Dear Mum, Dad and Jim,

Although I will phone you Sunday night, it would be good to get a letter going now.

I forgot my photos of America and Canada. Could you post them to me? I want to show them to the others.

The journey went well. I got to Boulogne easily with my wheels. Annie gave me a lovely welcome. I'd been a bit sad in the train. There were lots of English people staying the night at Boulogne and driving to Caux the next day. I travelled with an English/American couple, the Blairs, and a girl from New Zealand who lives in Portland, Catherine Linton. We arrived in time for supper. I am in a corner room at the far end of the building – lovely because it has balconies on two sides and is very light. I have two roommates, both young French girls, and both at Caux for the first time. There are four beds in this room, I hope no one else comes, unless they know the ropes. They're both very nice girls, very different one from the other.

So, yesterday was my first day. So many people to greet and many good friends here. Yesterday morning I went to the meeting and in the afternoon sat on the balcony. That wasn't for very long but it was nice and cheered me up. We had a technical rehearsal before supper and have the dress rehearsal this afternoon and the show tonight. Jean-Louis is relieved of the lights, François is doing it. Michel N has resigned from the follow-spot to let the young stage crew here do it.

After supper, everyone had coffee upstairs and the session was officially opened.

I had awful trouble getting to sleep last night, worrying about everything I'd said wrong that day. Which I hadn't really but it's such hard work coping with so many people. Things will perhaps get quieter. I've decided not to enrol for labour until Monday though Lotty's asked me to think about helping with the

recording of the meetings. I think that might be right. I had had a thought about using my professional qualifications here and I'd like to do some translation but there are plenty of people who know French.

Well, hope you had a good journey home and the unpacking goes OK.

Lots of love, Su

PS Monday 8th

Have just helped serve a private meal. All smooth and easy.

Am apprehensive about learning how to record the meetings. It means noting all speakers and summarising what they said so all can be easily found again on the tape. It may also mean typing parts back later on, if requested.

Dear Ma and Pa, and all friends and relations,

Another week complete, stuck up this Swiss mountain. My French roommates went yesterday, Saturday 13, and a girl from Pennsylvania has just arrived. She seems fun.

I have sent a letter today to Jeanne Faber to say... oh, you don't know the story. Right. Trehanes arrived, Tuesday? bearing a letter from Jeanne to say that Mike Smith was getting worried because Jackie Firth was leaving end of August and if I don't take over, who will? Had I got any further? Next day I sat down with Lyria and had clear guidance, I both wanted to go, and should go. Trouble is, although we cleared I could be free to be part of the show's last trip, Michel wants to use time until then. So I faced giving up London, or being replaced. The answer for London had been yes. So I felt awful that someone else would do my job. One of the French girls helped me over that. Claude and Annie said not to worry, it's only Michel dreaming. Quite a few in the team, i.e. the key figures Christian and Peter, want to do something else now. So perhaps Michel needs a whole new team? So that's what I wrote to Jeanne, all this, except I was so tired I was muddled and I bet the letter will be difficult to understand. I had the thought at the same time with Lyria, that the Plan is already laid and this is today's piece of it that I see. Just to say yes to London. The rest will sort itself out, in its (God's) own good time. Do transmit all this to friends who were concerned.

I do feel that's nice to get settled. I've just had supper between this and the last paragraph. Girl from Philadelphia is a very nice girl, but is feeling very tired and lost, so is in her parents' room right now. Meanwhile, surprise, an Indian girl is brought in. I am flabbergasted, but try to get welcoming FAST. Apparently, she and her father and brother arrived in the Indian fashion – their uncle is here, so they just dropped in for a few days. I hope plenty of other people will help me look after these two girls. I dearly hope that tomorrow morning there's not too much secretarial work so I can be free to bring a late breakfast to these girls. Two jetlagged roommates. Great, at least I'll get a good night's sleep (as long as they don't get up in the early hours....)

Meanwhile, Michel has made a date for himself and Marie José to get together over a meal, and discuss the future of Monde et Théâtre.

The last show, in the greenroom I shared what I felt about feeling desperate, not doing a perfect show. Michel was most understanding, others too I think. You know, that show just flowed. There was one minor error near the beginning but otherwise it just sailed along. As though the instruments were just doing the work themselves. Oh, it wasn't perfect. The miracle was, I felt I had done my best. I feel there's a good spirit here this year, and teamwork is good all over the house.

Many thanks for the parcel of photos. It was expensive postage.

Julie's back. Will go to bed, so she feels she can.

Bye for now. Hope all's going smoothly with you.

Lots and lots of love, and prayers, Su

CIRCULAR LETTER

Caux, Switzerland, 17 August 1983

Dear Friends,

Here is the long promised second half of the report on our tour of Canada and the United States, in April, May and June. I am writing to you from the MRA conference centre, where we have presented to show every summer for the last three years.

I think I left you after two weeks in Portland, Oregon in early May. The mountains there were so beautiful, the city full of rhododendrons and azaleas and one day we were able to get down to see the roaring surf of the Pacific!

Mid-May we moved to St Paul – Minneapolis, the Twin cities either side of the upper Mississippi in Minnesota. The country there is only gently undulating, but a fresh green, and everywhere you go you catch a glimpse of one of the 10,000 lakes of that State. We performed in the theatre of a very Christian University where the students who came to our first night made the most responsive audience we've had anywhere. At this point we had five free days and I flew down to Huntsville, Alabama to meet one of my best friends from the Paris days, Cindi. It was super to have a glimpse of the South and of course very precious to see Cindi again and meet her and her family in their home. Then it was back to a performance in another college and visits to Franciscan communities in the area. At this point I moved to stay with a teacher, who has set up her own Montessori nursery school. She was a fascinating person: she had been very active in the civil rights movements in the 60s, but had felt something lacking and eventually became part of a very caring Christian community. MRA means a lot to her because it has shown her a way of putting together her faith, and her concern for the world.

Our last shows in this area were in a well-known theatre in downtown Minneapolis, which attracted more of the general public (i.e. interested in theatre, not especially Francis of Assisi.)

So mid-June we moved to Chicago. A city better known in Europe for its past than its present. To start with, it has the tallest building in the world and a beautiful frontage along the huge Lake Michigan. It is an important commercial city and has a notable cultural life. I visited the Art Institute, an amazing building stuffed with works of art from all over the world. I concentrated on discovering American artists. Chicago has just voted in its first black Mayor, after a very bitter campaign. There is still trouble between him and the City Council, and across the whole city. We were given 20

minutes to meet the new Mayor, Harold Washington and Michel sang him a song from the show about taking the first step in order to bring about reconciliation. I watched his aides, watching delighted and amazed, at this music in the great man's office.

Chicago was our last date in North America but we still had a week left for sightseeing generously organised for us by the Americans. The first stop was Washington for a few days. Then Allentown, Pennsylvania, that town where Frank Buchman, the initiator of MRA grew up. Lastly, New York, which I got to enjoy in the two and a half days we were there.

So on 27 June we flew home to Paris. Glad that all the travelling and hard work were over, but sad to leave such a friendly, beautiful and hopeful country. Hopeful, because of the daring of its people, its vast reserves of sincere and dedicated Christians and the possibility that one day America will settle its moral problems and learn to really care for the world selflessly.

It was a great tour, great fun. Full of instances of God's great love for us, for others, for me.

Since then, I've been home for a couple of weeks and on holiday in Brittany with family and friends, and got here to Caux in early August, in time for the beginning of an Americas/Europe dialogue starting here. I've been working in the secretariat and we've been presenting the show in French and English. We gave our last performance and are accepting no more invitations.

In September I'll be in London. I've accepted an invitation to do phototypesetting for a fortnightly publication of MRA, 'New World News'. It will mean learning something new yet again and living in London, but I'm looking forward to it. At last I'll be able to settle down in one place (in the last three years and two months, the longest I've spent in one place at time is two months) and get to know my country properly.

With love and best wishes, Su

Mountain House, Caux

Sunday 21 August 1983

Dear Ma and Pa and all and sundry,

Herewith, please find enclosed a bad copy of my latest newsletter which you don't have to copy or send out, as I'll do it when I get home and have the original. I will need you to dig out the list of those to whom the last one went.

I only need to be in London for training the week before 19 September. I do so want one week at home before going there, just to get my things straight and feel that materially I'm ready to assault this new course.

I feel happy and cheerful at this new challenge. I think it will be fun and I have a note from Jeanne asking where I think I should live. She wonders 'if a smaller set up might suit you better'.

Lyria and Bob have offered me a lift home (i.e. GB) on 30 or 31 August, plus a night on the journey bringing us to England on 1st-ish September. I would come STRAIGHT home, refuse all evening invitations in order to be in bed at 9.00pm, sleep until 9.00am the following morning, use the remaining 12 hours of my day to get in touch with friends, pack my autumnal gear, visit the beach twice a day to stock up for the months in the city, get one haircut and follow my Mummy and Daddy about in order to talk to them. I want to eat lots of sausages, one apple crumble, one suet-type pudding, porridge, real pasties, a tea-treat bun, perhaps a doughnut, and to cuddle the cat a lot.

The African conference finishes tomorrow. I have worked over all meetings so have not followed it. All turned out well with my American and Indian roommates.

Friday was supposed to be our last show but we will do another Saturday next. On the 29th the Dalai Lama is popping in to Caux, I must stay for that. We might have some nice cakes and food as well as the speeches and all.

I'm getting so tired mentally. Physically I'm standing up very well. It's 10 to 10 now, and I'm sleeping well, roommates permitting but I just can't take stress, or cope with strain or tension, or pressure. People tell me it's a natural result of three years on the road.

At least I'm OK for chocolate, got my day off Wednesday, and went down to Montreux and bought tons.

Last night, for one night, I had an African lady in my room. Tonight I am alone, so should be in bed. Night night!

Bye now, lots of love, Su

In the summer of 1983, when the play's initial tour came to an end, the cast was back in Caux. Su wrote in New World News 26 March Vol31 No6:

Un Soleil en Pleine Nuit has meant a new start in life for me. A few months ago I began to worry about what I'd do when it's over. Then I looked back at my first 'call' and realised that it must be part of a plan, God's plan for my life. I've given my life to God, and he knows what I need, he knows more about me than I do. He has a plan for the world too, and I want to be part of that. So day by day I'll go wherever he leads me.