

## ***Two Days in June* by Vivé Griffith**

For many guests, staying at the Channel Road Inn may remind them of their grandmothers for its welcoming, worn-wood feel and the way it evokes another time. For me, my grandmother inadvertently led me there.

It was Tuesday, June 27<sup>th</sup>, and I'd been traveling for 12 days. In a rented Chevy Malibu I'd sped across the Pennsylvania Turnpike, gotten lost in eastern Ohio, stayed awake across hundreds of miles of flat prairie in South Dakota. I'd crossed the Big Horns, the Virgin River Gorge, and the Mojave still shimmering with heat near midnight. I'd slept in sunken beds in motor courts and in bathroom-less cabins where bison roamed outside.

In was on the trail of my grandmother, Jennie Marrocco, who had traveled from Bridgeport, Connecticut, to Los Angeles and back in 1946. Using her journal as my guide, I was re-creating her trip – which she made with three girlfriends – as exactly as I could 60 years later. I'd spent months in preparation tracking down the places she'd visited and the hotels she'd stayed in. My goal was to replicate her experience.

I thought Los Angeles would be the exception.

My grandmother had spent her night in Southern California in Cucamonga, near San Bernardino, then a small farming and wine community. She slept in a “lovely cabin” and followed Route 66 into Los Angeles each day, where she visited Beverly Hills and the Chinese Theater and “loads of orange groves.” She'd sipped a cocktail at the Brown Derby, which she admitted was “not too hot.”

I could have stayed in Cucamonga myself, now named Rancho Cucamonga and a community of suburban California homes with red tile roofs. But the cabins would be long gone and the commute would have been a chaotic mix of concrete and traffic

I chose to stay at the Channel Road Inn.

When I arrived, I was tired, achy, and dizzy from travel. I needed the cookie sitting on the plate inside my cheerful room. I needed the note with my name on it, the sun flooding through the windows, and the almond lotion in its tiny container in the bathroom. I needed the sense of ease contained in the fluffy comforter and the glasses for wine set out in the afternoon.

I used my nights at the Channel Road Inn to focus on quiet instead of adventure, recuperating instead of retracing.

On the second afternoon, I walked out the front door, took a right, followed a tunnel under the PCH, and ended up on the sand. I walked to the shore and stuck my toe in the water. When my grandmother had made it to California 60 years earlier, she had seen the Pacific for the first time. She'd traveled clear across the country to stand beside it. Doing so myself, I know it was one of the few things that hadn't changed.

Then I walked back to the Inn. I looked at the historic photographs in frames in the living room, the details on the tiles of the elaborate fireplace. Although my grandmother had stayed 55 miles east, it was easy to see that staying at the Inn was a more authentic way of re-creating her journey than staying at a chain hotel in

Cucamonga ever could have been. This place, and the old California it so richly conjures up, would have been familiar to my grandmother in ways the strip shopping centers along Route 66 never could.

The morning of June 29<sup>th</sup> was clear and bright as I packed my bags and headed downstairs. A few miles away, a friend would meet me on Montana Avenue and we would drive all the way to Williams, Arizona, crossing the Mojave a second time, and then to the Grand Canyon the following day. First, I took a table for breakfast.

Sharing the dining room with me were a man and woman who were in town to attend their son's first West Coast gallery opening. As we chatted, they told me about traveling across the country in a VW bus with no air conditioning in 1968, the year I was born. They'd been a young couple testing their wings. The trip had shaped who they became.

We sipped coffee from delicate cups. It occurred to me that there were three generations of cross-country travelers in that room. There was me, traveling on the trail of a woman who'd died when I was just a girl. There were my new friends, remembering a journey that still brought smiles to their faces. And there was my grandmother, who linked us together.

All of those spirits, past and present, gathered on a June morning at the Channel Road Inn.