

# Six Weeks



Switzerland/  
A.F.A.T



European Space Agency



Peace Child Reunion



Voyager Neptune Encounter



1<sup>st</sup> Condo



And the rest...

**Six amazing experiences clash in the fall of 1989**



## PREFACE

*In the early 1980's, I was a photographer for a children's sign language performing ensemble called "A Show Of Hands". The group toured Switzerland in 1985 and made intense friends there with members of a Swiss children's theatre group called AFAT.*

*Three years later, I went on a similar photographic excursion to the Soviet Union, where I documented a cultural exchange between Latvian and American high school students. (Both of these exploits are covered in other photographic books that I've assembled for posterity.)*

*In this trip, I follow up somewhat on them both.*



A Show Of Hands & A.F.A.T.



Soviet and American kids of Peace Child

October 12, 1989

The Herman Family  
3009 Sheringham Road  
Orlando, FL 32808

Dear Howard, Chris, and Robin,

Before I go into anything else, let me announce that our visit to you in Orlando has been rescheduled! Now Jenni, MichaelAnne and I are shooting for sometime around Easter vacation. Can you spare room for three visitors? I'll even be happy to cook you all breakfast if you don't mind going hungry.

It has now been two months since the busiest and most exciting six weeks in recent memory (and since you know how I usually live, this is saying a lot!!) The trip started with a visit to the kids in Switzerland, followed by a week at the European Space Agency on behalf of JPL, a stop at the Peace Child Latvia reunion tour in Detroit, and finally back in time for the first ever planetary encounter with Neptune. Only now do I have time to sit down, relax, and write letters. I don't remember what I told you on the postcard, so here's a rundown on what the past two months have been like...



In late July I flew into Frankfurt, took a train to Lausanne, and collapsed. I stayed with the Rossels, (Aude, Benoit, Roma, Darian, "and the rest"), one of the AFAT families that hosted A Show Of Hands during the Switzerland tour. The day after I arrived, Benoit and I took their boat (yes, you heard right) and we lunched in the middle of Lake Geneva. We even sailed over to visit another old AFAT member who lives ON THE LAKE (name escapes me; she's front center in yellow shirt when looking at the group shot) but alas, she was summering in Greece. Oh, yes; Aude now has purple hair. Everyone asks how you are.





I spent a day or two on my own wandering around the town; I found the place where ASOH performed in front of the cafe, too! I then ventured to the town of Les Diabriolets, the home of AFAT: The Next Generation. They're now stationed down the road from where they were last year, in a village which is still picture-perfect. Julian's little brother is now 9 years old (he's the one climbing up the rock wearing the red hat) and is just like his brother: uncontrollable, loud, and hates photographers.







I saw Gerrard, who is still doing creative things with the theatre group, although he no longer had anything to do with this summer's production. (There apparently were "artistic differences" with the other director, which I'll describe in a minute.) I gave him an early photo of Neptune, which he proudly showed all the kids. After a brief question and answer session about spacecraft, the planets, and travel time, the camp proclaimed me Guest of Honor.







I went hiking and rock climbing with the kids (ropes and all; Aude has proof that I participated still in her camera), and since Gerrard left early to oversee another production, I got to sleep in his room ("Gee, that's funny! This bed only accommodates one person!") which looks out on the Swiss Alps and the tiny villages below it. Really beautiful!







Their production that night, although impressive to me, was one that none of the kids or the staff were really proud of. It started out as a joint production between AFAT and some locals who have had no previous acting experience. After two months of isolated rehearsals, a common rehearsal revealed that the kids showed up the villagers; they had great stage presence, could project well, had memorized their lines, etc. The local villagers got intimidated and demanded that the kids' role be reduced, and after much arguing that's what finally occurred. The story was about this 200-year-old hotel, and a look back at all the times and people it had experienced. The hotel in question was the backdrop, and the street in front of it (they closed it off) was the stage. It looked good; the show made ample use of horses, carts, livestock (how they taught the cattle their cues I'll never know), but since I couldn't understand what was being said I suppose I'm not the best judge.



The villagers in the audience knew nothing of the back-stage quarrels; they basked in the spirit of a show that they knew was about them, their town, their lives. After the show all the villagers gathered on the street, drank in a festive manner, and sang Swiss folk songs all night long. It's the stuff TV movies are made of.





The week I spent in Germany wasn't too bad, either. I was at The European Space Agency working on a joint ESA-NASA project called Ulysses, which will send back scientific information about the magnetic poles of the sun. (Until I worked on this project, I didn't know the sun *had* poles, either!) It was very busy and we uncovered a lot of problems before they became problems. I did nothing but work and sleep for a week. I witnessed the launch of the Hipparcos spacecraft and its failure to achieve proper orbit two days later. Panic everywhere. It was great. They finally figured out how to salvage at least two weeks' worth of data before its orbit decays. By the time you read this letter it will have burned up in the atmosphere.



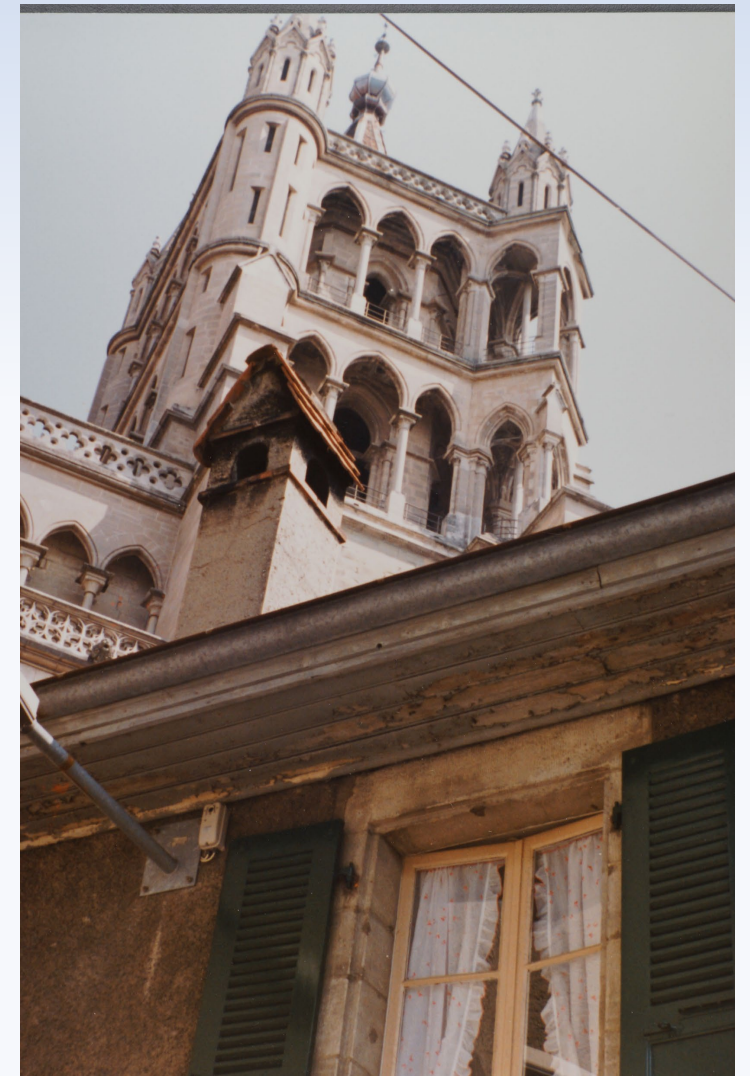




Half the fun of the German experience was talking to all the residents about the new Common Market that's supposed to take effect in 1992. They see it as a farce; unifying the continent (with the exception of Switzerland, who will not be participating) would mean those in England would have to drive on the right side of the road, a speed limit would have to be imposed on the Autobahns (which are really fun to drive by the way), and the German stores will have to stock English beer! No way, in their opinion!



And talk about the world's worst decision...I had only two opportunities to do sightseeing. The first was a six-hour break to go visit Heidelberg, which I did. The second was a free evening in which I contemplated visiting the Berlin Wall and Checkpoint Charlie, but instead decided I was too tired, and I should get some sleep. "I'll see it on my next trip to Germany," I said to myself. "The wall will always be there!"





Anyway, after a job well done and a week's worth of wearing a tie, I flew to Detroit (JPL picked up the tab, since it was a natural stop-over) to visit the Peace Child equivalent of what A Show of Hands did for AFAT in '85: a reciprocal tour. (Don't ask me why anyone would show people from a beautiful country like Latvia a dirty American city like Detroit! Yecch!) Almost the same kids were reunited; except for 3 Americans who couldn't make it and one Latvian who committed suicide two weeks before the tour. They were here for a month, and I stopped by for three days roughly in the middle of their stay, when the finishing touches of their new show were being worked on. Boy, what a welcome I got!! (The following week they were scheduled to tour York, PA, Chicago, and a few other cities which I've already forgotten.)





I'll skip over how some of those kids have changed, since your interest in them is probably lower. Suffice it to say that they cried when they met each other again, and the trip so far was an emotional roller coaster for everyone. When they were happy they were really happy, when they were upset they were really upset; there was no in-between. It's kind of like the normal oscillations of group interactions, except they were all compressed into a short time, resulting in short times between emotional extremes. I had my slide show shipped over to the camp and for the first time in a year they got to see the story I brought home about their experiences together.



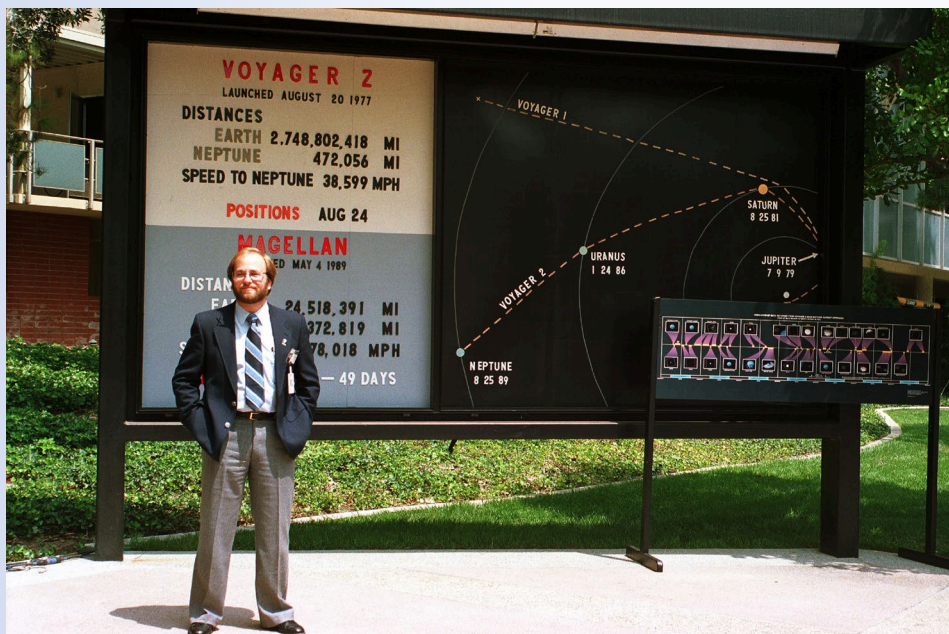


After it was over, they were really crying. It was horrible! (I guess it means I told the story well!) I also got a chance to see the documentary the Soviets were making of the same trip using WWII 16mm equipment – the whole show looked 20 years old. Talk about a Twilight Zone experience! When it came time to leave I presented them each with an early photo of Neptune, and re-emphasized last year's theme that we share all the stars and planets.

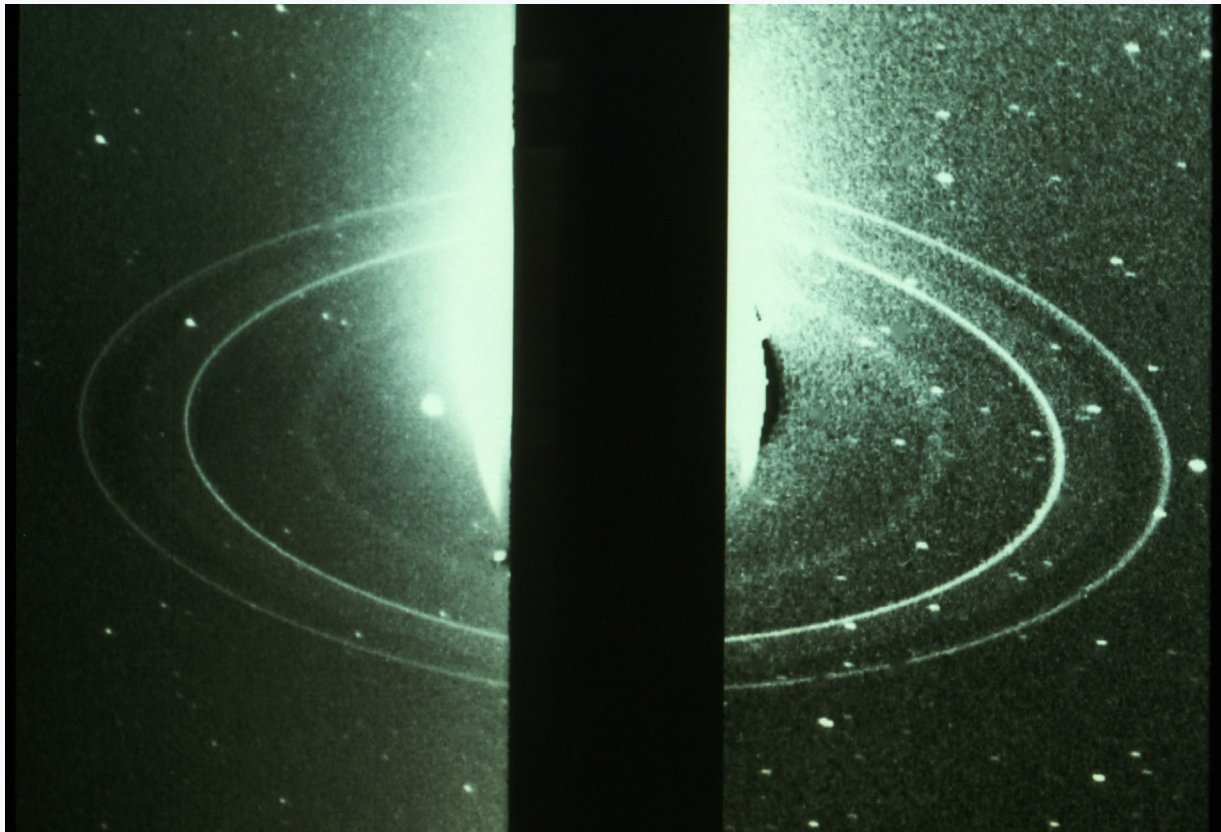
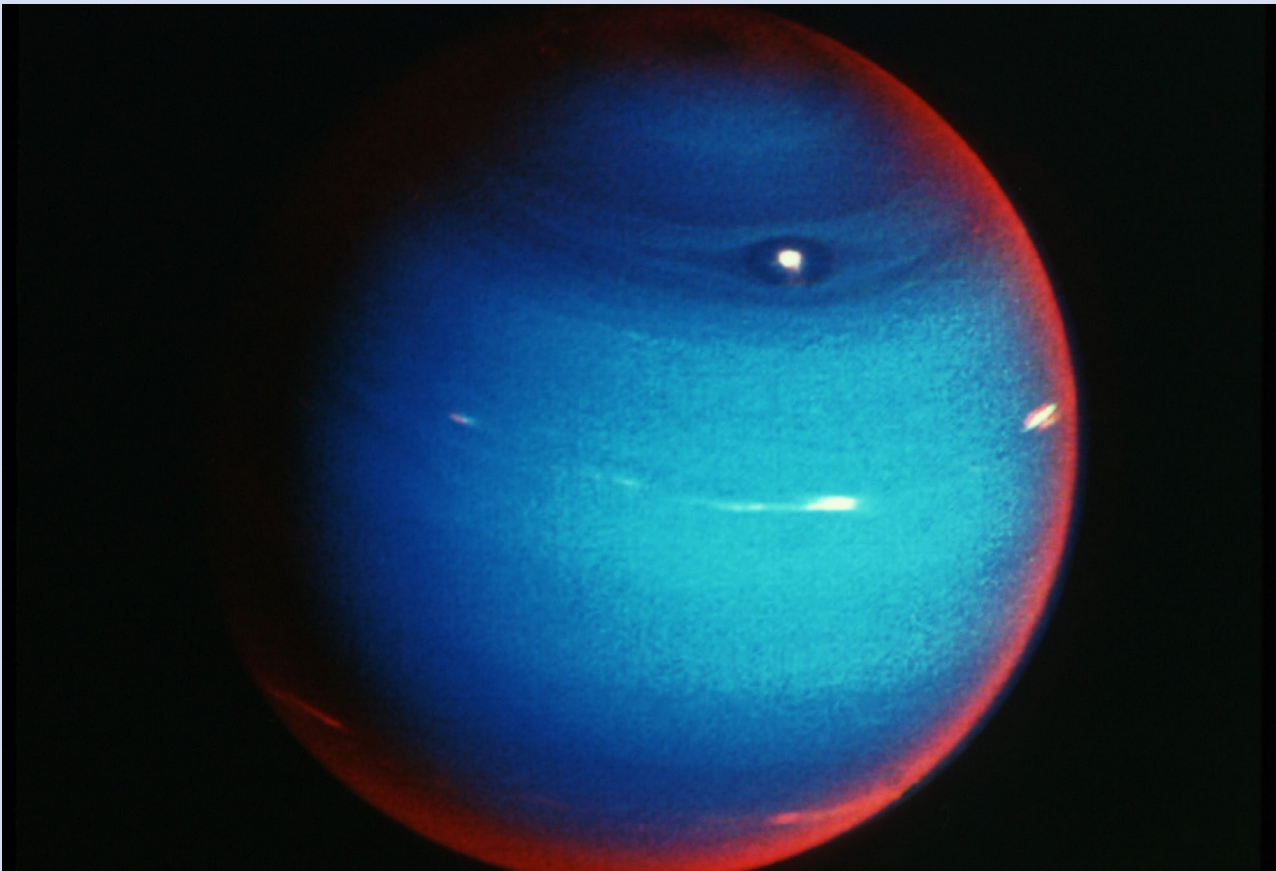




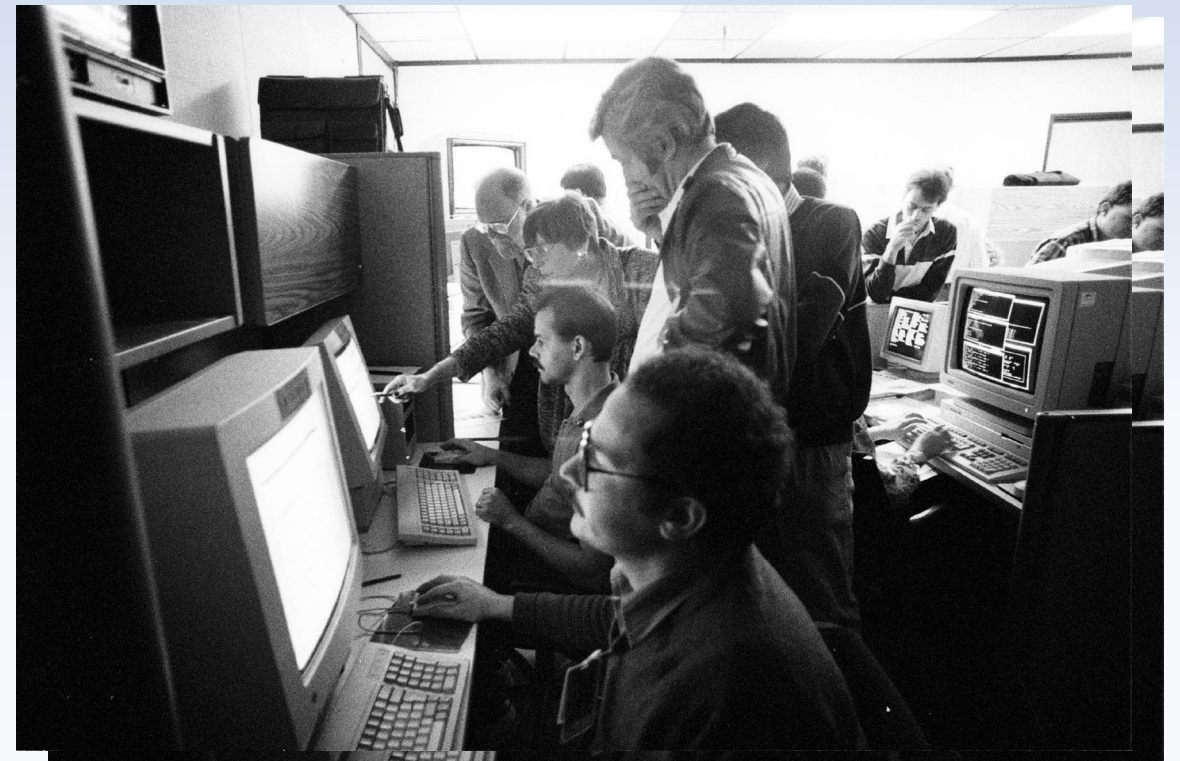
Then it was back to JPL where all the fun was. The Neptune encounter was to be Voyager's last major planetary flyby, and the press descended upon the lab from the world over. I was working in the TV studio, from where the hourly Voyager Updates were being broadcast. I would call up all the graphs the Principal Investigators would ask for on the computer, and I was also in charge of upgrading certain large-screen capabilities for Vice President Dan Quayle's visit.











The Sunday after closest approach Dr. Carl Sagan and Sidney Poiter were doing a special for the Turner Broadcasting channel in Building 230. Immediately afterward the Planetary Society (of which Uncle Carl is president) threw a 'Goodbye Voyager' party in the courtyard. Carl Sagan invited his favorite rock musician, Chuck Barry, to play, and he sang such hits as 'Voyager Be Good', etc. This guy hasn't aged in 20 years, only knows three chords and can do the duck walk (at least he's been practicing the duck walk). If you were watching CNN (they had the most responsible and thorough news coverage of any of the worldwide press here) you would have seen Carl Sagan "get down" (his words) during the party, it was a sight you wouldn't expect to see in 'billions and billions' of years.



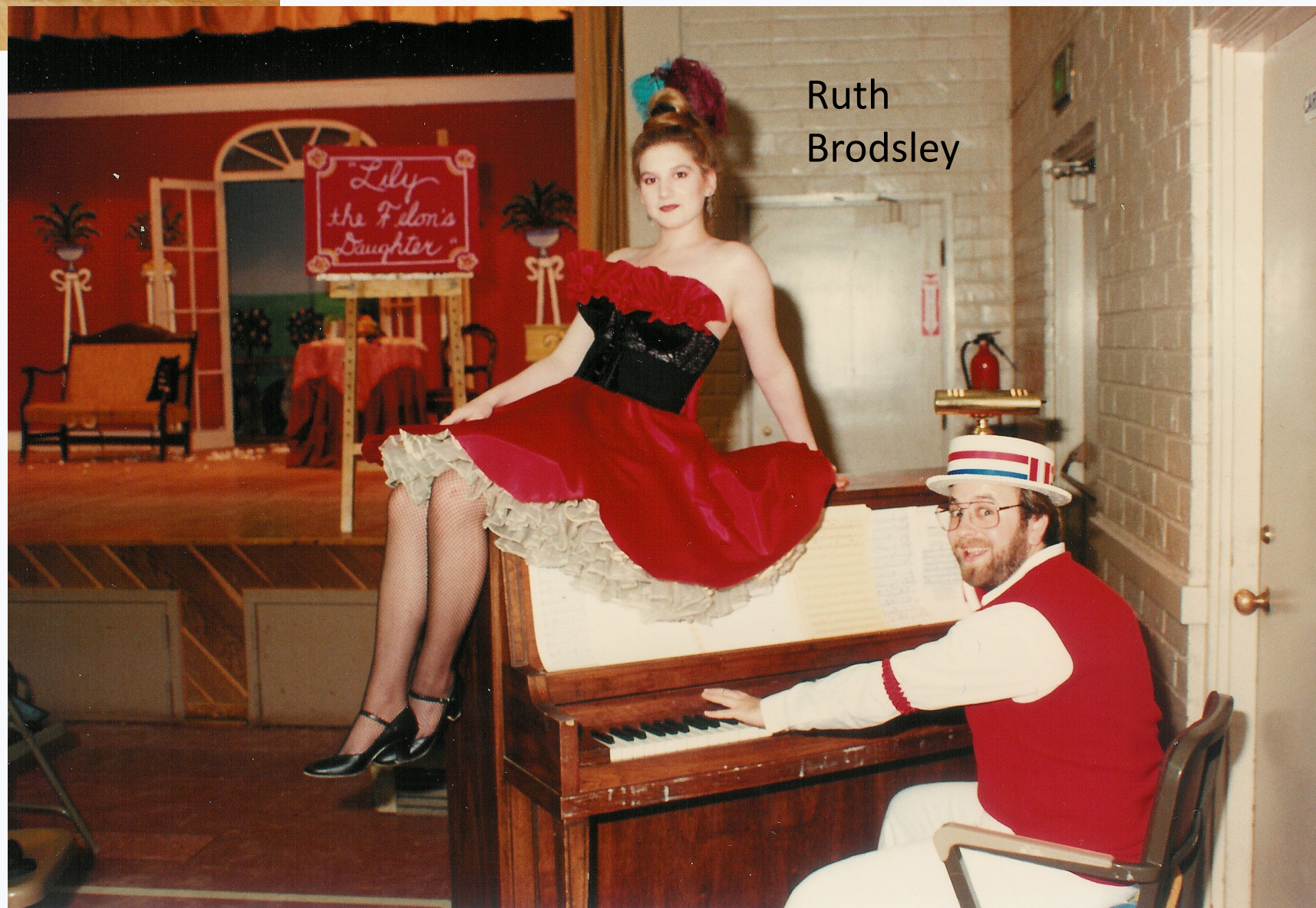
By this time I had a chance to sleep. The keys to my new townhouse arrived when I was in Switzerland; already a month had passed and I still hadn't begun to move in. I'm in the process of that now; but I've enclosed some photos of what it looked like beforehand. It's a two-bedroom, and every room is on its own level. The larger bedroom will be converted into a laboratory, accommodating music, computers, electronics, and a darkroom. Hope I have room to walk!







All this will have to wait, of course, until Judy Greening's latest theatre production is complete; for I have agreed to play piano for a melodrama she's directing for the Studio City Park Players. Complicating matters is the fact that I don't even have a piano to practice on. No time, no time...



Ruth  
Brodsley



Well, I assume you've already put down this letter and started looking through the pictures. As for me, my washing machine is developing violent oscillations and is starting to walk across the floor. I'd better go.

See ya!

Gary Friedman (you knew that)  
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Sepulveda, CA 91343  
(818) 894-0206

P.S. - The phone is in General Telephone territory, so you may have to try 5 or six times before you get through.

