



TRAVELS WITH MARILYN

San Juan's famed El Morro fortress

Finding antique treasures in Puerto Rico

By EVELINA EMMI RECTOR

Several years ago, Locust Valley interior designer, Marilyn Rose, shared a fabulous trip to Egypt with her dearest friend, Sarah Harkness. That work/play journey led to a series of articles about Marilyn's subsequent excursions. Recently, Sarah was able to join Marilyn for a "reunion tour" to Puerto Rico.

Puerto Rico has enough to please almost any tourist and that includes Marilyn Rose. Ms. Rose's expeditions don't involve tattered maps, shovels, or diving equipment - she seeks her treasures in antique shops and auctions.

Marilyn and Sarah's spacious room at The San Juan Grand Beach Resort and Casino included a cozy patio, just a few steps from both the pool and the beach.

Antique hunting in Old San Juan is a trip back through time,

into a place of intimacy and charm. Sarah and Marilyn were enchanted by vibrant pastel buildings trimmed in white, massive stucco walls with elegant wrought iron gates that allowed glimpses of the gardens within, and huge potted plants grouped on richly colored tile, providing cascades of flowers.

Sidewalk cafes, fine shops, and art galleries are scattered about Old San Juan.

Most interesting to Ms. Rose, of course, were the treasure filled antique shops. The first piece to catch Marilyn's eye was at a shop called Xian Imports. It was a magnificent Nineteenth Century stringed instrument made of rosewood, called a biwa.

Next was a collection of delicately designed Rose Medallion porcelain china, a special passion of Ms. Rose's who playfully claims that the design was named after her. Sarah pointed out a



Marilyn Rose at her shop in Locust Valley

lovely chrysanthemum pattern produced during the Nineteenth Century at the Canton Royal Porcelain factory. The mother of the shop's owner was friendly and informative. She explained that the primarily yellow design was strictly for the use of the Emperor of China (not even his family members were permitted

to use it). They also saw a lovely soft jade green pattern created for the Emperor's cabinet and other members of the aristocracy.

The next shop, El Alcazar, was housed in three separate locations, a quaint way to handle a growing business. The first building offered an outstanding collection of religious art. Most impressive was a large bas-relief Sacred Heart plaque, fashioned in rough-hewn wood and painted in a primitive style. Tucked in a corner, surrounded by religious art, was a striking Nineteenth Century mahogany armchair with ormolu, crafted in Russia.

The second location of the shop was presided over by a "guard cat" that greeted Sarah and Marilyn at the door. "Between the cat and the heat, doesn't this remind you of the auctions in Egypt?" asked Marilyn. Sarah nodded in assent, but was already mesmerized by a Seventeenth Century refectory table. Made from chestnut wood, the fifteen-foot long table had originally served in a monastery north of Barcelona, Spain. There was also a striking Art Deco armoire of Puerto Rican craftsmanship. The most spectacular piece in the shop, however, was an intricately carved Nineteenth Century Portuguese marriage bed.

The shop-to-shop parade ended at the third location, a building painted bright lavender, trimmed in white. The two highlights of this shop were a set of cane back chairs and a pair of absolutely stunning wrought iron candelabra from an altar in Spain, all Eighteenth Century pieces.

After a full day of antique hunting, Sarah and Marilyn were eager to get back to their hotel. On the drive back, there were two views that left a deep

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The antique district in old San Juan



Ms. Rose with an antique



Ms. Rose in native district