

BIOGRAPHY

Anne-Marie Simons



Always a bit of a gypsy, I left my native Holland at age 18 “to see the world.” Went to study French in Paris, spent a few years in Brussels working for an international organization, then moved to the United States where the first year was spent reconnoitering the east and west coasts, cross Canada by train, and see a good part of Mexico as well. The 1960s were an ideal time for the curious young woman who likes to travel, and

San Francisco seemed the ideal place to get off the train, so to speak, and check out the movements of the day: Free Speech and People’s Park in Berkeley, primal screaming, transcendental meditation, Joan Baez, Golden Gate Park sit-ins and other delights. Jobs were easy to find; you worked until you could afford to travel again and when the money ran out you took another job. Life was simple, or so it seemed, but life also has a way of curtailing one’s ambitions to manageable bites, and bringing dreamers down to earth where things like marriage, divorce, moving away and starting over again cross one’s path. After 16 years, the exciting, joyful, exuberant life in San Francisco in the sixties and seventies was over, to make way for a new life in Washington, DC.

In my reincarnation of divorcée, the roaming instinct made a timid comeback and I took a Journalism degree in hopes of “getting out there” again while earning a living at the same time. A job with an international news magazine which also owned a car magazine that covered Formula One races was the answer to my prayers. As a young girl I had caught the sports car bug from my father who once won the week-long Franco-Dutch Tulip Rally in his category with a souped-up Volkswagen. And as a teenager I had seen a number of Formula One races in Europe, had felt the roar of the engines in the pit of my stomach, and became a fan for life. I soon had my name on the magazine’s masthead and my days of reporting news as well as races could not have been happier -- until the main magazine folded, taking the car magazine with it.

Another phase began. Freelance writing, office jobs for steady income, a renewed and growing interest in art, in nature, in music – all abundantly present in and around Washington and never before properly enjoyed. A sense of quiet contentment settled over me but then Mr. Right knocked on my door. A soul mate and kindred spirit, Oscar was open to taking early retirement and hitting the road with me. In 1998 we started scouting for a desirable place for our upcoming retirement and agreed on France for a tryout.

And there, the Europe that had seemed so small and restrictive in my youth, when the open American spaces had felt so much better suited to my nature, now felt snug and secure, safe and worry-free, slow and leisurely. Some of us just need time to recognize a good thing when they see it.