

*A curious widow explores cultures around the world. How do others solve life's basic problems: courtship, raising kids, caring for the helpless? She is eager to learn.*

## **The Wandering Widow: A curious woman takes on the world**

By Andrea Granahan

**Order the book from the publisher BookLocker.com**

**<https://www.booklocker.com/p/books/11971.html?s=pdf>**

**or from your favorite neighborhood  
or online bookstore.**

# THE WANDERING WIDOW

*a curious woman takes on  
the world*

ANDREA GRANAHAAN

Copyright © 2021 Andrea Granahan

ISBN: 978-1-64719-791-9

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or permitted in any form by any means, electronic, mechanical, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the author who maintains all rights.

Published by Joy Woods Press, P.O. Box 25, Bodega, CA 94922

Printed on acid-free paper.

First Edition

Granahan10@gmail.com

WanderingwithAndrea.com

***Other books by Andrea Granahan***

**It's Greek to Me**

**The Man with the Portable Love Room and  
Other Stray Thoughts**

**Backstories from the West Edge**

**Loving David**

# Contents

<b>Prologue .....</b>	<b>xiii</b>
<b>Section 1. Africa .....</b>	<b>1</b>
Sawubona Soweto .....	3
Peter and the Sand Elephant .....	7
South African Males .....	12
Tales from an African Guide .....	17
The Night of the Lions .....	22
Mozambique .....	24
Morangulo.....	28
A Day in Maxixi .....	30
Tree Schools .....	33
Best Job in Africa .....	35
<b>Section 2: Bali.....</b>	<b>37</b>
Kuta Cowboys.....	38
At Theodora's Losman .....	42
Wayans and Monkeys Everywhere.....	45
The Golden Girls Explore.....	49
The Mother Temple .....	53
To the Beach & Love and Marriage in Bali.....	55
Blind Date .....	58
Departure .....	61

<b>Section 3: Italy</b>	<b>63</b>
When the Unspeakable Happens	63
Angels Made Me Do It	67
Switzerland for Lunch	69
Bellagio	71
The Fat Cats of Vernazza	73
Unprepared for Beauty	76
Alone in Venice	79
Night Train to Naples	83
The Old Man and the Museum	85
The First Days of Pompeii	87
A Castle in Tuscany – With the Gonfolieres	90
Tuscan Towers of San Gimignano	93
Umbria	96
Il Professore	100
When in Rome, Do as the Catholics Do	104
Intimidation vs the Unspeakable	107
Little Neros and Caligulas	110
An Evening to Remember in Venice with a Surprise Ending	113
<b>Section 4: Road Trips</b>	<b>115</b>
Are We There Yet?	115
The Hills of Alabama and the Importance of Corn Flakes	116
Keys to Fun and Chickens	120
Alligators Everywhere	129

*The Wandering Widow*

The Jeweled Clasps of the Pearl Necklace.....	132
A Lucy and Ethel Road Trip Moment .....	137
Anasazi Country .....	139
East to the West .....	141
Mariachis and Radar .....	147
Harry Behind the Wheel .....	150
Safari to Yellowstone.....	152
Stump Knockers and Humpy Suckers on the Choctawhatchee ...	158
<b>Section 5: The Auld Sod .....</b>	<b>161</b>
Ireland .....	161
A Rainy Day in Ennis .....	162
Yeats and Shamrocks.....	165
Jimmy Stewart with Bagpipes .....	169
The King of the Buskers and the Prehistoric Museum .....	172
Limericks in Limerick .....	175
Missions Accomplished.....	179
<b>Section 6: London and Paris (and Quebec!).....</b>	<b>181</b>
The Diva and the Starlet .....	181
The Dark Side of London .....	184
A Love Story Found in a London Pub.....	186
How They Gonna Keep Me Down on the Farm After I've Seen Paree?.....	191
Naked Yoga .....	195
The Drunkard and the Angels.....	197

Quebec City – Europe Without the Euro .....	199
Surviving the Ice Hotel .....	203
<b>Section 7: Catalonia and Spain .....</b>	<b>207</b>
Barcelona – Not Spain, Catalonia! .....	208
I Looked Good on the Radio .....	212
The Gates of Hell .....	217
Shade and a Place to Sit .....	221
The Blabla Car .....	224
How I Went to Spain and Learned to Love Polka Dots .....	227
At Concha’s .....	231
Law and Order Istanbul Style .....	238
Cairo .....	242
Saqqara and Egyptian Drivers ( <i>worst in the world!</i> ) .....	247
An Afternoon in Aswan .....	249
Some Reflections on Piety vs. Reverence .....	252
On the Nile .....	254
Giza and Bedouins .....	257
Love and Marriage Egyptian Style .....	260
A Coffee Break in Egypt .....	262
Just A-Goin’ Over Jordan .....	265
The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan .....	268
Maybe the Jerk is You This Time .....	270
Switzerland of the Middle East .....	272
Wadi Rum – Me and Lawrence of Arabia .....	276



*The Wandering Widow*

The Unexpected Roman Army and the Earring Guy .....	281
Ramadan at the Dead Sea .....	284
Where Bible Stories were Born .....	286
Are Arranged Marriages Doomed?.....	288
<b>Section 9: South of the Border .....</b>	<b>289</b>
Off to Mexico in a Marshmallow.....	289
Noisy Camping .....	291
Tequila and the Stray Horses .....	293
Las Niñas .....	295
A Bribe and a Pickpocket .....	297
The Coconut Beach.....	299
The Sticks and the Carrot.....	302
Oaxaca .....	307
Bulls and Wedding Dresses .....	309
The Unwanted Wonderful Tour.....	311
<b>Section 10: Peru, Land of Coca and Condors .....</b>	<b>313</b>
El Estomago del Burro ( <i>The Donkey's Belly</i> ) .....	314
When Poop Was Gold.....	316
Sand Sledding and Grave Robbing .....	318
Saroche Creeps In – How High Can You Get?.....	321
Lost Valley of the Incas .....	323
Cusco and Machu Picchu - Where Incas Still Rule .....	327
A Night on Lake Titicaca.....	332
The People of the Floating Islands.....	339

In the Amazon Rainforest .....	343
<b>Section 11: Chile, Uruguay, Argentina, Belize .....</b>	<b>347</b>
Neruda and the German Pirate .....	348
Me and Julio.....	357
Domesticating the Demon - Rounding the Horn.....	360
The End of the World– Tierra del Fuego .....	364
Outlaw Saints and Penguins.....	366
Uruguay, Argentina and the Mighty Rio de la Plata.....	369
Dog Walkers and Crazy Graves.....	374
Gauchos.....	376
Tango .....	377
Belize and the Lucky Mugging.....	379
Where Pirates Ruled .....	383
<b>Prologue Home Sweet Home.....</b>	<b>385</b>

# *Prologue*

When you find yourself completely alone after decades of sharing a life with a mate, raising children, running a business now sold, your jobs now complete, what do you do with yourself?

Even as I raised my family, I had worked as a journalist and published a newspaper. I knew how to write and I loved to travel. I was always a curious person and after my two year sojourn in rural Greece, I became even more curious. How did other cultures solve basic human problems such as earning a living, finding a mate, raising and educating children, healing the ill, caring for the helpless? What did other cultures honor on a daily basis, even hold sacred?

When I was widowed, I discovered many things about myself. After the shock and sorrow, along with bleak loneliness, there was another new sensation. It took me a while to realize what it was.

Freedom.

Married as a teenager, becoming a mother, attaining an education, owning a business, freedom from responsibility was such a novel sensation, it shocked me.

I had sold the newspaper that had claimed so many hours and years of my life. My time as a caregiver was over. My children were all independent. I had a small income from a rental. With care, I could survive as a freelance travel writer.

The emptiness which I felt at first as a widow I now saw had become a blank slate. I wanted, no, needed, to fill it and for the first time, I consciously realized it was a matter of choice.

I chose the world.



# The Fat Cats of Vernazza

The sun was bright in the small harbor, but the small colorfully painted boats were all on the beach because the seas were still high from a windstorm. The rulers of the village of Vernazza didn't mind. There were five of them asleep in a heap on a canvas boat cover. One, a tabby, woke, stretched, and hopped off the boat to stroll to the fish shop. She deigned to stop and let me pet her on the way.

The fat cats of Vernazza have become famous. They even sell signs there that say "Beware of the Cat" in Italian in all the shops.

The cats were everywhere. They were all well fed and healthy. Some people had household cats, but the vast majority belonged to everyone.

I asked Rosa, the lady who had rented me my studio apartment. "Are there kittens?"

"Si, she answered. "Two litters, one by the cemetery, one at the tower."

The tower was named The Tower of the Screaming Voice. In the bad old days the fellow with the loudest voice was made lookout and lived at the tower watching for pirates so he could warn the villagers.

I asked Pietro at the fish market about sick cats.

"There is an animal doctor in the next village," he told me.

There were no "scaredy cats", no mangy strays. They were all friendly and all pampered. When the people found out I was photographing their beloved cats, they'd pull me off the street into their homes to meet their personal cats. Each restaurant or cafe had its own group of cats. The cats tolerated the local dogs, who treated their feline bosses with great respect. Visiting dogs quickly learned to do the same.

Vernazza is one of the five villages that make up the Cinque Terre on the Italian Riviera. There are no highways linking them. Each is nestled in an impossibly steep canyon by the sea. They were tucked into their inaccessible locations to avoid the pirates that terrorized the Mediterranean in medieval times. The Cinque Terre, unlike nearby ritzy Portofino and San Remo, is a down-to-earth place. Trains tunnel through the mountains to reach the villages, and some challenging hiking trails link them. In good weather small ferry boats also travel back and forth. The villages were so picturesque I had to thank the pirates for their influence on architecture.

To get to my room I had to climb seven stories from the harbor. There is only one street that is not a flight of stairs in the entire village, and it is on a steep hill. Some streets are not



only stairs but tunnels that wind through the mountains. I watched the locals haul their groceries and children up and down as they got their aerobic and strength exercises. I wondered how (and why) the older folks did it.

There is constant construction and repair work going on - old villages need a lot of maintenance. The workers used small barrow cement mixers and hoisted their concrete up with flexible rubber buckets and clever slings. The man working on the roof next door to me always sang opera as he worked. His black and white cat kept him company and sometimes “sang” with him or objected to his arias; it was hard to tell.

The hills around the town are so steep even donkeys can’t handle them, and a tiny monorail has been built to haul down the grapes

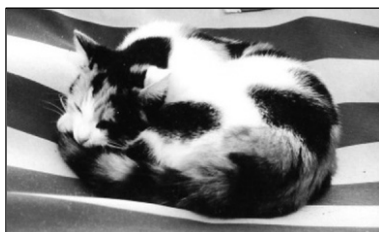
## *The Wandering Widow*

from the mountain climber-built terraces. I watched the driver take off one morning singing as he climbed, the soles of his shoes facing the sky. His cat refused to accompany him but waited at the piazza below.

The villagers make a wine, *sciachetra*, only found in Vernazza, not even in neighboring villages. At sunset I'd go to a cafe by the sea that had yellow umbrellas to enjoy a glass of it as I watched the sun go down and the cafe patrons take on a glow from the light and the bright umbrellas (and maybe the *sciachetra*). Cats would curl up among the patrons, purring, or sun themselves on the beach.

On Friday evening the church which also served as a breakwater for the harbor, was tolling its bells. In storms waves came through its windows. When the bells stopped, grandmothers and mothers streamed out of it and sat on the benches outside or joined their men at the cafes while the children played tag in the small piazza. The golden light settled over everyone. Conversation and children's laughter filled the harbor. The sea was finally calm.

And I realized why no one minded the difficulties of getting around Vernazza. Golden moments like that were worth any number of stairs. The calico at my feet resettled herself more comfortably and purred as she agreed.







# Keys to Fun and Chickens

I talked Mom into a mother-daughter road trip to Key West, a place I always wanted to see – the USA tropics. We were supposed to meet at the Tampa airport.

Somewhere on the East coast there was snowstorm although there was no snow in San Francisco, where I started from, Tampa or in St. Louis where I was to change planes. Nevertheless, I was told we would be delayed in California by several hours. It was pre-cell phone days. I tried calling Mom at her home before she set off for Tampa, but she was gone.

Once on board I learned there would be no flight from St. Louis to Tampa because we'd be arriving so late the airport would be closed there. I was assured the airline would have arranged a hotel room for me. That was a big fat lie. At 11 p.m. I tried calling hotels from the airport – all were full and the personnel just laughed at me. I also tried to call Mom again at our Tampa hotel, but I was told they did not put through calls that late at night.

The airport in St. Louis wants to discourage homeless people, like passengers abandoned by their airlines, from sleeping there. All the seats are hard plastic with built in armrests. They also play very loud heavy metal music all night, even in the restrooms. It was a very uncomfortable night and in the morning after catching a short nap with my head resting on my roll-on suitcase, I discovered one of my favorite earrings had fallen off somewhere, never to be found, and I was awfully grouchy for the short flight to Tampa

I managed to call Mom just before we left. The hotel had never delivered my messages to her, so she was relieved to hear from me and was cheerfully waiting for me at the airport with a cooler packed with lunch. We decided to head for the first part of the Everglades – the part they call 10,000 islands. We got there just in time to book a

sunset cruise, so not stopping to book a room or eat dinner, we hopped on board.

That part of the Everglades is made up of mangrove islands. The remarkable trees send out floating seeds that have already germinated. The traveling seeds send down roots surviving salt water and wave action. Once its roots get to the sandy bottom the tree flourishes and traps sand, eventually forming forested islands of tangled roots, catching more floating seeds so the islands grow. Only birds, fish and floating creatures can use the islands. There is no solid land to stand on.

Our boat was accompanied by a school of dolphins that played in the bow wave as the beautiful sunset lit up a world of graceful egrets, lovely islands and a flat calm sea. Mom and I smiled at each other while she tried to get photos of the dolphins in action.

Once back on land, we were famished and went to the only restaurant in the small port to eat dinner.

We perused the menu. There were very few items listed.

“Fried alligator, frog legs and conch?”

“Yes, ma’am. That’s the house special,” the waitress said.

We asked the waitress about lodgings when she delivered our novel meal. “Ain’t none here, ma’am. You have to head east or north,” she told my mother.

Mom and I headed east, confident we’d find a motel along the way.

It was dark and the two-lane highway had no lights. We were in a canyon of impenetrable bushes as we drove. I was very, very tired because of my night in the hospitable St. Louis airport. An hour passed and there was not one sign of life. A few times we saw a panther crossing sign and hopefully looked, but there are just a handful of the critters left, so no luck. I began getting sleepy behind the wheel by the second hour of darkness with not even a wide spot to pull over and nap.

“Mom, I don’t care what kind of place it is, I have got to sleep so the first place with a bed, we’ll stop,” I told her.

She agreed. A couple hours later I saw Motel on a neon sign. The M had burnt out so it actually read “otel”. Mom was uneasy. There were no cars there. We went into the office where a polite young Seminole man told us the motel belonged to the reservation and he could only take cash, not credit cards. A room was forty dollars.

“Oh, we’ll have to keep driving,” Mom said quickly, but I hauled out two twenties to her chagrin.

The room was very simple but clean. The old iron bedstead held a freshly laundered hand-made quilt. A simple outdoorsy print hung on the wall. There was no air conditioning, but the night air was pleasant. The bathroom was old but spotless.

I unpacked pajamas and told Mom “I can’t wait to shower off airplane and airports.”

“You sure you want to do that?” she asked.

“Unless you want to shower first.”

“No!” she said sharply.

I took a long time showering and the hot water lasted. I came out and found Mom was in her nightgown and that she had propped a chair under the doorknob and stacked all our luggage against the door.

“What’s this about?” I asked puzzled.

“Didn’t you ever see Psycho?” she asked, and I burst out laughing.

“No, I didn’t. So many of my friends were afraid to shower for months I had no interest in seeing a movie that would do that to me. But Mom, that movie was like forty plus years ago.”

“Doesn’t matter – motel in the middle of nowhere, a young man at the counter...”

“A very nice young Indian man,” I said as I crawled into bed. I didn’t point out to Mom that while she had efficiently barricaded the door, the window in the room was wide open with just a screen and a curtain between us and Anthony Perkins if he was lurking outside.

In the morning I saw the motel had filled up. We packed up and drove off in search of breakfast. Just fifteen minutes down the road we reached a major intersection with Highway 1, the route to the Keys.

“You see, if we had just kept driving we could have stayed at one of these nice places,” Mom admonished gesturing towards the bland roadside hotels, motels and restaurants that Henry Miller had called “air conditioned nightmares”. I had preferred our simple but clean and comfortable Native American lodging. Well, comfortable for me, not Mom, who it turned out had nervously lay awake much of the night, wary of Anthony Perkins and his knife.

We began the drive to Key West where I had made reservations at a youth hostel. Mom and I had a small budget, and in addition, I had discovered hostels were great for women traveling alone because of the security. I explained that to Mom who still had misgivings.

Key Largo was a big disappointment. I expected something isolated like in the old Bogart movie, but it was covered with air-conditioned nightmares instead. But after that the drive was spectacular. The highway became a causeway over the sea, a brilliant turquoise sea. We saw sections of the old railroad built by Flagler a century before and the abandoned highway that got eaten by hurricanes many decades before. I labelled then “ghost bridges” Some sections were so long I wondered why they hadn’t become party venues for boaters. Mom and I discussed how a fund-raiser might be organized on the longest ghost bridge about seven miles long. As we crossed keys, I watched diligently for a sight of the miniature Key West deer that are supposed to inhabit the archipelago. I never did see one.

Finally, we reached Key West. I saw a large K-Mart looming ahead of us.

“Oh, God, Mom. I think we are thirty years too late.”

But on the Caribbean side of the island (one side is Gulf of Mexico, the other the Caribbean Sea, locals told us) we got into the old town. Wary of falling coconuts under the wind tossed palms we located the hostel. To my dismay it appeared it was an old, neglected looking motel with a number of older men in the courtyard drinking cans of something in paper bags.

“I can’t have my mother stay here,” I thought, and hoped that without reservations we could find a hotel room. Then the cheerful woman at the desk pointed out a newer building next to the motel. “That’s the women’s dorms,” she told us.

We went to check it out and as Mom saw the security rules posted, she breathed a sigh of relief. In the four-bed dorm we found two compatible roommates. Both were older women. One was moaning as she lay in bed. It turned out she had been a passenger on an Amtrak train that had derailed the day before. We had heard about the wreck on the car radio. The Amtrak people had simply handed her a bottle of painkillers and hired a taxi to take her to Key West, her destination.

Mom promptly started nursing her and finally told her she was in shock and had better go to the hospital and get in touch with an attorney as well as a doctor. We talked to the woman running the hostel and she sent for an ambulance. That left us with Peggy, a woman in her sixties who was very healthy. She told us she was from Mississippi and had recently buried her mother after nursing her for several years, and decided on a vacation.

We strolled into town, bought trolley passes and settled ourselves into laid back tropical life. One of the first things that caught our attention were the chickens. They were everywhere and didn’t seem to belong to anyone. There was horrific traffic and it seemed no one stopped for pedestrians, but whenever a chicken hopped off a curb all vehicles came to a dead stop until it was safely across. We learned

to watch the hens when we wanted to cross ourselves and docilely followed them.

We found a place with a patio for lunch and the chickens were busy in the patio, eating crumbs although once in a while a waitperson would shoo them. We went back to the hostel so Mom could rest a bit before we went out for a sundowner at Mallory Square.

As soon as Mom sat in the courtyard at the hostel a gentleman handed her a paper bag holding a cold can of beer.

“Thought you and your daughter might like one,” he said as he handed me one, too. “Not supposed to have alcohol in a youth hostel, but us grown-ups bend the rules a little,” he grinned.

Mom grinned right back and started a conversation. He was there to fish and it turned out a whole group of elderly anglers had met there. Mom, an avid angler all her life, began describing some of methods she used. She became the center of attention. Word spread about her knowledge and more men came and offered us another cloaked beer. Finally, Mom begged off to take a quick nap to their disappointment.

Later, Mom, a petite blonde, dressed for the sunset in a cute little outfit she had made herself topped with a straw hat. We were early and found a terraced bar overlooking the action. We ordered an umbrella topped rum drink and sat back to watch a circus unfold.

A steel drum band was playing in the distance, then some bagpipers began marching around. One man was juggling three active chainsaws, another flaming batons. Someone was doing magic tricks while costumed stilt-walkers were prowling the crowd. The act that captured our interest was a man with trained domestic cats who performed all sorts of charming tricks. Since getting an ordinary cat to come when you call it is not easy, Mom and I were very impressed.

In the middle of all the colorful chaos a wedding was happening right between the bagpipers and chainsaw juggler. The photographer was taking pictures of the happy couple using the sea as a backdrop. Their

album would show a peaceful setting, not the increasing madness around them. Fire dancers came to perform dangerously, various bands set up to compete with the steel drums and bagpipes.

“I have got to see those cats,” announced Mom after one of them wheeled another around in a doll baby carriage.



We immersed ourselves in Mallory Square Madness. There were about eight or so of the trained cats quietly sitting along a walkway with a sign and basket asking for donations. The cats were so mellow they looked high and I sneakily wondered if the trainer had fed them some special catnip, but we donated since we had been so happily entertained. We stroked the comfortable felines and earned purrs as a reward.

Then Mom found a man making hats from what looked like palm frond strips. Mom was immediately ecstatic, saying she had worn one out gardening, and needed a new one. The man agreed to make one to fit her for just \$15 after some bargaining. It was clear he found Mom as charming as the fishermen had. We strolled for an hour and sure enough Mom had her new hat, and some palm roses he had fashioned for her as well. He presented the latter with a bow.

Mom handed me her straw hat and donned her new palm one as we walked into town to watch the action in the growing dark. I was feeling somewhat disappointed in Key West – so much traffic, so many tourists despite it being off season. We walked away from the tourist area to where the working fishing boats were moored, and there we found what I had been looking for, something real. This was blue collar Key West. There was a six-foot wood fence with a knot hole in it. I glanced and saw a patio with tables. We had found the entrance to the Hole in the Wall Bar.

This was not the glam part of town. People wore real worn denim, not designer torn jeans that cost a week's pay check. Mom and I felt at home. Of course, a conversation sprang up about fishing, this time commercial fishing. We had a lot to learn.

We became habitués of The Hole as its regulars called it, for the next few days we were in the Keys.

One night, taking Peggy with us, we went hunting for a place on Big Pine Key a neighbor of Mom's had told her about. It was perfect. The raw wood shack of place was on a dock. There were a few oil-cloth covered picnic tables inside but more outside. It was a balmy evening so we ordered a beer we were given right away and placed our order for the seafood chalked on a blackboard menu then went outside to wait until our number was called.

This was the Florida I had come to see: the sound of a calm sea lapping the shore, a warm night, fresh sea food, palm trees decorating a clear night sky.

Mom and Peggy praised youth hostels. Every day there were events posted on the bulletin board, and people shared food they had cooked. Mom was excited to have discovered older people populated them.

"Mom, it's ex-hippies. They traveled the world in their youth staying in them and they recapture those days by staying in them now."



She asked me to fetch the hostel directory I had brought with me from the car to see if there any more on our planned route home. There weren't to her disappointment.

The next day Mom and I left, glad no coconuts had fallen on her car, and blowing farewell kisses to the chickens who ignored us. We stopped a few times to let them cross the road as we headed north. We agreed, the Keys had been kind to us.



# Jimmy Stewart with Bagpipes

“Turn right,” I said to Marlene, then screamed “Left! Left!”

She abruptly jolted us into the left lane to avoid an oncoming bus. We had discovered it took two people to drive. One to actually drive and the other to keep screaming about hugging the left side of the road as we navigated the narrow roads lined with stone walls and hedges.

“Oh my God, what does that sign mean?” Marlene asked. The ominous sign read “Accident Black Spot”.

“I have no idea but you had better slow down,” I replied.

The traffic signs were interesting. We never figured out “Go Mall” or “Go Mall Tisteach”, nor the ominous “SLAM!”. “Traffic Calming Ahead” was always comforting but “Acute Bends Ahead” or even worse “Dangerous Bends Ahead” were alarming. Bends, we learned, are not a deep-diving ailment, it meant curves. It was nerve-wracking until right on the roadbed there was help; approaching a dangerous bend the word Slow would appear, a little farther on it would turn into Very Slow, and on the bend itself “Slower!” “Hedge Cutting in Progress” meant trouble because Irish roads are so painfully narrow and the hedge cutter would force us into the oncoming lane. The roads are so narrow sometimes there would be a sign “Danger Oncoming Traffic in Center of Road” and we lost a side mirror once to one of those stone walls while coping with that.

My favorite sign would be posted outside a village “This is a Tidy Town” those signs told us. Indeed, they were, hedges and gardens manicured and not a smidgen of litter about. Irish males must be very secure in their masculinity or only women run town councils. I can’t imagine American men agreeing to calling their burgs “tidy towns”. They’d go the tough guy route, “Death Penalty for Littering” or “We shoot litterers” or something close to it instead if they even cared.

We drove into a tidy village – Kinvarra on Galway Bay. Like so many Irish towns it was colorfully painted and decorated with a castle at the edge. We decided to stay and looked up a nearby bed and breakfast listed in the booklet we had been handed with our car rental. I spotted what looked like a grocery store where we could ask directions, but it turned out there was a pub in back. Three jolly middle-aged Scotsmen on vacation were quaffing their Guinness. They loudly welcomed us and insisted on buying us a round.

One of the men was carrying a bagpipe. He was tall and handsome and had big enough lungs to handle the bagpipe. We admired the instrument and he promptly played a couple tunes for us. He introduced himself in his thick brogue as Jimmy Stewart.

“Like the movie star but he didn’t play bagpipes, and,” he winked and laughed, “unlike him I am very much alive!”

We finished our drinks and left to claim our room. That done we went back to Kinvarra to find a cozy restaurant. We had finished our shepherd pies and were just tucking into dessert when the three jolly Scots walked in.

“And here’s me lass without me,” Jimmy Stewart told the others.

“Bon appetite,” I called back.

“Let’s find a pub,” Marlene suggested so we set off and discovered Mary Green’s. Mary herself presided over the taps. She told us she was the fifth generation of Mary Greens to rule over the pub.

“Mother to daughter to granddaughter and so on. Me own daughter Mary works here when she’s not in school,” she shared.

It was a venerable pub and the bent shelves groaned with the weight of the largest selection of potables we had ever seen. Marlene’s favorite beverage was not Guinness, but Colorado’s own Coors Light, a sacrilege on the auld sod I thought.

“I don’t suppose you have Coors Light?” she asked Mary.

*The Wandering Widow*

“And why would you be thinkin’ that?” replied our publican as she fetched out a glass and cold one for Marlene.

Just then in walked our still jolly Scots.

“And here’s me lass again, out on the town without me!” Jimmy Stewart clutched his heart and wailed, “Tramps, tramps ye are, to break a man’s heart so.”

We were still laughing as he launched into a bagpipe concert. Mary Green poured drinks for the trio.

“He’ll be thirsty after all that playing,” she confided in a low tone.

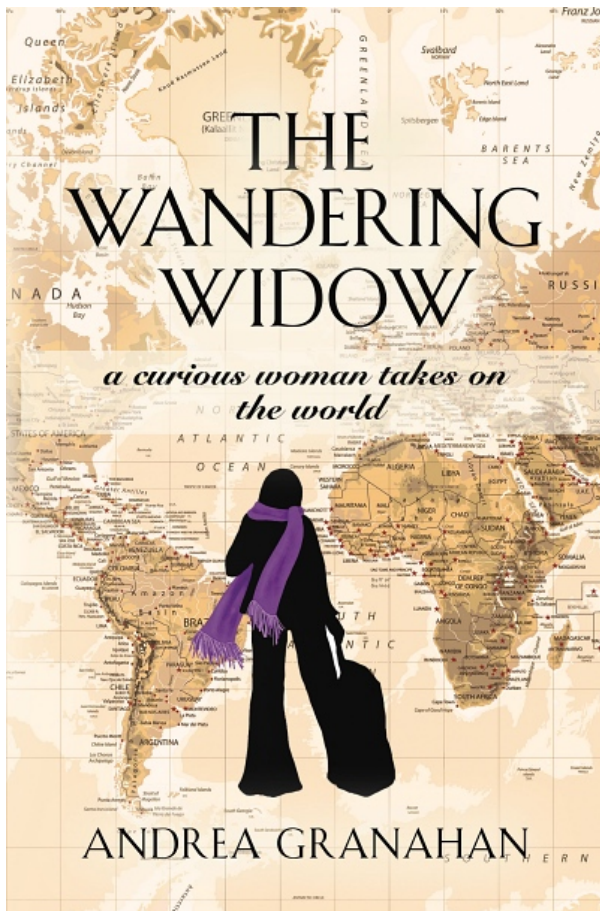
Jimmy Stewart accompanied Marlene and me to our car when we left.

“And haven’t I at least earned a kiss?” he asked me with a mournful look on his face.

I leaned up and kissed his cheek. He smiled broadly.

As we drove off waving, he called, “And now me day is complete!”





*A curious widow explores cultures around the world. How do others solve life's basic problems: courtship, raising kids, caring for the helpless? She is eager to learn.*

## **The Wandering Widow: A curious woman takes on the world**

By Andrea Granahan

**Order the book from the publisher BookLocker.com**

**<https://www.booklocker.com/p/books/11971.html?s=pdf>**

**or from your favorite neighborhood  
or online bookstore.**