

TYKE TALK

## How to be "at home abroad" with children

By Barbara Bain

If you have never done it, you may have wondered what it's like to live in a foreign city with a small child.

I now know from experience. My husband, Martin Landau, and I, have two children, Susan, who was three last August, and Juliet, who was two in March. Susan was only 13 months old when Martin and I flew with her to Rome, where he was to act in Cleopatra. Our problems started right on that plane. We thought we were flying at a perfectly marvelous hour for Susan, it was her sleeping period, and we assumed she would sleep. It was a wrong assumption. She was overexhausted and hours off her schedule. She cried and cried. I've told our friends that Martin and I walked our way to Europe. You see, in an effort to keep Sue quiet, we walked up and down the aisle of that plane, holding her in our arms.

Our life in Rome for the first couple of weeks was sheer bedlam. We take so many conveniences for granted in the United States. There were many things in Rome I was unprepared for. I had taken pasteurized milk for granted; milk wasn't pasteurized there, and we had no electric grill in our hotel room to use for boiling milk. I had to send one of the hotel men out with Sue's bottle and plead with him: "Please boil this milk for ten minutes". If he came back in eight minutes, I would worry about it. Fresh fruits and vegetables were available, and they were fine, but there was no cottage cheese to be had.

There are very few canned goods sold in Rome, and at that time no baby foods.

We take packaged refrigerated meats for granted in the United States, but many of the stores in Rome did not have refrigerators. There was an outdoor meat market nearby, and an indoor market, neither with a refrigerator; both had huge carcasses of meat hanging on hooks. I wondered when they had arrived at the butcher's. How could I get fresh meat for my bay? Consulting my english-italian dictionary, I stammered out, "Fresca per una bambina" (fresh for a baby). The butcher assured me that the meat he was selling me was what he would serve his own family. I murmured that wasn't sufficient. This was for a bambino, I reiterated firmly.

After about one week we moved to an apartment, and soon afterward we got a housekeeper. What a blessed relief that Italian girl, Rosa, proved to be! She took over the shopping and cooking; the stove which sometimes conked out on me always worked for her. She did all the laundry by hand, including large sheets. She took over the diaper washing too (there were no diaper services in Rome then).

Things really calmed down after Rosa arrived. But before her coming, I often felt I was in Disasterville. I'll never forget the time, about ten days after our arrival in Rome, when red welts appeared on Susan's face and hands. I clutched Sue in my arms and went downstairs to phone a

pediatrician. I was afraid my baby had been poisoned by something she ate. "What is it?" I asked the women in the apartment house. "Zazarea", they buzzed back. I'd asked friends in the United States who had lived in Rome to recommend a pediatrician—they had recommended an Italian who spoke English. I'd arranged to meet him a couple of days after I got to Rome, and it's a procedure I recommend to any parent. If you are going to be in a foreign country any length of time, it is wise to know a recommended pediatrician, so you won't panic when you need one.

When he saw Sue, he smiled and said, "It's nothing. Mosquito bites".

"Oh", I said. "What's the Italian word for 'mosquito'?"

"Zazarea, he said. Then I knew that the neighbors had been right.

Mosquito netting was not to be had; I settled for curtain fabric for her crib.

Since then, after more than a year in Italy, Martin and I have been living in the United States, and enjoying the comforts of life here. Our younger daughter, Juliet, has never done any extensive traveling so far. We're busy on Mission: Impossible. But if I ever have to travel with my two daughters, I know I'll not be as panicky as I was with just Sue. I now know that when you pack to travel to a foreign country, you must remember to pack a sense of humor along with your clothes.