

## “The World in Your World”

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My Mom used to say when my brother would forget something or be a little dazed and confused “It’s Zack’s world and we just live in it”. I thought about that immediately when I saw the subject for this writing contest.

This is **our** World, but we can do so much more than just **live** in it.

We can be an **integral** part of it.

We can **travel** to visit history, to experience different cultures, and to make memories out of the 15-mile comfort zone of our house.

My family has always embraced traveling. It might be that my parents met in Berlin in high school and had traveled most of Western Europe (and some Eastern Europe) before they graduated high school. I love to travel the world. It could be that I was born in Germany on an Air Force base – so I am not a dual citizen – but I really wish my parents had applied for it for me. It might be that I don’t have a state issued social security number, but a State Department issued social security number. It could be that before I was 6 weeks old, I had visited Switzerland, Luxembourg and Paris and my first passport picture had to be taken three different times because my eyes were never open enough.

I love that the world has shaped my grandparents, my parents, and me to respect and embrace other cultures and their practices and beliefs. I love it when my parents break into speaking German so that my brother and I can’t understand what they’re talking about. I loved to hear my Pop-Pop speak in Russian. He was a Russian linguist during the Cold War in Berlin, and he could speak multiple languages conversationally, but Russian was his thing.

One of my favorite memories was in 4<sup>th</sup> grade when my parents wanted to go back to Berlin for the “25<sup>th</sup> Fall of the Wall Celebration”. My mom and her best friend, Mrs. Malissa, took me, my brother and Mrs. Malissa’s daughter Hailey traveling around Europe the way they travelled Europe as high schoolers. We started in Rome and took the train to Venice, navigating the city via foot and water taxis and then took the overnight travel train to Munich. This was the part my mom and Mrs. Malissa were most excited about – this is how they had to travel from Berlin to West Germany in the 80s in an overnight sleeper car train. We then navigated a HUGE German train station to catch a train to Prague. We rolled our suitcases over cobblestone streets to our hotel. We then took a train to Berlin, but my mom said it was serendipitous that the German train union was on strike and once we got to the border, we would have to take a bus to Berlin. This was the way they travelled – overnight train to Frankfurt and then charter bus to their destination city. We got to Berlin the same day my dad flew into Berlin from Georgia and spent the weekend celebrating the Fall of the Wall and the Reunification of Germany with the Germans.

I live in a small city in the South. There are cultural pockets in our city, primarily brought on by the diversity the local military base has stationed here but outside of that we are limited in diversity. We are not an Atlanta, New York or San Francisco. I think because of that lack of diversity in our own community my parents try to take us out of the country at least once a year to experience something different.

I am consumed by curiosity. It makes me a better person. If more people had the opportunity to experience cultures and life outside of their 15-mile comfort zone, the world may be a more intelligent place. The World is **definitely** in My World and I can’t wait to see more of it!