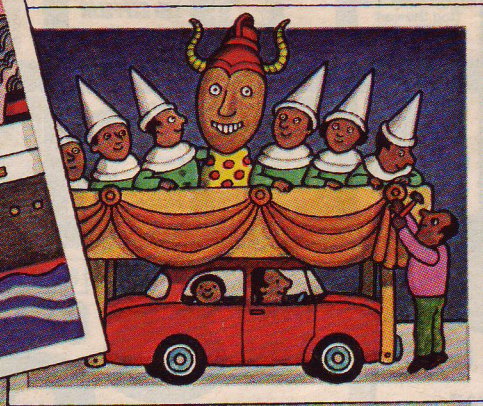


BETSY McCALL WRITES FROM THE FRENCH WEST INDIES



Statue of Josephine



Carnival



Parc Naturel

Dear Mommy: I keep thinking I'm in a dream that began with Grandma's winning this trip-for-two at her supermarket and taking me along! Guadeloupe is too beautiful to be true—dazzling flowers, purple mountains, tall waterfalls... and Grandma, in a giddy, pointed straw hat, saying, "Tell her that the Caribbean Sea is made of turquoises, emeralds and diamonds." Okay, I just did! If you think we're exaggerating, you should have heard what Christopher Columbus said in 1493, when he discovered the island! The other day we explored the very rain forest that *he* did. It's a dense jungle but with no savage animals or poisonous snakes. Everything there grows to fabulous size. Your philodendron plant would become a giant tree there, each leaf bigger than I am; ferns grow taller and fuller than our big old oak! There's a dormant volcano, La Soufrière, nearly 5,000 feet high. We didn't go to the top because it was too misty, but we could smell its sulfur, feel the warmth of its earth and see plumes of steam rise where we scratched the soil! Exciting? Wow! From there, we flew to Martinique, where we are now. It's flowery and summery too, but more sophisticated, Grandma says. Guess who was born here! Napoleon's wife, Empress Josephine. There's a Josephine museum in what remains of her house and a marble statue of her that faces the harbor. Martinique women are very beautiful and romantic. They knot their turbans to show whether they're single, married or just flirting, as Grandma says. Martinique dances are beautiful and romantic too. This weekend, everybody is preparing for next month's Mardi Gras. We saw some of the costumes and floats they're making, and they're just *fantastic*. Maybe next year Daddy will take us all down for the Carnival! But right now, *à bientôt*, Maman (means *see you soon*), from *votre* Betsy.



Martinique



Guadeloupe

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