

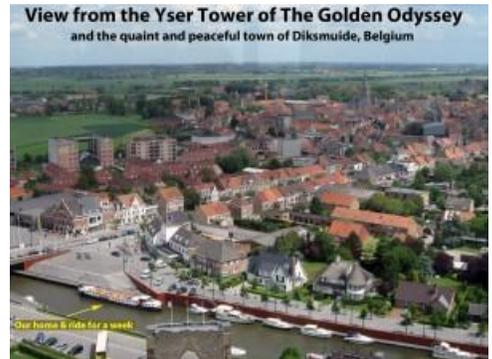
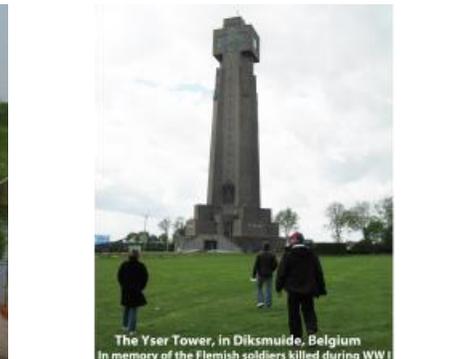
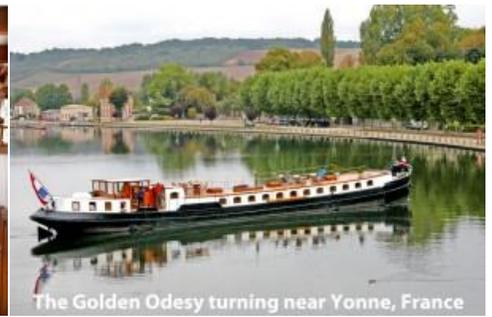
LET IT BE

Introduction. My wife Hilary has always loved music. There are three songs, in particular, that have been running in and out of Hilary's life. Here's her story about one of them.

Let It Be

By: Hilary Gauntt

Still deeply mourning our adored son Jimmy, we joined our friends Terri and Bill Stampley and Jill and Rich Murphy on a trip to Europe in May, 2009; hoping that a change of scene would provide a welcome distraction. After three nights in Paris, we trained to Brussels and then were driven to meet our luxurious barge [The Golden Odyssey](#) for a leisurely trip down the canals of Belgium.



There was a crew of four led by captain and owner Gregory Birra, and the six of us the only passengers occupying the three lovely staterooms. Some nights were spent in towns such as Brugge or Ghent, and others out in the country under the stars. Wonderful meals provided by Claudie the French chef and endless bottles of wine enhanced the experience of the easy cruising of the extensive waterways, with the amazing quality of light illuminating the clouds, grass and grazing cows. The rhythmic chugging of the engine felt like a heartbeat as we lay in our deckchairs, reading and gazing at the ducks and trees as we glided by.





Terri & Bill Stampley



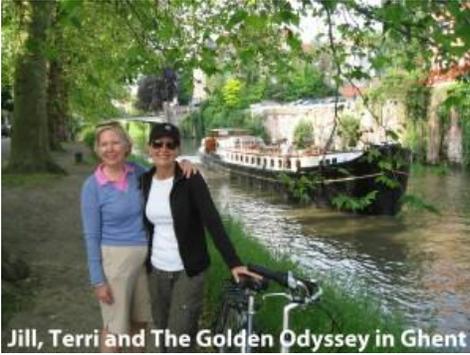
Les Vaches du soleil: banks of canal pastoral & peaceful...



Jill & Rich Murphy



Hilary, Jill & Terri



Jill, Terri and The Golden Odyssey in Ghent

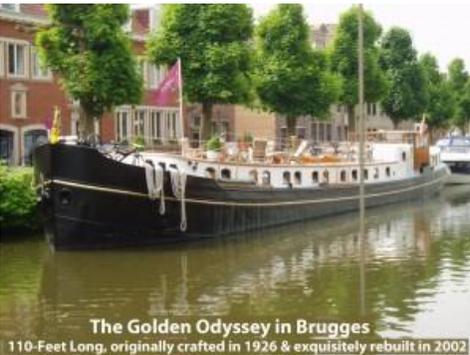


Jill, Hilary and Terri on deck on a cool day...

In our cabin there were several pieces of art. The one I found myself captivated by was a beautiful Madonna and Child icon, with deep rich colors of blue and gold, hanging by a ribbon on the wall next to the bed. As a mother who now has also lost a beloved son, I was feeling a new connection to Mary; and found myself finding comfort in gazing at this picture every day.



Hilary & Casey Gauntt



The Golden Odyssey in Brugges
110-Foot Long, originally crafted in 1926 & exquisitely rebuilt in 2002



Captain Gregory Birra in Ghent

One afternoon towards the end of our week, I got up from my chair on deck and went below to our cabin to use the bathroom. As I started to leave, I turned to look at the picture on my way out, and was surprised to hear the words to the song "Let It Be" come into my head as clear as a bell. I realized that this was the first time I had thought of this song since suffering our loss, and that Paul McCartney's words were deeply meaningful and comforting and surprisingly appropriate.

Smiling, I climbed back up to the deck, said hello to everyone, and resumed my seat facing backward next to the side of the barge. As I was trying to remember all the verses of the song, I could hear a boat coming up on my right going the other way. We were out in the Belgian countryside, and passed very few boats at that point. I turned my head to look at the boat, which was a very large yacht. I leapt up out of my chair as I read the name of the boat, which was right at my eye level and written in very large script....."Let It Be."

I still feel as though I was being sent a sign and a message in the words of that song. After returning home I e-mailed our captain to ask where he purchased that Madonna and Child, and if he could help me find one similar. He said he also had been quite taken with it and purchased it at the Church of Our Dear Lady in Saint Quentin, France. I read the history of St. Quentin and the Church. The Saint who was born there and cared for the sick and poor was St. Godfrey (or Geoffrey) who died on November 8, 1115. Interestingly, November 8 is also my son Jimmy's birthday.



In reading about how Paul McCartney came to write the song, I was surprised to learn that "Mother Mary" wasn't referring to the mother of Jesus, as most people assume. Paul's mother, also named Mary, died of lung cancer when Paul was fourteen. During a difficult time in his life years later he had a vivid dream that "my mother Mary came to me and whispered words of wisdom, 'It will be alright, just let it be, let it be.'" He said that when he awoke from this dream, he got up and wrote down the words to this song.

Let It Be (The Beatles - Paul McCartney)

*When I find myself in times of trouble, Mother Mary comes to me
Speaking words of wisdom, let it be*

*And in my hour of darkness she is standing right in front of me
Speaking words of wisdom, let it be
Let be, let it be, let it be, let it be
Whisper words of wisdom, let it be*

*And when the broken hearted people living in the world agree
There will be an answer, let it be
For though they may be parted, there is still a chance that they will see
There will be an answer, let it be
Let it be, let it be, let it be, let it be
There will be an answer, let it be
Let it be, let it be, let it be, let it be
Whisper words of wisdom, let it be*

*And when the night is cloudy there is still a light that shines on me
Shine until tomorrow, let it be
I wake up to the sound of music, Mother Mary comes to me
Speaking words of wisdom, let it be
Let it be, let it be, let it be, yeah, let it be
There will be an answer, let it be
Let it be, let it be, let it be yeah, let it be
Whisper words of wisdom, let it be*

Upon returning home, I searched everywhere for a copy of the Mother and Child icon that was in our stateroom on The Golden Odyssey. A couple of months after I gave up the search, a package was delivered to our home. Inside was the Mother and Child icon from our boat—a gift from our wonderful Captain Gregory Birra. It is now hangs by a slim golden ribbon in a place in our house for all to see, speaking words of wisdom, Let It Be.

