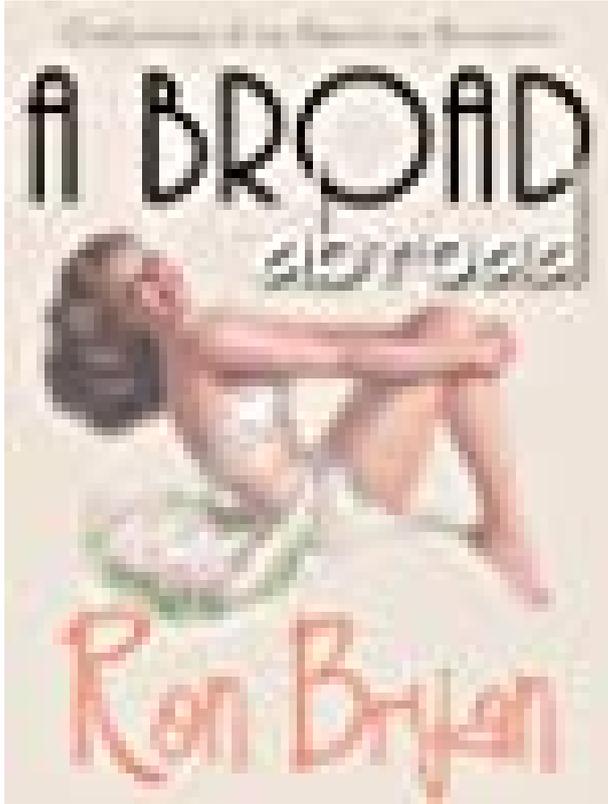


A Broad Abroad



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Once upon a lovely spring day in 2005, I met Baroness Geraldine Ruddy de Lussats on Oceania Cruises' Regatta, a luxury passenger ship, sailing on a 10 day cruise from the Port of Miami to various islands in the Southern Caribbean. I could not help staring. Some say the eyes are the windows to the soul. When I looked into those eyes, a barely ripe woman in her 20s was still there. And her sensual lips held secrets of trysts from days now gone, but not yet over. When she spoke, she sounded like a much younger woman. Her voice was smooth but firm, like silk on rare polished hardwood. She radiated happiness and sunshine. The more the Baroness spoke, the younger she seemed to become. At first glance, she looked like a classy and elegant older woman. A second glance revealed that something did not quite fit with the older part. After a few moments in her presence, it became clear that the Baroness was still young and unspoiled. She was witty and down-to-earth, radiating a youthful glow and an unrestrained positive attitude. Her mind was razor-sharp and she conversed of events 50 years in the past as readily and as lucidly as she did of events that had happened yesterday. She had traveled the world and hobnobbed with royalty and celebrities alike but she did not quite achieve superstar status. Could she have become a superstar? Probably—but her motherly instincts prevailed and she gave up showbiz for motherhood. She got to enter into the limelight and bask in its radiant glory for a few years and she has no regrets about that. Through her clever bravery and good timing, she got to live her dreams.