

A Traveling Scarf-Maker

by JO ANN HARRIS

SHE has dodged bullets in New York. Haiti, brushed her teeth in wine in the Far East and traveled by tramp steamer.

And she has never lost her enthusiasm for travel. That's Vera, scarf designer and explorer extraordinaire.

Vera (last name Neumann) sat down for a minute, but not very still, in her New York showroom designed by Marcel Breur. She flipped through photos that she takes on all her trips and showed one someone else shot—Vera taking an elephant ride.

"When anyone asks how I got up there, I tell them I sat on his snout and was thrown up there," she said. "But actually, you climb up on a platform."

Vera posters tell the story of her travels—"Vera Paints Danish" was her year for Copenhagen. Then it was "Vera Paints a Persian Garden." And this year, it's "Vera Paints Jewels of India."

While she travels, she actually paints the scarf designs on canvas. That's part of the reason that the scarf prints resemble paintings, and often wind up framed on walls instead of being worn.

Because of the booming pop-

ularity of scarves, Vera and her staff have published a booklet, with instructions on how to tie scarves into babushkas, hoods, bibs, etc. Models pop in and out of the room, showing the variety of ways to wear a scarf. They also model samples from her new venture, sportswear.

Vera wore a scarf looped around the neck of her navy sweater, decorated with an Alexander Calder pin, and a full tweed skirt. Her tan gave away the fact that most of her time is spent in her Ossining, N.Y. studio, instead of in Manhattan.

She shares a home there with her children, Evelyn, 14, and John, 17, who attends a Vermont preparatory school. Her late husband, a native Viennese, was the first to introduce her to travel.

Lasted Six Weeks

"The first trip I ever took was on an Alcoa freighter, with the sunniest bunch of people. We went to the Caribbean and stopped at a lot of unusual spots. Then we picked up a cargo, and went into Canada.

"We were supposed to be gone three weeks, and came back six weeks later. It was

the greatest trip I've ever taken."

Although she speaks English only, Vera says she has never had a language barrier. "People are friendly everywhere. You hear a lot about the ugly American, but if you seem to enjoy what they are doing, they'll open up."

It might be too that people enjoy someone who so obviously enjoys them and their country.

As she travels, Vera collects folk art. Her collection has now grown to the point that she is considering building a folk-art museum. "My studio in Ossining has small sections of the wall recessed; they're really lightboxes. But they're all already filled. I'm running out of space."

Indian musical instruments and richly-colored tapestries line the walls of her New York showroom.

Mention a country and Vera can talk about its folk art—and its excitement. "I have some sculpture from Haiti. When I was there, bullets were flying all over. It was during an election.

"If you ever go there, look at their suitcases. They're hammered out of our Ballentine beer sheets."