

FORE SCRIPT, BY MARY

When the editor was preparing his sermon for Thanksgiving, he remarked that as he was so busy we might have to omit our usual Christmas letter. I agreed that he was busy (when two ministers try to do the work of the four last year, busy really isn't the word), but I felt that some of our readers might be disappointed not to receive their sheets on time, and I brashly volunteered to write the news and leave the postscript for the editor.

VACATION PLANS

Before the date for vacation had been settled, I began to plan for it. Since we needed to get away from San Mateo without too much driving, I sent for Travel Folders, and after reading several describing conducted tours either too expensive or too long, I came up with the idea of a Cruise to Alaska. However, when I told friends who were taking that in June, I was assured that it was much too late, for they had made reservations in October. By that time I had sold the idea to Rob and we consulted Sally Morrison Travel, but the agent was discouraging. "Everything taken months ago". But there just might be a cancellation, and he promised to telephone if he learned anything. About a week before we had to decide, the call came -- the agent through letters and telegrams to the right places, had found just one cabin on the Canadian Pacific Princess Louise, to sail from Valcouver June 6, return on the 14th. Robinson Luck, Hurrah! We were as good as gone. Of course a few details had to be cared for, such as the purchase of tickets, arrangements for watering our grass, care of mail, and so on, but that was easy.

ALASKA, HERE WE COME!

We locked our house on Tuesday morning, June 6, and gave our keys to Ed Howard, who drove us to the airport, where we boarded a jet plane for our first jet flight. To fly at 650 miles an hour at a height of 35,000 feet (the high point of the year) was a thrilling experience, though much of the time we were above the clouds, and missed the wonderful mountain scenery. Since we had to change planes at Seattle, we did have interesting glimpses of that fascinating sprawling city. From there it was no time at all until we landed at Vancouver, in a pouring rain. Since we were eager to see our Princess we took a taxi to the Canadian Pacific waiting room, though we know we could not go aboard until five o'clock. Because of the downpour we could not go out for lunch and had to take a snack at a counter. We spent most of the afternoon wishing for sunshine, which finally broke through so that we could walk the wet streets, and find a good restaurant.

How exciting it was to go aboard at five, see some of our fellow passengers, and find our little cabin. I thought I knew why some one had cancelled; we were on the boat deck between the bartender's cabin, where he sold his drinks and the large lounge where his customers enjoyed his wares, and we were beneath the shuffle board where the youngsters loved to play at nap time. But we had an outside cabin with porthole, through which we could enjoy the beauty along the shore. We had plenty of rest, and usually I was ready to race along the deck with a ninety year old man before the "First Call for Breakfast" at seven o'clock. Our meals were excellent, three hearty ones during the day, and a bounteous snack at ten o'clock. We developed large appetites, and the editor gained several pounds, which he has been trying to lose.

I won't try to give you a day by day account of the cruise. The scenery was magnificent, the "midnight sunsets" glorious. We went ashore for sightseeing at Prince Rupert, Ketchikan, Wrangell, Juneau, and Skagway, where we took a train for Carcross, stopping at Bennett for an old-fashioned Alaska miner's midday lunch, with moose meat as the piece de resistance (well named). To me the most interesting town was Juneau, the new capital and fast growing city. From Juneau we went by bus to the Mendenhall Glacier, which in the late afternoon sun was indescribably lovely, especially when viewed through the big picture window of the Chapel-by-the-Lake on Lake Auke where

"The glacier climbs the mountains high,
Alaska's ladder to the sky,
All Heaven is mirrored to challenge our try
At the Chapel-by-the Lake."

From verses by Carol Beery Davis

This view is a never to be forgotten inspiration.

Along the shores of the inlet were magnificent snow capped mountains with thick evergreen forests at the foot. The water was calm, the weather perfect. We passed glittering or translucent icebergs, and occasionally we saw whales. I should like to write more -- of our fellow travelers, of the fun and frolic, the services of worship, but I promised to be brief, and I am out of superlatives. On our return we had two delightful days at the Vancouver Hotel, sightseeing, by bus, walking along the busy, well-kept streets in invigorating air, and just loafing. We like Vancouver.

HOME AGAIN

The return by jet was interesting and uneventful except that the ticket collector at Seattle tried to bump one of us off, saying we had only one reserved seat, when our tickets indicated two. By seven o'clock we were coming down at the San Francisco airport, and were delighted to find our daughter waiting for us, to take us home -- a very pleasant ending for a happy restful vacation. We were back in time to be present at the wedding of our friends, Nancy Nielsen and Ed Howard on June 19, and to enjoy some of the festivities later. It was good to be lazy at home during the rest of June, for days since then have been busy, especially the last two months while Dr. Trexler's illness has kept him hospitalized in Boston. We were happy that he is now convalescing at home.

Rob and I are beginning our ninth year in San Mateo. It doesn't seem possible! As we look back over the years, we are grateful for such rich experiences -- teaching and fun in Honolulu, 35 years of interesting missionary service in China, sometimes discouraging, sometimes exciting and possibly dangerous (a dangerous opportunity) but always worth while, and deeply rewarding, years of joy and precious friendship. When the Communists and the American Board in 1950 gave us the opportunity to return to the United States to retire, with sadness and regret we chose to come. Now, after eight years of active retirement here, we feel we can truly say, with Browning, "Grow old along with me, the best is yet to be."

And once again, to all our friends, near and far, I send my Tiny Tim Christmas wish,

"God Bless Us, Every One".

V. W. 'S COMMENTS ON VACATIONS LIMITED

I was not at all sorry to be left in the garage when the tourists went on vacation, I had travel enough last summer, but I welcomed their return, for I found the garage rather stifling, especially on the hottest days of the summer, and I was glad to be released from confinement the evening they returned. I think they were glad to be home, too, but they didn't sit around in the back yard enjoying the sun. There are grandchildren in Hillsborough, and in Walnut Creek, and many friends in this area. We went to Santa Cruz, San Jose, Carmel, Palo Alto, Redwood City, and Berkeley, and once to a White Memorial Retreat near Mill Valley. Robbie makes calls morning, afternoon and night up and down the Peninsula, and even in San Francisco. I am luck that Mary can't drive. However, I am happy to be useful, and I have enjoyed my travels until Saturday night about two weeks ago. We had gone to Walnut Creek in the afternoon, and didn't start home until after dark. Not too much traffic though, to worry Mary, and we were doing fine until we took a short cut at San Ramon, a road we knew well. I don't know just what happened, but suddenly, BANG, I was in a ditch by the side of the road. Mary and Robbie got out, and I heard some one say, "Can I help you?" and then to Mary, "Are you hurt? Let me feel your forehead to see if it is bloody". She insisted that she wasn't, but Boy! I was! My windshield was shattered, from the bang by Mary's head, one tire was flat, the front bumper was jammed against the wheel. They got me out of the ditch and on the pavement in front of a large building, with a very bright light high above me. I heard some one say, "I will take you home," and that was that. Later that night I was towed to a garage, and there I stayed lonely and sad until a few days later I was towed to a shop in San Mateo, where all my injuries were repaired, and now I am racing around as lively as ever. I heard Mary say that she always knew that she is a blockhead, and since she does not want to shatter the windshield a third time, (this is the second) she will fasten her seat belt from now on. I should like to wish all the Robinson Friends a Merry Christmas and a Happy Year of Safe Travel.

POSTSCRIPT BY H. W. R.

My "postscript" will be mostly about the grandchildren. Let me begin with yesterday, when seven of our ten grands, with their parents, four grandparents, and Uncle Floyd had a wonderful Thanksgiving at the Ratcliffes'. The German friend, Elizabeth, who lived with the Ratcliffes while studying in college, and is now teaching in San Jose, was there; also to help make the event interracial, Henry Sun from Korea and his wife. Henry became a friend of the Ratcliffes while a student in San Mateo, and is now getting A and B+ grades in the University of California at Berkeley.

After a delicious dinner some of us gathered around the piano, and with Harold R. as accompanist we sang Folksongs and Christmas Carols. Most of the children have good voices and pleased the grandparents by singing. Henry's wife, who arrived from Korea only a few days ago, also joined in singing carols, and she with Henry sang a love song in Korean. Henry also did some solos, including Santa Lucia in Korean, in such wonderful "grand opera" style, that some of the youngsters had to leave the room to give vent to their amusement. I used as the subject of my sermon last Sunday "Thanksgiving on a Broad Basis" and the party at the Ratcliffes' fitted nicely with that thought.

Bruce Ratcliffe sings in the Boys' Choir, Patty in the Girls' Choir at our church; three Ratcliffe children have music lessons, Bruce on the violin. Katie Robinson plays the flute in her high school orchestra, and a few weeks ago went to Sacramento to play in a County Orchestra at the State Fair. Katie is the horsewoman of the family. She has had a saddle horse for some years, and had raised a colt which she recently sold at a good price, replacing him with a well-trained silver buckskin. Now a girl friend has bought the old mare, and she rides with Katie and other friends.

Jennie Robinson is the cook of the family. That is her 4H project, and she does a wonderful job. Twice when we have been there for dinner she has prepared the whole meal, which was delicious. Once she made "beaten biscuits" pounding the dough half an hour. They were good, but I think she will not make them often.

Tom Robinson distinguishes himself by having a lot of fun, and by working at mechanical and electronic projects. Stephen Ratcliffe is a real student, a tennis player, also a baseball fan; Bruce is the mechanic, Patty the dressmaker, David just learning to read, a friend of everyone.

Last summer the Walnut Creek Robinsons went east, and the California Kids spent some time with their New Jersey cousins and their many Vermont relatives. Their Grandmother Burnet, returning from Europe, met them, and together they visited the Vermont home of another daughter, where Tom got a kick out of working on his uncle's farm. They met my relatives, some 70 of them at a picnic in their honor. The whole family seems to have fallen in love with the Green Mountain State, which some of the children like better than Sunny California.

I am sorry that I do not have more information about the New Jersey grands but letter writing does not seem to be one of the strong points of the family. They do telephone occasionally, and we know that they had a grand time at the shore last summer. All of them enjoy sailing and hope some day to have a boat of their own. When they stay at motels where the three girls, Carol, Lynn and Jan sleep in the same bed, they call it a "Janwich." We were pleased recently that they hope to come to California, possibly next summer. That will be a great day, and calls for a "super-duper" celebration.

We are pleased with the People to People Program promoted by our grandchildren and their parents. Dr. John Ratcliffe had a wonderful experience on the SS Hope and has spent a lot of time telling groups in this area about it. The family have entertained many Hope doctors, also foreign students and doctors from abroad. If you have a chance to see the movies made on the Hope, but sure to do so, for they are good. The Walnut Creekers are starting a foreign student exchange -- their Mexican cousin Suzanne De Prieto, whose mother is Mary's niece, her father a Mexican, is arriving from Mexico City December 1, to live with the Robinsons and attend school with Katie for two months, and next summer Katie will go to Mexico for her vacation.

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

As for my own activities, they have been pretty much like those of past years, except that because one of our ministers, Ed Howard, has gone to a church near Monterey, and Jerry Trexler has been in a hospital for two months, I have done more preaching than usual and have helped in various other ways. I was glad to be able to announce Thanksgiving that Dr. Trexler had returned to San Mateo the night before, and that our budget for 1962, \$127,000 had been assured by pledges. My discussion group at the Senior Center has continued, and I have to keep up on world events, which we discuss on Tuesday mornings. The adult Bible class Sunday nights has kept me digging

away at the Bible, and I have learned a lot, also had a good time. I represent the Council of Churches on the Community Council of the county.

This Postscript is too long, but the world situation should not be left out. I am still an optimist, don't plan for a bomb shelter, and believe that there are forces for good at work in the world. If we try to understand them, and work with them, we can look forward to a good life on this planet, not only for our grandchildren, but for theirs. May the Spirit of Christmas, Hope and Joy, lead all of us to that Better World of which Thomas Wolfe wrote ...

"whereon the pillars of this earth are founded, toward which the conscience of the world is tending -- a wind is blowing, and the rivers flow".

AMEN

Harold W. Robinson