A LINE ON THE WORLD

Helen & Francis Line, 5475 Eagle Rock Vw., Los Angeles 41 Cal. Our 26th Annual Letter

Dear Friends: Nov. 25th 1959

Blending in our thoughts like the remembered fragrance of tropical flowers are the impressions from a score of lands- each of which has been our home for a few days or weeks during these last three months. Just a few days ago a silver "Jet" -Aladdin's Magic Carpet flying straight out of fairy land into reality- whisked us in 6½ hours from Tokyo to Honolulu, then on to Los Angeles. In 30,000 miles of travel we had proven to ourselves that the world is round.

Since we started this global adventure in early August we proved to ourselves, also, the validity of those words of Sophocles which we adopted as our travel motto over 20 years ago- "Many wonders there be, but none more wondrous than man." Places like Bahrein and Amman and Nablus and Kavala will henceforth be people to us, rather than just names on a map. Instead of thin lines on a chart, the Indus, the Po, the Danube, the Yamuna, will be waterways that serve human needs. The people we met are the greatest treasures of our journey.

But also, like a cluster of lush grapes from which the bloom will never rub away, there hang before our memories certain precious sights and episodes which transcend a hundred fine but lesser wonders.

ENGLAND

We had visited Coventry Cathedral the year the war broke out; we returned this summer to find its splendor burned and shattered. Only stark stone walls still stand. But after that horrible blitz of nearly 20 years ago, someone had piled up stones from the rubble to form an alter, then had fashioned two charred beams into a cross and erected them there between stark walls beneath the open sky. Following that bombing, someone else had erected a carved wooden sign behind the burned cross- "Father Forgive." The cross and the sign remain. Now a glorious new cathedral is rising beside the wrecked one. Christians from Germany have donated toward its construction. And the entrance to the NEW edifice will be through the broken walls of the old. That charred cross and "Father Forgive" will remain. This was the greatest sight we saw in England.

INTRODUCING OUR GRANDSON

Taking a world trip is fine, but watching our grandson grow and develop is even more wonderful. Adrienne and Gordon (Mr and Mrs Gordon Knute) live in Long Beach. But as official distributor for our films, she comes up to work here twice weekly. Of course she brings Jeffrey, our grand son. We could hardly wait to get back and see him again. Watching his development is the greatest thrill and joy we have had for years. A photo of Gordon, Jeffrey, and Adrienne- taken just before we went away- is enclosed

SALZBURG AND AUSTRIA

We went to Salzburg, in Austria, only because our German map showed that a fine autobahn (turnpike) led that way. The tiny Volkswagen which we purchased in Frankfurt and in which we toured for 3000 miles around Europe, lapped up the kilometers so avidly on the autobahns that we found ourselves across Germany and into Austria before one tankful of benzin went dry. So there we were in the Austrian Alps, with the Mozart Festival in progress. The "view" hotel room looking to the river and castles and mountains; the blunder which got us into the Bavarian Dance Club as they filled the night with melody; the supreme experience of hearing Mozart music played by a great orchestra in the Mozarteum- these were all providential accidents. Every hotel room in the city was supposed to be taken; seats in the Mozarteum were "impossible" to get. Yet the grapes dropped into our laps from somewhere, and we savored them deeply. Driving on to Innsbruck and over the Brenner Pass, back to our intended route into Italy, was a glorious b o n u s.

ITALY

Assisi was our goal and our climax in Italy. We lingered there a week, changing hotel rooms three times until at last we had one of the finest views in central Italy. Below us was the gentle Umbrian Plain so familiar to St. Francis; right beside us was the great church and monastery of his Order; back of us were the piled white buildings and spires of Assisi itself. Just beyond our window began the vineyards and fields, where we filmed the gentle Italian farm folk- working as family groups- stopping their oxen, putting aside their sythes, to visit with us in excited elation. Assisi was restful, inspirational, fine.

SWITZERLAND

Our memories of Switzerland make a whole cluster of grapes in themselves. The Inns we chose were the simplest, yet each night we had a view- over Lake Lagano, or Luzerne, or the River Rhine. Our VW, darting around the glorious tangled snarl of hairpins and corkscrews which they call St. Gothard's Pass- carried us into travelers Dreams. Later, having shipped our car home from Bremen, we had a review of Germany, Switzerland, and Italy as we flew over them to Greece.

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GREECE

We stayed in Greece the longest and enjoyed it most. The spectacle of lights and sound and music, as we sat at night on a rugged hill watching a great historical drama with the 2500-year-old Parthenon as its setting- this was the greatest single experience of our trip. A journey to Kavala, small fishing town in northern Greece and gateway to biblical Philippi, was- because of the people we met, the most enjoyable side trip we had. A five-day cruise by ship to the Aegean Islands was probably the most rewarding five days we ever spent. Crete introduced us to the ancient Minoan civilization, Rhodes to the Crusader Castles. Kos was reminiscent of Hippocrates. Mykonos was the island of windmils and whitewashed houses; Delos the island of ruins. At Patmos we visited the cave where St. John wrote the Book of Revelation.

HOLY LAND

What single episode can be selected as most outstanding in the lands of the Bible? If we live to be as old as the Cedars of Lebanon themselves we can never forget our journey from Beirut up through the mountains and villages to those great trees.

But the trip by car to Damascus, then across the lava wastes of Syria, up to the strange ruined city of Jerash, on to Amman and then through Moab to Jericho and the Dead Sea- this was even a greater journey. More significant yet was a trip through unspoiled Samaria, where every few miles revealed a place which had been made immortal in Bible times - milleniums ago. Jerusalem and Bethlehem themselves we found scarred with ugly churches and Arab commercialism. But one evening, wandering by ourselves on remote paths of the Mount of Olives up and back of the Garden of Gethsemane- standing at the spot where Jesus wept over Jerusalem, looking out as he did at that sprawling city so significant in the religious history of the world, this was perhaps the central point in our Middle East experience.

JET FLIGHT TO INDIA

A Jet took us across America in 4 1/2 hours, across the Atlantic in 6 hours 15 minutes. In a French Caravelle 2-engined Jet we made quick time from Athens to Istanbul. When we started our trip, Pan Am had no jet service around the world. But we re-scheduled enroute and flew from Calcutta to Bangkok by Jet, then finished our journey on jets from Tokyo to Hawaii and L.A. But the supreme flight of our trip was by B.O.A.C. Jet from Beirut Labanon to New Delhi. In quick succession we had fine air views of Beirut, the Lebanon Mountains, and Damascus. Then for hundreds of miles the uninhabited wastes of Saudi Arabi lay below us, broken only by a single pipe line. We put down for 45 minutes at Bahrein, British crown colony in the Persian Gulf, then headed out above the shores of Iran and Pakistan. Near Karachi we saw the great Indus, near its mouth broken up into a score of rivers, gleaming in the sunset. Then we began flying through crimson mountains of clouds. We were a part of the sunset. After dark, these clouds became beds of lighting. We were glad then to seem them at a distance. The mystery of India lay below us as we circled to a landing at New Delhi. India itself can scarcely be touched on in a brief letter. The Taj Mahal was its jeweled climax; the deadly floods of West Bengal and the poverty of Calcutta were its shuddering nadir.

THAILAND, FLIGHT OVER LAOS

It seems incredible that each succeeding country could build into a new climax. Bangkok definitely offered the most fantastic sights we had seen. A boat journey along the river and canals of this "Venice of the Orient" revealed the strange life of an interesting people. After viewing the Golden Pagoda; the jeweled throne-like pile on which the Emerald Buddha rests; the Temples of the Royal Palace and the enormous gold leaf "Reclining Buddha", we felt dizzy, Hollywood could not have produced a setting so fantastic. Bangkok was a climax in color and interest.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN- A STUDY IN GREATNESS

Most of 1959 has been spent in finishing our documentary film on Lincoln. Adrienne is now distributing it to schools and libraries throughout America. The film is too long to describe here, so we are enclosing our folder on it, in order that you may know what we have been up to.

JAPAN...HAWAII

Our trip to Nikko, two hours north of Tokyo, was still more climactic. Great temples of rare beauty, the famous monkeys that see and hear and speak no evil, huge waterfalls, mountain lakes- these were supreme. But we caught them all in the glory of a Japanese autumn which rivaled New England in beauty. The flaming mountains of Nikko we shall never forget.

In Honolulu we had two glorious days with Pat and Rhodes Martin. That was the next best thing to getting home.

And HOME- seeing Adrienne and Gordon and Jeffrey- visiting Win and Grace and the folks again- calling on all the Gibson girls and our many wonderful friends, this was the real climax.

CHRISTMAS BLESSINGS TO YOU ALL!

Helen and Francis Line