

Around About By Justine Weatherford

After I wrote a column at the ending of January, I embarked on a travel experience that took me a great distance from Heppner and exposed me to parts of the world I had long hoped to see. As I write this I have not yet gathered my February collection of mail and periodicals and gotten around to checking out home folks.

My big trip began with the familiar first step of driving over to Arlington and then down the Columbia and south to Corvallis with Martha King's good company. After leaving Martha with her sister, Barbara, and visiting with my cousin and some old friends in Corvallis for two nights and days, I drove on south to Medford where I spent three nights and days enjoying my second son and his family before flying off toward Australia, New Zealand and French Polynesia.

My daughter-in-law, Bette, took me out to the Medford Airport on Feb. 1 where after checking through my baggage, I noted former Heppner High School biology teacher Kirk Horn was standing in the waiting area. We had a short visit. He is working as a U.S. Forest Service biologist and does considerable traveling. When I told him where I was headed he declared, "Justine, you will just love New Zealand." He had really enjoyed his time there. He asked about Heppner generally and wanted an update on my stepdaughter Karla.

In the airports at San Francisco and Los Angeles I met the 21 persons with whom I would travel for the next three weeks including a married couple from Vale, Ore., and 19 fine folks from various locations in Idaho. Most of my traveling was with a King—first with friend Martha and then I was paired with attractive Julianne King from Hamett, Idaho.

From L.A. we flew on Qantas for 8.5 hours to a very early morning re-fueling stop at Papeete, Tahiti. Then we continued another eight hours and 3,799 miles farther southwesterly to Sydney, Australia, where after the still loaded plane was carefully fumigated by Australian Dept. of Agriculture officials, we got off and went through the entry process and then very quickly boarded another Qantas flight of over three hours and 1,341 more miles to Auckland, New Zealand. I was told that our indirect trip to Auckland cost a great deal less (about \$700 per person) than flying directly there from L.A.

So my round trip from home and back covered approximately 24,700 miles, including those miles described above plus around 1,250 miles by bus and private cars in New Zealand, about 2,500 miles by bus, private car, sightseeing boat and air in Australia, and then maybe a total of 400 miles on a cruise ship and truck-bus and by air in the Society Islands (French Polynesia). I've just checked out the circumference of the earth at the equator and find I traveled just about 200 miles less than that 24,901.55 miles. No wonder I was sort of weary when I reached home last Saturday night.

It was difficult for me to keep track of time as we moved along. Heppner is in ZD-7, which means seven time zones west of Greenwich, near London, England. We moved west through ZD-8, -9, -10, -11 and half of -12, where we crossed the International Dateline midway between Tahiti and Australia and moved into ZD +12, then +11, and +10 which includes Sydney and much of eastern Australia. New Zealand is in the +12 Zone Description. My 1984 had no February 2, as that day was completely lost. However when I flew homeward I seem to have had two February 22nds. Really confusing.

Right now I want to take a few lines to say how helpful it would be, especially to travelers and business people, if the U.S. would join most of the rest of the world in using metric measurements and giving temperature in Celsius or centigrade. Everyplace I've been distances are not given in miles. One amusing exception I found where an old form of measuring is used was on the bathroom scales in the homes in which I stayed. How strange to have the scale needle stop near 11 or 12 and to be told that was an accurate measure of one's weight because it meant 11 or 12 stones (a stone equals 14 pounds). So many of us realized we had been sitting too much and eating too well.

The tour I chose was rather unusual, and I feel it was outstanding because it did not just include jumping from one city to another and sightseeing at a few well known places in each country, but was arranged around stays on farms and ranches on New Zealand's North Island and in Australia's most populous state, New South Wales. Mrs. King and I spent four nights and days as guests on two ranches in N.Z. and I spent two nights with another companion on one Australian property and one night each on two other large properties with three different visiting American women.

We were told that in N.Z. the crop farms and orchards are called farms, and the sheep, cattle and deer are cared for on ranches. In Australia the rural folks along the eastern coastal areas are on farms or ranches, those further inland on larger places are on properties (a new term to me), and only in the far west and north are the really huge, outback places, called stations.

We found that staying in homes was the most delightful part of our trip. We ate dinner, lunch and breakfast with families, were taken around their property, chatted with them about the differences in our lives and homes. We had plenty of time for the rush to buy souvenirs, but did not spend nearly as much time in shops as many travelers do nowadays.

During the coming three weeks of March, I plan to write articles about each nation in which I visited and share with you some of what I learned and enjoyed seeing in New Zealand, Australia and French Polynesia. As I traveled I made pages of notes in a small notebook which most unfortunately I managed to lose on our very last island visit. As we took the circular tour around Bora Bora in a rather crude truck-bus, just after we got off the "sealed" road onto a graveled section, we came upon an unusual electric power plant. The fuel used is the husks of coconuts and the Islanders haul trucks and pickup loads of these husks there and store them in high wire enclosures until they are burned to make power for that island. I decided to take a picture from the open, traveling truck to show Fred Toombs and his crews how economically electricity can be produced on a tropical island. As I juggled with my camera I had my notebook and pencil on my lap from which it slid. So off we jogged without my three week's worth of notes. The beautiful brown-skinned truck-bus driver "Mimi" said she would try to pick it up on the next trip. A few miles further Mimi's truck refused to proceed. Ten of us were transported to our over-the-mountains destination on the following truck and most of the group sat in the sun with Mimi until a relief truck picked them up.

Much later that day when I next saw Mimi she said, "So sorry Madame, but I couldn't find your notebook." Because of this mishap I may not include in my articles some of the interesting bits I had scribbled into that lost-forever notebook. I sure hope the pictures of the coconut-fueled power plant come out well.

Lions Club presents flags to Heppner first graders



Heppner Lions Club members Bob Kahl (right) and John Edmundson presented American flags to first graders at Heppner Elementary School last Tuesday in an effort to promote patriotism. The students also received a pamphlet explaining the history of the flag and information concerning its display.

Retired educators to meet

Unit Nine (Morrow and Umatilla counties) of the Oregon Retired Educators Association will meet Saturday, Mar. 3, at the Assembly of God Church at Hurlburt St. in Hermiston.

A business meeting will begin at 11 a.m. followed by lunch at 12 noon and a program at 1 p.m. The nominating committee will give its report, said a spokesperson. Louise Harmon is program chairman. A musical and slide program, "Climbing the Matterhorn" will be presented by Dory and George Flesman from LaGrande.

The hostess committee is made up of Lloyd and Gladys Howton, Henry and Dorothy Kopacz and Lawrence and Edna Gray.

All retired educators and their spouses are invited to attend, the spokesperson said.

THANK YOU!

Thank you to everyone who attended, played, bid and made donations at the Calcutta Pool Tournament last Saturday to help Debbie Sharp. Special thanks to Blackhorse Tavern, Bucknum's, Wagon Wheel, V&G Tavern and the Heppner Elks for all their help.

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