

'A Dream Come True' Is Term Used By Writer Telling of Panama Trip

(This article was written by Mrs. M. L. Kurtz, who with her husband and friends, returned in March from a trip to Panama. They left early in November, traveling via Old Mexico. Using her typewriter, Mrs. Kurtz paints a vivid picture of the people and their customs in the countries they visited.)

Mexico, Central America, Panama—another dream come true! It is fun to dream but still much more fun to pack the car and take off, headed for parts unknown.

We cast our ballots on Nov. 9 and the following day headed south. We thought we were leaving early enough to miss the winter but headed into quite a snowstorm as we neared Jordan Valley.

After spending two weeks in Arizona, Mr. and Mrs. Warren Russell of Salem met us at Phoenix and the four of us waited at Guaymas, Mexico, for a week before we were joined by Mr. and Mrs. Claude Dutton of Pasco.

The six of us enjoyed a leisurely trip south to Mexico City where we spent several days seeing some of the many wonderful sights, sometimes going on guided tours.

We saw the "Ballet Popular de Mexico" presented in the Theater of the Palace of Fine Arts, the Cathedral, the ruins in and around the "Great Aztec Temple" where the pyramids were so interesting. These were the highlights of our stay in Mexico City where we also had to obtain our visas for other countries.

Spend Christmas in Oaxaca

We left Mexico City on Tuesday before Christmas so we could spend our holiday in Oaxaca, a much smaller city.

The Christmas Eve parade which included floats by the various churches was beautiful to behold and the many dark-skinned children with such beautiful dresses riding on flower-decked floats gave us a glimpse into the native custom of celebrating the birth of Christ.

Our dinner the next day was served on the warm patio at our trailer court with 12 places set at the table.

In Mexico City we were joined by another couple from near Montreal, Canada, and all drove slowly toward the Guatemalan border where the Russell couple left us and headed home.

Travel Coastal Highway

After going through the border customs on Jan. 5 we took the coastal highway traveling through countries rich in coffee, cattle, cotton and sugar cane with much citrus fruit in season.

One never tired of traffic along the highways. Oxen teams, burros, cattle, goats and the many native people were going to work, to market or to do the family wash in the nearby rivers. Stops in the villages or cities where we purchased food, our sightseeing

excursions, even our wash days in the river with the native women added to our enjoyment and helped us to feel that we were some of them.

The friendliness wherever we met people was one of the biggest surprises and joys of our many weeks in these countries.

Welcome Extended in Panama

At last Panama. After three days we drove into Panama City and our goal was reached. The warm welcome extended to us as we stopped at the administration office in the American zone made us feel like we had almost been trail blazers.

We were told we were the first to come over the highway since the trouble over a year ago, but we knew there had been others although they must not have made their presence known to them. They planned our stay, taking us on a guided tour of the canal and found the only trailer park in the city for us to stay in. We spent two days in Colon where a native Panamanian offered us the fenced enclosure of his Yacht club for our "home" while there. We also had an enjoyable evening in the home of a couple formerly from Canada.

Meet Others From U.S.

We shopped in the custom-free city and met a few other couples from the States as well as army personnel. Our six days in Panama City came to a close and after enjoying a beautiful folk dancing event in Old Panama, where many years ago they used the square for selling slaves, we started for "home" some 6,000 miles away.

We spent time sightseeing in the cities of San Jose, Costa Rica; Granada and Managua, Nicaragua; passed through Honduras; then stopped in El Salvador in the cities of San Salvador and at a state park called Los Chollols.

We drove to the top of the old volcano in San Salvador and looked down into the half-mile crater and across the mile distance from rim to rim. Coffee grows on the slopes all the way up and wild flowers are cultivated along the slopes of the inside of the old crater.

Five Days in Guatemala

Guatemala City was our next sightseeing stop and here we met a young fellow who asked for the privilege of showing us his city. Five enjoyable days were spent with him as our guide.

After seeing some of this lovely city we drove to Chichicastenango where some 10,000 Indians meet to worship at their two churches—one a pagan and the other a Catholic. Sundays and Thursdays are also "market days" for them. Another day was spent seeing and climbing over the ruins at Antigua.

On Feb. 16 we crossed the border into Mexico again and headed for Veracruz. We had wonderful summertime weather all winter, delicious tropical fruits of all kinds to eat and the warm friendliness of people who did not let the language barrier keep them from extending to us their kind hospitality. They sat with us in the evenings or "looked in" our campers wherever we stopped.

Continue North to Texas

We knew we were leaving these countries, possibly never to return, and our hearts were a bit heavy as we continued north to Brownsville, Texas.

What an adventure! The many surprises made the trip much more of a pleasure than we had ever dreamed it would be.

We brought back with us memories that we shall always have with us and addresses of many people we met and enjoyed, people from our United States as well as neighboring countries. We hope we shall be better neighbors of theirs and that some of their friendliness has rubbed off on us.

MR. and MRS. M. L. KURTZ

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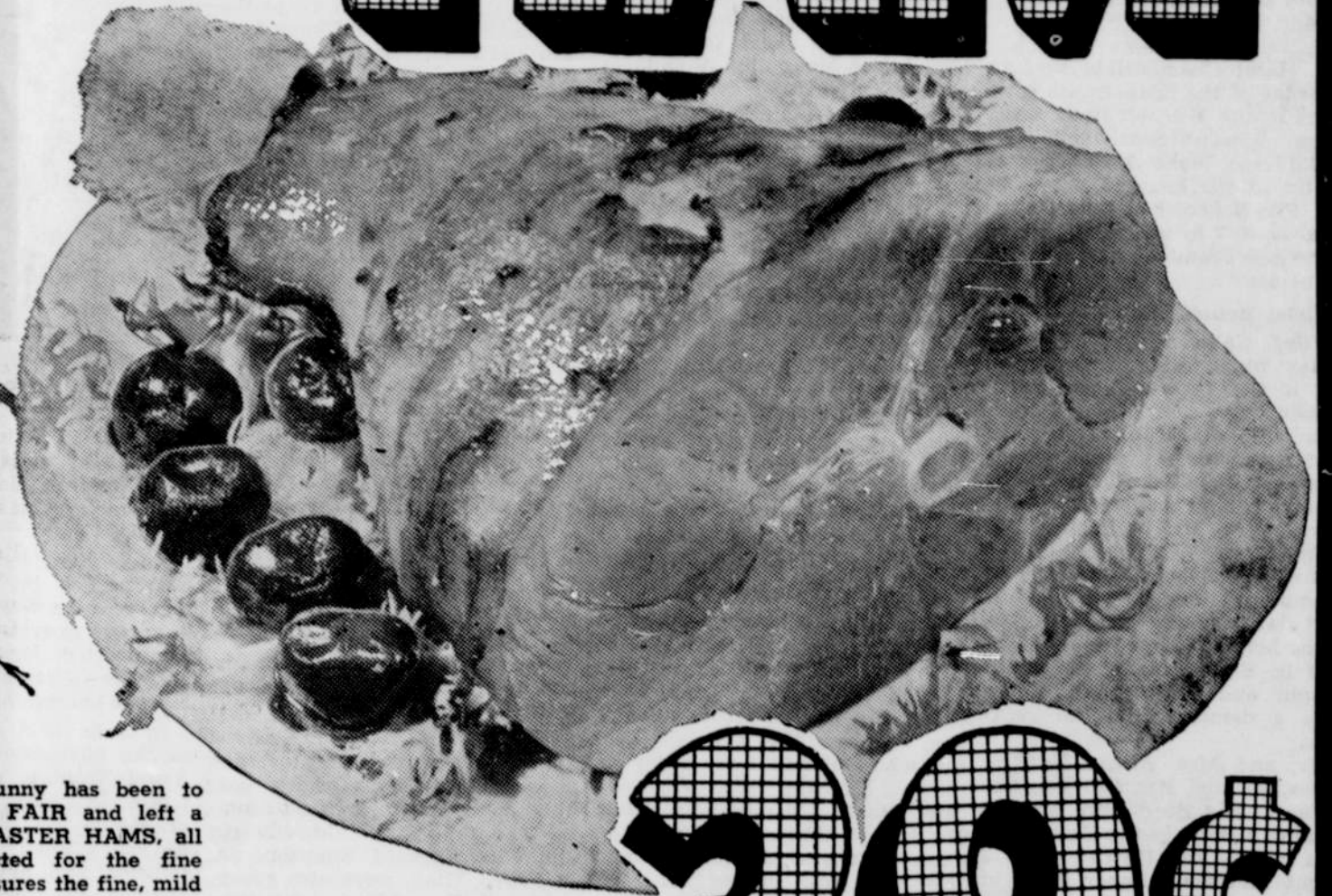
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