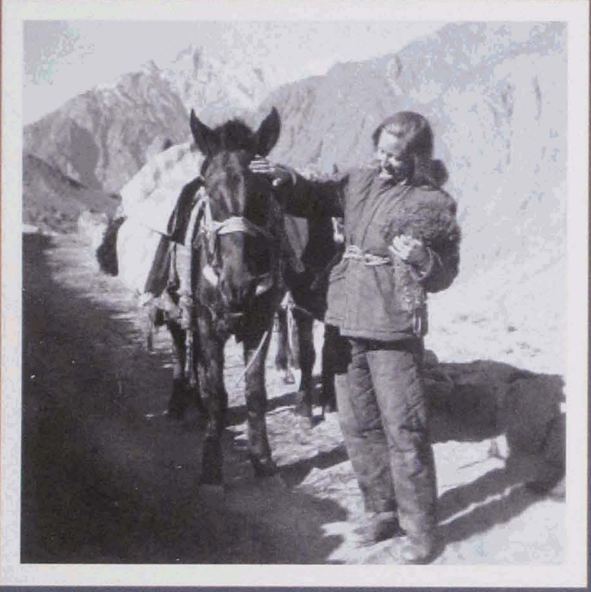
LETTERS FROM ASIA

THE JOURNEY OF BOB AND VERA RANSOM

EDITED BY
THOMAS A. ROBERTSON



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1. SAN FRANCISCO

Considering what Bob and Vera Ransom had done until then, there was little sign that they would change their lives so completely. They were in their thirties. Bob was an associate at a large San Francisco law firm, where he had begun a climb that could lead to the top of the profession. Vera worked at the Hearst flagship, *The San Francisco Examiner,* where she enjoyed meeting young journalists enlivened by adventures around the Pacific. It was late 1944, and the end of the War was in sight. As soon as they married, however, Bob and Vera both quit their jobs.

The decision to abandon what they had worked so hard to achieve remains surprising. Bob's legal career had been moving in the right direction. He had been deferred from the military, and so was ahead of his generation. The partners at his firm liked him. He was a member of the Bohemian Club and had been invited to join the Pacific Union. Despite lingering self-consciousness because he had not been in the service, all other signs were auspicious.

He had also married a stylish and intrepid woman. Vera was ready for anything. On their wedding trip they bicycled across half of the United States and crossed the Great Lakes by steamer, followed by a train ride to Philadelphia. They ended up at Vera's parents' farm outside that city.

Then they spent six months in Acapulco long before Mexico's west coast became popular. Its single attraction was that they could live on the beach for a dollar a day. Despite considerable trouble, when Bob fell ill with jaundice, the experience apparently stirred an appetite for even more exotic travel.

Yet life in San Francisco was seductive, and once they returned attracted their involvement. Although people still stood in line for butter, by early 1946 the city was growing used to peace.

Bob and Vera loved Chinatown, where dinner with a beer or two cost as little as $2.00. They sampled the local wine, including reds made in North Beach basements. They ate the fixed-price meals in the neighborhood's family-style Italian restaurants. Vera says that

Italian bachelors ate at La Pantera and Green Valley for less than a dollar. She and Bob often were the only non-Italians, she the only woman.

The city offered other possibilities. Paul Robeson came on tour, and Bob and Vera went to hear him. Martha Graham came, and they went to see her. Bob appeared in Bohemian Club theatricals. In one he and a friend danced a Charleston. The ballet, opera and symphony announced full seasons for the first time in five years, and they attended. They went to lectures, including one which particularly interested Bob on the Nuremburg trials.

San Francisco was alive and accessible to them. For a lark Bob had a "psychic reading," which Vera recorded in the notebook where she kept a record of their expenses. It cost seventy-five cents. She gave no indication of what was foretold, but the fun of such strangeness was certainly worth seventy-five cents.

Despite its awkward floor plan, Vera loved their Telegraph Hill apartment on its narrow alleyway. It had a large kitchen, typical in what was still an Italian neighborhood. She and Bob entertained frequently at the kitchen table, which sometimes collapsed. The bathroom had been added precariously to the back porch. Her descriptions in her letters to her parents of how cleverly she and Bob worked decorating their new home are affectionate. They describe a special time in which their attachment deepened.

Vera liked pink. They had a pink Mexican swing, and she had a pink dress. She wrote that Bob liked pink, too, or didn't care what color she chose as long as she was there. They slept separately, one in each of the small bedrooms. This does not indicate a lack of passion, but getting used to someone beside you all night took time. Bob also liked to sleep late, not a useful trait in a young lawyer, and Vera didn’t want to disturb him; nor did she seem to care about what might have bothered other wives.

She rose early to shop in North Beach for what she would cook that day; and then they had long, sunny afternoons when they were free to spend hours in bed making love or enjoying their apartment or wandering around North Beach doing whatever they wanted; it was a slow, sunny time as they wove the ties of a long and successful marriage.

Vera's letters and account book during the spring of 1946 reveal not only how carefully they had to watch their money but also her own unconventional streak. Her purchases included asparagus, artichokes, avocados, and other choices unusual at that time, such as, olives in bulk, Italian sausage, tongue, kidneys, and even brains.

She cooked with fresh tarragon and saffron, drank Assam tea, and experimented successfully baking her own bread. She shopped for Dungeness crab, which she now says were larger then. She commented to her mother about how it was the best local seafood, the meat white and sweet.

At Fisherman's Wharf she had her favorite stand where she was well known and celebrated. When she went she could consider several possibilities that the white-aproned owner held up for her. Sometimes she took a live crab back to the apartment where she would boil a large pot of water, take it by its back and drop it in. She and Bob liked it that way, warm, with the fat still in the body so they could scoop it out to spread it on sourdough bread.

They often threw parties for friends who seemed to arrive in San Francisco with remarkable regularity and sometimes settled on Telegraph Hill, which itself was changing. The Italian immigrant community was giving way to people like Bob and Vera, young, well educated, yet also unconventional.

The physical environs of that world, if not the Italian Community, are intact today: the small streets and alleys lined with box-like buildings where one could find an apartment then for $35 a month; the streets still frame arresting views of the great Bay, Alcatraz and Treasure Island in the foreground, Marin, with Tiburon and Angel Island, to the north, and the line of hills, with the distant Campanile on the Berkeley campus faintly visible to the east.

What then possessed Bob and Vera to strike off for Asia? Bob realized that he had to find another job, and he began to look in a more serious way. He spotted a newspaper advertisement that the Army was looking for attorneys to go to Manila to defend Japanese officers accused of war crimes. This would not help his career. It also was not the usual way that a young lawyer and member of the Bohemian Club went about things; but not using his or his father's connections appealed to him.

The opening may also have been a way of further irritating his father and putting a finger in the eye of a military establishment that Bob had come to resent.

He had been 4-F because he walked in his sleep. Once he woke up his mother and reported that he had stepped out a second story window of their Portland home. He was uninjured; at first she did not believe him, but then she saw the mud on his feet and realized it was true. So did the military authorities, and Bob sat out the War. This didn't build a sense that he had done his part.

He became particularly unhappy when he met people who spent the War behind desks and then said something such as: "I was out in the Pacific." Bob felt that they had done little more than he had practicing law. He had no answer for those who actually fought.

The list of applicants for Manila was not long and few had Bob's record. The job and quick departure would be a major step, because Bob would defend Japanese officers who were extremely unpopular, especially among those still in the military. Some of them had liberated prison camps the Japanese ran or had been in action in the Pacific where the Japanese fought long after it made any sense.

About the only thing in its favor was that the job would provide experience trying cases, something difficult for a young attorney to gain even today. With his credentials, however, Bob would have had a chance at a job with the U.S. Attorney to sharpen his trial skills.

The question remains, why did he and Vera want to go to the Philippines? Their only trip into the third world had resulted in an illness and months of convalescence. Bob's father was dead set against the idea. They had no particular reason to choose the Philippines, much less China. He and Vera were not journalists. They did not write travel books. They had no commercial motivation, and it is difficult to think of such work as public service. Even if it wouldn't lead too much of anything else, however, it was a job in an exotic place.

On March 5, 1946, as they began planning the trip, Bob had $30.73 and Vera $12.09 in cash. It is not entirely accurate to say that they were without financial resources. Bob had an aunt who told him that he should always keep $5,000 as a reserve. Vera thinks that she gave him a gift of some amount but is a little vague about whether he actually received it before they left. Even in those inexpensive times, $5,000 was not enough to pay for a trip around the world for two adults who wanted to travel decently. Besides, it was a reserve, not to be spent on what everyone in Bob's family considered a frolic.

The conflict with Bob's father was serious. His father was actually his stepfather, who had married Bob's Mother when Bob was three years old. Bob and he developed a strong bond, and his stepfather adopted him.

He never accepted that Bob abandoned a job with a good San Francisco firm. He was a self-made man who had not had the opportunities he had provided his adopted son; he was very proud of Bob's education. The conflict between them grew so heated that during Bob's convalescence after Acapulco, he and Vera were told to leave the house in Portland.

Later, when it became clear that Bob was serious about dropping everything that had been so carefully planned, his father boarded a train in San Francisco to return to Portland to cut Bob off so that he would get nothing even from his mother. He had a heart attack on the train and died. Bob was not only stubbornly unconventional, he was also lucky.

Vera's mother sent an occasional check, and there was usually even enough for flowers for the apartment. Bob also handled a few legal matters as a sole practitioner, although it doesn't appear that he was very serious about them or made much.

Over time Bob turned out to be serious only about travel. He did not lack enthusiasm or energy. Throughout his life he plunged into things, into law school, into his first job, and then into leaving the country, sorting through what his latest interest offered. One of the stories he told about that time was meeting his firm's managing partner on Market Street and having him remark: "Bob, you're not dressed." Bob wasn't wearing a hat. Although it is hard to imagine now, that was the era that produced *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit.* Bob wanted none of it.

It is far more possible to imagine Bob as an enthusiastic law student at Stanford than as a lawyer. He might have gone up to a professor after class with a question or sat up late with classmates to discuss an obscure point; this falls far more into the category of the good café or barroom conversation, something Bob loved all his life. When it came down to the specifics, the day-to-day grind pursuing a client's case, marshalling documents and interviewing witnesses, all that was dull.

What Bob did like was an unconventional, basic way of life that was actually enriched by a lack of money. He wanted to think things up, interesting and exciting things; and from that point on he did, while plunging ahead as he always had.

When I met him in 1981 in Paris, he was leaving to hitchhike around Ireland. When he returned he said that many of his rides were with priests. Even in cold months he dressed in Bermuda shorts and wool knee socks. It is easy to imagine him riding beside a friendly priest discussing Irish politics or religion, the latter a fascination throughout his life. The priests loved him.

Bob was intrigued that modern, educated people practiced Christianity with dogmas like the Virgin birth and transubstantiation. Later he would watch televangelists and laugh at their wild claims of financial miracles and cures.

Once out in Asia he did not study Buddhism or other eastern religions he and Vera encountered; he was curious about dogma generally, which he thought was strange and funny, not something to believe.

Both Bob and Vera were not only well educated, but sophisticated. She had spent a year at Vassar and then moved to Penn, which she found sexist. She then transferred to the University of Vermont, which she remembers having the best professors among the three.

When they were young they both had seen surprisingly large part of the world and heard about a great deal more. They were well read, even if they often didn't read very much about places before visiting them.

Informing themselves about a new country was part of the trip, meeting and talking with as many local people as possible and then considering and discussing what they had heard and seen for years afterward. Reading more completely about wherever they'd been also came afterward so they could compare what they read with their own experience.

Vera reports that whenever they began to consider any trip, Bob would look at a map, pick the most distant place and say: "I want to go there." He did not lack courage. The post-War world was unstable. As he already knew from his Mexican experience, if something then went wrong in a remote place, there was no going back.

Perhaps he liked the way a trip took things out of his hands. When traveling he faced no decisions about a career, nor did he have to answer questions about why he didn't work. He was traveling.

With Vera he had a companion he could depend on to help him handle most difficulties. Once they returned she also could work, and did happily, rising before him each the morning. He, too, would work at the War crimes trials, a job that he even tried to convince himself could lead to something other than an interesting time in Manila.

Of the two of them, Bob actually had had the more conventional upbringing, attending boarding school in Santa Barbara, where he was a good tennis player and a good enough student to get into Stanford. While Stanford was not the university it became after the War, it was still a credible place and a mark of distinction on the West Coast.

He told Vera that his Stanford admission depended on his grade in French. He had a C, which wasn't good enough. He went in to see the teacher, who asked he what he needed, an A or a B. "A B," Bob replied -- he knew when not to press his luck. It turned out to be enough, and he went off to Palo Alto in 1928, an interesting time if only because of Stanford's connection with President Hoover.

Bob and his mother, Isabelle, were close. They formed an alliance dealing with his stepfather, his mother dancing between, until sometimes her husband put his foot down. When Bob became sick in Mexico, as soon as he could travel he and Vera went to his parents' Portland home for the convalescence.

Vera remembers Bob sitting in the corner of the living room before their banishment, working on what he claimed was a novel.

Considering that they were over thirty, taking his wife to his parents' home for an extended stay was unusual.

Many others Bob's age had spent much of their twenties at war. Now they were starting families and using GI loans to buy homes or to pay for education. This was the greatest generation that had survived the Depression, won the War. and would create an economic miracle.

One of its most intrepid travelers, someone who would visit remote parts of the Philippines and walk the most difficult route in Asia, was not really a part of things. He had sat out the War. Now he was establishing no permanent home and making no career plans.

There were obstacles, however. His father had founded a successful lumber business in Oregon. He was energetic, but also "difficult."

Frank Ransom had divorced his first wife, with whom he had three children. They never acknowledged Bob's Mother, although they had to work with her and Bob during the funeral and probate of the estate.

Her husband's death in early 1946 was hard for Isabelle. The earlier family, with whom she had little connection, frightened her.

The shock quite literally knocked her off her feet: she broke one of her legs, not once but twice. She once had been an attractive woman, although Vera reports that she had limitations. She tried to control her reality to the degree she could by arranging her home with care, having the table set exactly way she wanted, giving detailed orders to her maid and cook. She doted on her lawyer son but had to spend most of 1946 convalescing while Bob moved toward his new adventure.

In a letter to Vera Bob described the aftermath of his father's death:

> The funeral was some pumpkins: no less than 135 flower sprays, etc. Including (as stated in the neatly typed "Record of Flowers" supplied by the undertaker) "3 wreaths on easels." Dad's friend the Rt. Rev. Bishop Dagwell was out of town, so his assistant performed all the necessary incantations and mumbo-jumbo. All hail the Witch Doctors. Young Frank Ransom insisted on someone singing -- so we listened to ten minutes of a dirge-like baritone.

Vera did not go with Bob to Portland. The recent banishment had created a barrier. She limited herself to a sympathetic letter to her mother-in-law.

Bob's letter to Vera continued:

> "Some double-breasted character at the trust company of the U.S. Bank was to have "read the will" to us this morning, but out of respect to the recently deceased Helen Ransom, said reading has been postponed. This, of course, is hard on me because I've already spent my dollar."

Helen Ransom, who had also died, was Bob's stepsister. Soon after his father's funeral a struggle developed with Frank Ransom's business associates over a closely held corporation, which was a major asset of the estate. After a lengthy fight, led by Bob and Bruce Walkup, a friend who later became a well-known San Francisco attorney, Bob's mother received an income, and the children from Frank Ransom's first marriage came out well, too. Bob, as he somewhat bitterly reported, got nothing, although later he did inherit some of the Ransom money through his Mother.

In the same letter, Bob took time to pass along a judgment on his late stepfather:

> Harry Pennell, who is a very calm child, has been around the house drinking up Dad's remaining Scotch and telling mother what a fine woman she is, . . . letting her know that he knows that it took a cross between an angel and the holy ghost to live with the late lamented F.H.R.

Vera's parents got along better than Bob's but her family's finances during her childhood were not always as sound. Frank

Ransom was a good businessman. Vera's father, Harry A. Prock, also dealt in lumber. The Depression and her father's resulting business troubles led her to transfer from Vassar to Penn so she could live at home.

Before then her family had the resources even to travel. During a visit with her in Paris during the summer of 2001, she told us that her parents had taken her there for the first time in 1928 when she was 16.

At 93 she remembers the voyage over on an Italian ship, the Saturnia. One evening in the first class bar she grew tipsy from a cocktail with colored liqueurs that the barman layered in a tall glass.

That first trip was exciting. Harry Prock had decided to try lumber brokering in Europe, developing sources of supply in Romania. Vienna was a suitable base for his family. The venture fizzled, and they returned to Philadelphia, but before they did Vera attended school, took German lessons, and saw something of a city that then was home to Wittgenstein and Freud. She saw *Die Fledermaus* on New Year's Eve, 1928, and remembers boisterous chimney sweeps coming into a restaurant in their work clothes, an Austrian tradition.

Her family stayed for long periods in various hotels, including the Astoria, and her mother, whom Vera describes as efficient and always able to create a home, prepared some of their meals in their room.

They also met an American Professor of German from the University of Vermont. When Penn and living at home proved confining, their new friend convinced Vera to transfer to his University.

The trip to Europe included a visit to Trieste, Zagreb and Sarajevo. Vera even managed to meet a boy from the Sarajevo Muslim community. She was invited to his home and well treated; they all sat on carpets, ate sweet cakes, and sipped tea with a peppery taste; Vera's culinary memory is exact. None of the local girls would have been permitted to do that, which added to the fun. Considering the freedom that Vera's parents allowed her, the first impression the Sarajaven family had of an American was a remarkable one.

Asia would be very different, but the idea of picking up and leaving fit in with what Vera had known as a girl, as did the precarious finances. Perhaps her life with Bob seemed an extension of her family's, ruled by a man who took risks.

Before she met Bob, she had at least one serious relationship, moving to San Francisco at the invitation of a young man who was an enthusiastic rock climber. She climbed with him on weekends, driving across the San Joaquin Valley and up what then were endless, two-lane roads. She still remembers the Sierra Nevada's granite faces. He was not ready for anything long term, and Vera expressed indignation when he later moved in across the street from her.

By then, however, she had met Bob. This happened late one foggy evening as Vera walked the large German shepherd that came with the apartment she sublet.

They made a striking couple. Bob was 6'2," Vera just over 5'. He was good looking, with thick reddish brown hair. Vera says that at Stanford he was known as "handsome Ransom." Vera was gamine, stylish and pretty. They both were spontaneous and enjoyed friends who dropped in at the last minute for dinner. At 93 Vera is still spontaneous, and calm to the point of serenity. She also has a refined way of speaking which is much as it was when she met Bob.

In May, 1946, Vera wrote to her parents:

> Today has been eventful . . . or may prove to be. Bob, while reading the morning paper noticed a news item asking for attorneys to help with war trials in Manila. He

> called up the army captain, made an appointment to see him this afternoon. Well, the upshot is that Bob thinks it is too good a thing to turn down . . . he has not been offered the job yet, but the captain gave him every indication that Bob would be acceptable. He has to make up his mind this week [and] hand in his application. He would know in 48 hours whether he's been accepted.

The first three paragraphs of the letter were about household tasks, so the prospect of Bob's leaving for Manila reads as one more mundane event of the day. Perhaps Vera didn't quite believe it would happen; yet she knew Bob well enough to know that he was taken by the whole idea. He could continue his legal career after a fashion, solve their financial problems, and begin a new adventure, all in one stroke. Vera continued:

> There is inflation in Manila, and it's hot as Hades. There is no malaria or other tropical diseases; only amoebic dysentery which can always be avoided by eating only peeled vegetables and not drinking water that has not been purified.

She remembered the Mexican trip, and although she sounds like an old hand at Third World travel, she wasn't really so sanguine. The list of the shots Bob had to get shows that the public health problems also included typhoid, typhus, and cholera.

There would be other difficulties. Only months after the War's end, Manila remained largely in ruins. There was little housing, and what there was beyond Bob and Vera's means. The Army claimed it could offer them space in a Quonset hut, but they wanted to live in the city itself, not in an American compound.

They spoke little Spanish and had few contacts. They were dependent on the Army to make arrangements and contrary to what they were led to believe by the captain who interviewed Bob, Army sponsored housing for married couples would be hard to manage.

At one point Bob made contact with *Time Magazine's* Manila Correspondent who had manage to lease a house. This proved to be a bachelor's pad, and Vera was not welcome.

Vera's trip out also would be hard to arrange. The Army would pay Bob's fare, but she wanted a job offer that included the airfare.

They also began to lay longer range plans, which gave matters added significance. Vera wrote:

> Then the idea is to save sufficient money from our salaries (I would get a job, too) so that we could stay in France or Cairo for six months or so, so that Bob could finish his book on Acapulco. So you see, we would have the experience of living in a foreign country for one year, plus the added experience of the legal work. Bob wants to travel around the world, too; in this way our fare for a great part of it would be paid for. We could save enough money to continue the round the world trip.

Despite his effort at his parents', Bob's literary ambitions based on the Acapulco trip came to nothing.

As dramatic or even dangerous as post-War Manila and outer islands of the Philippine archipelago were and still are, or as challenging as crossing the Himalayas on foot and horseback into what is now northern Pakistan was, to hear Vera describe it, they seem more like a Saturday excursion to a farmer's market, something that Vera now often makes. This attitude accompanied many trips she and Bob made over the next fifty years, to Africa, the Middle East and Latin America, including Tierra del Fuego. They went everywhere with only the most rudimentary planning, extreme travel made routine.

It is as if they set out to send up better known travelers who, well-equipped and funded by institutions, such as *The National Geographic* or the Explorers Club, sailed off to Asia or Africa in the great explorer tradition and returned to write and lecture.

Bob and Vera turned out not to be very interested in that. They wanted to go and to see, and then to imagine going and seeing again. If they lacked resources, or if no one more than their close friends and family knew, that was fine; neither lavish resources nor eventual publication turned out to matter. Not only what they did but also how, and then what they did afterward remained casual. They turned out to be pure travelers.

2. ALONE IN MANILA

Bob was offered the job, and the decision made. The Army handled his arrangements. The recruiting captain in San Francisco continued to assure them that it would be easy for Vera to join him, but what ensued proved a three-month struggle. Much of Bob's and most of Vera's time was spent getting that done.

He had his shots quickly, followed by side effects that put him in bed for two days. Their lives moved on unchanged into the summer of 1946. Each morning the fog burned off and each afternoon blew back through the Golden Gate. There was anticipation and many parties and a great deal of talk: "You've got to meet him. He has a cousin who went out to Manila in 1935."

In late August, Bob was told that he would leave in three days. Despite the expectation, neither Vera nor Bob were fully prepared for what was about to occur. They would miss one another, but they did not realize how much. Some days the longing would be piercing, and moments when each would hardly recall exactly how the other looked.

For Vera the first day was like the end of a long holiday. Bob was pre-occupied by trip and the newness of his military surroundings, but when she returned to their apartment, she was alone, imagining only when she would see him again.

He flew across the Pacific. Once in Manila he wrote:

> The plane trip was hard and wonderful. We had a day in Guam -- three of us hitchhiked all over the tropical island -- ending up at a War crimes trial being conducted by the Navy. The Japanese defendants -- 18 of them ranging from Lt. General to Private -- were charged with killing and eating an American flyer. The tongue was evidently the choice bit. Very fancy courtroom, air conditioned, and much military humphing and salutin...

Two Japanese defendants, including a Major, were convicted of actual cannibalism. Although 21 of the Guam defendants had their death sentences commuted, one to 16 to 20 years, 20 to life imprisonment, 13 were hanged in a Quonset hut.

This was also Bob's first experience in the tropical heat and humidity. The Mexican coast had been different. There the climate was dry, not too different from Santa Barbara on a warm day, the cooling, afternoon wind rising off the sea. Guam was stifling and wet. At night insects clung to the walls of the bathroom and flitted around the bare light bulbs. The atmosphere, with its scent of mildew, fit the post-War mood, a time of sloth, elaboration of personal war records and revenge, a clubby exercise that for obvious reasons Bob loathed.

His arrival in the Philippines turned dramatic:

> Came into Manila in a blinding tropical rain storm, was picked up by a jeep and immediately threw my shoulder out -- was driven the to the War Crimes place, and it took about six men holding me down to pull it back. Some fun. . . . We are staying in tents about four miles out of town -- we have a "boy" who shines our shoes and cleans up and guards the place against theft.

Bob had disasters of that kind throughout his life. There had been the sleepwalking incident out the second floor window, the jaundice in Mexico and now this.

The actual scene was remarkable, Bob flat on the floor of a walled tent, someone holding each leg, Bob telling through clenched teeth how to pull the bone back into its socket; they sweated in the heat, Bob flushed, cursed the pain.

This was discussed later in the officers' mess as a major event of the week.

In that first letter Bob also wrote:

> I am writing from the High Commissioners' Palace where the trials are actually held. The walls of this building are covered with bullet holes; they fought thru here room by room. There are 13 lawyers now, and soon there will be 15. Only two: Ransom and Tobin, have wives they want to bring over here. We are informed that there is a list a mile long, and there is no chance of getting on same. But don't worry about it. We will work it through the commanding General or thru Washington, and if not, then I can pay your way over -- get you a passage on a freighter thru Mr. Lillick. [The managing partner of the firm where Bob had worked.]

Bob did not fully understand the bloodlust of the American troops who re-took Manila, hunting down the Japanese. By the final battle the hatred was passionate and officially endorsed.

Bob could only imagine the sound of the machine gun fire growing closer and the breathing of the Japanese soldiers waiting silently in the Palace's large rooms, knowing or even hoping that they would die. Some of them killed themselves rather than be captured. It was a time of supreme sacrifice for most western troops, who did not want to be among the last to die.

Bob was immersed by choice in the subculture shaped by all this. It seemed as if everyone in Manila remembered firsthand the last battle.

Bob immediately began angling to get Vera a job as secretary for the *Time* correspondent: "He wants someone who can answer the *Time* fan mail, and take shorthand, and handle the office when he [is] out of town, and I am sure you can do it." It hadn't sunk in yet that getting Vera a job and out to Manila wouldn't go as easily as things had in San Francisco. They also couldn't afford to live in what little housing was available -- Bob reported in the same letter that inflation truly was "terrible."

Yet there he sat, chatting up the *Time* correspondent over dinner, extolling Vera's efficiency: “She types 60 words a minute and can take shorthand.” Bob was new in Manila, but he was also persistent and confident, if not brash, as young lawyers who have tasted success often are.

"This town is rather Wild West, rootin tootin’, with lots of holdups at night,” he wrote. “One has to be a little careful. Some of the 12 year old children have pistoles stuck in their back pockets."

Bob did not take much of this seriously. He had no trouble, a young American who was 6'2' and cut a striking figure as he strolled through the streets. The fact that he walked at all set him apart. Americans drove. But for him safety was not an issue, at least not one that would keep him away from what he wanted to see.

Vera now reports that windows had to be closed and locked at night or thieves would climb in and go through everything they owned.

The Filipinos were desperate to survive in what was left of their country, with the remnant of an economy that offered few choices. And here among them strolled the Americans, rich beyond imagination, living off a military economy that had been refined for the American's benefit for five years.

"We are so damn lucky," Bob surely thought. He felt good. Things were working out.

Many other Americans in Manila felt the same way. They were alive. We had won the War, liberating the Filipinos in the process. We respected them to a degree for fighting along side us, but most of us thought we were of a higher order and so were insufferable. Yet most Filipinos did not seem to think we were, at least not then. We were MacArthur and the generous GI's who had returned to save them. We also believed firmly that we had made our own luck, paid for in lives, which so soon after the War was the ultimate justification. We had also defeated what we well knew to be evil.

During his first week in Manila, Bob remained confident about Vera's arrangements:

> "One of the lawyers out here -- one who has been here for six months -- is an old friend of Sig Unanders and mine from Stanford. Sooo, as you can see, the long arm of the Sacred Order of Stanford Slickers extends even to Manila. His wife is here, and I am going to have dinner with them...

It was just a matter of putting together the right contacts. Someone would offer a job, someone would have pull at Pan American, and someone else would have an apartment to sublet. It was how things had always worked for both of them.

Back in San Francisco Vera closed up their apartment, putting everything in storage. She then would move to her parent's in Pennsylvania.

Bob had not received his first paycheck and they did not have the money for her to live on her own. In one letter he reassured her that "soon we will be dancing at the Hotel Manila, swimming, and being happy together, doing nothing or something, as we always do . . ."

He didn't care what they did, as long as they did it together. The immediate reality was painful.

A single room in Manila proved to rent for $125 per month, three and one half times what Bob and Vera had paid for their entire apartment on Telegraph Hill.

Bob also sent Vera a news clipping of an American killed by a stray bullet fired at a member of the Philippine Army CIS. Someone had followed the maxim, "If you can't buy him, shoot him."

Corruption, including turf battles and vendettas, were frequent despite or because of the War's end. Vera did not share this article with her parents.

Bob joked that Vera should bring a large dog for protection; after cold beer delivered the day after landing on a beachhead and an airstrip for B-24's a week later, even that seemed possible. The trials themselves were a miracle.

Vera's parents did hear the dog idea and registered concern. What was this man doing with their daughter? But they weren't young; nor had they seen firsthand what American miracles could be performed.

One of the obstacles to making arrangements was that Bob already had been assigned cases and had to work. He reported shortly after his arrival, in a letter dated September 11, 1946: "Met my first Jap prisoner today -- a vice admiral. Very pleasant and smiling."

The term "Jap" is offensive sixty years later, but in 1946 it was accepted usage, especially in the Army and even for someone assigned to defend Japanese prisoners.

By October 4th Bob had already completed a two and one-half week trial, carefully marshalling the evidence he had been able to gather, sitting beside his client at the counsel table through long afternoons as the prosecution presented their witnesses and documentary evidence. The three-judge panel of American officers had not been terribly attentive, but Bob was only beginning to grasp the situation:

> . . . they sentenced my "client" to death. In my opinion he was sentenced due to the indifference and incompetence of my superior defense counsel -- a Stanford graduate and Harvard law man. I really wish to

> hell that I had had control of the case from the beginning. The hell with it.

And also:

> The "Executive Officer" of the defense counsel is a colonel and a son of a bitch with delusions of grandeur -- he is always issuing orders. Jesus H. etc., am I glad I have never been in the army. At ease. Ahhh-rumph!

Bob lost whatever remaining respect he had for the military.

As he fought for his clients, he also began to feel for them. His life outside the courtroom was equally unsettling:

> We have been living in the sticks in tents, or in a place on Taft Avenue with a lot of other lawyers -- and the days have been confused. Sometimes we eat in one place and sometimes another, and after eating we get bumped over rutted roads until I thought I'd just as soon not eat at all.

His situation changed professionally:

> Now my time as assistant defense counsel is over.
> I have arranged so that I shall never again work with my good Stanford friend. . , and have had the luck to be teamed with one Simon, the best lawyer here. We shall work on cases together in the sense that we shall exchange ideas, but by God and by Jesus, we shall each run our own cases; and then if they hang my clients, I'll know whose fault it is and why.

He had had some experience at his firm in San Francisco, but he hadn't had much major trial experience. A lawyer's responsibility during capital cases is crushing, even when he is supposed to lose.

Bob took matters seriously, and was enraged when other defense counsel, and especially the judges, did not. They were still killing Japanese; it was an extension of the War, a last phase in which Americans took no risk of dying themselves.

By then Bob also had a clearer idea of local conditions:

> Manila is really a blown up place; hardly a building left -- people living all over the place in board shacks, etc. But there is fun to be had -- and I'm sure that we could be happy here. I am eating at a very good officer's mess but am finagling to get a commissary card. . . .

He also used what was a special talent:

> I am writing you from OUR new home. About a week ago I began ringing doorbells (or rather banging on shattered doors), and a snaggle-toothed Filipino answered this one. The whole downstairs of this house is blown apart. The house itself, if old fashioned -- even a sort of Victorian tower you will like. Three Spanish ladies occupy -- together with [me] -- the top floor. . . . I have partitioned off a part of the upstairs and have to myself a bathroom (plumber coming tomorrow), a sort of bedroom opening onto a tile porch, and a balcony! For all this I pay $35 a month. And the Spanish ladies speak Spanish all the time. They lost brothers, fathers, etc. during the War, and are rather sad. They want a man around to protect them from the robbers, . . .

The whole city was sad, brutalized and broken, an Asian Berlin, made sadder still, because, unlike the Germans, the Filipinos had done nothing to start the War. So many had died.

There remained the problem of getting Vera the necessary visa and the money to get to Manila. Perhaps the *Time* correspondent, and others, did not like brash, young American attorneys who were quick to get their feet on the ground and also to criticize the American occupation *Time* so strongly supported. Bob described the man as:

> . . . a kind of mouse here; a sort of cross between a YMCA [secretary] and an American Vice-Consul at Acapulco. He wanted a secretary and he didn't want one. And the more he thought about it, the more he didn't want one with brains. . . . The big business boss from Shanghai came thru here the other day. I met him and gave him some letters to deliver personally to Preston and Sousa [the grandson of John Phillip Sousa, another Stanford classmate]. He says that Preston and Deedee are his closest friends, and that Sousa gave him the tie he had on -- but there was the smell of politics about him. . . . They [turned out to be] retrenching.

The *Time* correspondent did not respond quite as they had hoped. Many Americans who went out to Asia immediately after the War had an eye fixed on the main chance. Careers could be made; but Vera would not work for *Time.*

Yet Bob was learning to cope in other ways:

> I am not as mad at the Army as when I came and am learning to avoid trouble: the way to avoid trouble, Miss Prock, is to turn around when you see a Colonel coming your way. A Colonel . . . is someone who wants to be a general and hates Japs because of his difficult War years fighting them from the Pentagon Building.

His attitude, one part reality and one part knowing that he lacked a War record, influenced his outlook throughout his time in the Philippines.

He became more thoroughly involved in his work:

> I think I am about to be assigned a most interesting case. Ever since I have been here I have been hearing from former tenants of the Santa Romas prison that there was a certain Jap they hated because he made it so uncomfortable for them. Nothing definite -- no atrocities -- but just restrictions, etc., made for the purpose of making people uncomfortable. I think that all of Manila is waiting for this guy to be punished. Well, he has been charged with bumping off some people at another camp nearby, and I think I shall be the one to defend him. We shall see.

Bob's hunch was correct, although this particular trial did not occur until well after Vera had arrived. His client was Sadaki Konishi. He had served as the supply officer at the Japanese Camp near Manila at Los Banos. He was charged and convicted of killing a six-year old internee named James Gardner, an entire family of Chinese, 30 Chinese non-combatants, an American internee named George Lewis, plus gradually starving the entire camp.

A picture on the front page of the *Manila Bulletin* shows Bob in the courtroom standing next to Konishi, who was wearing a surgical mask because he had tuberculosis. Around them the courtroom was crowded with former internees. It was their day of vengeance. As the newspaper account stated:

> The shadow of the hangman's noose fell yesterday on Sadaki Konishi . . . when the war crimes commission sentenced him to die by hanging. Konishi was found guilty of five of the six specifications on which he went on trial for his life. The findings and decision of the commission will be forwarded to the commanding general . . . after which they will be transmitted to the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers, General of the Army Douglas MacArthur for confirmation.

The *Manila Bulletin* also reported:

> Robert Ransom, chief defense counsel, yesterday indicated that he will appeal the commission's decision to the Supreme Court of the United States on a writ of certiorari. Ransom said that the principal evidence relied upon for the conviction of the accused was admitted in violation of the high standard of American jurisprudence.

Bob was very angry. He mentioned years later that when they grew bored American officers serving as judges sometimes read comic books on the bench.

At about this time Bob discovered the library at the High Commissioner's palace and found relief in reading. One of the titles he checked out was *Many Happy Days I've Squandered*, a book that hit home with him. Because on his attitude toward his work and searing experience of the War Crimes trials, he would never be a careerist.

He remained in close contact with Vera. They even spoke on the telephone, which at that time was a near miracle. Vera provided him with the name of her father's lawyer's daughter who was in Manila, and Bob tried to look her up.

Vera was secure. No one was her rival. Bob wrote to her shortly after they spoke:

> I think we shall be happy in this house. The three Spanish ladies vie with the old man to turn down my bed at night; and the youngest even brings me a bottle of water. . . . The various boys who live in the ruins downstairs (very nice students) are cleaning up the garden, and the papayas are growing away, and the camphor chest smells good and I'm writing to my Baby by night and plotting by day to bring her over here.

After a month in Manila, however, he still had no idea how that might happen. His life had fallen into a routine, which sounded pleasant enough, if lonely:

> Right now I get up at about six in the morn, sans fusfus, shower in my own bathroom. (recently fixed by six plumbers working two days, said plumbers borrowed from a captain I know who runs a stadium nearby) and walk thru the native section along a river to a very good officer's mess about ten minutes away. After breakfast, all the lawyers are bundled into a truck and taken to the High Commissioner's Palace. I, however, leave a little

> early, walk to the bay, and there hitchhike to work or take one of the native jeepneys (converted jeeps stolen from the Army). I meet a lot of local people that way.

Even in the midst of the trials, Bob was interested in the local people. As he made his way on a battered jeepney each morning, sometimes he met someone who spoke English and then could ask what that person had done during the War.

The story of the plumbers brings Manila in line with every other place occupied by the Allies. Things could be scrounged, fixed and generally made bearable by a system that functioned outside official channels.

Bob's cases arrived in rapid succession.

> If I'm actually in trial, the court hours are 8:30 until 11:30, and 1:00 to 3:00. Right next door is the stockade where the prisoners are kept. There are also interpreters, Japanese civilians who we work with. There are also a couple of Japanese lawyers we can use if we wish to. In the trial just finished, [my co-counsel] associated in a Japanese lawyer who even conducted the examination of some of the witnesses.

A little over a month after he arrived in Manila and he began to know his clients as individuals, Bob began to type out the word "Japanese."

> When we interview our clients, or witnesses, we sign out for them at the stockade, and take them into little rooms.

> We sit around a table and talk and take notes and smoke cigarettes. The Japanese are the politest people on earth, and they have no fear of death. They expect it. Sometimes we take a jeep up to Loupow -- a big Japanese concentration camp about an hour out of town.. . . we took one of the local interpreters, and I had to wear a "side arm" a 45 pistola to guard him (Don't worry; it didn't go off).

Despite the joke about the pistol, this was serious stuff for an American who until then had done few things beyond finish his education and sign on with a large law firm whose partners told him every move to make. Life had not been that serious, certainly not in his first job. Life in Manila was.

The Japanese had been brutal to the point of bestiality; but it turned out that they also were courageous and civilized in other ways, no longer acting as they were portrayed in the press. If they were capable of brutality, so was the United States, which had dropped two atomic bombs to end the War: these stunningly violent acts blurred the moral lens through which the War was viewed by any who cared to look and think.

Bob met other Americans who also didn’t take the occupation at face value:

> The AP man is a very good guy; he took me to lunch at the Press Club on Friday -- and there met all the local

> newsmen. A long discussion over drinks about the army in Manila, and McNutt, and what this general said, and overall policy. I think this may be a good source of contact. I have been offered an associate membership ("Mr. Ransom is a journalist, and is about to travel around the world as a freelance, and it is hoped that he will be given such help . . . etc.) and will accept same if I enjoy the next couple of meals there.

He apparently did, and the Press Club got Bob, and eventually Vera, away from what was a parochial group of Army officers and even fellow defense lawyers. One can imagine whom the Army was able to recruit to defend the Japanese: the inexperienced, like Bob, and in too many cases, the inept. The Executive Officer for the defense counsel apparently fit more closely into the latter category.

Bob went on to tell Vera about the Press Club, "Every Sunday they have Little Pig Barbecues!" This was a reference to Vera's Mother whom Bob kidded about the pigs she raised on their farm. By all accounts Mrs. Prock was highly skilled in what then was called "home economics," coupled with knowledge of animal husbandry.

Bob also had hopes for a special way of life for Vera and him:

> The . . . family speaks Spanish all the time; we could be boarders here if we wished. You and they could cook together and shop together, etc., and you could learn Spanish . . . . This house is really light and airy. A lot of the walls are out and birds -- something like wrens -- fly

> in and out. One of them is sitting right now on mosquito net.

Professionally, however, matters did not improve. Bob wrote regarding his former co-counsel:

> He wants to work with me on all the cases, and I feel a so and so for arranging it otherwise, but I just could not stand to see these young Japanese kids sentenced to death because of indifference or ineptitude. Of course, I may make a worse record than he does and may come to the conclusion that his methods are best. But I don't think so now . . . Everyone around here just loves you to put in a negligent defense. "Of course he's guilty" is the attitude. I think that if the defense counselors would get down to work and start educating the courts, there would not be so many death sentences. But most of these guys are scared to death of the colonels sitting on the courts. So am I, a little. They are like the English: so goddamned sure that they are right that they just about convince you . . . .

To illustrate what he meant about the English, Bob described an incident involving a colleague's English wife:

> She is right out of a movie: dowdily dressed, big hats that make her look like an illustration . . . , intolerant of everything American, the most atrocious cook (favorite dish: grated onions cooked slowly in a mass of grease). . . . a caricature of a caricature of a caricature . . . three Filipinos put a caribou across the road and stuck a gun in her ribs and asked for her money. She only had a peso and a half. But instead of handing it over, she gave these desperate characters a fifteen minute tongue lashing, told them ought to be ashamed, told them to put away the gun because it might go off, told them that she had no intention of handing over her peso and a half, told them she was returning along the same road in an hour and that

> if they were there when she returned, she would report them to the British Consulate! You don't believe it? Well, its true, and she told me they were ashamed and they apologized. Well, that is what the colonels are like. They know they are right and it takes a little time to resist that sort of assurance.

The woman actually sounds amazing, but as a lousy cook, she couldn't be forgiven.

Bob had pointed out one of the keys to the British Empire: How could anyone resist a nation so certain of everything? Resisting that attitude, especially when the British had guns, takes time. At first, most of the locals were intimidated. By the time most of them were not in awe, a century or two had passed. In Bob's view, the colonels had torn a page from the British book, something that other western nations now find increasingly irritating about Americans.

Bob remained focused on getting Vera out to Manila.

> Tobin and I have tried everything from applications to the commanding general to actually contacting a congressional committee, which went through here, but nothing doing so far. We are now working on an appeal directly to the Assistant Secy. of War . . . I personally don't think anything will come of it. I think what will happen is that I will write to Lillick and get him to see some of our companies and put you on a ship and pay your way over here. A ship costs $330 and Pan American costs over $700. To hell with the money. I agree with you, NEVER AGAIN will we be separated.

They were having their own separation but after the War when most couples had been reunited. Many had endured far longer periods apart, but in one way this was worse: Because the War was over, there was no good reason for it. They had just begun their life together and their passion was fresh. One can imagine evenings that lagged, especially for Bob who was away from home and had few people with whom he could talk.

Over the ensuing fifty years never again would they be separated for so long and never voluntarily. Years later Vera remarked that "Bobby never did anything he didn't want to do in his whole life." This was one time when, at least for a while, he had to do something he didn't want to do.

Because of what Vera wrote, Bob's letters began to show some concern:

> "I am not surprised at your train experiences; so they liked your hair and your clothes and your "mild sophistication!" Mild sophistication indeed. If those young men only knew what a grown up gal you really are!

In a letter from the same period Bob added a handwritten note on the margin:

> So your bed is cold and chaste, is it? Listen, Miss Prockwok, my bed is so chaste that the Virgin Mary herself would be ashamed in it. (Beat that if you can, my fine one.)

Despite his jokes, he was relieved when she left San Francisco for her parents' farm.

He also returned to a familiar theme: "Yes, yes, send me the article from *The New Yorker* about the bombing of Hiroshima. Maybe there will be something in it I can throw in the teeth of some colonel."

Bob added this on Vera's politics:

> So your mother thinks you are a Communist. You can tell her you did not get any radical ideas from me. You can tell her I was a hidebound Republican and believer in the American way and a Communist baiter and hater and a watcher upon which side my bread is buttered; but under the influence of the daughter of the House of Prock . . .

At 93 Vera remains to the leftward side of San Francisco politics. This orientation, tied to her willingness to quit an interesting and comfortable life in San Francisco, for a very uncertain one in Manila, and then travel to still more uncertain places, was based on a general lack of interest in money. She paid attention to it, as is clear from her household accounts, but she did not let it rule what she did. Later she would largely support herself and her husband for well over a decade, something that in the late 1940's and the 1950's was unusual.

Before Vera moved to her parents' farm in Pennsylvania, Bob reported a professional success:

> Heard today that a couple of the four members of the commission that condemned my 28-year old to death have been feeling a little ashamed (not the colonel, but the younger ones, one of whom I'm going to play tennis with); and they have offered to join in a plea for clemency when we go on appeal. So it looks as though his life will be saved . . . and then after five or ten years, maybe they will reduce his whole sentence . . .

A copy of the petition for clemency in Bob's papers reveals that the Japanese officer involved was First Lieutenant Kiyoshi Nishikawa. He was accused of allowing those under his command to kill civilians and of killing two civilians himself. The incident had occurred during combat, and Bob believed that because he had acted under the stress of battle he was not guilty. He also proved that Nishakawa had worked to lift certain restrictions on the Filipino's in his area. One of the Commissioners, whose last name was Nosun, indicated "that anyone who had been in combat knew that these things happened on both sides, and nothing would be gained by killing a 28-year old."

The second commissioner who signed the petition Bob identified as King Butler, an All-American football player at the University of Alabama. Bob went to see one of the other Commissioners who had voted against clemency to convince him to change his mind:

> But said Lt. Col. turned out to be a very self important fellow -- so he beat his chest and said that my man was guilty, that the Japs would start another war, etc. He asked if I had been in the army, and when I said that I had not, he said that is why I did not understand. Well, I asked the so and so if he had ever seen combat, and he replied that he had not, but his cousin had. Can you tie that one?

Two commissioners out of four, however, were apparently enough to insure commutation, although Bob couldn't understand why the two who supported the petition didn't hold out for a lesser sentence in the first place. Their change of mind adds to an impression that they took their duties casually.

Bob's letters remained filled with his efforts to find Vera an affordable passage to Manila. He alternated between hoping that connections with shipping firms through his old law firm would work out and telling her to drop everything and get a Pan American ticket from San Francisco to Manila. The $700 airfare was a lot for someone earning less than $5,000 a year, especially since they hoped to save enough to travel.

Bob also began to get to know his landladies:

> . . . there are three women in this house, all sisters: Solidad, Pilar, [and] Inez. Last name is Crame. Also living here is little Anita (1), a niece. Solidad is rather quiet and solidad; perhaps 45 years. Pilar, who speaks the best English seems to be the head of the family [and] is perhaps 38. Inez is the youngest, about our age. Now to tell the truth, Inez is now in the room, fixing my mosquito net for the night, and putting fresh flowers on the camphor chest. The name of the flowers is Cadena de amor. They are rather like lilies of the valley, only in chains; they are pink and white.
>
> . . . .Well, today is Pilar's birthday -- or rather her Saint's day. They gave a lunch party -- and I brought a case of beer. We sat downstairs around a big table looking out into the garden. The downstairs is all shot up, even some big holes in the floorboards around which . . . [the] . . . children played ball, ran, and made all the noises children make. We had roast pork and chicken soup and a nice cold salad. But for my sake they left garlic out of everything! . . . . The rest of the guests were all family: either sisters or sisters in law. We all drank beer, and of course spoke Spanish, and you know what my Spanish is under the influence of beer. Much laughter and fun. The only other man was a five-year old, good looking child named Fernando with long eyelashes. They all petted both of us and after lunch we both took siestas while the women cleaned up. Then coffee and talk while the sun went down. A walk in the garden. You will like this

> tumbled down garden. Bring along any seeds that you think might be fun. The soil looks good.

He was teasing Vera a little. She didn't worry about his living in the house with three women; she says now it sounded like fun and was innocent. Because middle class Philippine women are more generally chaste than westerners, she was probably right.

Vera remains certain that Bob was always faithful to her, so their mild exchange over fidelity remained in balance. As far as spicy food is concerned, Bob later ate a lot of garlic and many other spices when he attended the Cordon Bleu School in Paris while Vera worked for the Marshall Plan.

His account of the saint's day party was followed by instructions for booking a flight on Pan Am and how much weight Vera could carry. The letter was dated October 12, 1946; Bob had been in Manila nearly a month and a half. He said he would try to get a reservation on the flight that left San Francisco November 4th. He wrote to forget the cost: ". . . . what the hell is the use of being out here if we are not enjoying it together? We will work a couple of extra months if we have to."

And then he went on to describe the evening: "the lizards are out and the garden is zzzing with . . . animal zzzs . . . I think when you get out here we shall eat with the Spanish ladies."

But Vera could not arrange to leave immediately. A shipping strike made commercial plane tickets scarce. Their loneliness grew:

> But YOU must get on; I want to see you . . . I was accosted in the street last night. (Hello Wide-Eyes!). The gal said she was pure Spanish and Very Hot and Very Clean and Very Fond of Americans. I told her I thought she was very attractive (it was so dark I could hardly see her!), but that I had a date, and I could not sleep with both her and the date. To which she answered that she was somewhat disappointed in an American who would admit to such weakness! . . . Me, I got a gal. Please come see me.

Bob's dreamlike report about the prostitute has a reassuring undertone, as if he were saying "See, I resisted a direct approach, so you have nothing to worry about."

On October 18, 1946, Bob wrote:

> All your nice letters about New York have been coming in – heard about the Sousa party tonight. I am, of course, pleased that bunnies at 11,000 miles are more attractive than wolves at arms length. Did anyone tell you that your hair is beautiful. Why Mr. Paul Young, the last three inches of my hair doesn't even belong to me; the title thereto is vested . . . in the Philippines. . . ."

We do not have Vera's letters providing details about the men who approached her, only Bob's occasional reaction.

He continued to amuse himself in other ways: "Went to the Polo Club yesterday. Mostly children – and the men playing baseball! "Young marrieds." Fun but grim, if you know what I mean . . . "

It is hard to imagine the Ransoms ever fitting into such a group. It was as if they had arranged an affair for themselves that would last as long as they traveled and lived in unusual places; this turned out to be the rest of their lives together. They never did have children, and the only home they ever owned was a garret in Paris.

Bob had faith that they would see each other soon. Throughout October he filled his letters with travel advice. He also asked Vera to bring a doll for his landladies' little niece, one with blonde hair and eyes that opened and shut, and also walking shoes for all three women. Vera would be with him soon, a prospect that held his life together. And he was certain of her and how things would be when she arrived, together in the ruined house. In the envelope with one of the letters there are still three sheets of tissue paper with dim tracings of his landladies' small feet.

3. TOGETHER IN MANILA

Vera's trip out in a sparsely equipped Army plane with no food service seemed endless. Somehow Bob had arranged things through the military. Vera does not remember how, and their letters do not explain. She does remember that there were only a few other passengers and everyone sat in canvas seats fixed to the sides of the fuselage. The flight left from San Francisco, stopping first in Honolulu, where Vera drank fresh pineapple juice drawn from a tap. She says it was the first she ever had had and the best.

The same crew, consisting only of a pilot and co-pilot, flew the plane the entire way pausing at various islands only to eat and sleep.

The journey took them not only to Honolulu, but also to Wake, and eventually Guam. It lasted nearly a week. The crew's stamina alone made a strong impression.

Vera arrived finally at a military airfield outside Manila, exhausted but very excited. It was evening and the field was nearly deserted except for the American duty officer, a few Filipino personnel, and a handful of others who were meeting passengers. The tropical evening was warm and humid, very unlike the cool fall weather she had left behind in Pennsylvania. Bob wore a blue seersucker suit that was new to Vera, and she still remembers it: "It was so hot, but he had on the entire thing, even a tie." she says. He had arranged a car to take them back to the house on Manila Bay.

When they went upstairs with her luggage, Bob showed her the jagged openings in the second floor; she didn't care. The house matched the city itself, exotic and broken.

They were together again, and better yet, Bob had the wonderful task of showing her around. The city, with its freewheeling atmosphere, suited them well.

The house was out Roxas Boulevard southwest of the older part of the city center. Roxas still runs along Manila Bay in what is now the commercial and government district. Before the War it had been one of Manila's best residential areas. They were not far from a streetcar line where service had been restored and the boxy, green, pre-War cars made their slow way, the bell clanging as the traffic surged around them.

From their second floor room Bob and Vera had a water view. They could see the wrecks of ships, American as well as Japanese, and could look to the north, toward the bombed out docks. The mosquito netting hanging over their beds stirred slightly in the salt breeze.

Vera recalls that she had to be careful not to rest an elbow against the netting. When she did, the mosquitoes bit her through the mesh.

The bathroom that Bob had built was quite large, a former bedroom, but with a shower that offered only a trickle of water.

Vera did not bring their hostesses' new shoes from America. Other arrangements had been made, and if they had not been, the strict weight limitations imposed on air passengers would have cost her part of her own clothing. She did bring the blonde-haired doll with eyes that opened and closed.

Vera remembers the ladies themselves as small in stature and very slight; they were also quiet, speaking in murmurs, moving about their house as if now it did not quite belong to them.

An older man lived downstairs who was, perhaps, the women's relation. He had taken in a group of boys, whom he fed and cared for and sent to school. Manila had many war orphans. At home the boys played in the overgrown garden. Their cries and those of the birds added to a sense of peace and separation from the roiling city.

Only one of the women spoke any English at all, and with Bob and Vera's limited Spanish, communication was difficult. They did invite the two of them for several meals.

Vera recalls one of the dishes that was very good: steamed banana buds filled with spiced meat.

After a day or so of reunion, she and Bob settled into a routine that lasted for as long as they were in Manila. Vera did not stay at the house each day but went with Bob to the courts. The High Commissioner's Palace was also on the waterfront and not far away. They declined the car offered them and walked each morning through the streets. It was almost always hot, and Vera dressed in cotton. She says that she did not think of wearing anything made of wool the entire time they were in Manila, even on the few cool days.

Vera then watched as Bob struggled to defend the Japanese officers assigned his clients. It never went well. The Japanese bore this with dignity, and even good humor, which for Bob made the likely result even worse.

The American officers who sat on the panels were in a vengeful mood. They also knew their duty. Although certain legal forms were observed, Vera now says of Bob's clients: "They were all taken out and shot."

Bob continued to have trouble accepting this. He was a well-trained lawyer. He was used to nuance, complexity, and the precise legal rules that provided justice for well-financed, well-represented American interests. What he found in Manila seemed to him far from anything like that.

Many of the Japanese were guilty of atrocities, but even if one favors the death penalty, the defendants deserved the judges' attention as Bob and the other defense lawyers fought to save their lives.

The resources available to the prosecution and the defense also were unequal. Although it seems a small thing, the prosecutors had cars and drivers permanently assigned to them, while the defense counsel did not, depending instead on an uncertain system of reservations when they had to leave Manila to investigate a case.

Bob began to question whether he was offering anything of value to his clients. The single commutation of sentence that he reported shortly after his arrival was not repeated. He had come to travel, but he also had come to defend clients in a system that he wanted to respect. So his disillusionment with the Army and the legal process made him gloomy and even a little bitter.

Vera recalls instances in which defendants had not reached the Philippines until after the crime for which they were accused occurred. Yet they still were convicted and then shot.

Post-War Manila few interests or people who attracted them. Vera remembers the bar at the Press Club where they went to talk with the friends they made, including journalists who had information about China where by then they had decided they definitely wanted to go. They took their meals at the Army's Officer's Mess and the food was surprisingly good.

Vera also remembers Chinese restaurants which were very good as well. They went to them often, walking along Manila's shabby, bombed out streets in the warm evenings. They could eat dinner for little more than a dollar. The dishes served varied from American Chinese food, both in flavor and presentation. This was an every day cuisine local Chinese could afford.

It also included more exotic dishes than Bob and Vera were used to in San Francisco, such as sea cucumber and eel, although Vera remembers no snake or dog.

This was the first time either of them had eaten food prepared Asian style, and they loved it. Vera, especially, will eat nearly anything that is well prepared. Yet they were familiar with many Chinese dishes and in that sense they brought them at least a hint of home. The Chinese quarter also allowed them to escape the Americanized, male atmosphere of the Officer's Mess, where if they spoke their minds about the trials, they were certain to find those who would move quietly away or even object.

Vera's politics, to say the least, were not typical in the American community. While she and Bob could talk shop and commiserate with his fellow defense lawyers, even many of them, as his letters had implied, were not a particularly interesting or even intelligent.

They could drink. Beer was abundant. The Philippine beer, including the San Miguel, was very good but expensive, while the American beer brought in by the Army cost only ten cents a can. Bob and Vera favored the Philippine, even at 75 cents a bottle; it was also what was served at the more interesting places they liked.

The inflation affected the price of imported goods, unless brought in by the U.S. Army. The Philippines was largely bankrupt, although no one spoke about that at the beginning of its nationhood. Hopes soared under the American administration. The country was going to succeed because the Americans said that it would.

Bob and Vera had Manila to explore. They also had their house and their landladies, although once Vera arrived the ladies proved far less approachable. Perhaps Bob and she were so absorbed with each other that there wasn't room for anyone else, but mostly it would have required a better Spanish to enter the ladies' world.

Their slight familiarity with Bob turned to shyness in Vera's presence. Was it like the arrival of English women in India? If the three ladies had had no ambition for themselves, they might have wondered if Bob would pursue another Filipina, perhaps even one of their relations. When Vera arrived, such speculation stopped.

Bob and Vera entered into a world of journalists and other Americans who gathered at certain clubs. This brought them something of home but also into contact with people who had at least some information about the Philippines that they very much wanted to explore.

As they struck off on their own in Manila, Vera remembers going to a club named Bill's, which she believes may have been owned by an African American, certainly something that was unique in the Philippines, if not in all of Asia. This foreign community life, out most evenings to the starched Officer's Mess or the palmy bar at the Press Club, was not something they could share with their Filipina landladies.

Few of the Americans were serious travelers. Vera found the western community's insularity surprising. The most adventurous foreigners had come for the War and then left, and most of those who remained or came out later had a much less spirit.

During this period Vera wrote to her mother: "No one gave us any detailed information about any place to visit, nor the mode of transportation. It is assumed you go by air, of course." Because they wanted to see as much as they could, whenever possible the Ransoms traveled overland.

Vera remembers that there were very few other American women. American men ruled the occupation in an era when Americans were so sure of themselves that "nation building" was assumed.

There were other compensations in Manila: Vera continued to pursue her interest in local food, sending home recipes for such dishes as "Lumpia Fresco," lettuce leaves stuffed with chopped vegetables and bacon in a brown sugar sauce; "Pesa," roasted chicken with cabbage, onions and bacon; "Although these dishes may have a certain interest, it is not hard to see why the Vera preferred the food at the Officer's Mess or the Chinese restaurants.

The tropical vegetation delighted her, including the flowering vine that grew on the balcony, framing the view of Manila Bay. She sent her sister, Lucille, a present:

> Here are the six morning glories – heavenly blue seeds. Thought you might like to experiment. This is what the packet says "Ipomoea, Clarke's Early Blue" This is the genuine early strain of the most beautiful of annual vines. Average height 12' and the vines climb readily. Mammoth flowers of the clearest blue imaginable. (All

> true as I know from my vine now growing on the balcony.)

They found other, more exciting diversions:

> We were extras in a Filipino movie the other night. We will be paid $25 for our acting. The movie is in Tagalog, entitled Unang Pagibid, which means "First Love." The story is rather dramatic, about a young girl who is blind but very beautiful. She travels to the U.S. with her mother in order to have a delicate operation performed, which will restore her sight. There's a love interest, too. We tried to get a complete story, but no one seemed to know. They were acquainted only with isolated scenes.
>
> We learned about our scene in a few minutes, rehearsed once, and did it twice for the actual shooting. Our scene was on an American ship at sea, hence the American extras. A terrific storm wrecks the ship; the captain hollers to abandon ship. We extras run along the deck, water pours from a fire . . . hose, stage-hands rock the boat, we rush to the exit, cluster around . . . and finally get out to the lifeboats. It was fun, but wearing. We were there from 6 to 11 p.m. They served us sandwiches and Cokes.
>
> We went at the invitation of an attractive Army corporal who is in love with a Filipino girl who is beautiful and looks Chinese, although she is only one quarter Chinese. She is also intelligent and very well-educated. We four had lots of opportunity to talk. . . . The picture will be released in three or four weeks, so I think we will be able to see it before leaving Manila for good.

The film sounds fairly dreadful, and there is no indication that they ever saw it, but the filming itself was their kind of adventure.

Vera also continued to share certain experiences related to Bob's work:

> Last week I went with Bob to Lupow, the Japanese internment camp. He wanted to see his two clients, both sentenced to hang, but the sentence of one had been commuted to life imprisonment. The camp is about 70 kilometers from Manila, situated on a vast, flat area, with not a tree or bush anywhere.

She wrote more about their meals:

> We ate the most delicious food at the officers' mess. The Japanese cook knows that fried fish should be cooked at the last minute, not an hour ahead of time and left to sit around . . . . Apparently he insists on hot plates and hot serving dishes, too. And the canned corn was heated to the right temperature, not cooked to a mush. Well-trained Japanese waiters served us.
>
> There are only 608 Japanese left at the camp; and of those about 60 or so have been charged with war crimes. The camp seems almost deserted. They must have accommodations for at least 5,000. The sing-song girls have gone home, too. Did you know that they followed the troops everywhere, even to the front lines? All the prisoners at the camp work; they live in tents with wooden floors and sleep on canvas cots. They get cigarette rations. The condemned men -- there about 30 at Lupow now – are segregated and do not work. Prisoners sentenced to a term of years are sent Sugamo prison in Tokyo. The condemned men are either hanged or shot, according to the decision of the Commission, and buried at Lupow. The bodies are not returned to Japan so that there is no possibility of making heros of them. The cemetery is a square area surrounded by a white fence. Graves are close together, each one marked by a white board.

> One of Bob's clients whose sentence has been changed to life imprisonment has joined the Catholic Church. Many of the condemned men take the faith. Interesting, isn't it. Maybe it is because the priest is the only visitor they see regularly.

Canned corn implies a certain lowering of expectations. "Sing song girls' is a remarkable euphemism, even for Vera. Considering Japanese ancestor worship, it is also sad that the graves, if they were marked at all, were remote from Japan. Perhaps because Bob was so upset about the trials themselves, Vera did not make more of this. Bob also lacked any sensibility for ancestor worship.

By this time Bob and Vera just wanted to get out of Manila, and the first place that they that they decided to go was Baguio, also on the Island of Luzon but high in the mountains. It served the same purpose for American personnel stationed in Manila as had Simla and other hill stations in India had for the British officers during the Raj: an escape from the stifling lowland heat.

They had to fly. The countryside between Manila and the mountains was too dangerous because of Huk revolutionaries. [1]

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[1] "Huk" is short for *Hukbalahap*, which in Tagalog means People's Anti-Japanese Army. After the War it became a revolutionary movement and was especially strong on Luzon, Negros and Panay.

When I asked Vera if Bob and she were frightened by reports of fighting and what was a very ruthless insurgency and counter-insurgency, she said: “Oh, we just ignored all that.”

That is not entirely true. They had discovered that the dangers described in the press were exaggerated, and they could move through the country even in the midst of revolution. More specifically, they learned to avoid trouble, a skill that would serve them well in China.

4. BAGUIO

So they flew at night in a DC-3 over the Luzon lowlands to Baguio, and the Huk revolutionaries heard their plane but could do nothing about it. They took off in the dark, the lights of the runway flashing past the plane's windows.

Once they landed they immediately set off on an unusual mission. Although Vera did not mention it in her account at the time, she says that buying and eating a dog fascinated Bob. He'd heard about this in Manila, where an American friend recommended it as the most exotic experience in the entire Philippines.

Vera wrote what she remembered in 2001:

> Dog was the feast dish in Baguio. So as soon as we arrived at the airport and checked in at the Episcopalian mission, we went off to explore the dog market. I was horrified by the whole idea, but Bob was adamant about what he claimed would be a once in a lifetime experience. . . .

Here Bob betrayed a love of the bizarre:

> The dog market was a clearing, fenced, with about a dozen dogs. Time was spent looking over the offerings and haggling over the price. They were very scroungy looking, real mongrels. I had the feeling that they had been force fed on rice before they were brought to market. We finally did make a selection of a smallish, non-descript animal. We trotted it back to our quarters on a leash.

Considering that Vera's family had always owned dogs, and that Vera protested how inhumane this was, Bob was out of control. Vera leaves unanswered what their Episcopalian hosts thought of this attraction, one distinctly outside the tradition of St. Francis.

Vera added:

> I did not want to witness the slaughter nor the preparation. Eventually dinner arrived. Well, it was probably the worst meal ever presented to me and surely the most extraordinary. The meat was stew-like, very tough, and very tasteless. As for me, the only edible part was the liver. But since I was so repulsed about the whole idea, I did not eat much even of that.

Considering her willingness to try and even praise virtually anything else to eat anywhere, it must have been very bad. Vera now says that she did not write about this to her parents because they would have disapproved strongly. Perhaps the trait that drove Bob to the dog market also led him to pick the most remote point on any map as their destination.

Baguio proved a sleepy place, with too many westerners for the Ransom's taste. There are no letters that provide any sort of general description, and Vera now recalls little about the town. Others describe a small, half-destroyed, hill town similar to many in Asia, slowly awakening each morning, the light exposing the dirt and refuse, a few roosters answering one another, a dog barking and then the locals who wished to get to the market square early slowly stirring. The American tourists rose much later to fairly boring prospects, made attractive only because Baguio was cool.

The town did, however, have one advantage: it was reasonably close to the Bontoc Igorots, a tribe that fascinated Bob and Vera.

The word "Igorot," coined by the Spanish, means literally "people of the mountains." So does the word Bontoc, so the designation "Bontoc Igorats" is redundant. The word Igorat is applied to mountain people all over the archipelago. Bob and Vera had already seen a few of these striking people in Baguio itself during the unfortunate evening before. They were quite short, dressed in a kind of G-string, tattooed, and often carried a long spear. They preferred to call themselves simply "Bontoc;" but the references in Vera's letters are often to "the Igorats."

They were still headhunters, even as late as the Ransom's visit. Vera wrote to her parents, they "are very friendly to Americans, or rather all white people."

The town of Bontoc is deeper in the Luzon Cordillera, and at lower elevation than Baguio. Even today the road to Bontoc washes out regularly. Vera's account focused on the tribal people:

> They do carry on feuds over many years, the origin of which is often forgotten, but they do not bear grudges indiscriminately nor do they head hunt unless there is some reason, as for instance a member of their village has been insulted.

Tolerance of the bizarre allowed Bob and Vera to go places and spend time with people many Westerners would find frightening. Vera continued:

> The Igorats do not like the lowlanders, the Filippinos living on the plains; and it is seldom that the lowlanders venture into the Mountain Province . . .
>
> As for head hunting, it has long been outlawed, but because of long . . . tradition the Igorots cannot give up feuding entirely and occasionally they do get a head. This was especially true during the War when the Igorots got Japanese heads. The Dutch priest in Sabangan, south of Bontoc, tells the story of how some of his men got

> three Japanese heads during the War and danced continuously for [several] days and nights.

Westerners were interned in concentration camps under terrible conditions. Priests and missionaries avoided imprisonment for at least part of the War.

What would it have been like the nights that the Igorots danced to celebrate their Japanese heads? This intrepid, holy man listened and wondered when the Japanese might return to take their vengeance, something that very easily could have included him.

Igorat guerrilla forces fought as allies of Amercan special forces who made their way into many areas and stayed for the War's duration. The effect on Japanese troops must have been singular in Bontoc, especially after the three beheadings. Noises in the night magnify. Sentry duty must have been terrifying for the average Japanese, and the occupation troops were distinctly average.

In addition to church schools, Episcopal missionaries created the first Bontoc language dictionary. The Mission was supported by donations from the United States. During the War the native Episcopal community in Bontoc sent much needed food to the Western Priests and Sisters who were interned.

Vera wrote about their departure:

> We drove . . . from Baguio on the Dangwa line. The bus was a brand new Chevrolet truck, with wooden benches in the back. We were fortunate to reserve seats in the front with the driver. The bus leaves at 8 a.m. and reaches Bontoc about 4 p.m. which seems like an incredibly long time for such a short journey. But because of the nature of the road and the constant up and down steep grades it is necessary to drive in second gear almost the entire way. The scenery is very beautiful, the terrain is rugged, sparsely inhabited, and covered with pine forests.

The bus converted from a new Chevrolet implies American aid. The dense jungle is no surprise, but Baguio is at 4,900 feet and a true hill station, with steep terrain and conifers reminiscent of the forests around Simla:

> The road is literally cut out of steep mountain cliffs and except for a few spots is only wide enough for one car. Fortunately, there is seldom a car coming from the opposite direction. The road is used almost exclusively by lumber trucks and transportation trucks. Tourists do not often venture beyond Baguio. Some of the bridges had been destroyed by a severe typhoon last July. At these points the truck fords the stream.

Vera doesn't say what the driver did when the bus met a logging truck coming the other way. They clearly were lucky. Of the tens of thousands of miles they traveled, most often over rough roads, besides occasional stomach trouble and the illness Bob suffered in

Mexico, the worst incident Vera remembers was getting stuck in the 1950's in a Volkswagen bus with too narrow tires while crossing the Sahara. A local nun rescued them that time. Considering Bob's attitude toward religion, he had remarkable luck with clergy from all Christian denominations.

From the condition of the road to Bontoc, one gets a more general sense of the way things were on Luzon right after the War. The way had been cleared after the War and a typhoon only in the most rudimentary way and the towns were still in ruins.

> Most of the improvements in the Mountain Province were destroyed during the War. It was the scene of the last stand of the Japanese, so much damage was done by both Japanese and Americans. The rest houses were all destroyed, so the only places travelers can stay is in a private home or at the missions. In Bontoc there is . . . a large Episcopal mission which once consisted of two concrete buildings and a charming church. All that remains is the hull of one of the concrete buildings.

More often than not Episcopal churches are charming, even in the Philippines. Bontoc and vicinity was the center of Anglicanism for the entire country.

Vera and Bob enjoyed meeting the priest.

> The missionaries were not interned for the first year of the War. One priest carried on by himself during the rest of the war years. He was not interned because he is half

> Bontoc and half Spanish and was born in the town of Bontoc . . . in fact he is the only one there at this time. One missionary woman assists him. . . . Before the War there were five or six personnel.

The Priest took the Ransoms in:

> The people at the mission like to have visitors because they lead a lonely life. They provide you with beds and good food. And naturally they are always well-informed about the local lore and the most interesting things to see. . . . It is interesting to go with the priest when he visits the outlying parishes. He always has to walk to their villages; sometimes the walk is two hours. Other times 1-1/2 days.

Bob had a religious discussion with this man who shared precious local knowledge and gave entree to the Bontoc people. He and two other Filipino priests carried on during the War after the Western priests were interned. American bombing caused most of the damage. As a priest, someone who had thought through his own views a long before, he likely shrugged off what Bob said, or even found it amusing.

He spent part of one evening describing how things once had been in Bontoc:

> [Before the War there] were also luxuries like hot running water, electric refrigerators, frozen meat once a week from Baguio and a variety of fresh vegetables . . . . Now in Bontoc there is no electric power plant and no fresh food is imported. For meat the butcher kills a

> carabao, one a day, and the next day a cow. Very few vegetables grow on the rocky, steep mountains, or at least the natives do not cultivate them.

So the Ransoms had reached what they later so often sought: the end of a very remote road, in this instance one torn up by the War. They might have gone further, but short of striking off on foot, they were not going to find a more primitive place.

The saddest fact Vera recorded is that most of the destruction in Bontoc occurred from an American air raid a week after the Japanese Army left. She had learned something that the Priest was too polite to tell them: "the city could have remained intact if the intelligence had not gone haywire."

Perhaps because they were visually striking and outwardly gentle, but also because they hunted heads, Vera remembers the Bontocs clearly to this day, especially that they were attractive and went about nearly naked. In her account at the time she began to inject a scientific attention to detail:

> The Igorots are attractive looking people, especially the young boys and girls. The boys and young men have beautiful rippling muscles. Their faces are round and features square. They are dark skinned, and have black, straight hair. The boys wear G-strings [called kuvals], the unmarried boys red ones, the married men blue ones. Although I don't think this is a strict custom, because

> many men wear white ones, some even wear printed percale from the States. They are usually barefoot, both men and women. Besides the G-string, the men wear a shirt, and on their heads the most curious hat. It is like a pillbox, woven of straw. It is always at a rakish angle. It is the custom for the men to have long hair, which they roll into a bun, and place the hat on top. This hat also serves as a sort of pocket. The men keep their tobacco, comb, pipe, and money, if they have any, in the hat. Very few of the young men wear long hair, but the hat is quite common. Referring to the G-string again, it is 3-1/2 meters long; wealthy families wear elaborately woven ones. They are tied with a big loop in the back; the ends in both front and back hang down almost to the knees. . . .

Men who were so minimally dressed were beset by a problem brought on by modernity: where to put possessions. In a hat everything stayed out of the way.

> Elaborate tattooing is very noticeable among the Bontoc Igorots. This is an honor reserved for the men who take part in head-hunting expeditions. The tattooing covers the shoulders in front and part way down the chest. Young girls who are related to the men of the expedition are also tattooed but only on the arms from the wrist to about four inches from the shoulders. The design is always stylized in red and blue.

The climate allowed or required bare torsoes. This also displayed the tattoos. Bob and Vera felt sympathy for them:

> These people work very, very hard for a bare existence. The land is not fertile, mainly because it is not fertilized properly. They also work hard because of their primitive methods of farming. Rice is their one big crop, and they

> eat it three times a day, if they can get that much. The rest of the time they eat camotes – a sweet potato – which grows like a weed anywhere a shoot is planted. They eat an occasional egg, and pigs and chickens on special occasions. Since the land is not productive enough, they have to import rice. During the last year of the War and immediately after the surrender, this was not possible. Consequently many died of starvation; in several cases whole villages were wiped out.

Despite this, their society remained picturesque:

> Late one afternoon we stood at the edge of the town of Bontoc and watched the workers coming home from the fields. It was an exotic sight. Men and women of all ages, we noticed many wizened old women with sagging, tattooed skin. Men and boys leading caraboas, young girls carrying a load of camotes and camote leaves on their heads. The men sometimes carry their spears. A large group walks down to the river, crosses and [goes] up the other [bank] with produce on their heads, never faltering or hesitating a step. The women walk very gracefully and with a rhythmic swaying of the hips which is beautiful to watch. Down below the river we saw about twenty people making a new rice terrace. The men would dig the dirt from one corner, put it in a basket, raise the basket to the women's heads, all the while chanting and dancing until the women dumped their loads in the prescribed corner.

How long could such a society endure? The Ransoms, so recently in Manila, which already was dominated by cars, trucks and the jeepneys imported or left behind by the Americans, watched this slow, communal society, seemingly gentle but also capable of extreme cruelty and violence and subject to famine

They counted themselves lucky to have a last glimpse of something they were certain soon would end. In that sense they were as trapped as the Bontocs themselves, bystanders to the slow erosion of a society, which had much to admire but also to abhor. The conflict was clear enough. The same thing was happening rapidly all over the world.

And who could argue that the continuation of head hunting would be a good thing? Or periodic famines? What had the Bontocs done long ago when the rains failed or their own feuds dislocated their agriculture? The impact of World War II was not necessarily an aberration. While Bob and Vera felt a certain sadness at what was passing, they do not appear to have fallen into the western trap of idealizing and dehumanizing a tribal society for their own and their society's purposes.

Vera's wrote simply:

> The women wear a wrap-around skirt, hand woven of a stiff, sturdy material. It is always striped horizontally, in somber shades of red, blue, tan, and browns. Some women do not wear anything above their waists, which is the native way of dress or lack of dress, but the majority . . . do wear simple blouses.

She also took an interest in courtship practices:

> The girls, when they are 10 or 12 live in a dormitory supervised by a widow or old woman. Young boys serenade the girls with nose flutes or just pretty words. The boys often spend the night with the girls, too. When a girl becomes pregnant, and only then, does she marry the boy, and [then] they are true to each other for ever after.

Vera concluded that this system of courtship and marriage avoided childless marriages, a serious problem in a society subject to famine and dependant on children as a source of labor and for continuity.

This was fairly hot stuff back in 1947, when unmarried undergraduates in the United States did not spend the night together in dormitories or anywhere else, although perhaps Vera had some inkling of things to come in America. Certainly her approval of the Bontocs' practices was part of the general discovery in the West that pre-marital sex was something that other societies happily practiced.

But one cannot help but wonder again, at the "Margaret Mead syndrome." This tribe, its courtship practices aside, was inclined under rather loosely defined circumstances to cut off people's heads. The reality of this, when one was actually there, was not very attractive.

Bob and Vera liked Bontoc and not only the amazing local tribe. The valley was lower, about 2,500 feet in elevation, which meant it was warmer than Baguio during the day but, Vera reported, "cool enough at night to wear a jacket," a nice balance.

To find it and to find decent accommodation with an Episcopal Priest, who also offered details and anecdotes about a people who believed slightly in Christianity and more fervently in magic, curses and hunting heads, was a stroke of particular luck.

With Vera's carefully typed account are several photographs, one of two, young Bontoc men with "rippling muscles," and also a remarkable one of a Boy Scout Patrol, fully fitted out in uniforms, including a local approximation of Scout campaign hats and neckerchiefs. There was even a flag that showed that they were members of the Eagle Patrol. This familiar group in so foreign a place is instantly recognizable to any American but has a single addition to standard Scout equipment: A boy in the front row cradled a scimitar-headed ax. Although there is no mention of it in her account, Vera now explains that this was used to hunt heads.

5. IN THE ARCHIPELAGO

The Ransom's adventure a hundred miles or so from Manila on Luzon whetted their desire for much more, and so planning for a trip throughout the islands intensified. After many conversations with knowledgeable friends, an outline took shape, yet they had to separate from the Army. On March 18, 1947, Vera wrote to her mother:

> We expect to start on our tour of the islands this week. Bob is having trouble getting separated from the Army. The colonel in charge of war crimes is very arbitrary. He has refused to let some lawyers go home who wanted to; and he has sent home others who wanted to stay. It doesn't make sense. We have a very bad impression of the Army from our experience. Some who have been in other theatres and with other outfits say this is not typical. Let's hope so. Otherwise I don't see how it would be bearable.

After only a little more than seven months for Bob, they both had had enough. If the trials had gone better, if there were some chance that more of the defendants would be found not guilty or even if the process had revealed the facts more accurately, they might have considered staying on; but by then Bob's role as an attorney had become fairly clear: He was helping to run the Japanese accused through a system that ended in death. He no longer wanted any part of it.

There also were too many small men, Army officers, who, in Bob's view, puffed themselves up with authority. For them the trials were an extension of the War they had too often had sat out behind a desk. This was their chance to get a few licks in at the Japanese Army many of them had never seen until then and to show what they could do to their superiors.

There were frequent conversations in the officers' club, beery assurances that the "Japs" had been dealt with in short order at the trials. Many, of course, were guilty; but Bob knew that some were not, and his country's actions troubled him.

It was in this letter, dated March 18, 1947, that Vera asked her mother to save her correspondence, the reason that we have such a detailed account of their trip.

On March 23, Vera again wrote to her mother:

> After many false starts we are at last on our way to see the southern islands. Tomorrow at 11 a.m. we are flying to Iloilo on the Island of Panay. It takes two hours to fly there; and 36 hours by boat. We will surely travel around the islands for two weeks, probably three. Then we will return to Manila, and as soon as we can make arrangements for passage to Hongkong we will leave.

The trip through the Philippines was so interesting that it would last over six weeks, and Bob and Vera managed to reach more very remote places. They also pursued their growing interest in anthropology, visiting various tribal peoples and carefully recording their impressions. Just as interesting was the post-colonial plantation society, which still dominated the rural areas of the islands.

They tried to plan. Vera says at the beginning of her account:

> Six months we had been in Manila and we never missed an opportunity to inquire about the sites of the rest in the Philippines. Europeans and Americans always said, "You must go to Baguio." Filipinos might refer to [it as] the "sleepy town" they came from.

They went to Baguio and agreed with the Filipinos. They marked this and the fact that they had proceeded on to Bontoc if only for a first impression of better, more remote place, if not for the bragging rights. Now they would move on for more of the same, knowing that they would have to work continuously to see more than others might, still casting about for unique experiences, a town or island beyond what any other westerner might consider appealing or even safe. The hope was to escape the dullness.

The war had brought the air travel to the archipelago. Dakota's and other aircraft from the huge American military surplus linked the islands as never before. The Philippines sprawl north south for a thousand miles. Hundreds of islands, some huge, but many more small, stretch from the South China Sea nearly to Sulewesi and Borneo. One could sail the various seas and straits for many years and not see everything. While Bob and Vera did travel extensively by boat, they also made roughed it on island roads and flew only to begin their journey:

> We were anxious to have a change of atmosphere as quickly as possible, so we agreed on the accepted mode of travel, the airplane, for the first leg of our trip. We did not regret it because the scenery [from the air] from Manila to Iloilo is very lovely to a westerner: many jewel-like islands surrounded by blue-green water, the outline of Luzon from the air looked just as it did on the map, fish traps in different shapes . . . stand out sharply along the coastlines. [The island of] Panay . . . [was] covered with fog, but as we approach Iloilo it lift[ed], affording a refreshing sight of a very green countryside.

One senses Vera's pleasure at being away from the ruins and heat of Manila, to say nothing of the Army and the pointless trials. They were entering an island paradise, as beautiful as any in the

Pacific. Perhaps the only difference was that no one famous had written about it, at least not in English. The green islands surrounded by the clear, blue green water – you could see the bottom from 12,000 feet – promised coolness; and it would be cooler, in part because of the deep jungle but also because they could dress more casually. There would be no more seersucker suits.

In a letter written later from Hong Kong, Vera also reports the sudden end of the war crime trials:

> No one knew about it until several days before that date. No one knows why . . . because there was money until June 30th. They say it was because McArthur got tired of the mismanagement of the [trials] by the colonel in charge. [Those] that are left have been turned over to the Philippine government. What they will do with them no one knows. [Philippine President] Roxas said publicly that no Filipino would defend a Japanese. It would ruin his career.

They were free, without concern of having abandoned any professional responsibility.

The other islands would prove largely peaceful, if not somnolent, even those with revolutionary activity, but the peace was superficial in the Huk areas and evidence the War still so dramatic that violence still seemed possible; from the windows of the plane the view was breathtaking. Although Bob and Vera did not yet know it, many islands they would visit few westerners ever visited. The people would fascinate them. It was their exact sort of thing, the perfect cure after the trials.

ILOILO AND THE ISLAND OF PANAY

Vera wrote of Iloilo:

> [It] is a quiet, small town, only partially damaged by the War. The streets are wide and smoothly paved. There are few automobiles or jeepneys, but calesas, painted cabs drawn by small, overworked horses, are everywhere and can be hired for a nominal fee. Everything is much cheaper here than in Manila. Our hotel room, at the New Republic, costs four Philippine Pesos. Meals are three Pesos. People are courteous and friendly.

The town is on the southeast coast of Panay, a large island that is 120 miles south of Luzon and stretches south and east. Iloilo is at a river's mouth that forms a harbor. The port was a major Spanish trading center and retained its colonial charm, especially in the Molo district where Bob and Vera stayed. That district's landmark is a large Gothic-Renaissance church, and it still had a lively commerce.

They enjoyed the market and the attention they attracted as they moved slowly through the narrow streets:

> We watch a wood carver in an open shop chip on a piece of wood which already resembles a religious figure . . . we wander around the market streets with many children following us and even more pairs of eyes . . . we drink tuba, fermented sap from the coconut tree, for the first time. I can't finish the large tumbler you get for five centavos; Bob has more relish for it . . . we have delicious Chinese food at the Bachelor's Café . . .

Bachelor's Café was La Paz Batchoy, and it still exists. Throughout his life Bob liked to drink and did so in the Philippines when beer or anything else was available; often he would stand at a bar, shaded and open to the street, examining a glass of tuba before he sipped it. Vera says that in those days Bob never got drunk.

In the Philippines drink was only a minor part of the experience, a way to meet local people, whether it was someone in a bar who he treated to a drink, or a planter to whom he and Vera had an introduction.

China also was already on their minds and even around them in the form of the Chinese diaspora. The Chinese were an essential mercantile class throughout the Far East. One wonders what Bob and Vera would have made of a steady diet of Filippino food.

Iloilo still is known for its good Chinese restaurants, many of which are tucked away on the small streets in the Molo and the neighboring La Paz District. Most of these served a noodle dish called *pancit Molo.*

Iloilo is also a center of weaving and embroidery of cloth used for the Filipino barong tagalog, a shirt which is not tucked in. These crafts were reviving after the War and those who wove, embroidered the cloth and made the shirts were relearning their skills. Bob and Vera were watching their money and there was also limited space in their luggage, so they did not buy one. Vera also reported that the cloth itself was very stiff and scratchy, not Bob's idea of comfort. Just as important, Bob had a lifelong aversion to possessions, which he felt tied one down.

After the destruction of Manila, in Iloilo they had found a remnant of the old Asia, and they were charmed. They also quickly established local contacts:

> . . . we have lunch at the house of friends of Charlie Navarro and for the [first] time experience a flunkey waving a long tasseled affair over the table to chase away the flies.

Charlie Navarro was a Filipino they had gotten to know in Manila who had urged them to look up an acquaintance.

Vera still recalls a *punkah*, which a servant moved by pulling a rope. She says it was far more effective than any electric fan because it moved much larger amounts of the warm, moist air. The house itself was large, with rooms paneled in mahogany. It had a broad porch and as they sat in the dining room and the servants slowly served the various dishes, the blinding tropical light filtered in through bamboo blinds. The conversation they had is lost. They were Americans who needed to be impressed. One can imagine Charlie Navarro's friend going on about the local economy, describing various possibilities in expansive terms but leaving Bob and Vera bored.

Besides visiting the marketplace, they did tour the city:

> And we visit the Molo Convent, an orphanage . . . famous for its cloth embroidery. The children are taught how to do the intricate embroidery from an early age. 100 Pesos for a man's shirt representing a month's labor hardly seems enough. Such a shirt was sent to [Philippine President] Roxas as a present from our luncheon host. Roxas was so impressed with the quality of the work that he ordered a tablecloth for [President] Truman.

They also noticed the unfairness, stumbling on what is so often the case: the inability of handicrafts to compete with mass-produced goods, except in a very limited way.

They had entered a world they liked, one which modernity touched but did not yet dominate:

> We make inquiries about what else we should see [when we go to] Capiz. Guimares Island is directly across a narrow channel. Bancas [small boats] will take you over there to a small, white beach. But the toonerville train [to Capiz] appeals to us even more. So the next morning we are on board. The front car is a converted bus, such as we have all over the States. It is comfortable for sitting and riding, goes slowly enough so that we can see the scenery, . . . yet reaches Capiz at the northern end of Panay in the reasonable time of four hours.

It sounds so easy, so spur of the moment. They take the train, rather than the bus which covers the same distance by the coastal road that requires two full days. The bus did not leave until "no more passengers can be squeezed in." So the train travel remained competitive with travel by road in the Philippines. Few of the locals had cars.

They rode in an open-sided train car, watching the jungle and fields slowly pass in the heat. It was relentlessly hot and humid, but they hardly cared. The train passed under trees that overhung the track, the sunlight flickering through the branches. Vera reported:

> The countryside is planted in rice and corn chiefly. We also see tobacco, camotes, a sort of sweet potato, sugar and coconut palms. The houses are attractive; here in

> Panay the nipa hut is not a hut but a substantial and decorative house.

So the poverty was not crushing, unlike the slums of Manila and what they would later encounter in parts of China and the Himalayas. The Panayans, existing close to the land, lived decently, if simply. If they had a low standard of living compared to the United States or even parts of Manila, it allowed Ransoms to see what would now be called a "third world economy," although that phrase had not yet been coined.

When they reached Capiz, which since has been renamed Roxas, there were more arrangements to make. Vera wrote:

> Formerly there were two excellent inns in the town; now there is only one, second rate rooming house. We were lucky to be welcomed by the Baptist missionaries to occupy the guest room. The missionary compound, including school and hospital buildings, are the only buildings in the entire town that escaped the fire started by the Filipino guerillas. The idea was that the Japanese then could not make use of the facilities of the town. Well, it wasn't so comfortable for them, but in the tropics a shelter can be erected in a day if one is necessary.

One has a growing sense of what the Filipinos endured during the War, in this case at the cost of their own homes and businesses. To be there in the immediate aftermath as young Americans was a striking and even emotional experience. Vera's matter-of-fact description does not reveal their actual reaction; but the fact that she mentions the destruction at every turn indicates its extent and impact.

They stayed with missionaries, and one doubts again if Bob made any jokes about the Holy Ghost.

> The mission is on a hill behind the town. Looking down we see a mass of nipa houses, a flat plain, a long row of coconuts and finally the sea. We are fortunate to meet two prominent citizens of the town. One is a Columbia graduate, Tony Viterbo, the other a Stanford graduate, Florencio Talaveras. Bob is able to give the latter the "proper grip." And all sorts of pleasant divertissements are opened up to us.

So it often was. The world, even in a remote part of the Philippines, was theirs. There is, "travel luck," and they certainly had it throughout in the archipelago.

> [There was] a pig hunt at a nearby sugar central', beer and a swim at a private beach house, a drive to a nearby village, Panay, the birth place of [President] Roxas, ice cream, far creamier and delicious than any we tried in Manila, and what we enjoy most of all, a ride by motor launch through the nearby swamps. Our guides fortunately know them; to us each canal looks the same. First we stop off at the fish ponds, which is one of the most important industries of Capiz. Before the War our friends had a canning factory here for the bangos fish. They say it tastes like tuna only better when canned. Fresh, it resembles our shad in taste and the number of small, treacherous bones. We go by the tall, sturdy nipa palms for which this area is famous. We see the flat, disc-like bivalve shell from which the small panes for Filipino windows are made and for which Capiz is

> named. We see many birds and shoot some. They make an easy target since they have not been hunted [since the War began]. Curlews, doves, an egret and ducks are sacrificed for our dinner. We return by sea since the tide is low and canals in the swampland too shallow.

The ease with which this all showered down was wonderful. There was even ice cream. Can anyone be quite so lucky, so favored? They are, in that sense, an extension of America of that time, a place and a victorious people above all, to be favored, especially by the Filipinos who loved and still love us. But to run into someone who had studied at Stanford in this remote place is almost too much.

BACALOD AND THE ISLAND OF NEGROS

They returned to Iloilo in time to catch a converted PT boat to Bacolod, 20 miles across a straight to the east of Negros.

"The passage costs five Pesos," Vera reported, "and the trip lasts 2 hours. In the afternoon the sea is very rough; the canvas has to be lowered on the sides to keep the water off the deck."

Neither of them apparently had trouble with sea sickness, something which Vera now verifies. One can imagine the PT boat, its gray paint, the plywood hull slamming against the driving waves. Vera described Bacalod:

> [It] is unique because it is the one city in the Philippines still reasonably intact after the War. It was saved by Theodore Vintner, a U.S. Army Private who disposed of the Japanese at the bridge before they could blow it up. An ugly monument has just been erected in the [town] square in his honor. Bacolod is also noted as the richest town in the Philippines. Everyone, [that is] the families who count, owns a sugar plantation or sugar central' (where sugar is milled). They live in palatial, ugly mansions, wear huge diamonds and own several Cadillacs, except that now they probably have a jeep, fewer diamonds and a run down mansion.

Everything, even what was intact, continued to be experienced in terms of the War, and in a tropical paradise, even in its richest city, there remained striking the class differences; Vera never approved of these, even as she took advantage of them when she stayed with wealthy Filipinos; she describes an incident in which she and Bob saw an overseer beating one of the plantation workers. The vulgarity of the Bacolod rich, based as it was on conspicuous consumption grated on them both.

They stayed at a hotel optimistically named the Sea Breeze, where the proprietor immediately informed them that Admiral Halsey had also once stayed. Inside the door of their room is a sign with a list of rules that warned:

> #5. No private person or persons will be permitted to enter in all engaged rooms with the consent of the occupant.
>
> #6 No exception nor consideration to nobody: pam pam girls or women of bad reputation will not be accepted or allowed in the hotel, especially those black-listed in the docket of the police department.

The presence of a few prostitutes to be warned off that night partially redeemed Bacolod for the Ransoms. One can imagine them lying in the darkening heat under the mosquito netting, laughing about the sign on their door, repeating "no exception nor consideration to nobody," and then laughing again.

The next day Vera decided that Bacolod was not so bad after all:

> [The] weather is refreshing, far better climate than Manila. The square is along the water. The market is nearby and in the center of town it is very clean. A wide variety of goods is for sale, especially fish and woven articles like baskets, mats, sieves, and hats. The merchants are mostly Chinese. In their stores are great selections of materials, canned goods, flashlights, even electrical appliances. There are numerous ice cream parlors, and they are popular meeting places for the boys and girls. The several very shiny new movie palaces are even more popular.

They made another contact, again a friend of Charlie Navarro's:

> Mr. Gaston . . . is our guardian angel. Not only does he insist on paying our hotel bill, but he provides us with an

> escort on one of his buses. The escort rides with us to Fabrica, past fields of sugar cane, miserable huts where the laborers live, occasional hacienda houses still standing, and ruined villages. In Fabrica, a large lumber town, our journey is half over. Our escort introduces us to our next escort, Elias Lerio, buys our lunch and departs for Badolod which will take him five hours. He has wasted a whole day, all because of us and the famous Philippine hospitality as displayed by Mr. Gaston.

Why a powerful and rich Filipino, on an Island and in a city remote from Manila, would decide to go to such trouble and expense is unclear. It could not have been solely an exercise in self-interest. Bob and Vera had no official position and little to offer other than conversation. It must be seen for what it apparently was, an act of hospitality.

Vera wanted to see more:

> We really should look around Fabrica, the largest lumber mill in the islands. It is operated by Americans. But we think there is more to see . . . and we want to see it in daylight. Lerio's friend, Ramon Casiano rides with us in the jeep. He is the overseer at the Hacienda Fe, a sugar plantation. When we reach his plantation, he extends an invitation we cannot refuse: to drink fresh tuba, eat lechon (barbecued pig) and spend the night.

One finally concludes that the Ransoms were a curiosity, a welcome break from provincial life, foreigners interested in how the people lived, which was flattering to those in whom they showed their interest. From that standpoint they were a fairly good bet and also a way to gain favor with the friends in Manila who handed them along; or at least a good story to be told the next time one met those who had handed them along. Best of all they were Americans, and who knew where that might lead? Surely in various positive directions. So they sat with the wealthy planter on his veranda, waiting for dinner as the tropical night descended.

> We want to know more about Tuba making and drinking. Everywhere in Panay and especially in Negros we see it for sale. Our host takes us out to a coconut grove, calls a boy to run up the trees to collect the liquid. The tree is tapped where a coconut would be growing, a bamboo tube is placed there to catch the liquid which drips out. Every morning this is collected.

It sounds like collecting maple syrup, except afterward there was fermentation

> If it is drunk immediately or within a few hours, it is sweet tuba. But in four hours it turns sour and ferments. This is what the natives like and they become very intoxicated with a very little. If the tube remains on the tree for several days and is not washed out, it becomes very strong.

Vera wanted to know the process precisely as if she might one day find her own coconut palm and brew up a batch:

> The liquid is colored with bark from the mangrove tree. . . . We keep the boy busy running up the steps of the

> palms. Before we can drink the tuba it must be strained through a natural strainer which grows on the tree (it strains out the pieces of mangrove bark). We mix this mild liquid with a stronger one, brandy, and have a fine cocktail.

Everything was very fine, but only to a certain point:

> The overseer calls another boy to catch, kill and barbecue a small pig. This "boy" is a middle-aged man, who was walking home from work. On a sugar plantation the overseer is all powerful and can command anything at any time and expect to be obeyed. A truly feudal system, and one cannot help but wonder how long it will be endured. The peasants on Negros were all wearing rags, living in huts unable to protect them from the elements. Negros is surely the poorest and richest island in the Philippines.

In fact, all this was not being endured. The Huks were making a revolution which would be brutally suppressed. But for the time being the Ransoms were living off what this economy produced, shocked perhaps by a remarkably oppressive system that made possible the hospitality extended to them, but not so shocked that they would refuse it.

They eventually proceeded to the table; the dinner proved memorable but not because of what was served:

> Our dinner is not ready until 8:30. The whole pig appears. The skin is crisp and good in some parts but tough because it did not cook enough. This is a feast, so we also have roasted chicken and several dishes bought

> at a nearby restaurant. We did not touch [the restaurant] food, so it appeared again at breakfast. Needless to say we did not touch it then either. Tuba and brandy are our liquid. The overseer is very gay, tells us about the kind of power he has, even shows us his arsenal: a pistol, a Garand and a small machine gun. He shoots them off; the sounds are deafening. He never leaves his house unarmed. He is the lord of three hundred families.

Perhaps the overseer detected the Ransom's unease over the contrast between rulers and ruled and wanted to provide a firsthand demonstration of how it all worked. In his precarious but cushy domain he sounds decidedly happy to shock a young American couple that had wandered in, would leave, and never return.

Under these extraordinary circumstances, the arms themselves are not surprising, but the shooting demonstration moves into the realm of the surreal.

Vera's assessment of Philippine women extended to their host's wife:

> Our host's wife speaks only a few words of English. Anyway, Filipino wives, except for the well educated and the rich, always remain in the background. She is always hovering over us, fussing around, waiting on us and her husband as though we were all helpless. And another trial typical of Filipinas that she often displays [is her demand] "Take your seat," if and whenever she finds you standing. Often you are standing by preference.

Even a slight intimacy had not been possible in Manila with Bob and Vera's landladies, and it was not possible now on Negros with the wife of a plantation overseer, who knew about the Huk insurgency that Bob and Vera largely ignored but did not speak of such things. If Vera had spoken fluent Spanish, she might have been able to communicate but probably would have received a denial that there was any trouble locally. Unfortunately she did not and in addition to mediocre meal and gunfire, her hostess was a pain in the neck. Even if it had been possible, there was no time to take matters further.

> In the morning we all drive off, en route for San Carlos on the western side of Negros. Of course when I say "we all" that includes just the men and me. The little wife has to stay at home.

This says something about her and the way she was raised. Vera now says that although her father was a businessman, a Republican, and strongly anti-Roosevelt to the point that he argued with one of her liberal friends, he also supported Vera in virtually everything that she did and made certain that she got an education, something he had not and sorely missed.

A very strong woman who dominated his family had raised him. So Vera had gown up with a second-generation German father used to women who took full advantage of the freedom found in the United States. He remained consistent in his view that each person was responsible for making his or her own way and should be left to do so.

It therefore was natural for Vera to do all the writing about the trip. Bob had his own role: He made all the travel arrangements, some of which were difficult because so often they depended on what was available on the spur of the moment. Bob also wrote "thank you" notes to every person who extended them hospitality. Vera thinks that there are parts of the Philippines otherwise unaccustomed to Americans where wealthy Filipinos believe that Americans are unusually polite.

Another sugar factory loomed:

> Our first objective is the Davao Central'. Though one of the smaller central's, it is considered the most attractive one physically. To us it seemed like a model prison, [with a] very pretty mansion, now in aesthetic ruins, gardens in perfect order, but the gate guarded by [armed men], the second gate also, and the gate to the mill. Other guards are seen wandering around, all armed, of course. Even with this apparent security, the manager

> prefers to stay in Talisay near Bacolod, because he is afraid of an uprising among the laborers.

The laborers had very little to lose, and so Bob and Vera, in their casual way, traveled through a region that was unstable. Having survived the Japanese occupation and the War, the landowners, however, were not about to falter now, carefully guarding what remained.

Was that particular mansion ever restored to its original state? It likely was. Families do not usually take pains to protect a permanent ruin. But first they had to bring the sugar fields and mill back into production:

> Their chief chemist, who studied at Louisiana State University, showed us around and explained the process. The salaries are low. He earns 500 Pesos monthly, plus 10 centavos royalty for each picol of white sugar. He invented the bleaching process used at this mill. The laborer receives 1.80 Pesos daily; the mechanic 5 Peso's. The chemist is very necessary to a sugar mill. If the temperatures and processes of milling the sugar are not just right, the sugar is apt to spoil, especially if exported. Sugar from this mill is always first class. Only brown sugar is exported; it is further refined in the States, San Francisco for instance. The price of brown sugar is 35 Pesos per picol.

The Philippine Peso was artificially set by law at two for each U.S. dollar. With labor costs at a hundredth of what they were in the

United States, and at a time when field workers even in the United States were lucky to make a few dollars a day, Philippine sugar production was lucrative. A picol is a unit of weight that first used by the Dutch East India Company. It is described as having various equivalents but by 1947 was about 600 American pounds; so the price of brown sugar at the dock was roughly $70 per ton.

The only problem was to paste the line of supply back together. Later Philippine President Ramon Magsaysay would deal with the Huks, although the insurgency would linger in one form or another through the 1960's. The country remains a shaky proposition politically even today.

What was fast becoming an industrial itinerary returned to tourism from time to time:

> From the sugar central' [on the way] to San Carlos we drive through some lovely country, hilly, rocky, [and right along the shore]. The ground is not very fertile here, and it is too hilly for extensive sugar planting, so the land is divided into small farms, and I must say these people look more prosperous than the laborers on the plantations.

Perhaps these farmers even owned their land and were in business for themselves.

> At San Carlos, another big sugar area, we are delivered into the hands Feliciano Ganzon, who has opened his house, the Coco Grove, to the traveler. Here we pay 24 Pesos for a night's lodging and three meals for us both. Mrs. Ganzon's hobby is cooking, and she prepares elaborate dishes when we tell her of our interest in cooking, too.

Vera did not complain about this woman's lack of freedom.

Later Bob made a hit:

> In the morning we wander through the market. A young jeweler fixes the clasp of my bag. It takes him about 30 minutes to do the job. We ask him the price and receive the usual, polite answer, "It's up to you." Only sometimes the seller is not so polite if you do not offer enough. One peso seems a fair price to all but very low to us. We also buy aspirin from him. Ten of the pills cost one peso! I'm sure they must be the most expensive aspirin in all the world. In other parts of the market we see squid for sale, seaweed which is eaten raw as well as cooked, Texas rice, utensils made of wrecked Japanese planes, and corn ground in various sizes. We are followed by many people who look at Bob and call him "Tarzan!"

When one considers the role that America played in this part of Asia in the first half of the last century, adulation, even a teasing adulation, is not surprising. Americans must have seemed to have supernatural powers and certainly did in New Guinea where some tribes formed the cargo cults. Both the repair and the aspirin cost about 75 cents, which for Americans, even in the spring of 1947, was not expensive whatever the cost per tablet was.

The paragraph about the market in San Carlos is a long one. Vera loved everyday things. Markets were outdoor museums and also sources of local news:

> Though the people here prefer rice, they are forced to eat corn because it is cheaper and more plentiful. They make a gruel of it. We see UNRRA used clothing for sale. [People here] say all UNRRA clothes were sold instead of given away. Immediately after the War they brought high prices, up to 10 Pesos. Now they are from 1 to 4 Pesos.

UNRRA was the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Agency. The spirit, which spawned Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos, was prevalent even then, and the honest charities we are used to in the United States often absent. The flood of aid goods competed with the local clothing industry, which struggled because aid goods were free. There was also the attraction which machine made goods have in the third world. They comprised another cult, as if wearing machine made Western clothing would bring the economic power those Westerners seem to possess.

Bob and Vera were in Asia before the invasion of college-aged children from the West who were often intent on wearing local dress and subsisting on fifty cents a day, health consequences be damned.

The Ransoms did not try to masquerade as Filipinos, or for that matter, later, as Chinese. Vera went to extent of carrying a stylish American purse, which she had so inexpensively repaired. And although not formally dressed, she did wear dresses. She now says that she hardly ever wore slacks. One can imagine her impact on the local market women, her light colored hair and sunglasses, the bag over her shoulder, looking altogether cool and elegant. In her understated way she was certainly very different from the overdressed women the Filipinos were used to seeing in many American films.

The clothing on the local market brought her comment: "It is interesting to see the lace evening gowns, woolen dresses and large sizes, all so unsuitable for a small, tropical town." Considering these dresses and their appeal, it is unlikely that Vera's gentrified looks struck a chord with the locals. Filipinas desired a certain Hollywood glamour. During the War none of that had been possible; but now it was, and the prices were falling.

In San Carlos the Ransoms also were heirs to the actions of the American troops who arrived there after the Japanese surrendered:

> Americans . . . are very popular. . . . We owe our popularity to the arrival of 300 paratroopers who took into custody 5,000 Japanese. The Americans stayed only a short time and everyone has found memories of their brave deeds, generosity and friendliness. Our host, who was a school superintendent, was amazed that several soldiers left money to pay for the schooling of some poor children. The tuition is very cheap, maybe no more than $10 to $20 a year; but no Filipino is ever philanthropic.

How did they arrange this in their minds? A society with extreme needs and remarkable possibility, held back by a deadening, feudal system and a supremely selfish upper class, which gave little or nothing back. The upper class lived in dull fear of the laboring class, unable to grasp that fairer treatment would end the threat of revolution and create a market that might make them even richer.

The American soldiers who gave a few dollars were as appalled by the poverty as Bob and Vera but able to do little more than help with a year or two of schooling for a few children. With the destruction and desperate conditions that had existed during the War, the privation and death that left so many children orphaned, Filipino society, already deeply divided, had been brutalized. The fact that there was a revolution so soon after a brutal War shows the level of desperation.

Bob and Vera walked on through San Carlos:

> We walk on to the mayor's house, close by the sea wall. He entertains us with beer and talk until we see the landing barge approaching which will take us to Toledo [on] the Island of Cebu. The barge is small and crowded. Seven of the people constitute the crew. Actually one or two could handle it. The fare is 1.5 Pesos. Again, we are crossing the channel in the afternoon, and again the sea is rough. Several people, when they feel ill, hold an opened orange to their noses. We reach the shore, lined with coconut palms as far as we can see. The pier was much higher than the barge. Only a narrow board serves as the gangplank. With the rough sea, it is quite a feat to get to shore. We pay the boy a tip of one Peso to carry our bags to the bus. He is angry and insulting over the meager amount. Other people in the town also ask us for money. The Island of Cebu is a quite a different world. It is the most heavily populated island in the Philippines. The hilly regions are unsuitable for agriculture, and the people generally badly off.

Vera made the connection between conditions, the attitude of their porter and the aggressive begging.

They left the port soon after:

> We sit in the front of the bus which will reach Cebu City, 47 kilometers away, in two hours. The fare costs one Peso each. This bus and the others throughout the Philippines are converted truck bodies. The superstructure is made of wood and built out in width and length to provide room for as many seats as possible. The rows of seats are close together so there is little room

> for legs, and practically none for legs the length of Bob's. Often there are no sides to the bus.

Bob's suffering may have been worth it to travel the same way as the locals, but by the end of each stage trip his knees still hurt. It was also steaming hot and nothing was air-conditioned. Cebu at that point, was proving less than they had hoped:

> The scenery from Toledo . . . is not extraordinary, except for some beautiful acacia trees in certain spots which are planted on both sides . . . and completely shade the road. They have pink flowers and are much more beautiful than acacias [in America]. The other . . . scenery is the seven kilometers over bare and steep mountains.

Vera usually found something to admire.

> Our bus driver is most accommodating. He takes his passengers wherever they want to go. We want to go to Squill's Fox Hole, but unfortunately the bus is too big to manage the narrow streets. We arrive by calesa instead and are taken to a large room with a huge, carved Spanish bed, which is Bob's and large enough for him. This is an expensive place, but elegant and frequented entirely by foreigners: Standard Oil men, International Harvester shipping representatives. It is a converted private home with accommodations for about twenty people. The proprietors are Italian.

Squills Foxhole sounds like the Bob and Vera's kind of place, small, run by someone one wouldn't expect on a remote Philippine island, someone eccentric. However:

> The Americans seem interested only in business and bridge, so we have our tea, and drinks and food alone. Drinks are cheap: one Peso for whiskey or scotch and 60 centavos for beer.

Other foreigners were a continuous problem in the Philippines. Bob and Vera were not like most other people, and especially not like most other Americans. They had no serious stake in the economy nor would they; and they were bored by endless talk of prices and deals. The emphasis on trade smacked of picking clean what we had recently reconquered.

They believed that there had to be more to life than such things, a realization which became a lodestar. In the Philippines they began their search for this additional dimension, to see more and more, a search which was to occupy them for the next fifty years.

They moved on to the island city of Cebu, away from the sugar centrals:

> Cebu is the second city of the Philippines. It is still second in population, but almost every building and house was razed by American bombing and Japanese fires at the end of the War. Rehabilitation has progressed very, very slowly because until recently American forces occupied the entire downtown section with their temporary buildings. Cebu could have been farther along because here is the headquarters of Portland Cement Manufacturing. The setting of Cebu is like Santa Barbara. Rather barren hills rise up just behind . . ..

> We walk along the waterfront, which stretches far and is bustling with business. It is peopled with all sorts of "tough eggs," stevedores who look very sinister, "dead end" kids who pester for money or to be allowed to shine our shoes and individual merchants who have painted conch shells and other atrocities to sell us.
>
> This is undoubtedly an international [place]. We see a British ship from Cardiff, a Danish one from Copenhagen, several U.S. ships. And even though it is midday we see drunken sailors. Of the Philippine ships we inquire, "Wherefore bound?" They are sailing to Leyte and Samar and Bohol and Mindanao, [and] to many [more] ports whose names we have never heard.

Despite the interesting types along the waterfront, the destruction and lack of anyone they might spend time with made this stop less appealing. The ship's prospective ports of call added allure of moving on. They did take time to go out to a place of particular significance for Westerners:

> We make a pilgrimage to Mactan Island, to the spot where Magellan was killed. A launch takes us out to Opon in about 20 minutes for 20 centavos. A long cobble-stone ramp goes up to the village. It is very picturesque -- Bob says that there are similar scenes in Italy. Mactan is on the other side of the island, about 12 kilometers away. The island is flat, scrubby growth everywhere. Formerly there was a large Navy [supply] dump and base on the island. Much of the surplus property still remains, guarded by Filipinos. The barrio of Mactan is a small, sleepy village. The road ends at the monument. The monument was erected by a Spanish governor about 100 years ago commemorating the

> victory of Lapu Lapu, chief of Mactan, over Magellan on April 27, 1521. (Interesting to find the origin of the Lapu, Lapu, which is the name of the most prized fish in the Philippines). The inscription reads further: ("Commander Juan Sebastian Elcano sailed from Cebu May 1, 1521, and anchored at San Lugar de Barrameda September 6, 1522, first circumnavigation of the earth was thus completed.
>
> When the Japanese landed on the island they inscribed a message on the foot of the monument to the effect that they were the victorious conquerors on such a date. It was written in rather poor English, "The Japanese occupied completely whole Mactan on this day . . ."
>
> We wander through coconut palms to the blue green water. There is no beach and the water is shallow. Men and women are a short way out spearing small fish; some one else is beating Maguey leaves in the water to make fiber. It is later laid out in the sun to dry and bleach. Wild lantana and wild poinsettias are blooming.

It was beautiful but they could not stay. There was no hotel, mission, or plantation where they could spend the night.

MINDANAO

Back in Cebu, with its destruction and poverty, they were ready to leave and quickly did:

> We are bound for Mindanao and finally decide to travel on the M/S Felisa. It is owned by a Chinese company, Go Chong Kang. It is pretty because it has just been painted. It was built by the British, . . . sunk by the Japanese, at Maria on Siquijor Island and just now

> rehabilitated. It is larger and faster than the FS boats which carry most of the traffic and passengers among the islands. We occupy the only cabin for passengers and are fortunate to have air mattresses; otherwise we would be sleeping on bare wood. We sail at 10 p.m., reach Tagbilaran on Bohol at 3:30 a.m. and sail again at 6 a.m.

This was an improvement on the rusty ships on which they had often sailed, all the more derelict from the tropical humidity. This new ship, with its center house and single cabin sounds like something out of a film, with Humphrey Bogart as the world-weary captain. Vera reported the voyage to a part of the archipelago completely unknown to them in her usual, matter-of fact-way:

> We reach Siquijor Island [and] the town of Lazi at 10:30 a.m. on Easter Sunday. The large convent and Spanish church on the hill dominate [the town] and the long pier is literally crowded with almost every inhabitant. . . Many of these people are to be passengers on our ship. They live on Siquijor but go to Mindanao to buy goods and to cultivate their . . . farms. We note the cargo unloaded: Portland cement, Texan and Louisianan rice, boxes of California Sierra and Rose Bowl sardines.

The freighter stowed its cargo break-bulk fashion, which was carried by stevedores on their backs and craned into the hold and then craned out and again carried off the ship by hand. In those days there were no container ships. With no way to generate foreign exchange, but a continuous need for much that was eaten and everything manufactured, the Philippines would remain poor.

> When the crowd calms down, and we have donated a peso to the Boy Scouts, we leave the . . . pier and stroll through the town. [This] becomes a run during intermittent showers. [During] one . . . spell we are inside the Catholic convent, a huge building built in typical Spanish, classical style. Only one Spanish priest is resident here. We wonder why the Catholic activity has died down . . . . For some reason the people must prefer the Filipino church, an offshoot of the Catholic Church. Their large [building] is directly across from the Roman Catholics.

The rain poured down as they explored tiny Lazi.

> The town is idyllic. A main street leads through the town up the hill to the churches and government buildings. Other roads lead off to barrios and the other side of the island. The roads are dirt, with a hard surface, something like cobblestones. They are completely shaded by palms, banana trees or acacias, so that the rain or the sun is not too bothersome. Very little English is understood.
>
> As we wander around, all eyes are turned toward us. Everyone must know that Americans are abroad. The town is clean, and the market, too. In the center of the market is a square building for [the] sale of material and clothing. Small stands around this main [building] contain shops for other things. We are attracted to the meat stall. A complete head of a cow sits at one end of the counter; hunks of meat are artistically placed elsewhere on the counter and hang from above. We regret the steady rain which prevents our taking pictures of the most picturesque town we have seen so far.

Vera even liked a display of meat. Few of us would see this as "artistic." The rain may have chased away the flies, but it is far from clear that even flies mattered very much to her. She liked and likes to look at food and the ingredients for food and has an appreciation of quality. Their rain-drenched walk continued:

> We return to the pier where the stevedores, [who] are with the Siquijor United Workers Union, are still busy. They are loading sacks of copra weighing 60 to 65 kilos (132 to 144 lbs) [by] carrying them on their heads. The copra is necessary for ballast. So many passengers are now on board the ship that it otherwise would be top heavy.

One cannot help but think of the terrible Philippine maritime disasters that appear in the press: a ferryboat capsizes and hundreds drown. Disasters like this, however, did not happen to Bob and Vera. It merely rained.

> We sail at 1:15p.m. on a dreary, gray trip to Plaridal on the Island of Mindanao, which we reach at 4:30 p.m. Because of a lack of deck space, for this stretch and the rest of the voyage we are compelled to remain inside our cabin. It is intolerably hot. Every inch outside is occupied by humanity. Cots are opened out and passengers lie, sleep and eat on them from the time they board until the time they get off. We make friends with the young Chinese girl and her even younger brother, about 18, who manage the business side of the ship. As soon as we leave a port, they retire to their cabin and work the abacus and deposit the money in the safe. Their

> uncle is the owner . . . . Amazing that the Chinese give so much responsibility to their young relatives; and that [they] can and do perform so cleverly.

The heat was made worse by intense humidity. From inside their cabin it was difficult to know if it were raining or not.

> It is raining and very dark when we reach Plaridel. We take a calesa to the village a kilometer and a half away. We ride through groves of the tallest coconut palms I have ever seen.

They had left sugar country altogether. Coconut palms stand in great, ordered forests, any breeze stirring the fronds and producing a papery rustle.

> The town is spread out with spacious grounds, even fields, between large, attractive, one-story houses which rest on pillars one story from the ground. This allows for the circulation of air. We walk along the hard, black beach to watch people fishing for small tropical fish, clams and a kind of sea welk [with] green bumps. The bumps are the edible part and have a peppery taste like chili.

Vera tried everything and enjoyed almost everything she tried. It wasn't that there weren't other things that were interesting. Bob learned about the local economy, and they visited the churches and monuments. They met people, some of whom sound very interesting, and Bob was often willing to strike up a conversation with any stranger who had enough English. They were struck by the beauty, but also the ugliness and poverty, of the cities and villages. Yet Vera's most detailed descriptions are of food or its ingredients. Both in the Philippines and on the Asian mainland, she drew the line only at a few items, including roasted dog, and even then the problem was a poor chef.

They continued the stroll up the beach in Plaridel:

> We see four Moro boats on the beach which have just arrived from Zamboanga. The journey took them nine days. The boats are distinctive because of their hand carving and the delicate rattan lashings that hold them together. They are the size of a large canoe and very narrow, with outriggers . . . . They have a small shelter of palm fronds which rests over the boat like a peaked roof. But no matter what there may be of conveniences, it is hard to believe that the entire family can live, cook, and exist in such a small area in the open sea. These boats were, by the way, the most delicate and prettiest of all we later saw. For that reason I think that they must have come from a small, isolated village. They travel such distances with their dried fish.

"Moro" in this context means, Moslem, and religious differences remain a source of conflict. Vera assumed that if a village were more centrally located, it would be more modern and the integrity and beauty of native boat building lost or replaced by factory-made boats. She was largely correct but made this observation at a time when there were still a lot of native-made boats.

The period right after WWII, nonetheless, was a time of loss of confidence in the West, where supposedly civilized nations had behaved so badly.

Today native bancas with outriggers and small decks with shelters work the coastal waters around Mindanao and the other islands. Whether they are as beautifully carved as the boats, which Bob and Vera saw or in earlier times is unimportant. They still skim beneath colored sails.

> Only two foreigners live in this area: [two] Catholic priests from Chicago. We wait until 8 o'clock for them to return from an outlying barrio, but sleep overcomes us so we return to our ship and cabin. Whether we are more comfortable here is hard to say because the cabin is literally a steam bath.

Plaridel was merely a port of call. The priests were Augustinians and part of a Catholic mission. They never did come to the ship, and Bob and Vera did not pass that way again.

Their ship moved on through the darkness, across the glassy Bohol Sea, gliding near the coast. They landed just after dawn.

> We dock at Iligan, our destination, at 6 a.m. Bob runs off to reconnoiter and finds a bus going to Dansalan, which drives up to the ship for our luggage. He tells me tales of exotic people, fabulous sights which I see for myself as soon as we have occupied the last two available seats on the bus. The Moros of this region are colorful and

> aggressive people. They seem to scream when they talk; and they talk incessantly very excitedly. All this is so different from the placid Filipinos.

Vera identified a cultural difference, one founded on general animation and speech, that accompanies the Christian – Moslem conflict in the Philippines. The Filipinos to the north are noted for their gentility and desire for concord to the point of agreeing even when they do not.

Bob and Vera were delighted to be away from the ship and the oppressive cabin. They were also delighted to arrive in a new place even if it seemed a little dangerous.

> Many of the Moros wear pistols on their belts; in fact you have no social standing if you do not flourish a weapon. The poorer Moros must be content with sharp knives. A Datu, wearing U.S. khaki clothing, constantly hollers at us. We think that he is uttering angry words, but what he [actually] says is, "I like Americans, and I like them to visit my country." The psychology is that the Americans are another tribe and the only one who conquered the Moros; the Spaniards never did. Therefore they have respect for us, and now the Filipinos are having trouble with the Moros because . . . [they] . . . refuse to accept them as rulers.

The fighting continues today as a theatre of the United States' worldwide war on terrorism, although that really has more to do with the propoganda value of another unstable Moslem area.

At least one current guidebook lists a telephone number that can be used to set up an interview with leaders of the Moro Liberation Front. This promises a new kind of tourism, something Bob and Vera experienced themselves from the Datu, or local sheik, who was willing to provide them with stories of Moro independence and fighting spirit. For the Moros subjugation began only after the Spanish American war when, in 1899 conflict broke out between Filipinos and the United States and U.S. Marines were sent to Mindanao. Before that they more or less ruled themselves.

Mindanao, the second largest island in the archipelago after Luzon, was different in other ways.

> [It] is the least populated of all the islands. Until just before the war it was impossible to get around because there were no roads. Because of [this] it was undeveloped and primitive and did not attract many [western] people. Along the east coast and elsewhere, too, there are great coconut groves. In the central and north part, the province of Bukidon, which we did not see, are large ranches for cattle owned by wealthy families. Also in this area is an extensive plantations owned and operated by the Hawaiian Pineapple Company. An attractive tourist hotel under their management is located at Del Monte. The government has tried to attract settlers by opening up the country to homesteaders. Quite a number have come, which is obvious from the cleared spaces. They are given something like 7 hectares [700 acres] of land; and they must make improvements, clear at least two hectares and

> plant them, and in so many years they are given title to the land. No individual can hold large acreage; only a corporation can homestead bigger tracts, and they are limited in size, too. We have heard that some of the rich families have done just this and tied up the most productive areas. Anyway, there is much unclaimed land in Mindanao and many resources, such as forests and minerals, and the country is very fertile so there should be a place for everyone. Wherever we went we were hailed as the first Americans to arrive after parity was voted; [i.e.] equal rights to Americans and Filipinos in developing the country. They thought we had a bag of gold in our hot hands and were most eager to help us find a good area to invest it. It is doubtful if much American capital will come over because of the corrupt and unstable government. At least that is the opinion of most Americans living in the Philippines.

There is a great deal more to say about Mindanao, which is the home to the eastern most reach of Islam. The island is huge. With its small neighbors of Jolo and Basalan to the south, its provinces stretch for over four hundred miles, from the Philippine Sea to the Sulu Sea. The geography and ethnology are varied and exotic, with five major groups among the Muslims alone, each independent and combative; one of these, the Tausug, were the first converted to Islam, and hold themselves above the other tribes. There are also many Catholics.

Because of Mindanao's remoteness and Islamic identity it has a strong sense of independence. The going became tougher. The roads that existed were still worse than on the other islands. The historical the conflict between the Moros and the central government continued. Even finding a place to stay grew more complicated:

> After a wild ride of two and a half hours on the Maria Cristina bus, which costs us one peso each, we reach Dansalan on Lake Lanas. It is Monday, market day. The Datu invites us to stay at his house, and we accept. But we did not know that Datus lived in such squalid places, so we seek out the house of the Presbyterian missionary, Mr. Hamm. His house is being renovated, and he is not there, but his assistant lets us use one of the rooms and borrows two cots for us. Later we discovered two more places which accommodate travelers: Nancy's Kitchen and the home of the agent for Philippine Airlines.

Nancy's kitchen was a simple restaurant with a few primitive rooms. It did not attract them. The airline agent did not offer them a bed, so a missionary rescued them once more, this time *in absentia.*

During the 1920's a sultan in Lanos rebelled and government troops assaulted his compound and palace. The fighting in Mindanao generally continued well into the 1930's.

> The market must be like an Eastern market. Crowds of people swarming in every direction. Because of the rain we walk through seas of slippery mud. It is utterly impossible to take pictures because people crowd around us too closely. We are constantly approached by sellers of Moro cloth (woven of rayon died various shades of purple and red), carved daggers, silver rings, earrings and bracelets. We move out of the market and the crowd, walk around the edge of the lake which is dotted with mosques. We visit the home of one of the best silver smiths, Coto. His father is a priest [a mullah] and wears

> the white turban allowed only to the pilgrims who have reached Mecca. He has four wives and 30 children. One son died on the way to Mecca; this is considered a great honor. He wants to make the pilgrimage one more time and hopes death will overtake him on the way.

The abrupt change in atmosphere may have been due to the Moros, although one must be careful not to prejudge. Islamic restrictions can produce tension, especially during Ramadan. Their new acquaintance's desire to die while performing an act of devotion impressed Bob and Vera. So that impulse is not something that is recent or involving a few extremists.

There was something else involved:

> He wants some centavos so that he can pray for us. We give, and he prays. He lives in a large house, but it must accommodate at least fifty people. There is a community kitchen which is nothing more than a few stones piled to make a hearth and surround a fire and several vessels for cooking gruel. The room is partitioned after a fashion into cubicles, but nowhere in the house could there be any privacy.

To be fair, other religions also raise funds, and also through prayer.

Bob and Vera were more concerned just then with the dangers of the region:

> Dansalan is spread out along the main street for several miles. We walk to the so-called business district. Those who speak

> English act voluntarily as our guides. We eat dinner at the PAL [Philippine Air Lines) agent's house. We are also marooned there because of a heavy storm. The mission house is about one mile away. We would be soaked if we walked; furthermore, it is folly to go out at night in Moro country. Bob thinks that's all foolishness, but the Filipinos in the house and even the LeSages, old-timers and Americans, would not risk it. Finally we send a boy to Nancy's Kitchen which is nearby with a note to deliver to the MP Captain we met earlier in the day. In parting, he said, "We will be glad to help you. We owe everything to the Americans." He was true to his word and sent a jeep for us which got us home safely with no excitement or shooting.

It was this practical side, arranging safe alternatives, and their remarkable ability to connect with people that brought Bob and Vera through again and again. This happened too often to call it beginners' luck.

They also met some old Philippine hands:

> The Spencers and LeSages arrived in Dansalan the same day as we did. The men were both soldiers in the Spanish American War and settled down in Moro country to homestead. By 1940 they both had flourishing coconut plantations; then came the War and now they feel that the U.S. has left them in the lurch by giving the Philippines back to the Filipinos. They thought that the Americans should have stayed until law and order was re-established because the Filipinos will never be able to do so.

The Spencers and LeSages sound like intrepid Westerners who stayed on in former colonies in various parts of Asia and Africa. Vera doesn't say whether the Japanese interned them.

It also is not clear from Vera's account if they had taken a short trip to Dansalan for the day or just returned from somewhere else for the first time since the War's end. Whatever the reason, they did not like what they saw. Although it was wrenching for such people to live in a newly independent nation in what for nearly fifty years had been their home and colony, Vera was unsympathetic. Their new friends were by then past the age when they might have accepted such a change. Listening to people complain is pointless, and neither name appears again in Vera's account.

She turned, instead, to the local conditions:

> Dansalan, of course, was destroyed. I say "of course" because every town and village we entered, except Iloilo and Bacolod, [was.] Several Americans had built nice homes here and planned to retire. It is a beautiful spot, very green, rolling hills surrounding a lake. The people are interesting and the colors and aspect of the landscape always changing. Early morning a heavy dew, sun by midday, then fog and frequent rain. [This occurs] all year round.

They were near the equator, where the weather does not change from season to season.

> Only the main street is paved, and because rain falls almost every day, the other roads are very muddy indeed. Dansalan is in the heart of Moro country. Much of it has never been explored [by westerners.] All government officials are Moros, but MP camps of Filipino soldiers are everywhere. Everyone carries guns and pistols openly. You feel like this is a Wild West show . . .

Mindanao was the first time that Bob and Vera had to contend with the unrest that then afflicted much of the country. Yet except for sending for the MP's jeep to get back to the mission, they seem to have needed little other help:

> We have the most difficult time finding out about a bus schedule to the south. No one has any information. If we had not been walking along the street just as a bus was loading, we would have missed transportation for that day. We buy our fare for Malabang, 75 kilometers away, for two and a half Peso's each. We are also charged two Pesos for our three small bags. This is surely a chisel, but we do not argue. This bus of the Maria Cristina line makes the trip once a day. The Mindanao Motor Line, [which is] much more comfortable and runs from Iligan to Cotobato but does not stop at Dansalan for passengers.

So it remained business as usual. They just got on the bus and started toward the next town they wanted to visit. Considering their experience the night before, this was brave.

> The baggage and we are piled into the truck like so many cattle. And more people crowd in along the way. It is amazing how they can squeeze in when there seems to be no more room. Never the less, everyone has a gay time.

> The Moros ask us many questions. Only two young men can speak English – they are teachers. They ask us our ages, occupations, how many children [we have], where we are from – the questions are endless.
>
> The country is lovely: pastoral, rolling green hills overhung with fog, thick forests, and damp atmosphere. [It] reminds me of Oregon. It rains while we are in the bus. The rain blows in from the side and comes in through the holes in the roof. We are glad to reach Malabang . . . . We were both sitting on air pillows, but even so the wooden seat became unbearably hard. Our legs are cramped because it was impossible to move them even an inch. So we welcome the comforts of Mr. Anton's Hotel [above] the municipal building.

They were now in as remote a part of the Philippines as they visited.

> The other guests of the hotel are surprised to see Americans emerging . . . . They would never take such a trip or allow themselves to be at the mercy of a group of Moros. But really, Americans really have nothing to fear, . . . [although] perhaps the Filipinos do.

Bob and Vera were the center of attention among the small, expatriate community:

> We meet Colonel [James R.] Grinstead, an old timer and a character, and Dick Spencer. The Colonel has just sold a lot of copra and feels in fine spirits. He has his wad of Pesos wrapped in paper next to him on the big table where we sit drinking beer and looking through the large window to the square below. The Colonel [was in] the Spanish American War. He never married, staying in his house [outside of] town most of the time, except when he's in a certain mood. When that comes he goes on a

> beer drinking bout at Mr. Anton's hotel and the nearby general store. He tells many wonderful stories about the old days and the recent days, too, when he commanded a troop of guerrillas in Misamis Occidentale on Mindanao. He avoided capture and internment during the entire War. He went back to the United States [afterward] but thinks it's his last visit. He likes Mindanao and a rather solitary existence . . . [H]e has a plantation in northeastern Mindanao where he plans to retire soon. The Moros have great respect for him, and it is said that he does and says many things to the Moros that another white man would be shot for.

Colonel Grimstead also had been an officer in the Philippine Constabulary and led a contingent against the Moros in the ongoing battles on the island. In order to have been in the Spanish-American War, he was least 18 in 1900; so as World War II broke out, he would have been in his late fifties or sixties. Yet he fled the Japanese and went into the jungle to fight. He was invaluable because he knew the country and was trusted locally. World War II now seems a long time ago, to say nothing of the Spanish American War.

The Philippines had changed and the way of life these American planters had managed fatally disrupted. Grimstead had been unusual even before WWII.

> [The Colonel] was one of the first . . . to return to this area. Because of that other planters asked him to open up their plantations. He has done . . . [what he could], but the Moro have occupied some of the groves, and even he

> isn't able to chase them away. Everyone says times have changed for the worse, and most of the planters are returning just to sell their interests. Anyone whose plantation is now producing copra is making loads of money. The price has risen 35 Pesos for 100 kilos. Three weeks later in Zamboanga, we found out that the price had dropped to 25 Pesos, I think because the U.S. market is saturated.

It's as if the American frontier had moved across the Pacific during the Spanish American War. This remarkable old man was living out his personal myth; although if you'd said that, he very likely would have laughed and ordered another beer. He was still happy enough on his plantation with a Filipina to keep house; he still rode his horse through his palm groves. When the Japanese came he slipped away into the hills; he had fought them not for some abstract political or strategic reason but to continue a way of life.

After the War his it must have been difficult reopening his friends' plantations, knowing that many were returning only to sell up while some of the others had died in the War. He could look back on a life in a place he loved, not because he had been born there, but because he had chosen to live there. Now there was nothing going forward, no legacy to leave to another generation.

The other American Bob and Vera met was equally interesting:

> Dick Spencer is a young man of about 23. He was born and brought up in [the Philippines, and] speaks Moro like a native. He's a very sophisticated and attractive man. During the War he was a pilot flying the Hump. Now he is in Malabang reorganizing his plantation. We express a desire to go on a safari in the jungle. He agrees to show us around his place.

To Vera, and everyone during WWII, "flying the Hump" meant over the mountains of Burma to supply the Chinese under Chiang Kai Shek, a dangerous mission that helped keep China in the War. Perhaps Vera saw something in Spencer of a new generation of Westerners who might persevere in the East, but more likely he was a romantic figure, a war hero roughing it on his plantation.

> Next morning a weapons carrier which charges ten Pesos for the trip takes us to the hacienda. All the buildings were burned, and at all the other plantations, too. The lane is rough . . . . But we are so impressed with the great vista of the towering coconut palms that we do not mind the jolts.

Another remarkable experience unfolds, available only because of Bob and Vera's ability to strike up a friendship in a remote place.

> On the way are groups of men pulling ripe nuts from the trees. They use a long bamboo pole which has a hook on the end. The simplest way is to cut steps in the palm as it grows, but this is considered bad technique by scientists. Parasites can too easily find their way into these exposed parts and damage the tree. The nuts are gathered into a heap and de-husked on the spot and, I think, split in two. The two halves are carried to the copra shed. Women

> carry on the work [from that point.] They remove the meat from the inner shell. The inner shells are then placed one inside the other and laid in rows on the floor of the copra shed. They are set in fire and fumes rise to the second floor to cook the coconut meat, stacked there five layers deep. After 36 hours copra is produced. It has a characteristic odor which is unpleasant, but by the time we finished our trip, we became quite fond of it. The copra shed is made of palm. With the fire burning, you'd think it would all go up in smoke, but the fire made of coconut shells does not flame, only smolders. Sun-dried copra used to be the best; but in Malabang there isn't sufficient sun to use that process. Also, the smoke can now be refined from the copra, so there is no longer any premium for the sun-dried variety. The less water in copra the better it is. That's the main criterion. All copra produced in the Philippines is shipped to the United States, refined there, and then sent to other parts of the world. Only occasionally do they load a European ship.

The island economy was very straightforward: The trees had to be planted but eventually produced a harvest that could be taken through the first stage of refining with virtually no equipment. This had considerable attraction to Americans leaving the Army after the Spanish American War with little capital. It allowed a familiar form of pioneering: Their parents and grandparents had done the same thing in the American West when the land there was free.

Vera continues her description of copra production in detail:

> Coconut trees are planted in straight rows, equidistant. They will grow absolutely perpendicular to the ground if planted properly. But first the ground must be cleared, no

> easy task in the jungle. And [the planters] must constantly fight against new jungle, trees and vines that grow faster than the palms and will strangle the young plants. This is what happened during the War years, or almost happened. The young plants are fenced with bamboo to keep out wild pigs which are very fond of such fare. The palms bear when they are five to seven years old. When they are 25 years old they are mature and are at the peak of their production. They continue to live and to bear until they are 75 years old. When the palm is full grown, it requires no more individual care. The height of the palms [blocks] the light and prevents growth [below] except for a harmless ground cover.

Clearly Vera was fascinated. Other things drew her attention:

> After the lecture on coconuts and copra, . . . we walk through the jungle part of the plantation with several Moros as our guides to hunt for Monkeys. Monkeys have been a great problem for the planters since the War years. They have overrun [many] groves and [are] destructive. They delight in swinging from palm to palm pulling off the coconuts. Most of the monkeys here have been killed, but we do see some . . . scrambling up tree trunks swinging along vines and shouting with glee. We kill two of them and later eat the smaller one. We also hear and see horn-bills, large birds with huge bills. They are often in zoos. They have a very odd way of hopping. Giant pigeons fly past. Dick says they are superb eating.

The jungle itself is a kind of larder, shifting focus to dishes to be sampled. But Vera was enthralled by the spectacle not simply because of the various culinary possibilities:

> [It] is a magnificent sight. Nature has abandoned all inhibitions and shot off in all directions. This jungle is not very dense [and] not the impenetrable jungle we had

> heard about. It is very easy to push away the brush or to find open spaces. It is also soft and lush to walk upon. Huge trees tower above. There are also innumerable vines, all kinds and varieties and sizes, along with smaller trees and bushes. Nearest the floor are flowers and the tiny plants on which we walk. Many leaves of the larger bushes are shaped entirely differently from any we know. Some are huge. All are green, a deep intense green. A botanist must be delighted . . . !

Vera clearly was, and it is remarkable that Mindanao has not become better known since that time; but until the recent reports of violence by Moslem separatists, it has slumbered on, and over the last fifty years most parts of the island have changed less than the rest of the Philippines.

> One interesting tree is the lady tree. [The original tree] has been strangled by vines which have completely encircled and killed it. The vines continue to grow upward and leaves sprout from the top, so that the whole looks like a tree. The Moros will not chop down this vine-tree. They believe spirits live inside. We found this same myth . . . all over Mindanao.

Plans for dinner intruded:

> We return with our small monkey. It is no easy matter to have it cooked. The Moros are superstitious and refuse to eat monkey. They are Moslems and consider the monkey like pork. Finally our guide persuades two more modern Moros to roast it. They do, but in a secluded spot so that their fellow [villagers] will not find out. We eat our monkey hungrily. It tastes like the dark meat from chicken and is very good, although it does not have a particularly distinctive flavor.

Vera then describes Moro dress. She does not tell us about what she and Bob wore, although there are pictures of her in a print dress and Bob in his khakis; at that point he had not yet adopted his trademark Bermuda shorts. But with his shock of reddish hair and her trim, cool look they were a striking pair, young and very American.

But Vera does not tell us what they were thinking and how they were together. They got along well, she now says. ("We always did.") They also were discovering that they loved to travel, something that few people can do happily for long periods of time, at least not in the way they so often did.

Travel is stressful. Traveling in a country which had just suffered extreme devastation from a modern war and was suppressing a serious insurrection plus religious conflict was more stressful. Vera, however, never reported that it was. Together they were happy. There were no tearful letters home to her mother and father describing how tough it was, or that she and Bob had fought, or that Bob was being unreasonable, which he sometimes was. Perhaps their secret was to drift along gazing outward, Bob making the arrangements on the spot for the next stage, rarely troubling with reservations or deadlines.

Now Vera says that she simply loved to travel and pretty much no matter where. She also loved Bob. He would occasionally tire of a trip, but she claims that she always wanted to move on. This shows remarkable spirit. Who hasn't been on a trip that went wrong or eventually grew tiresome? She even savored near disasters: the ship's cabin that was a steam bath, a crowded truck on a rough road in the jungle heat, or the host who decided it would be good idea to finish dinner by blasting away with his guns.

Successful extreme travel, which the Ransoms took up and pursued during much of the 1940's and 1950's, requires this kind of spirit. Bob's role included endless speculation about how fascinating this or that place must be, building their expectancy on rumors and his imagination.

At this point they were still trying to understand the Moros. Vera wrote:

> Men wear a shirt, usually U.S. Army issue and of all things, a skirt. The skirt is a piece of material sewn together at the end, ankle length, bunched up in the front and twisted to form a kind of knot. The whole affair is always slipping, and . . . the men are constantly fussing with their clothes.

A nation of fussers. Vera did concede:

> Foreigners say it is most comfortable garb. The costume is somewhat modernized occasionally by the use of a leather belt to make the skirt secure. They always wear a fur felt fez, either dark red or purple or gold.

Through positive cross-cultural influence the belt sounds as if it might solve the skirt problem.

Vera also wrote:

> The Moro women wear a blouse, with kimono sleeves, loose and high at the neck. It is always . . . a solid color. Their skirt is the same size and the same material as the men's. The real Moro material is hand woven by the women. They use rayon thread, dipping it in dyes as they go along. The colors are purples, reds, and touches of yellow and black. The design is sort of a plaid. The material is very heavy and unmalleable but softens with use. It also fades rapidly.

It sounds very uncomfortable and unsuited to the tropics. Style had triumphed over function.

> The material is also expensive, and so not all the Moros can afford it. The women are dressed when they pull the skirting material tight under the arms and then one end up over the left shoulder. They love jewelry and usually wear it. The wealthy like large, bulging gold-plated bracelets that clamp on the wrist, or bracelets made of elephant tucks in the same shape. I tried on these bracelets. They are very small and are most difficult to put on. I doubt if the Moro women remove them very often.

It is not apparent from Vera's account that she bought any of the jewelry. She and Bob made purchases only occasionally, and then only if it were something extremely striking.

> Besides the bracelets they wear several rings made of U.S. gold pieces that command high prices. We were asked if we had any for sale. I am sure that there are more gold pieces concentrated in this area than in the entire United States. The Moros will pay 120 Pesos for a $20 gold piece. They also horde coins for making silver jewelry, and as a consequence, we had great trouble getting change all over Mindanao and the Sulus.

Certain things especially caught Vera's eye:

> The Moro women have a stunning way of fixing their hair. The hair is all combed to one side [and] twisted into a knot which lies close to the head. The hair hangs from this knot in a loop. I will try to draw a picture. They use oil on the hair to keep it in place. No pins are used. If the technique was brought to the U.S., it would be a rage. I watched a woman put her hair up. It is done very easily when you know how. The coiffeur stays put and would do credit to the best hairdresser in New York or Paris.

Vera's pencil drawing shows something like a French twist, with the hair seductively pulled up off the neck. Later Vera worked for a Lilly Dachet, a leading New York milliner, and she always had great interest in style. She also understood how a foreign, native style might be transplanted to Europe and the United States.

At this point they moved on:

> The road from Malabang to Cotobato is 78 kilometers and winds through beautiful jungle. Sometimes the monkeys play in the road. . . . We saw a wild hog and its family scutter into the privacy of the jungle as we approached. Large tree ferns grow everywhere. We stop at several barrios where small kids gather round the front of the truck where we are sitting. They invariably giggle when we talk to them. Half way to Cotobato we leave the jungle and ride through rolling green country until we reach our destination.
>
> We are going on further, to the Episcopal Mission at Upi, 38 Kilometers south of Cotobato . . . in the mountains.

They were in the vicinity of Mount Apo, at over 9,000 feet the tallest peak in the Philippines.

> Fortunately we meet a bus on its way out as we come in. The charge for the three hour trip is one Peso each. The road winds up the mountain to Kil, the highest point. Here is a panoramic view of the entire Cotobato Valley. We wind through the mountains which seem entirely uninhabited. The hills are green with Cogan grass and occasionally with forest. We cross a river on a ferry that operates with a cable and the principal of tacking with the wind. More twisting roads through the hills brings us to the green and fertile Upi Valley.

Here they met another American:

> Thirty years ago when Captain Edwards arrived at Upi there was no village. He was a U.S. Army scout and educator who "liked to blaze new trails."

Vera announced this as if a combination scout and educator was the usual thing in the United States Army. What would an Army officer have been doing shortly after World War II in the middle of the mountains of Mindanao? Vera wrote:

> He decided that this was the best place to live in all of Mindanao. His idea was to make this a Tiruray village, but the Tagalogs and especially the Visayans and Ilocanos have immigrated to this land (and other parts of Mindanao, too). The Tiruray are very shy and unagressive people, so they have been pushed back into the hills and village now has very few Tiruray people among its inhabitants.
>
> Captain Edwards is married to a Tiruray woman, and he has six children, [including] two boys, one six months and the other 19, who at present is attending college in the United States.

Captain Irving Edwards was another officer during the Spanish American War who played a significant role in the pacification of Mindanao, something the Spanish never achieved but the United States had to a degree by 1903. The immigration Vera describes was the result of the colonial administration's policy to settle Mindanao with non-Moslems. By 1945, only 25% of the population was Moro. The Moslem separatist movement none the less has continued and the ongoing violence must have been difficult for Edwards, although the Tirurays usually did not to respond with still more violence. Slash and burn agriculture, gold mining and illegal lumbering also continue their destructive incursions. Edwards stayed on to live a life that could have been described by Conrad:

> Edwards knows more about this region than anyone else. He thinks civilization has encroached upon him too much, and he is eager to push on father into the mountains in which there is much unexplored territory and many unknown tribes. In the barrios he has visited in the hinterland, he alone is considered the arbitrator by the chiefs. They communicate with him by sending couriers with oral messages, or in one recent case by a picture letter drawn on [cloth.] Edwards lives in a charming spot which he has beautified with gardens and trees. He likes to grow vegetables and flowers; and he has many varieties of fruit trees; avocados, mangosteens, plums, and papayas. He also has experimented with teak trees. Apparently they will grow in this area, though not to the tremendous size that they reach in Siam and Malaya.

Edwards is mentioned in *Wisdom From a Rainforest*, an ethnographic study of Mindanao.[2] The "wisdom" is the Tiruray belief that only God possesses the land because we humans are merely passing through. Edwards came to the Upi Valley in 1926, choosing the Tiruray perhaps because they had not converted either to Christianity or Islam.

Bob and Vera were very pleased by this part of their trip:

> We stay at the Mission of St. Francis of Assisi and are so comfortable and well fed and entertained that we remain

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[2] Schlegel, University of Georgia Press, 1999.

> for five days. Father Raymond Abbott is the head priest. He was in Manila, [but] we did not meet him. Father V.H. Strohsahl was taking his place. We were very fond of Father Edward Jacobs, who has since moved to Bontoc, and of Father James Trotter. They are all young, between 28 and 33. Sister Ada Clarke also helps out. And Deaconess Dawson was expected soon.

It is not an accident that the Anglican Franciscans chose to live among the Tiruray whose values are similar to those of their own order.

Again the effects of the War intruded:

> The mission compound was quite extensive [before the War] but everything was destroyed except the shell of the chapel. They are rebuilding as quickly as possible. The building . . . going up is the dormitory for girls.

The Ransoms went many places in the Philippines and almost everywhere they went much had been destroyed. These places were not fought over foot by foot; as they fell back the Filipinos destroyed some things; as the Japanese retreated, their soldiers burned and blew up what they had to leave behind; and then there was the American bombing.

Vera continued:

> [The girls] live and eat here and attend school. Later a dormitory for boys will be built. . . . The priests have private prayers early in the morning, then mass at 6:30. Another service at 5:30 in the afternoon and more private

> prayers before they retire. On Sundays there are several masses. The priests wear long gowns in church and the service seems just like Catholic worship except that it is in English.
>
> The Fathers have fixed a very comfortable and for this area luxurious quarters. They have two bathrooms, and have rigged a shower. The living room has comfortable, rattan chairs, bookcases full of books and a Victrola. They are also fortunate to have a superb cook who prepares well-balanced and ample meals out of nothing. By that I mean he often has to use canned goods because fresh meat is available only over the weekends, and only fruits and vegetables grown in the area are sold. Nothing perishable is imported.

It has a ring of Robinson Crusoe Episcopalian style. One wants to escape to such a place to live. For someone with a religious sensibility, it sounds like a continuous retreat and an opportunity to develop a faith without some of the rough edges sharpened by modern life.

Captain Edwards took them to the Tiruray:

> We walk several kilometers away from the [Upi] to look for the typical Tiruray village. They are agricultural people, and . . . live in isolated [places] they never gather together into barrios or villages, and so a long walk is necessary to see many Tiruray houses. We saw several. They are very simply constructed, made out of Nipa and bamboo and without furnishings. [The Tirurays'] belongings are a few mats for sleeping, a hollow bamboo for gathering and storing water, a knife, and perhaps a few other implements, a round wooden affair for

> threshing rice, one or two cooking pots, and that is absolutely all.

This spare existence must have appealed, at least to Bob.

> The houses are difficult to approach because the surrounding land is irrigated, and you never know when you are going to come across water. These people are shoeless, and so it doesn't bother them. The Tiruray build their houses on the steep slopes of a hill next to their patch of land. The land they have burned over [to clear], often [removing] virgin growth. The stumps of the trees are left and all [the ground] around them is cultivated. For three years the ground will be fertile enough to produce crops: the first year rice, the second corn, and the third the lowly camote (sweet potato). Then the family moves off to yet another virgin area. This is a disastrous method of farming and is practiced in many parts of Mindanao and northern Luzon. China was farmed [in this way] and the result is that there is now a great dearth of trees.

This is the lament of every tropical area of the world. It is easy to criticize but difficult to change these practices, which require less labor and capital than methods that might sustain a modern way of life. To many who live in these regions, there seems a lot of jungle.

> An agricultural college has been established in Upi, and they are endeavoring to teach new and better methods. Of course, the old and uneducated folk won't change their ways. The college had 1,000 students before the War and was doing a fine job. But it and the rest of Upi was completely destroyed by fire. The college is still open, however, and in several years hopes to be back to normal.

The islands' problems have not changed much in the past sixty years. There is more general economic activity, but destruction of the jungle continues, as does the Islamic separatists' violence.

Vera's account turned to the local economy:

> Saturday is market day. The night before the Tiruray come in from the hills and sleep in the market stalls. Gamblers from Cotobato also come up to tempt and win money from the Tiruray. Even though the War has been over for some time, it is only now that the Tiruray have been coming to the market. Every week more come and a larger variety of goods is for sale.

This shy people hid out during the War in the mountains. It is unknown how many were killed, or if they joined bands of guerillas to fight the Japanese. In so remote a spot, there would have been few Japanese and little that they could have done to counter resistance.

Vera went on about the market day:

> The Tirurays are wearing their best clothes for this occasion. They've all been recently laundered, too. The men wear a long-sleeved shirt, tight-fitting coat, and skin tight breeches made of striped material that reach to the knee. The women have cloth loosed draped on their heads. Their jackets are tight fitting at the waist, . . . They are made of many kinds of material of all different colors. Their skirts are long and plain. If they are affluent, they wear necklaces which they buy from the Moros. One side is of colored beads; five long, gold tubes are strung on the other side. Dangles of jingle bells and small beads hang from the end. Around the skirt they wear a rather wide belt made of tubes of brass. It is

> their custom also to wear lipstick on the lower lip; we have seen young children do this, too. The lipstick, from China, is colored paper. First one licks the paper, then transfers the red [dye] to the lower lip.

Because they lingered longer than usual, Bob and Vera began to get more involved in the Mission's daily life:

> Sunday we walk with Father Trotter to Captain Edwards' house which is the center of an out-station. The foundation of Edwards' house is used as a chapel. Most of the attendants are children, and they get a big kick out of singing the hymns and the Bible story, which Father Trotter tells and acts out in English. It is later translated into their language. We notice one very old gal who comes every Sunday. No one knows why. She doesn't understand a word of English and takes no part in the service, but she must get some enjoyment from it. A younger woman with three children, one a baby whom she nurses during the services, is later the center of attraction. After the service we find out that she wants her three children baptized. Father Trotter suggests the names of Anna, John and Thomas. She agrees and the ceremony begins. A Christian name is always bestowed on the children, not that it is necessary, but the parents wish it and it is much easier for the children when they go to school. Tiruray names are most difficult.

The heat drove Bob and Vera to a less spiritual activity:

> [A] store in Upi sells beer at one Peso each. It is warm but tastes good to us inveterate beer consumers. The store has to pay a tax of five Pesos every month for the privilege of selling beer; and a tax of three Pesos for selling cups of coffee.

The government had established a moral price list for beverages, and under such a system beer had to cost more than coffee.

> At night as we hear the sound of the agongs, brass drums which all the tribes and Moros on Mindanao and the Sulus have and play. The sounds seem to be quite near, but they are coming from the distant hills. The Tiruray also have a type of wooden xylophone.

Then it was time to move on. What determined that is unclear, except that Bob and Vera spent more than twice as long touring the Philippines as they had intended, and they had already seen a considerable part of Mindanao. Five days in Upi was simply enough, and they were running short of money.

> Early Monday morning we start the return trip to Cotobato. Upi is the end of the road. We are advised to stay at the Commonwealth Hotel, a very decent place owned by a Chinese. They charge two Pesos per bed, and they have mattresses – O comfort! But we were not warned that the Chinese play mah jong until midnight in the "Salon" which is in the center of all the bedrooms. There was no cloth on the table to deaden the noise.

The Chinese emerged again, and not simply in Bob and Vera's consciousness. They didn't have enough money to join in themselves. They soon would be leaving for Hong Kong:

> Cotobato was completely leveled during the War, so only temporary buildings have mushroomed up. There are so many Chinese in the town; they own every store, restaurant, shipping company and are the export-import

> brokers. You'd think that you were in China. [They] even have their own cemetery, the only one we saw except for Manila.
>
> The Moros in this area are friendly, docile, and do not rise up as the Jolo and Lanao Moros do. Also, the Cotobato Moros do not have the tradition or education to compete with the Chinese, so economically they are at their mercy. We heard much wailing in Mindanao . . . that the Chinese have a stranglehold on all the business. They do not care to realize that the Chinese have acquired their capital through very hard and diligent work, saving, selling their goods quickly so the turnover is rapid even though the profit is small or sometimes not at all, and by cooperation among themselves. The Filipinos will not keep open their shops at all hours and Sundays, too; nor do they go out of their way to please a customer; they always want at least 100% profit; when they have capital, rather than investing it in the business they purchase a brand new automobile.

Vera's American affinity for the Chinese and their disciplined businesslike ways was close to inevitable. One earned one's way. Many Chinese were poor but worthily so.

> The Chinese in Cotobato add a further Oriental flavor to the town. Also, the Nanking Restaurant, the best in town, serves excellent food. On the opposite corner is the Cold Spot, famous for their ice cream, and I should say infamous for their prices. A dish of ice cream costs one Peso. However, we wanted to try and did enjoy their durian ice cream. The durian is probably the world's most exotic fruit. It grows in southern Mindanao and Jolo and only a few other places in the entire world. The fruit is large, larger than a Persian melon. The skin is green or black; the latter is better, I think. The skin is thick and tough. When the fruit is opened inside is white

> pulp . . . surrounding large, black seeds. You must eat the whole affair with your fingers, rather a messy proceeding. But it is the taste that's exotic. It is rich, buttery, has an after taste of onions or Camembert cheese; and it smells!

That is an understatement. Anyone who has been in Indonesia, Thailand or the Philippines during durian season cannot help but notice the sewer-like odor near anyone who eaten it. But as Vera reports:

> You definitely must acquire a taste for it. They say when you do, your passion for the fruit is uncontrollable. I must say that each time we tasted it, we liked it much better. Even here it is rare and expensive; we only had it twice. The Moros in Jolo consider it a sacred fruit, and camp under the tree until [one] falls. As soon as it does, they consume it no matter what time of day or night. The fruit is very, very perishable, and will not stand transportation. Even in Manila is it rarely found, [and] only if a friend is flying in.

In other parts of Asia the Orangutans used to feast on Durian but have been hunted close to extinction to keep them off. As anyone who has smelled the effects of this fruit will testify, Bob and Vera were extremely adventurous to sample it. It does not grow anywhere near the United States, and as Vera reports cannot be transported, so we generally have been spared this unique experience of the East, although now it occasionally shows up in San Francisco's Chinatown.

Laid waste by the War as it was, Bob and Vera enjoyed Cotobato:

> Cotobato lies inland from the sea on a navigable river. Since this is a copra center, the waterfront is lively. The river is extensive and many people live along its banks and use the river as we do a highway.

They also make contact with an important local official:

> We have heard of Datu Sinsuat and decide to call on him. We reach him through his eldest son (The Datu's children number 27) who is a lawyer. [The Datu's] prestige is at low ebb because he was seen consorting with the Japanese officers too often and too openly. He also persuaded his father, [also a] Datu, to stay in town and ostensibly to cooperate with the Japanese. The other sons and residents all fled to the hills. Anyway, we proceed to the Datu's house, a large, well-kept wooden [building.] A young Tagalog girl and two sons, all of whom speak English, meet us and have us "take a seat" on the rattan chairs The Datu, a very old man, wearing pajamas (this is not at all uncommon, they are often used for lounging costume) appears. He knows no English, so we are thankful for our interpreters. Conversation is rather tedious, but we have a nice time. A tray of Sheffield, mind you, is brought in laden with triangles of Sunkist oranges, beer and locally made Scotch. All the while other children and grandchildren stand around staring at us. The Tagalog girl brings us a message that Mrs. Sinsuat will come out to see us. Obviously she has been donning her finery. She makes a grand entrance and takes the seat next to me. She is Moro, but a Christian and a strong-minded young woman, though she speaks no English. We learn that she is the Datu's only wife, which is enough to indicate her strong mindedness, because it is common practice for Moros, especially affluent and influential ones, to have numerous wives.

> We admire her jewels: a handsome pearl ring with three large pearls set in gold and a gold filigree bracelet with flowers made of jade and pearls. At this point the Tagalog girl announces that the Sinsuats have a present for each of us, a sword for Bob and a ring for me. Our hopes rise because we have seen lovely jewelry here and elsewhere handsome old swords. When the gifts arrive our hopes sink because the ring is like all the others we have noticed in the markets and the sword is a new one, so new that it is a copy of a Japanese Samurai sword and not Moro at all.

Perhaps the Datu was using Bob and Vera's visit as a chance to lay off trinkets he had had made up for the Japanese. In any event, he had turned the way the wind was blowing, which was definitely toward the United States. Consorting with a local quisling was a new experience.

> However, we have a fine time with these fabulous people. The Datu was one of the most famous and was the most powerful one in Cotobato. He was a senator during the governor-generalship . . . . and he was very friendly with the [governor general] who even writes to him occasionally. [We sat staring] at three large jars said to be filled with gold and silver coins.

It was odd that, despite this official's collaboration, he still claimed contact with the former American governor general, although Bob and Vera had to rely on his word.

With the uncertainty and violence of the previous five years, the Moro's reliance on precious metals became stronger.

> The women wear silver anklets and sometimes bracelets above their elbows. . . . [The] buttons of the blouse are gold coins; a gold coin in often worn in the hair, too. Of course, sometimes the blouse is held together only by safety pins.

This last touch may well have arrived with the War. The hairstyle of the Cotobato women also is not as pleasing to Vera: "the loop hangs high from the center and back of the head – not nearly as stylish as the side loop of the Lanao Moros." What would have happened if the Lanao Moro women's hairstyle had hit New York or Paris?

After their five-day interlude in the Mindanao highlands, the Ransoms began to move more quickly. They traveled inland:

> . . . in central Mindanao . . . 125 kilometers [from Cotobato but] still in Cotobato Province. A "streamlined bus" [from] the Mindanao Motor Line picks us up at our hotel at 7 p.m., and not until 4 p.m. [the next day] are we deposited at Kidapawan. [The Motor line] uses [the word] "streamlined" to distinguish this . . . bus that makes the trip daily to Davao from all the other buses. . . . [It is] only recently that the trip could be made in one day.

The stage was rough:

> Several months ago it took two [days]. . . . Pre-War, when the road was completed, . . . the journey [took] four hours. This road, entirely ruts, holes and bumps, is the roughest road we have traveled so far. The jolts are incredible. We welcome the delays at the rivers . . . Just

> outside Cotobato, at Sibulao, we are held up for 2-1/2 hours waiting our turn on the ferry. Our bus has priority on the ferries three times each week when it is the mail courier. Today is Tuesday, and we must wait our turn. We see a crowd across the river and are told it is Moro market day, so we hire a banca to cross the river. The bancas are so narrow; we barely fit ourselves into the narrow space.

Why did the bus line choose the worst road on the island for its "express run?" Considering that Bob and Vera had had to travel by troop carrier to make it to a plantation, the road must have been extraordinarily bad. Certain diversions compensated:

> The market is a great crowd of people, but they do not crowd around us as the Moros in Dansalan did. The people have come from their river homes in bancas which are lined up [carelessly along] the river bank. They are selling and buying material (material is always sold in a covered building), salt, rice, corn, and cooked food. In one field ... [herdsmen offer] carabaos are for sale. Other [people] sell agongs; they are frequently tested for the quality of their sound. We are enchanted by an old lady who is wearing a tremendous hat. When she bends down to play the wooden xylophone of seven notes, nothing is visible but the hat. She plays only two tunes, but they are very good. If she could give us the music for them, we'd have been tempted to purchase the xylophone for one Peso.
>
> The rest of the trip is uninspiring. The villages are poor, the people poor, the land is flat, overgrown with brush and occasional forest. We did see several living examples of the towering narra and molawe trees. This last is the finest of the Philippine hardwoods, more handsome and harder than mahogany. The Spaniards

> always used the molawe. I think they call it iron wood. There is much good forest in Mindanao, but not in this area.

Vera reports now that by then Bob definitely was tired of the trip. Mindanao is hundreds of miles long. No one can know such a place well in a few weeks, and at some point the inability to do so grates. It was also steaming hot. Every long trip has such moments, low points when the desire to go home or even settle somewhere for a week or so becomes overwhelming. Bob and Vera, however, were able to find ways to lift their spirits:

> A rainy afternoon we walk the kilometer or two to Central Mindanao College which our hosts manage. The mud adheres to our shoes until it is laborious to lift up each foot. Mrs. Sabulao has all of the students go to the assembly room to hear a talk from us! We didn't know that we were guest speakers when we said we'd like to see the college (college is really high school). Bobbie gave a nice talk about enjoying the Philippines, etc., and then I had to give a speech, too, my first public address! Then the students fired questions at Bob. They asked about the significance of the atom bomb; the status of a Filipina married to a GI and left in the islands by the GI. (this happened to quite a few Filipinas); the cold winters in the States; and are Americans anxious to have Filipinos go to school in the United States. Bob was very diplomatic in his answers, which you have to be because they take the word of Americans as gospel. The students were very eager and alert; and intensely interested in everything that Bob said. Mrs. Subulao said afterward that this would be one of the high points of the school year; so few Americans ever come here, and except for

> the GI's and a few missionaries, we are the first. It was fun to meet these boys and girls and to see how familiar they are with the States and American culture. It made us very ashamed that in the States very few people know anything at all about the Philippines. We were certainly ignorant until we came over.

There is a true sense of America's status through the eyes of these teenagers, how it shone as the world's best hope at least for some.

> The school has been open only for one year. It is the only high school in central Mindanao. The enrollment for this year is 150; next year they expect to have 300. The students pay 60 Pesos yearly for tuition; and they must have money for their board in town. Teachers are paid only 130 Pesos a month, not enough to live on decently.

Vera goes on to describe the remarkable woman who arranged the tour:

> Mrs. Sabulao was educated at Columbia and got her masters degree there. [Altogether] she spent twelve years in the States. She arrived in New York with only about $100, and was able to support herself and earned a few scholarships during the depression years. She has amazing confidence and will power. During the summers she traveled around giving lectures on the Philippines; and she met some interested people who gave her money to continue her studies . . . Mrs. Sabulao teaches English and the literature courses.

Mrs. Subulao had a strong sense of duty to her country. She could have immigrated to the United States, a dream for many in the Philippines, but did not.

Vera added:

> Education is greatly revered in the Philippines. Too many acquire a good education and never use it because politics is more lucrative. Medicine and law are the two favored subjects; and many graduates in both fields never practice.

Bob, of course, did not practice law very much, either. They took a genuine interest in the school. It was more interesting than simply drifting from one tourist site to another and brought them into contact with local people much in the same way as Mrs. Subulao's lecture tours must have for her in the United States.

> When the rains have stopped, the chief of police plans a celebration at his ancestral home. He is Manobo [an ethnic tribe like the Tirurays]. His father was one of the biggest Datus of the tribe. He is one of the very few educated Manobos; he is very anxious to do something for his people. We walk about five kilometers to the house Most the way is inland. When we near the house but still cannot see it, we hear the sound of agongs, a wonderfully primitive noise. The house is one very large room, open at three sides; at the back is a sort of partition. The house is entirely made of bamboo, bamboo supports, and strips of bamboo interwoven for partitions and walls, bamboo shingles on the roof. The shingles are common to this area. We saw them nowhere else. Usually roofs are made of nipa palm thatch. The

> bamboo shingles are better and last a lot longer but are tedious to put on. Sitting on the bench around the room's perimeter and on the steps are thirty or more Manobos dressed in their native clothes. They have come in from the surrounding area. The chief of police sent out word for them to [assemble] in their native dress in order to meet two Americans. If these arrangements had not been made, it would have been difficult for us to meet any Manobos. They do not regularly wear their native dress, and they congregate only for special occasions. They are agriculturalists and live scattered in inaccessible places, the more inaccessible the better.

The hidden agriculture of the Manobos sounds very much like that of the Tiruray.

> As we walk into the house, all eyes are naturally on us, but no one moves in any other way, not even [to change] the expression on their faces. The boys still continue beating the agongs. We are given the seat of honor behind the sewing machine.

This honor loses something between cultures.

> Two sets of agongs are strung up in the house. They hang from a beam. Apparently Agong stringing is a kind of art. Only Datus and the wealthy can afford [them], or at least a whole set. They are brass or, possibly, copper, and are made by the Moros or imported from Singapore. The imported ones, distinguished by their black paint, are the best and apparently the most desirable . . . . Only the young boys appear to play the agongs; the Datus just sit by. And only women, usually younger ones, dance. They know only a so-called modern dance, which is very simple and monotonous. It is a sort of shuffle, round and round in a circle. The girl holds up an oblong piece of cloth, usually a Turkish towel, while leaning towards the

> right and shuffling around. Sometimes the boys who are playing join in. . .

Vera ends her description with the great modern lament:

> The chief of police remembers seeing many different kinds of dancing, but now no one knows the steps. The Manobos had a much more advanced culture and [until] fairly recently, as I've read in books; but it is all rapidly disappearing.

Was the lure of modernity too great, the ease of a life enhanced by technology? Or was the astonishing power and machinery of the Japanese and American armies, which these peoples had seen firsthand, so overwhelming?

The inevitable thing was that the Manobo and Tiruray cultures were sustainable and, with modification, could have resulted in a positive blend of old and new. Their decline is sad and a counterpoint to the pleasure that Bob and Vera so took in the sights they were fortunate enough to see.

Not everything was in decline:

> We have brought U.S. cigarettes and pass them around between dances. They are greatly appreciated everywhere we go. We are about to leave when we realize preparations are being made for a feast. They kill a chicken, roast it and serve it to us and . . . [the] Filipino who has accompanied us. They cook rice for us in bamboo.

> The rice is washed, then wrapped in a banana leaf and stuffed in the bamboo. The bamboo is then laid on the fire. The bamboo and the banana leaf impart a delicious flavor to the rice.

These natural cooking implements had practical benefit:

> Because the Manobos do not need cooking utensils and have practically no belongings, they could move around freely during the War and consequently did not suffer much. Having rice is quite a treat; it is too expensive for the Manobos to eat often. Corn is their chief diet. Also in [our] honor they serve a box of U.S. cookies – quite stale by now – and bananas and coffee. The [coffee] bean is pounded in a mortar, put into a bag, which is then lowered into a pot of water and allowed to steep. Not our idea of coffee, but highly prized by the Manobos. They apologized for the simple fare, which was quite elegant, really, and certainly more than we expected. The bamboo cooked rice could be a connoisseur's dish. The chicken would have been good too, except that almost all the chickens in the Philippines are tough.

Vera then launches into her final assessment:

> . . . [T]hese people are listless and spend their days sitting around with the blankest expressions on their faces. They are averse to change and ignorant of civilized ways. They are not even industrious about cultivating the land. They just do enough to get from the land a bare subsistence. Some of the boys, only a few, are going to school. None of the girls attend school because, as was explained to us, the parents love their daughters so much that they want them close by all the time. It is also important to watch them constantly, so they will be fresh and virginal when it comes time to select a husband. The chief of police and one girl at the Central Mindanao College are the only educated Manobos.

For Americans, it was very difficult not to expect entire tribes to roll up their sleeves and rise from poverty in a few years. This is just another form, however, of our belief that we still know best.

> The "Chief," as everyone calls the chief of police, takes us west of Kidawapan a few kilometers to the house of another Datu. He lives in a pre-War house, a wooden one with some decoration but no furnishings inside, as is usual. The Datu, one of his wives, and his friends are sitting around on the floor chewing betel nut and speaking only occasionally. The Datu is a good looking fellow, heavy and strong. All the other Manobos are so small and slight. [He] is well-dressed in GI clothing. This Datu has a 10,000 Peso claim against the United States for War damage. He asks Bob's advice and wonders if he can expedite the settlement. Such faith! There is an agong set strung up here, but either it is not a good one or it is badly played. The sound is not as satisfactory as we have heard elsewhere.

Except when they were high in the mountains, it was always humid and hot. And as Vera says now, the chicken was always tough.

There none the less remained interesting moments:

> Much chewing of betel nut. As soon as anyone appears, they are offered some. The women chew, too; the young girls and young boys only smoke. We offer cigarettes to everyone, but the men and women get much more pleasure from the betel nut. Bob wants to try some, but they say it makes you dizzy; also, it looks so unsanitary. Everyone has a betel nut box: a narrow box made of metal, silver or gold if you are rich. It's decorated, and inside are three partitions, one for betel nut and betel leaf,

> which grows on a vine and is very refreshing. It must be picked fresh every day; one for a moist kind of tobacco; and one for pieces of lime. The trick is to get the right mixture of these three . . . in your mouth and chew. The betel nut is hard, but the action of the lime and saliva soften it. They say that finally you have a very palatable mixture.

Vera did not report that Bob actually tried it and now does not remember. Perhaps he did and didn't like it, so she dropped the whole thing. Another side effect is that it stains the teeth mahogany.

> Again, at this house, they apologize for having nothing to offer us. They boil some taro which we eat. It is dry and tasteless. Bob likes it and says it resembles potato. After a visit to a nearby spring from where they carry all their water in bamboo tubes, we walk cross country to the old town site. The trail [once] went through it but the road was built to the south. Here is the inevitable Chinese store.

The store was part of an established local pattern. The Chinese ran stores, not the Manobo who lacked even a rudimentary knowledge of the bookkeeping.

The Manobo had stayed with farming, selling or bartering some of what they grew.

Vera continued:

> The chief orders cooked rice which we eat in a sort of café across the path. The whole village turns out to see us. They lean in the window and sit down on the floor near the one table. We eat rice and a can of the big

> California sardines. The most satisfying part of the lunch is an eggnog made of tuba and a raw egg.

As in most of the other places they visited, Bob and Vera got a glimpse of local life and an unusual folkway for infidelity:

> The Chief carries on some business. Several Datus sit next to him, and there is a long talk about an adultery case. A fine must be imposed upon the guilty parties. If, however, it was agreed to exchange husbands and, consequently, wives, the fine will be less.
>
> After the Chief has gathered all of the points from the Datus, he will render a decision. The Manobos respect his decisions since he is pure Manobo and is familiar with their customs. These purely tribal disputes are all settled by him in this informal manner and are never brought up before a government court.

Compared with what American military courts were doing in Manila, the Manobos appear to have had a better level of justice.

> We have a fine view of Mt. Apo on the walk back to town. This is the tallest mountain in the Philippines, about 9,700 feet. It stands alone and has been little explored. The Chief would like to take us up there. In fact, he has been planning enough trips to keep us busy for several months. We pass a pink flower which is the Manobo onion flavoring used in their cooking. We stop at a farmhouse owned by an Ilocfano family. The difference between this house and the cultivation of the surrounding land is striking in contrast to the Manobos. Here there is industry. In the fields a group of girls are weeding. The wife is treading on dried black shells to remove them from the mongo beans inside. The husband is in the rice fields. We are invited in and the wife

> changes into a becoming negligee, and orders bananas and coffee for us.

From adultery to a farmer's wife in a negligee, Manobo society was proving amusing. Vera accepted the way of life these people pursued without further comment.

They had now come full circle, having traveled down to the southern part of the island and then back across to Davao on Mindanao's eastern coast.

> A lot of abaca grows here. It looks just like the banana tree, but it is taller and the leaf is thinner. What becomes abaca is stripped off the stalk. The plant is ready for stripping after 18 months. The plants are gotten from the numerous shoots of the roots of an old tree. Each plant has about 50 shoots. The strips from the stalk are pulled through a shredder. This is dried in the sun for two days until it becomes blond, flaxen and shiny. The whitest abaca is very beautiful stuff. The current price is 35 Pesos for 100 kilos . . .

"Abaca" is the Tagalog word for Manila hemp used for rope and even certain kinds of paper such as for tea bags. The Philippine government attempted to restrict export of the plants to maintain the national monopoly.

Davao had been a Japanese colony for many years before World War II, first with the arrival of Japanese laborers and prostitutes and then more extensive investment in industry and full-scale immigration.

In 1904, 1,100 local tribes people also were taken to the St. Louis World's Fair to create a native village and provide a living anthropological exhibit directed, among other things, at softening American opposition to colonizing the Philippines. The country was sold the as a savage land where tribesmen sharpened their teeth, ate dog and hunted heads, therefore needing civilizing.

Bob and Vera moved into the area's society:

> Sunday is our last day in Kidapawan. We play Shanghai Mah Jong. It is more fun than ordinary Mah Jong. You take 20 counters from the board and make pairs. Winds and dragons count highest. Bob lost ten Pesos. I won twelve, to our embarrassment. With the money we buy beer. This groups plays the game every Sunday, and sometimes all night Saturday.

Bob's losses somehow fit, as did Vera's winnings. They moved on, taking the bus back to Davao:

> Davao was entirely a Japanese colony. They developed the town and the abaca industry. Pre-War Davao was a model town, and the plantations were garden spots. The yield was much greater than the Philippine plantations because the Japanese were so thorough in their farming. The Japanese have all been deported from here and all the other islands. But occasionally you do see either a person of Japanese descent or even a Japanese.

This was different from the United States. In the Philippines the Japanese were not allowed back. The Davao Japanese community that had prospered during the War lost everything afterward, which was also the reverse of what happened in the States. All this is virtually unknown outside the Philippines. The Philippine government never thought for a moment of offering reparations to the Philippine Japanese deported. After the occupation and its atrocities, they simply threw them out.

> Davao is very spread out, with wide spaces between the residential areas, the business and waterfront districts and our hotel. It looks like a frontier town. The weather is excellent, very hot, but a dry heat. Almost every day it rains, but only in the afternoon about 5:00 or 6:00, and then only for a half an hour or so. [The] sky is beautiful, a very deep and intense blue with fleecy, white clouds on the horizons. New warehouses are being constructed at Santa Ana, the waterfront district. They are owned mostly by Chinese. There is a definite air of activity and . . . bustle . . . . Some say it is the most progressive town in the Philippines. We liked the atmosphere.
>
> We are so happy to have cold beer, ice cold, too. At the Kwong Lee on San Pedro Street we eat excellent Chinese food. We watch them preparing it in the kitchen. One person prepares the ingredients, chopping the meat, selecting the vegetables. This is put on the dish in which it will be served and passed to the cook. A very large, round frying pan [a wok] is set in a brick stove, with the fire underneath. The pan is very hot. Into it go a little fat, other seasonings, including Vet-Sin and a little soy, and then the ingredients in the proper order. A spoonful

> of stock is ladled from the huge vat of simmering liquid . . . into the frying pan. Over goes the lid; everything steams . . . and then is put in the dish and carried upstairs to the hungry bear. Each dish is prepared in a very few minutes, never more than five. The cook then pours in a lot of water, and after a few seconds swishes out the water with a whisk. [The water goes] into a trough at the back of the stove for this purpose.

Vera had entered Chinese food heaven. She had never seen a wok, something that indicates Americans' remarkable ignorance of Asia even after World War II.

> We stay at the Guino-o-hotel for ten Pesos a day for a double room. For an additional ten Pesos we could eat there, too. We swim at Talisay, a compound set up by one of the biggest Japanese companies. They had a hospital, a school, and everything [right] there. The beach is black sand and the water is quite shallow, but it is most refreshing. Talisay is about nine kilometers from town. . . .

It was apparently very nice to be back on the coast with black sand and the water warmed by the sun. The weather cooperated, and the humidity fell. Talisay, or "Dalisay" is now a tourist attraction, but contemporary guidebooks make no mention of the Japanese community, only that there is a Japanese garden.

Bob and Vera also took this opportunity to seek out the most interesting American then living in Davao, Charles Wharton:

> We read about this man's activities in *Time*, and we found out his name and where he's living from Bill and Marge Hoover, the Standard Oil representatives and our hosts for cocktails.

On arriving in Davao, they had returned to civilization and the evening drink. Wharton proved unusual by any standard:

> Charles Wharton [is] an animal collector who is living in one half of a large building with his animals. The other half contains the motors for the electric light system for the town. The noise of the motors is most disturbing to his animals, and he is anxious to get out of there as soon as possible. He is waiting for passage on a ship that will go through the Panama Canal and on to New York. The climate [along this route] will be most advantageous to the animals. He is doubtful that many of [them] will reach home alive because of the difficulty of acquiring the proper food. When an animal does die, he pickles it.

Vera was careful to record every fact.

> [None] of the animals that Wharton has has ever been brought to the United States. One prize is a monkey eating eagle that has never been captured anywhere. They live in the mountains and eat nothing but monkeys. [Wharton] pays 50 Pesos for one of these birds. They are the largest of all [raptors].

They are not only large but also huge, with wingspans of ten feet or more, a nightmare carnivore that could carry off a child.

> At four they are fed a live chicken. About that time . . . the eagle lets out shrill cries. One was caught in a fight with a monkey. The other was shot and as a consequence has a broken leg. The chicken . . . is first injected with vitamins and then strips of meat are [fixed] under the

> wings. In this way [Wharton] hopes to train the birds to change their diet . . ..

Davao had been knocked about during the War so there also was little to describe beyond what was being rebuilt, so Vera stuck Wharton's zoo:

> Tarsiers are amazing little animals. [Wharton] has . . . 37. They live in few places in the world. They are below monkeys in the zoological tree. They sit on their haunches and stare at you with their large, bulging eyes. Their small, sensitive ears wiggle at noises. Their tails are long and skinny; their legs are, too. They move by hopping about.
>
> Most people also fall in love with them, and they are favorites as pets. The flying lemurs are the rarest; Wharton doubts if any will reach the States alive because they are so finicky about eating. They eat vegetables only. They are below tarsiers in the scale of development. They have lovely fur, like chinchilla. [They have] a membrane between their four limbs, so they give the appearance of flying when they stretch out their legs. They are active mostly at night.
>
> [Wharton] has snakes, bushy tailed rats from northern Luzon [which] look like raccoons, civets, monitor lizards, alligators, myna birds with pink heads, and just for fun a tame hawk.

Few could resist the man who owned the collection, either:

> Wharton is young and very attractive. He is a zoologist, discharged from the Army in the Philippines, [who] stayed to collect . . . [including] these birds for the Washington Zoo. He says that the animals are more trouble than 25 children.

Bob and Vera were ready to leave.

> At the waterfront we see a handsome ship, inquire and find out that it is sailing to Zamboanga, our destination. We buy first class passage for 37 Peso's each. The trip will last 36 hours. We sail at midnight, so have two nights and one day on board. The ship was built in Vancouver . . . in 1945. The de La Rama Line bought it, sailed it across the Pacific and have been operating it for the [past] year. The ship is perfect and the service is perfect, too. We are on the upper deck to the right of the Captain's bridge. The breezes are so cool that at night we need a heavy blanket. We also have two real pillows and two sheets.

Vera never complained -- she still does not -- but her reporting the sheets and pillows shows how rough they had been traveling. By the upper deck, she doesn't mean the location of their cabin but out on the deck itself; the nights were moonless and clear, lit only by the stars in the equatorial sky.

> In the mornings we are awakened at 6 a.m. with a cup of coffee. The dining room is well-ventilated, [with] upholstered banquets, and the menu is printed with several choices, or you can order everything. We could have had a cabin for more pesos. They are very comfortable and are really the crew's quarters. But they sleep somewhere else. The ship sails to Iloilo, Zamboanga, Davao, and back to Manila every two weeks.

The ship was also a new link to unify a newly independent country.

> In Davao it was interesting to watch them load. Bright lights . . . focused on the hatches. The cargo coming on board was copra, and truck after truck with bales of abaca. They pile eight or nine bales of abaca in a net; the boom lifts up over the deck and deposits it through a hatch into the hold. When we sailed the smell of copra was always with us, especially when a certain wind blew.

The swarm of stevedores managing and loading break bulk cargo was like a construction site, concentrated activity hurried forward all night so the ship could sail on time. In a few years, the stevedores would be gone, replaced by containers and machines.

> We hug the shore, about two miles distant. We see mountains and occasional beaches along the shore. On level land near the shore are settlements planted with coconuts. When we look through the powerful glasses we distinguish small huts in clearings on the mountainsides, even near the ridge lines. Davao gulf is as smooth as glass. The sea is indigo, very intensely so. When we go through the Sarangani strait, we see our first flying fish. The ship disturbs them as we cut through the water. They fly to the sides of the ship, starting off by flapping furiously, then whiz through the air just above the water. They are small. At first I mistake them for birds. Soon we sail past Balut Island, a mountain whose peak is in cloud. On the horizon are more clouds. One oval-shaped island ringed by a wide, white beach is most appealing.

The ship sailed slowly through a paradise made complete by unaccustomed luxuries.

> We arrive at Zamboanga at 8 a.m. We regret leaving this well-scrubbed ship, but the sights we see as we approach

> tempt us, too. Moros in their boats come out to meet us. Their purpose: to dive for money. They call, "Give me money, Joe," over and over, to the same tune. They are not all good divers. Sometimes they miss the coins.

Zamboanga is one of the southernmost Philippine cities, at the end of a long peninsula stretching west and then south between the Sulu Sea and the Moro Gulf.

> The town is badly damaged but still has more character than most Philippine towns. [Before the War] it was considered a very choice spot. Quite a number of Americans retired here. Wandering along the waterfront we meet Vivian and Bill Trevor who buy shells and coral from Moros who bring these up from the Sulu Islands. The Trevors then ship these to Los Angeles. There is great demand for coral and shell and it brings good prices. They make things out of it in Los Angeles and [they] sell like mad. We had a letter of introduction from Ramon Macaso [a Manila friend] to Betty Mankion, whose mother is a native and father an American. Ramon said we could stay with her at her home near Pasananca Pool, but her brother has just married and he and his new wife have occupied the only spare room. Their pre-War house was destroyed and now they have a much smaller one. The hotel is full. Finally, we are taken to Frank Munne's. He lives in a large house with his mother. His father, a Spaniard, is dead. His sister married an American soldier and now lives in Michigan. But for two years she and her husband lived in Zamboanga and managed to build and furnish the house in an American way. It was mostly GI stuff because he was a quartermaster. The toaster, drawing lamp, a [large] bed with springs made of thick rubber slats, six or seven Navy footlockers, all GI. A U.S. Navy damask tablecloth, Navy dishes, GI canned goods, mosquito nets, blankets and books.

Bob and Vera managed to go partway home, a strange interlude so remote a place. What was the United States Navy was doing with a damask tablecloth?

> We get chummy with the Senora, who speaks no English, but we manage to converse a little in Spanish. She worries herself sick about her daughter in the United States because she has a baby but no servant. Also, she lives with her parents-in-law and has not been able to get her own house yet. The senora worries because she has so much work to do and on and on. She doesn't realize that household chores are 100 times easier and more efficient than in Zamboanga with all the servants imaginable. She also worries about money for herself. She has no money and lives on whatever her other son in Manila can send her. She charges us for our stay and only does so because she is so poor. She apologizes profusely.

In another letter, Vera added:

> This is one of the most delightful towns of the Philippines. It was so Spanish that the dialect here is 80% Spanish. We are staying with a woman who speaks only dialect, and we can understand one another because of our knowledge of Spanish from Mexico. This house was built by her son-in-law, an American lieutenant who married her beautiful daughter. Because of his connections with the Army, the house is large and well furnished. The bed is tremendous, 7' x 7.'

So the tablecloth was the least of it.

> Frank [Munne] is anxious to go to the States. He wants to attend a . . . school [to learn] about plastics.

> He saw the school advertised in a mechanical journal, and [he] has implicit faith in everything American. His sister promises to help him raise the money for transportation and tuition. Bob wrote to his lawyer friend in Los Angeles to inquire whether the school is reputable. A Filipino is not skeptical of things American.

Not so soon after the War, anyway.

> Zamboanga was and is one of the most Spanish towns. The influence is noticeable in the architecture, what still remains, in the physical appearance of the people – they are taller, . . . and have [more western] features than the many Filipinos; and the influence is notable in the native dialect, Chavacano. It is 80% Spanish; the rest is Tagalog and Visayan.
>
> We walk along the seawall about a mile to the Moro village. The Moros must live near or on the water to be happy. Here all the houses are over the water. The most treacherous walkways go between the houses. They are boardwalks made of anything handy, an old piece of wood, an old log, or a bundle of bamboos lashed together. I almost fall in once and twice need a helping hand . . . . It is Friday, the day of prayer for Muslims. We stop in at the mosque and see a crowd of men milling inside. Outside the door is a large jar of water. They wash their arms and hands in a perfunctory way. The prayer is rather half-hearted. The Iman recites the Koran; and one man is bowing toward Mecca. We look into the houses and see women playing the most complicated card game for money. Some of the houses are nothing more than vintas, a Moro boat, perched on pilings. How easy to sail off in your home. Some Moros are bundling and chopping firewood. Fish have been split and laid out in the sun to dry. The houses are made of nipa, often with rather nice carvings on the roof. The people have a decidedly Malay appearance to their features.

In the stifling climate people lived in the open.

> We take a bus along the western shore of . . . Mindanao 25 kilometers [to] the San Ramon Penal Colony. It is a large place, 20,000 hectares . . . [with] many large buildings. Americans organized and built the colony about 30 years ago. The prisoners work, so the place is self-supporting (I think). They grow abaca and coconuts, and they make wood carvings that are sold to visitors as souvenirs. Their clothing is bright orange. Fifty just arrived from Manila. We see them on the ship in their orange clothing. They were not under guard. In fact [they] were carrying off baggage and cargo quite freely. Our guide told us that some of the prisoners have been held for a year awaiting trial. Bob was so incensed and alarmed. [With his legal mind, he] is always outraged when he sees an abuse of the law. In fact, he was so uncomfortable with the whole thing that we left in about 15 minutes. Some of the prisoners do not even know what the charge is against them. Some live in individual houses with their families. The sentences are from one year to life. They ran into the hills during the War; most returned voluntarily.

After this Vera returned to lighter matters.

> I decide that I must have a Moro skirt, which I will wear as a sarong. In a Chinese store we see just the right material. The design is just right: a bright purple with a narrow yellow stripe. We have the skirt sewn up in a few minutes, then return to our house for a siesta. I wear the skirt while resting; in a half an hour I notice purple streaks all over my body. When I confer with the storekeepers, they say everything will be all right after one washing. I try this; the color continues to run; in fact, it has run all over the yellow stripes and obliterated the design I liked so much. We take back the material. The shop owner accepts the material we had bought for presents, but my skirt he refuses. It is only after a long

> harangue, and lawyer talk, that he finally accepts it. His excuse was that the Moros never complained. We swear off Chinese goods. The Filipinos tell us that they are very tricky. We learn of another incident with regard to gold, which the Moros love passionately. The Chinese were selling U.S. gold pieces to the Moros. The [coins] came from Borneo where [they were] treated very cleverly to remove most of the gold. The inside of the gold piece was hollowed out with a tiny drill and replaced with lead, so that on the surface the coin looked like the real thing.

As they made plans to leave, the bad skirt was forgotten.

> Several times daily we visited the waterfront. There are always new ships that have arrived. We get acquainted with Dutchmen from the Dutch Navy. They have been in Samar purchasing PT boats from U.S. surplus. There are five small boats going down to Surabaya. We think it would be fun to go along; and I think we could have done so if we had pressed the matter. The boats are sleek little things, painted black and [one is] named the Black Witch.

A trip to Surabaya would have taken them out of the Philippines. Surabaya is on Java over a thousand miles from Zamboanga.

> Moro vintas are always arriving from nearby islands with a dozen or so bags of copra or fish for the market. A fast motor boat flies an American flag. It has taken an American general to the Sulus for a fishing excursion. Two wooden ships fly the British flag. They are from Sandakan, Borneo. One is leaving in a week for Sandakan, will stay there for two weeks, and then return to Zamboanga. On the way she will stop at Cagayan Sulu, a Philippine island way off to the west to pick up someone who has entered the country illegally. The

> owner is a large, handsome Chinese who offers to take us along. The trip would last about three days. The temptation is very real, but in the meantime we have met the Skolfields on the M/S Arctic, and we think going through the Sulus with them will be even more interesting . . .

In a letter to her parents dated April 25, 1947, Vera summarized their alternatives:

> We have had an awful time deciding where to go next. So many choices have been presented. (1) Four Dutch P-T boats are bound for Surabaya in Java. The crew came here to purchase them from the U.S. Navy. They are going north in easy jumps, but we've decided to take the Java trip later, because now we have to return to Manila. (2) There is a Chinese boat leaving for Sandakan in British North Borneo in six days. This is an isolated spot we would like to visit, and very near, just 200 miles away, a 48-hour trip from here. We have given this up because we want to go to Peiping in the spring, and the spring months are disappearing (3) Basilan Island is just two hours away by launch. There are several rubber plantations owned by Americans. Because of the launch schedule we must stay on the island overnight. We may just have time to do this. And (4) a ship sails through the Sulu Islands. This one we are going to take. It is a six day trip with stops at Jolo, Siasi, Bougua on Tawitawi and at Siangi in the Sibutu Islands. This last is only 70 miles from Borneo.

6. ABOARD THE ARCTIC

The ship was the Arctic, owned by an American named Ernest Skolfield, who offered them not only a remarkable voyage, far better than pounding a thousand miles to Surabaya, or sailing anywhere in a stifling freighter. Skolfield and his new wife also offered knowledgeable companionship, a valuable commodity after weeks alone in a remote country where they did not speak the language.

The Arctic also would take Bob and Vera back to Manila for free and relatively quickly, allowing them to leave sooner for Hong Kong. Although they didn't seem to realize, delaying their departure could have brought them closer to when the revolution barred all travel to China. Vera wrote that they wanted to get to Hong Kong to avoid the stifling summer, leaving out any mention of the revolution.

Her parents, of course, had read followed the news it in *The Philadelphia Inquirer* and had far more up to date information than Vera, isolated as she and Bob had been on Panay, Negros and Mindanao and even in Manila, where the English language paper concentrated on the local community.

Sailing with the Skolfields also offered a unique adventure in the Sulus, the southernmost islands in the archipelago. In addition to a career in the U.S. Navy, Earnest Skolfield had captained a Baptist Missionary ship and was reputed to have converted an entire tribe.

> We are thrilled to be on board the Arctic. Skolfield is an "old hand" in Manila and considered quite a character. He comes from Maine, still retains his accent, and also the shrewdness characteristic of those from that state. He was in the last war and this war, as well . . . . He captained a large ship which supplied other ships in . . . the South Pacific. He retired from the Navy; and doesn't like the regular Navy. He always disregarded protocol if it did not suit him and retained his individuality throughout. He loves the sea and has sailed everywhere in this area, once to Tahiti in a small sailing ship. And he escaped from Cebu City with five other Americans just before the city fell in a very tiny ship and sailed her to Australia.

The escape involved a journey of over 2,500 miles through waters patrolled by the Japanese Navy.

> [Skolfield] was the only sailor among the refugees. The journey took three months. This is the sort of thing he filled us with during the whole ten days of the voyage.
>
> He recently married a Dutch girl who is a doctor. She was in charge of a hospital in Batavia. Her specialty is pediatrics. She has given up her career now for married life. She also has no heart for it any more when she saw how the Javanese acted during the civil war – and after all they [the Dutch] had done for them, etc.

Vera was not convinced of the great benefit bestowed by the Dutch.

> We slept on the deck on our air mattresses. We borrowed blankets in Zamboanga. The cabins were occupied by the crew. At 6:30 we'd rise [and] have coffee. The Captain always wore a sarong and a blue cotton robe, quite a sight with his large stomach; but he was comfortable, and the outfit was quite becoming to him when you got used to it. After coffee, we showered, with hot water. Then at 7:30 we had breakfast. At 11:00 we'd start drinking beer. In between we would read, talk with the Captain, scan the horizon with glasses. After the beer we might drink something a little stronger. Then at noon lunch appeared: always fish, a meat dish, vegetables and rice. At 4:00 we would have iced tea and cookies. We dressed for dinner. We would bathe if we had not done so. We were allowed only one bath a day. This was the only restriction on the entire ship. Then it was the cocktail hour. The Captain took a large pitcher, filled it with ice, fruit juice and a mixture of liquors. It was just right to stimulate our appetites for dinner. After a large dinner, with as many courses as at lunch but a little more elegant, we moved our chairs aft and sat under the stars and moon, talking, drinking cocoa and chartreuse (the real French stuff). We retired about 8:00 or 9:00. This was our life every day; but it was never

> monotonous. This was my first experience on a private yacht. It was most appealing.

It sounds very appealing, although the combination of the cocoa and chartreuse required Bob's and Vera's remarkable digestion. Considering the consumption of alcohol on what Vera describes as a typical day, the Captain apparently had recovered from his Baptist phase. One wonders how they all held up.

> Skolfield purchased this ship from the Navy as soon as the War was over. It was built as a refrigerator ship at a cost of about one half a million dollars; but the Captain bought it for $75,000, completely fitted out with spare parts, sheets, towels, medicines, everything. All the sheets, towels and medicines had disappeared. The crew walks off with them. The Captain uses the ship for bringing fish to Manila. It is the only refrigerator ship in the islands. Other ships transporting fish merely ice it, and naturally the fish is more perishable under those conditions. Filipinos are primarily a fish-eating nation, . . . so the business is a good one. Because of the refrigeration the Arctic can bring the fish from a great distance. The farther away from Manila, the cheaper the price of fish. The ship holds something like 70 to 90 tons . . . a cargo worth $100,000 or more. The ship makes a complete trip in one month. The only drawback is that the Captain is the only salesman; . . . also, he is the only one who can deal with the natives. And since it is impossible to be in two places at once, one end of the business suffers.

Having originally come to do good, by then the Captain was doing extremely well. Even if the profit were 10% -- and it was very likely closer to 50% -- $10,000 per month was a fortune in 1947. The southern Philippines seas were lightly fished; if he remained the only owner of a refrigerator ship in the archipelago, even for only a couple of years, he would grow wealthy.

His story sounds like the days of the whaling ships, when ship-owners made profits of several hundred percent from a single voyage. As in the days of whaling, a Yankee trader reaped the profits. It wasn't, however, quite so simple:

> In Manila he has a salesman, a Spaniard, in charge, and he pays him a high salary. But the psychology is this: if a man gets a high salary, he thinks he does not have to work; he is worth so much . . . [lesser] work is beneath him. The Captain brings in all the customers, but the Spaniard loses them. It is a series of headaches, but the Captain loves it.

He also sold his cargoes quickly, because he could undersell the Manila market.

Bob and Vera's wonderful voyage began:

> Our first stop is in Basilin. Since the War cattle have been living on the island in a wild state. Basilin is a large island directly off shore from Zamboanga. We wanted to visit it but did not have time.

Which was probably just as well. Even now it is a center of violence between the Moros and government troops.

A large part of the island then had been purchased by a Dr. Strong who:

> . . . ha[d] planted a model rubber plantation, the only rubber grown in the islands. He proved that the climate is suitable, but the Filipinos have not been resourceful enough to follow suit. We saw pieces of raw rubber on the pier. It is about one inch thick, in sheets about two feet square, and looks just like the spongy stuff used for the soles of sports shoes. (I have not seen such shoes since before the War.) Rubber trees are said to be very handsome, but we will see them in Java and Malaya. We met Dr. Strong's son, who is half Moro, and he said that they could put us up. That sort of hospitality is found all over the islands.
>
> Anyway, the Arctic stopped here because they were to pick up beef, freeze it, and take it along to Manila. The Mayor of Zamboanga demanded a high tax for each head, so the deal fell through. When the captain returns to Manila, he will have a chat with the Minister of the Interior and let him straighten it out. Moros from Jolo had been brought along for the express purpose of shooting the wild cattle. Several butchers were on board, too.

The high tax was more likely an amount that went into the Datu's pocket. Dr. James Strong was another Spanish American War veteran who stayed on. He helped pioneer the Philippine rubber industry and established his first plantation on Basilan in 1910. Just after the War began, he was on the SS Corrigidor, a steamship that struck a U.S. mine. He was rescued by the U.S. Navy but then captured when the Philippines fell. He was interned in the Los Banos Camp whose supply officer Bob later defended. Within a month of VJ day, Dr. Strong returned to Basilan and had his rubber plantation back in operation, so he missed the trial and Bob's defense.

The cattle on Basilan in a "wild state," were free for the taking. Captain Skolfield had hoped for another financial coup and may later have managed one once the "tax" and the Datu's fell to a bearable level.

> When we arrive that night in Jolo, these people [the butchers] disembark. We have heard so much about Jolo. It was a beautiful, walled Spanish town until it was wrecked during the War. Now there is nothing left but shacks. However, the people are still the same, as is the scenery. Many Moros come down to see us dock and sit along the pier watching until long after we are sound asleep on deck.
>
> In the morning it is very overcast, damp, with a heavy atmosphere. We have only a day to see the sights, so we are very busy. The bay is a semi-circle and fans out. Jolo is in the center. To [one side] is a Moro village built over the water. We walk in that direction. In general the Moros are not as friendly here as they were elsewhere. They peer at us but with little interest. We continue gingerly along the narrow and dangerous walkways. They are far less secure even than the ones at the Moro village in Zamboanga. Here they are entirely made of bamboo. Their size and roundness make them difficult to navigate. Sometimes only two poles form a walk. Bob breaks right through one but fortunately recovers. The houses are poorer and there are no carvings on the roofs

> as we saw in Zamboanga. We invite ourselves into one. A school teacher from one of the other islands lives there, so she speaks English. There are many things for sale, brass urns and the inevitable pearls. Here, of course, is the place to buy pearls, but there is no way of telling if they are real. In fact, most of them are cultured. Back to town we go, over the precarious walkways, the drizzle and damp hindering us more than ever.

"The inevitable pearls" indicate riches in local markets. Vera says she could have bought a handful for less than a hundred dollars, matching what she needed for a necklace.

> The market is a busy place. We look for material to make me a sarong. The designs are different here than elsewhere in the Philippines. The material is imported from Singapore and Mexico, but the quality is not good. The only thing that appeals is a batik from Singapore. It is woven in lengths of two meters and is quite wide. It would make a perfect sarong. But the price is $20. There is little choice in batiks, and we think that we will find even more beautiful ones in Java.
>
> The main staple of the local diet is cassava (or taro). They pound it and make a kind of dough, . . . form it in a square cake, and wrap it in a banana leaf. When roasted it is supposed to be fairly palatable. [It] is the garden spot of the islands. We do relish the oranges, more like tangerines. They are juicy and tangy. And we buy mangosteens, considered the queen of all tropical fruits. They are not yet in season, so ours are not the best. They are round fruit, the size of an orange. The skin is deep purple, almost black and hard. When the fruit is opened, half of the purple red pulp adheres to the inside of the skin. The white fruit . . . surrounding the seeds is the delectable part to eat. It is delicate and refreshing, but to my mind not as wonderful as a mango.

Has anyone enjoyed fruit more? Among all things that were free or close to free the two of them tasted or tried what the archipelago offered. The only real cost was escaping two ordinary lives.

> Jolo would be just the island to explore thoroughly. It would not be too difficult to go to all the accessible places; a road encircles the island and branches off in some places. But [what is] almost a civil war rages. The Moros are fierce and out of hand. Those on the coast say that the ones from the hills are unruly. They stop buses and harass the countryside, especially the military police. Because of this it is not safe to go far from the city of Jolo itself. This morning an incident occurred at Parang. The Moros have guns captured from the Japanese and after the War the Americans abandoned arms everywhere.

Most westerners will not go to Jolo at all today:

> Our inquiries indicate that it is safe to go 14 kilometers where there is a nice beach. Our bus is a converted commandant's car. The ride is beautiful. We see excellent views of the hills covered by thick jungle. The sun is shining now. The growth here is different from any tropical growth we have seen so far. It is impossible to describe. I thought it was thrilling, like a Rousseau painting. The green is so rich, so intense and lush. The trees and vines are all on such an enormous scale, the leaves are such unusual shapes, and often very, very broad.
>
> We halted at the Sultan's palace, but the Sultan has gone into the hills. He is considered the Sultan only by a

> certain faction. The Moros apparently can never agree on a single leader.
>
> At kilometer 14 is a small village right on the shore. We cross a river that leads into the sea. It must look like the rivers in Tahiti, except that this one is muddied by wallowing carabao. Farther on several Moro boats have just run up on the shore with the catch. Squid hang on a pole drying in the sun. The beach has many shells, and we quickly assemble a collection. We hear a few explosions. The local people are dynamiting fish. The men go out to the place where the fish are turning up. Children paddle out on a bamboo raft. The fish are tiny, brilliantly colored and not good tasting. Although they often use dynamite, fish caught this way have flabby flesh and it spoils the fishing grounds. The government is trying to outlaw this method but with little luck.

They returned to the ship having seen what they could of Jolo.

> We have a perfectly calm sea all the way to Siluag. I'm certain that only in the tropics can the water be so calm. It is a mirror. Many flying fish skim along. We are continually in sight of the islands. The Captain lives on Siluag. It belongs to a Moro Datu. The Captain rents it for 300 Pesos annually. He uses only part of it. The rest is planted in coconut trees. The Captain has erected a cold storage plant with eight rooms. He has several houses for his employees. A Russian runs the plant for him. A Chinese who lost everything during the War runs the store, which is also owned by the Captain. They have all come down from Manila to this completely isolated island. The Captain has chosen his personnel well, because they all say that they like it. They save all their pay because there are absolutely no temptations. Before they came, the island was uninhabited except for a single guard for the coconut plantation. Now more people live on the island and they are all employed by the Captain. They bring their catch to the island every afternoon. The

> catch is weighed and sorted, and then a receipt is given to the fisherman who then spends most of his money at the Captain's store.

Again, there was an extraordinary sense of Conrad.

> "At sundown the fishermen, who are mostly sea gypsies, hoist their sails and go out onto the water for the night to fish."
>
> As we approach Siluag we see the boats coming out to meet us. The sea gypsies crowd their boats against the ship' side. They have come for water. There is no fresh water anywhere on the island. The sea gypsies, or Badjaos, clamber on board for the hose, and take it over the side to fill their water jars and empty cans. As soon as they have their water, they go back to their business. They are shy and do not mix with the Moros or any of the other tribes. They live on their boats out on the water almost all of their lives. But they bury their dead on land at Sitanki. The graves are marked by elaborate carvings and a wooden canopy. We wish we could see Sitankai.

At death they reverse what we often do, burying on land rather than at sea.

> The Badjaos wear very little clothing. They can be distinguished by their long, bobbed hair. They are very tough because they survive life on the water, although infant mortality is very high. We never saw a family with more than two children.
>
> Their boats are very similar to the Chinese sampans, with wide, flat bottoms and no outriggers. The Moro's boats are very narrow and always have outriggers. The Badjao's boats have five pieces that fit across the boat. Below is space for storage, especially the fish they have just caught. In the bow, they cut a hole into one of the

> cross pieces to provide a place for a water jug. The jugs are from Borneo. Surely they are made by the Chinese, perhaps in China itself. The sails are made of wide strips in different colors. We never saw one with sails made out of one color. The prettiest we saw was yellow and gray. As they come up to our ship they drop the sail to control the speed, so it was difficult to get just the right picture with the sale filled by the wind. They mount branches at the bow and stern, and these look just like antlers. These they use to support poles and other equipment. Dried fish, whole or cut into filets, hang to dry all over the boats.
>
> At sunset the sea gypsies sailed out together, raising their sails just as they pass us. Their nights are almost always spent at sea. Once the boats' prows were carved. Now they still have the shape but have dispensed with the carving. We also saw little carving on the Moro boats.

It is important to note that the Badjao sea gypsies still work the coastal waters off Jolo and many other islands of the Sulu archipelago, making their living from the sea; most no longer live on their boats, which are called *lip,* but in Nipa huts built along the shore or out on the reefs. They are remarkable swimmers. They still wear few clothes, and their young children attend school naked, a system more practical even than school uniforms.

> We sail north to Laa, a small island near Simunul, our destination. The coral reef prevents us from anchoring near the shore. We can see the village, many houses on stilts clustered on a long spit. We should like to go over there, but we are staying only for a short time since there are no fish . . . . Our host has a talk with the Datu and

> with [a man named] Bill Shuck. Mr. Shuck is the only European living in this entire part of the Sulus. He is one of four brothers who came to the islands 40 or more years ago. They all married Moro women and have interesting children and are very interesting characters themselves. Only two are still alive. The other survivor lives in Jolo. They say that Moro blood mixed with European blood produces the most attractive and intelligent mixture. I also thought that Chinese Eurasians were remarkable, although they suffer from some people's prejudice.

Vera had a progressive attitude for the time, fully in tune with her general political orientation. She and Bob enjoyed the Philippines, with their extraordinary diversity, because they were receptive to everyone.

Sailing among the Sulus was unforgettable. The water remained calm and limpid. They glided past island after island. By then there also was a full moon, which was the time to hunt wild pig. On Simunul Bob and the first mate went on an expedition, which Vera reports mostly involved sitting and waiting for the pig to appear. None did, and Bob and the Mate fell asleep.

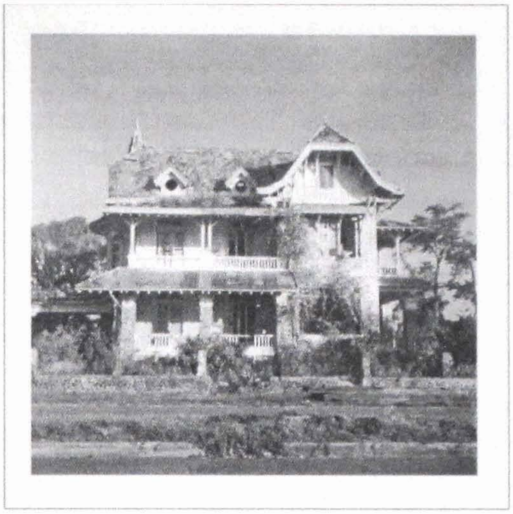
> In the morning a woman who is sick is brought aboard the ship before breakfast. She has a brown paste on her forehead which turns out to be tobacco . . . leaves and dried blood. The doctor attends to her, wrapping the wound with a bandage. It seems that the woman was in a fight with another woman the night before. They are having a private feud over a man; the other woman brandished a knife and did the damage. The doctor often

> has to make use of her training. At Simunul a young boy had a bad infection in his leg from coral cuts.

They pressed on to the Island of Siocum, where Vera reported that the fish traps had been taken in before the Monsoon, and also that the islanders made nice hats.

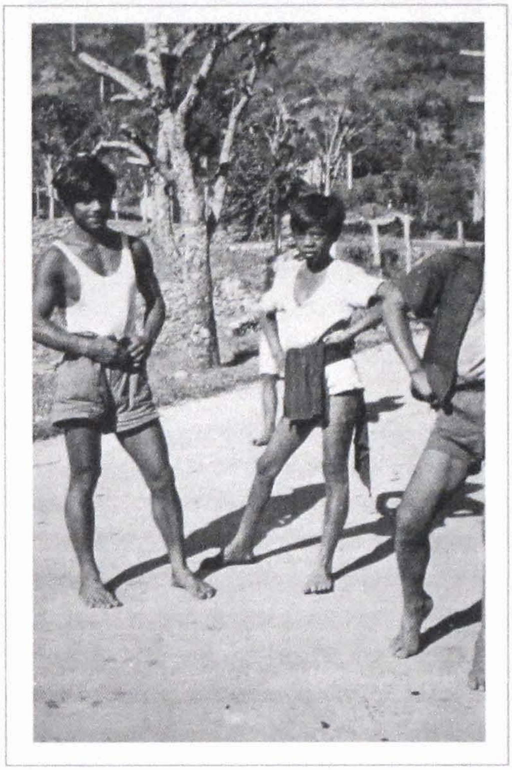
Then they were nearing Manila, stopping only briefly at Santa Maria, an isolated village where the mountains come down to the sea. Vera wrote to her parents on May 6, 1947:

> We are just about to enter the Manila Bay. . . . We've had a wonderful ten days vacation . . . . We've seen hundreds of islands, calm, mirror-like seas, flying fish, a school of porpoises, two of whom cavorted in front of our ship for 15 minutes. We've had a moon all the time. We slept on deck, so it's been cool. Food has been excellent and cocktails and liquors . . . abundant . . . .
>
> I hope there will be time to write up at least part of the trip before we leave Manila. We hope to get a free airplane ride to Hong Kong as soon as possible, within a week, anyway. We are nearing Corrigidor now, and I don't want to miss seeing it.



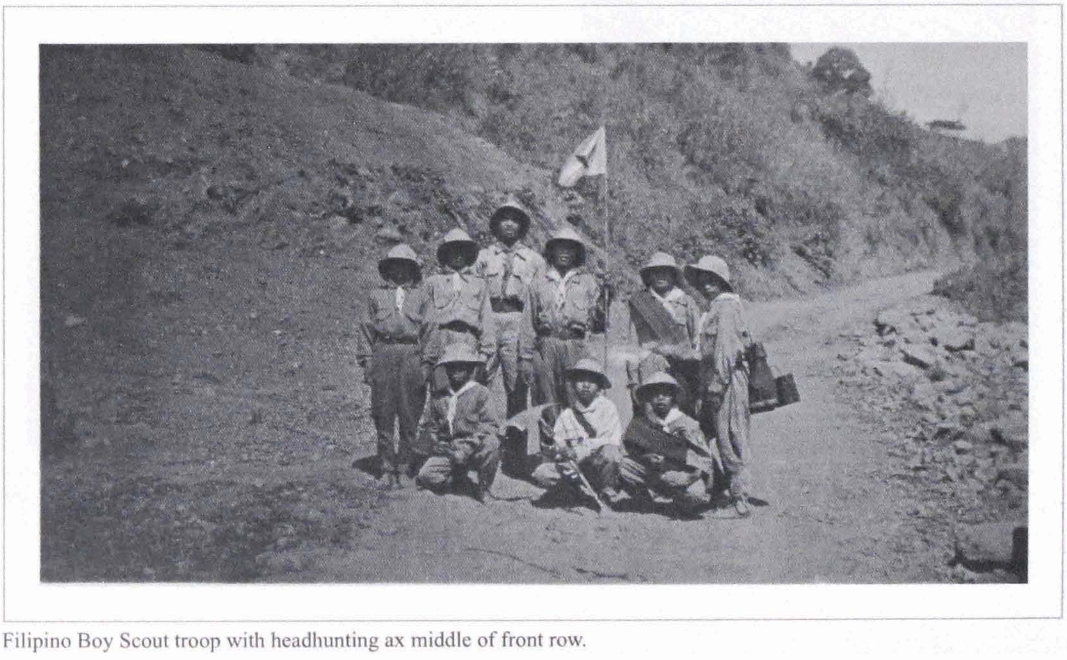
Partially bombed out house at 1244 Mabui Avenue where Bob and Vera lived in Manila.

Bob and his fellow defense counsel and officers in Manila.



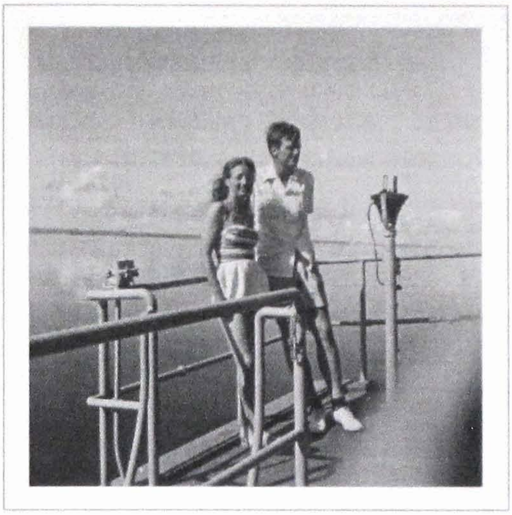
Young Bontocs with rippling muscles.

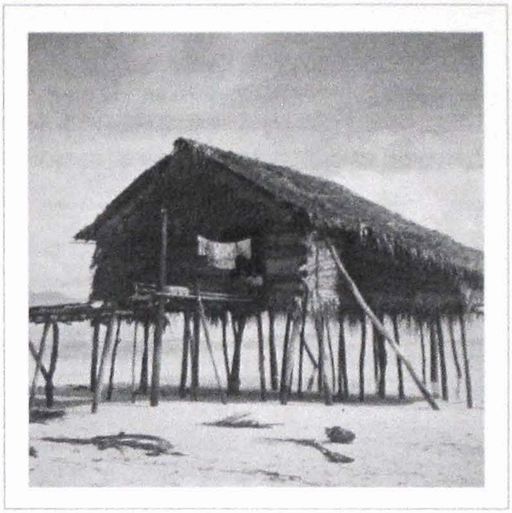
Philippines
January - March



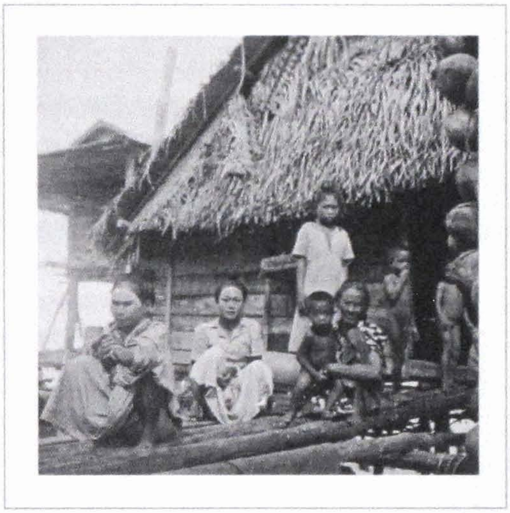
Filipino Boy Scout troop with headhunting ax middle of front row.

Philippin
March - April

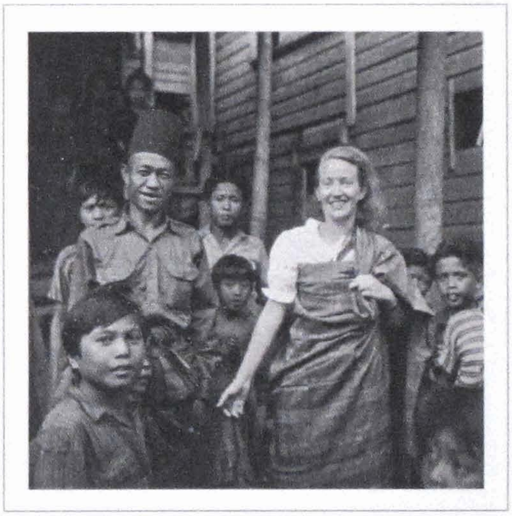

Bob and Vera on the SS Arctic in the Sulu sea.


Moro house.

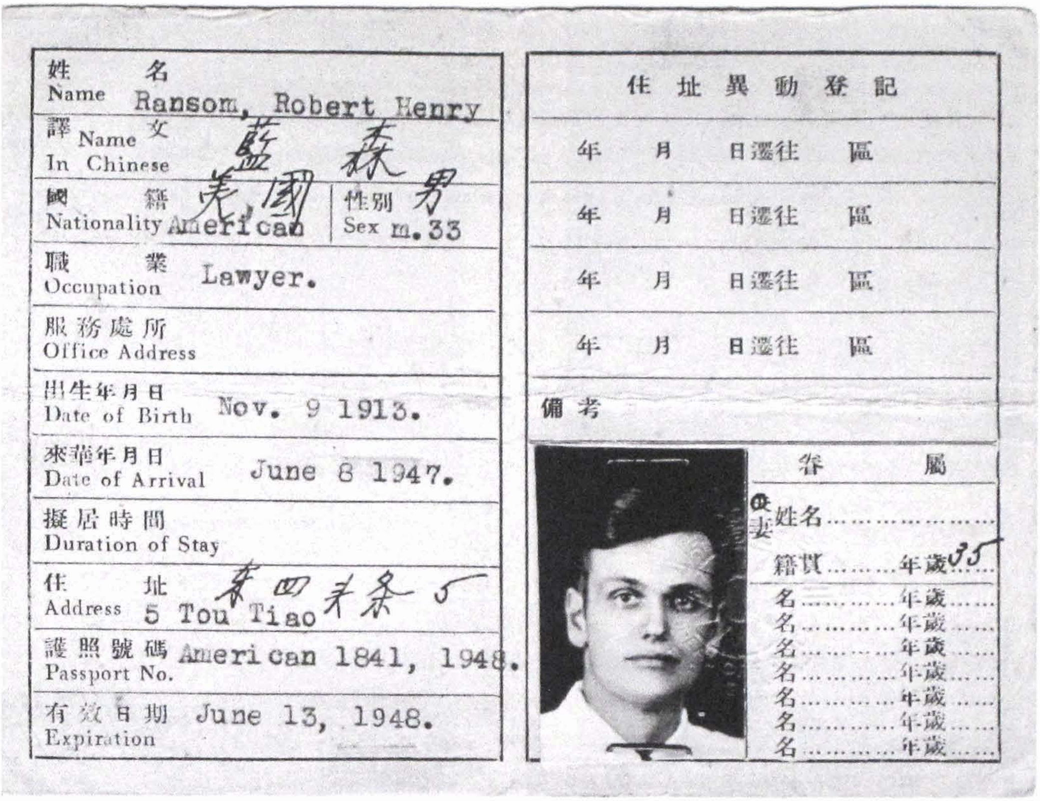
In the Sulu Sea.


Young Moro women with painted faces.

Manobos gathered to entertain Bob and Vera.


Vera with the Moros at Lake Lanao.

Bob and
Chinese



姓名 Name Ransom, Robert Henry
譯文 Name In Chinese 藍森
國籍 Nationality 美國 American
性別 Sex 男 m.33
職業 Occupation Lawyer.
服務處所 Office Address
出生年月日 Date of Birth Nov. 9 1913.
來華年月日 Date of Arrival June 8 1947.
擬居時間 Duration of Stay
住址 Address 东四头条5 5 Tou Tiao
護照號碼 Passport No. American 1841, 1948.
有效日期 Expiration June 13, 1948.

住址異動登記
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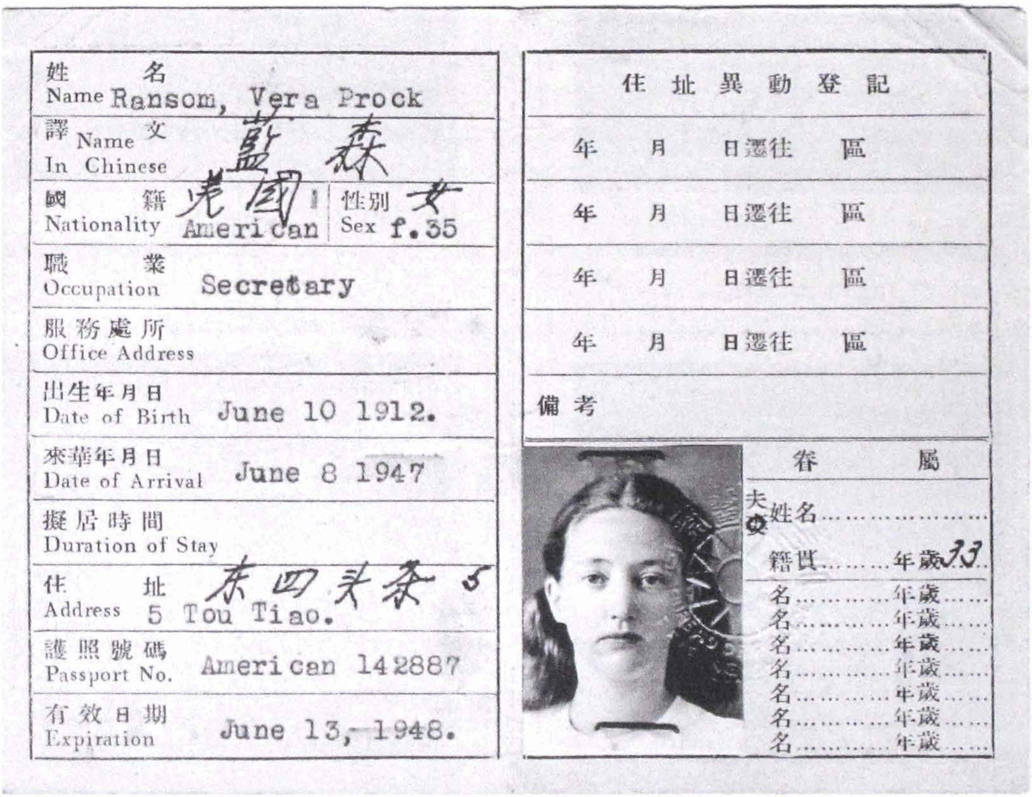

姓名 Name Ransom, Vera Prock
譯文 Name In Chinese 藍森
國籍 Nationality 美國 American
性別 Sex 女 f.35
職業 Occupation Secretary
服務處所 Office Address
出生年月日 Date of Birth June 10 1912.
來華年月日 Date of Arrival June 8 1947
擬居時間 Duration of Stay
住址 Address 东四头条5 5 Tou Tiao.
護照號碼 Passport No. American 142887
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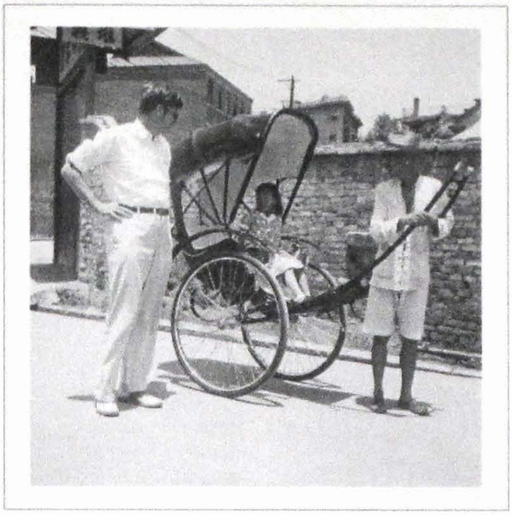
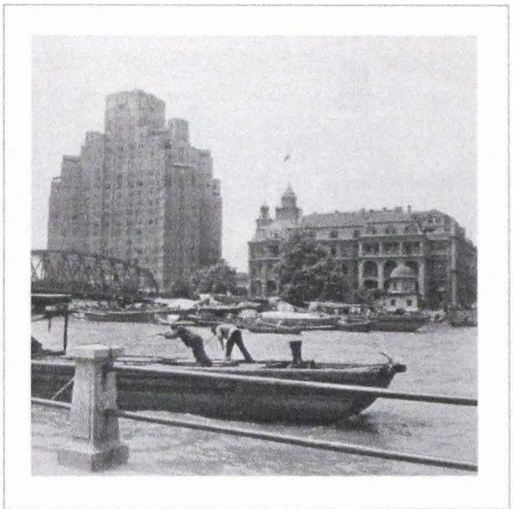
China
May - June 194



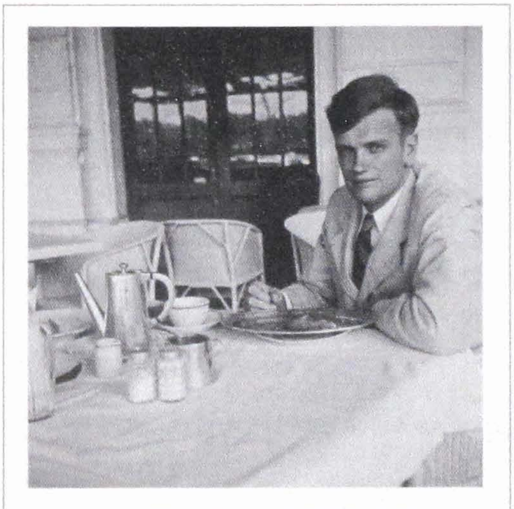
Bob speaks to a little girl in her family's rickshaw in Hankow.

Bob with inflated Chinese money which filled a suitcase.

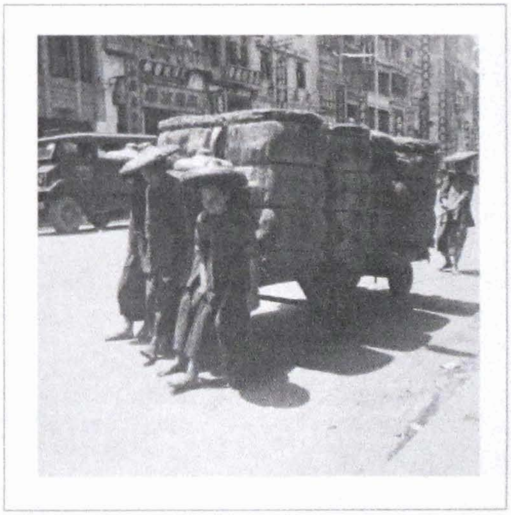


The Bund in Shanghai.

Vera at Forbidden City admiring her birthday present from Bob.



Breakfasting on rum omelette at French Club in Shanghai.



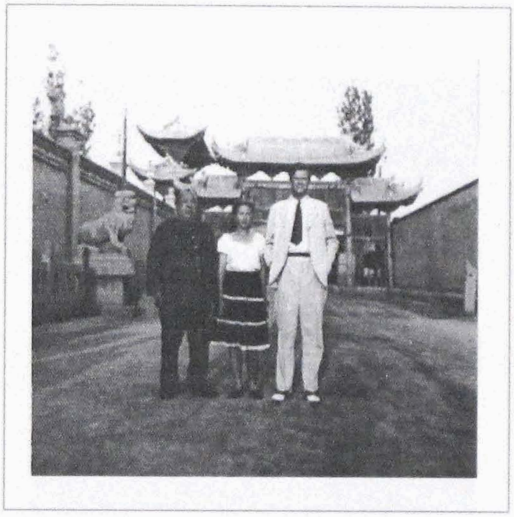
Vera was deeply shocked to see these women.

China

June - July 194

Vera at Temple of Heaven in Beijing.

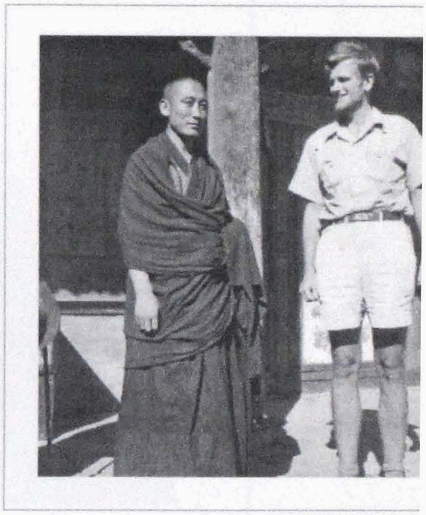
Breakfast with General Tchou in his garden in Yanki.
His wife is to Vera's left.



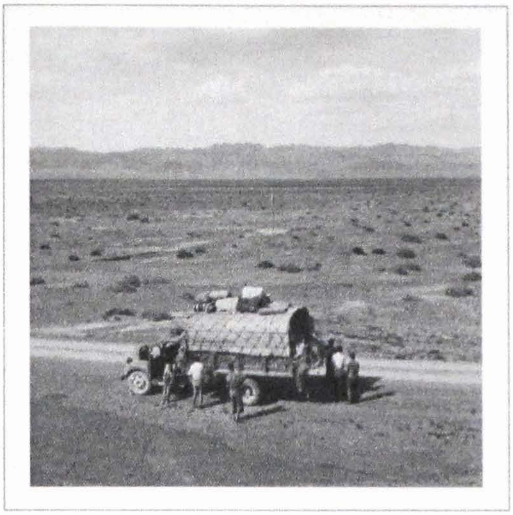
Bob and Vera visit governor of Ninghsa province during the time that they were frequently mistaken for agents of the U.S. government.

Vera with two Turkis in Hami.

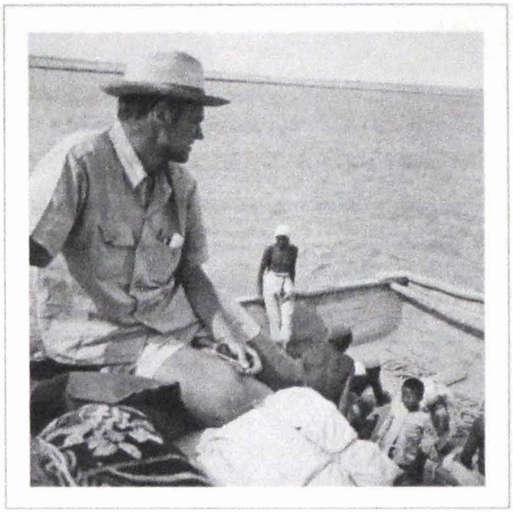
Bob and Vera with Fathers of the Belgian Catholic Mission in Shenpa who made memorable beer and wine.



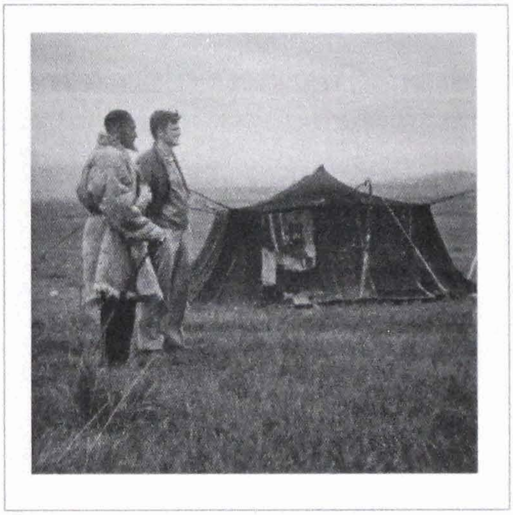
Bob with the Tibetan Abbott at Kumbum.



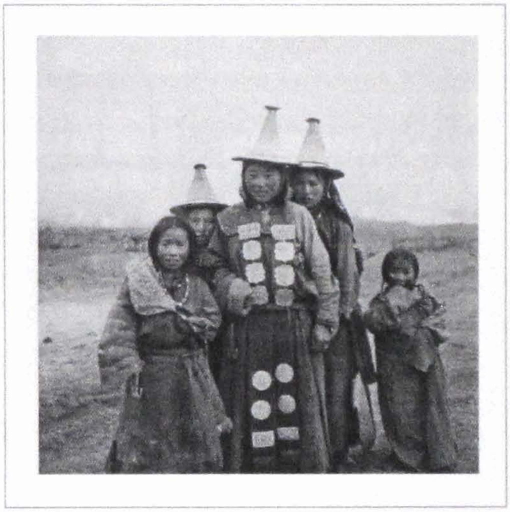
The postal truck Bob and Vera rode from Hami to Urumichi making perhaps 60 miles per day.



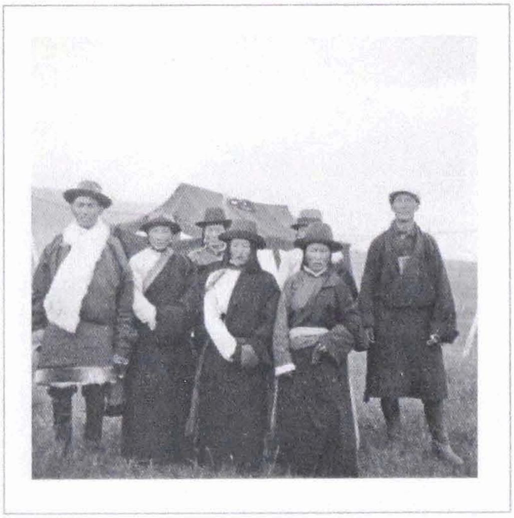
Crossing the Yellow River. The truck on a raft and Bob on the truck.



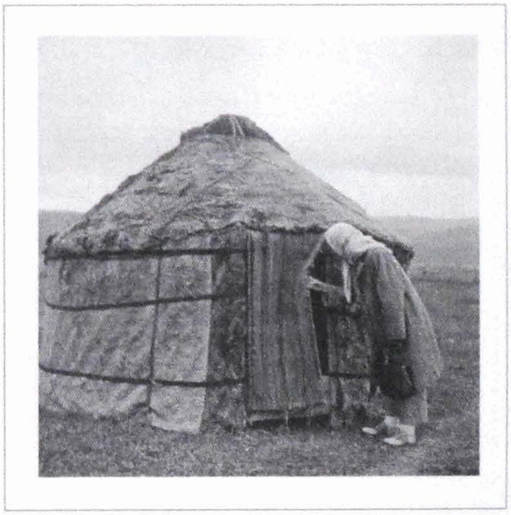
Bob with a shepherd in front of his tent in Kokinor Valley.



Tibetans from Kokinor.



Kokinor Tibetans from Triangle city.

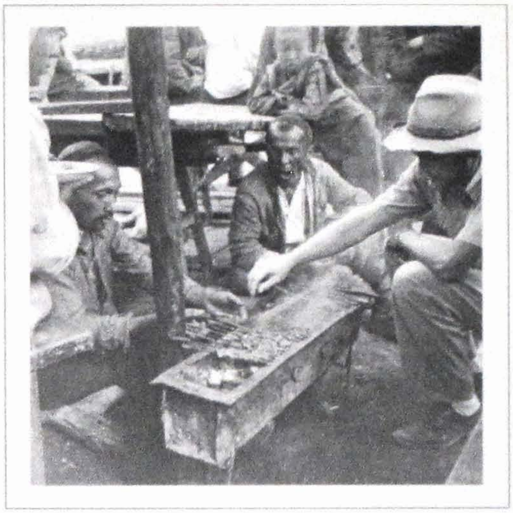


Vera's first close view of Mongolian yurt in Kokinor Valley.

Moving W

July 1947

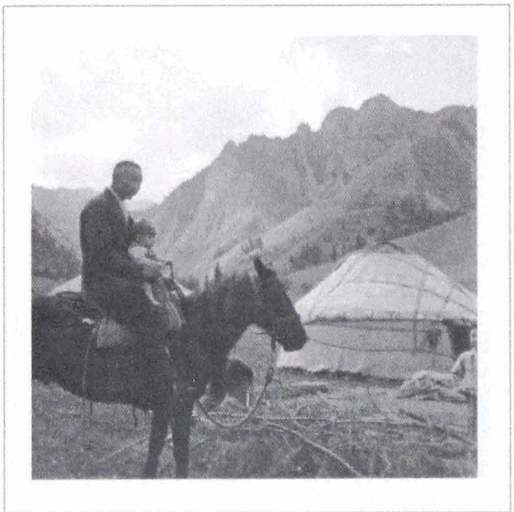
Bob and Vera between Hami and Urumchi with Tibetans.



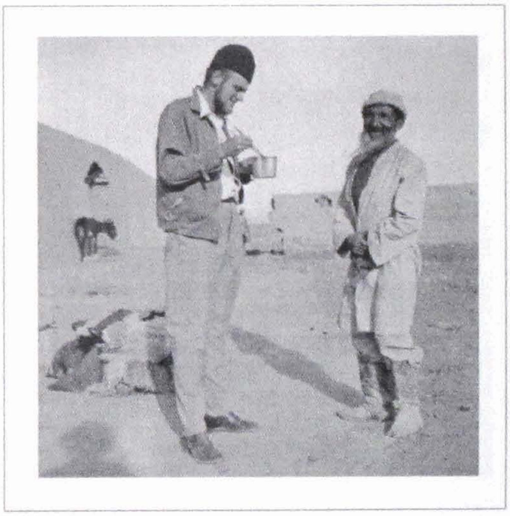
Bob ate kabobs of barbecued mutton, beef, kidneys or liver in Urumchi.

Woman who ran café in small town on way to Aksu.

Vera in Kucha followed by curious crowd.



Kazak's took their children on horseback with them.

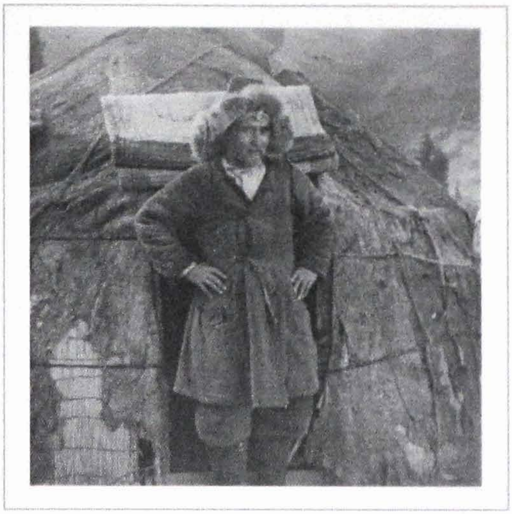


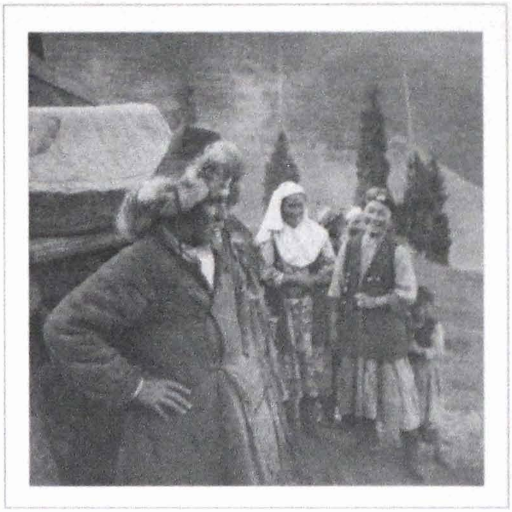
Bob shares noodles at road workers camp between Urumchi and Kashgar.

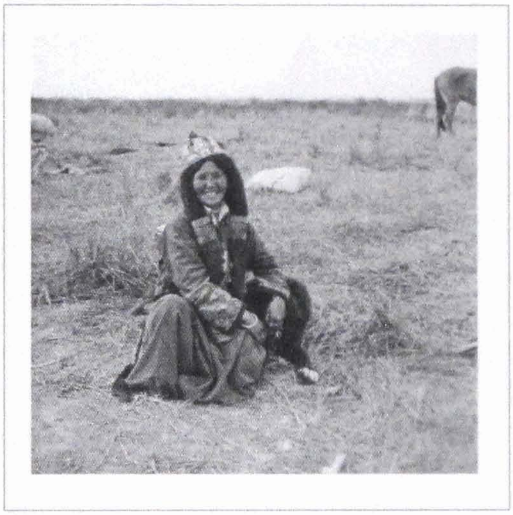
Further We
Into Sianki

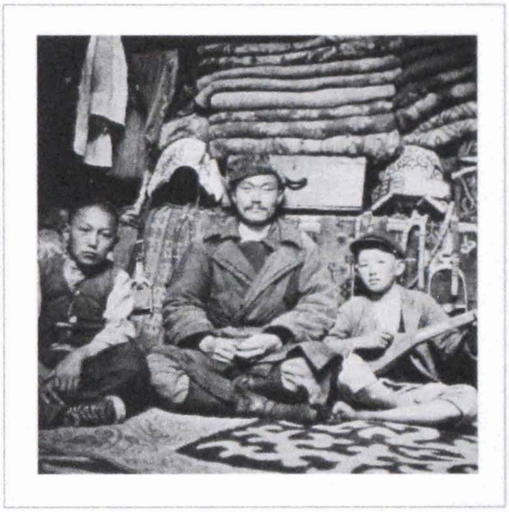
August - Septem

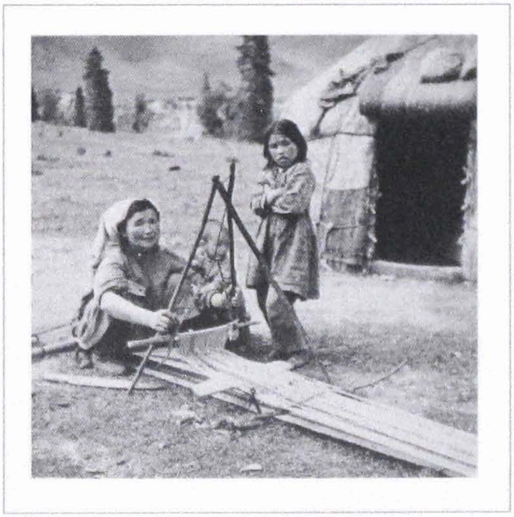
Sinkiang
September 194

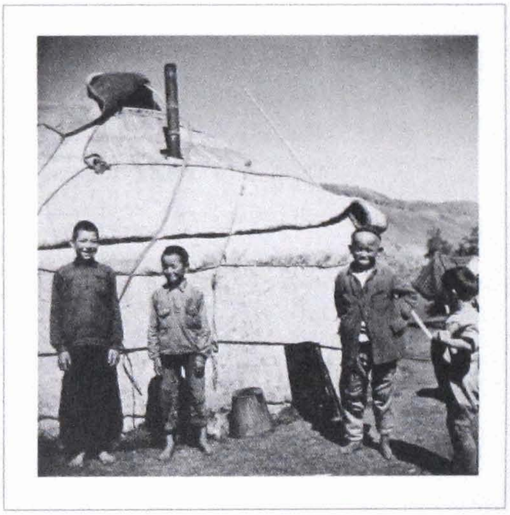

Handsome Kazak had three wives but kept them in different valleys to avoid squabbles.


Same Kazak with laughing women.

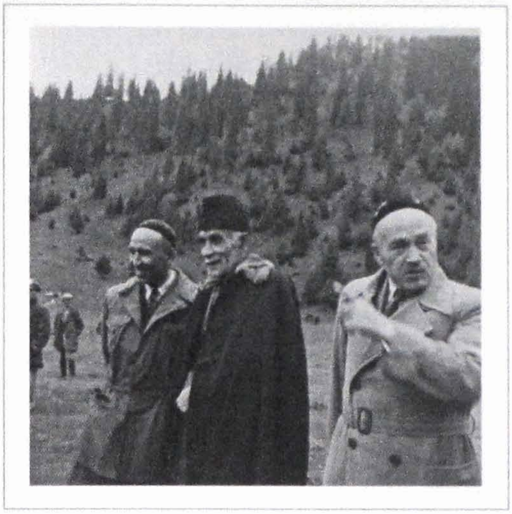

Mongolian woman holding on to watch dog who would chew anyone to pieces if given the chance.


Turki, Sinkiang Province.

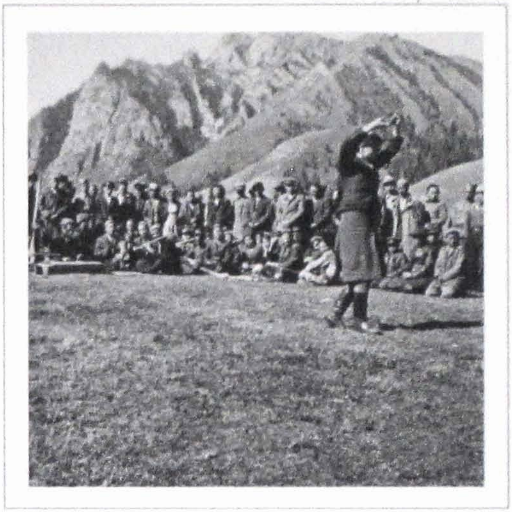

Kazak woman weaving.


Three Kazak boys in front of yurt.

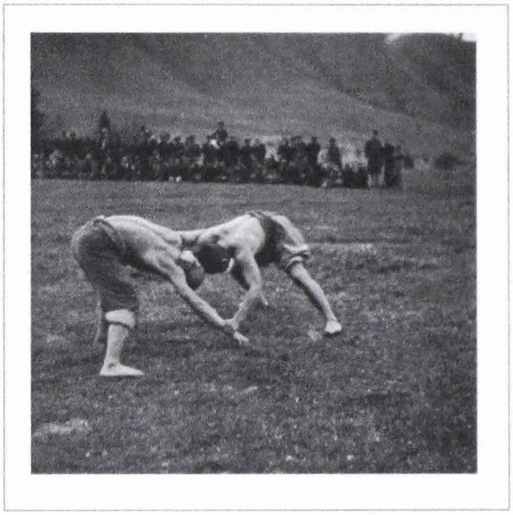
Sinkiang
September 194



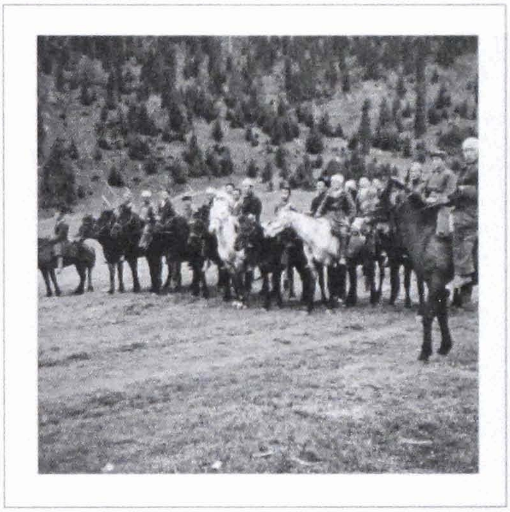
Masud Sabri (middle), a native Uighar and governor of the province.



A Uighar entertainer at the Kazak camp.

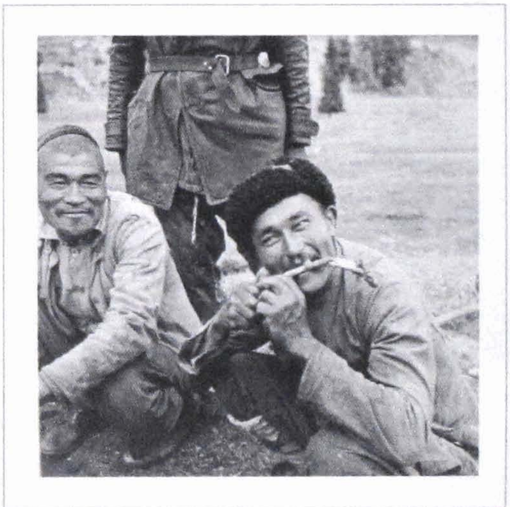


Kazak wrestlers.

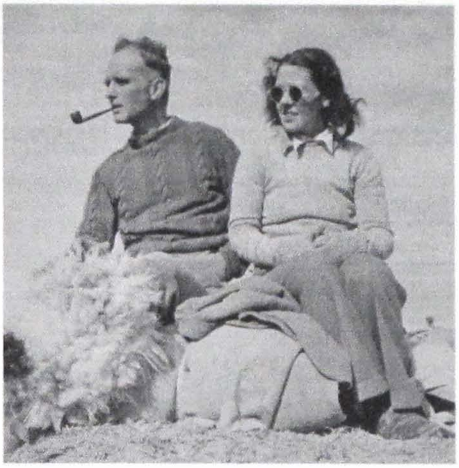


Kazak horsemen.

Kazak slaughtering a sheep at celebration arranged by governor.



Enjoying the feast.



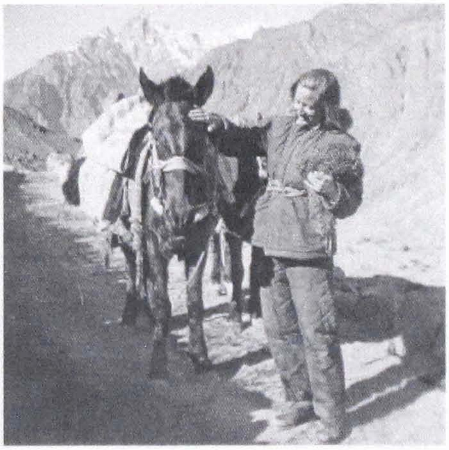
Eric and Diana Shipton.

Eric and Diana Shipton with Bob.

SINKIAN

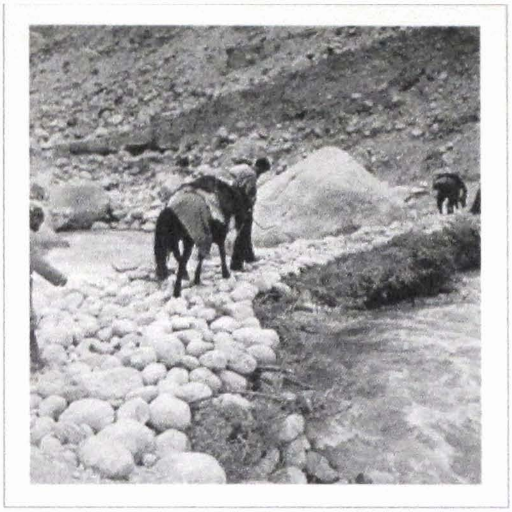
October 1947

At the British Consulate in Kashgar with (left to right) Diana and Eric Shipton, Vera, Bob and Jackie Brown.

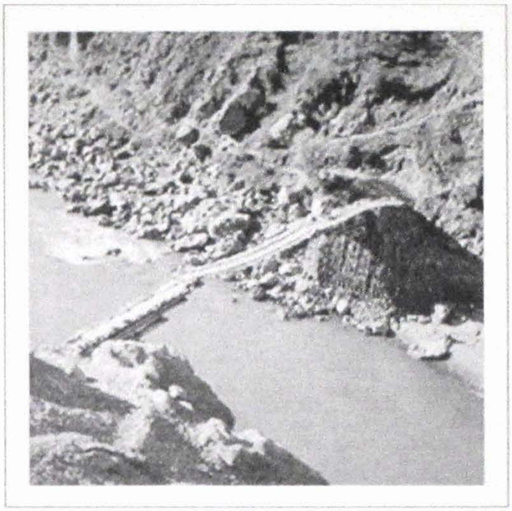


Vera with her horse.

Bob poses near Buluku.

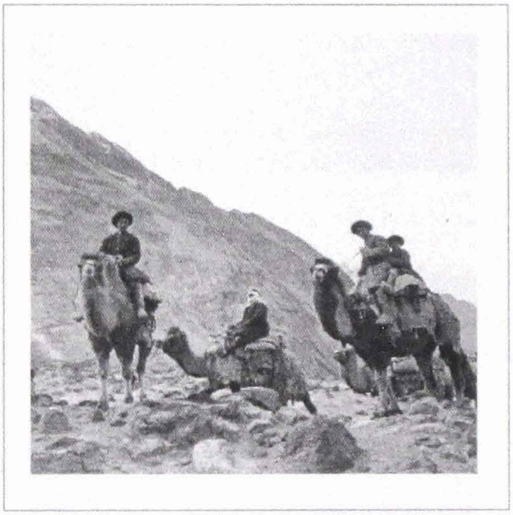


Bob led his horse over a bridge topped with stones.

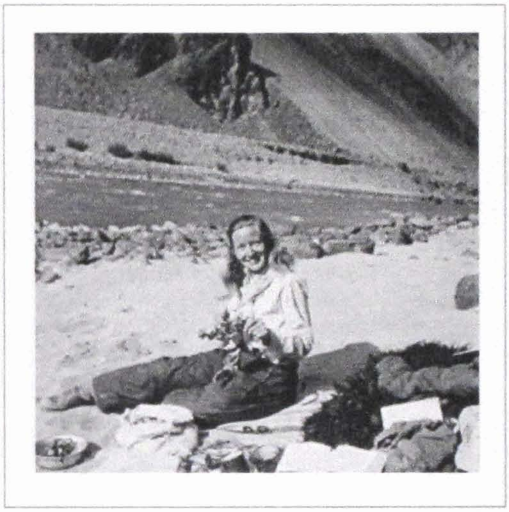


Precarious bridge on the trail to Chitral.

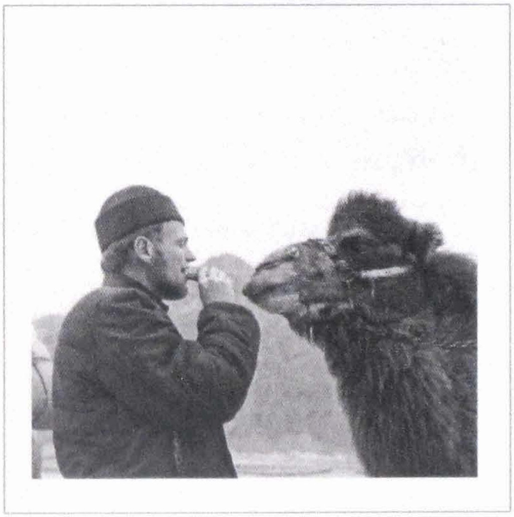
The
Karakora
and Chitr
Oct. - Nov. 194



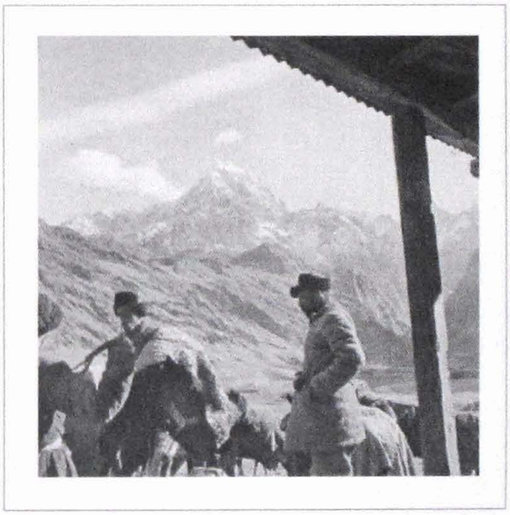
Bob and Vera met a camel caravan along the trail from Gez to Bulukul.



A lunch stop between Gilgit and Chitral.



Bob with a camel after crossing a river.

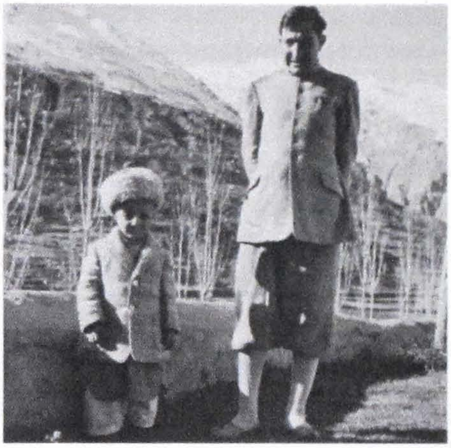


A 20,000' peak behind Arab Jon and the Gircha bungalow.

Mail couriers arrive with heavy mail sacks from Misgar.

Fateh Ali's brother's family in Tashgurgan.

Hunza boy with toy polo mallet.



Mir of Nagir with his son.

Bob and Vera's servant Arab Jon.

Descendi
into Paki

Oct. - Nov. 19

7. HONG KONG, MACAO, CANTON, SUCHOW AND SHANGHAI

In their last days in Manila the Ransoms stayed with the Skolfields. Parties and goodbyes followed for people they had gotten to know, but this lasted less than a week:

> We flew to Hong Kong. We got one free passage because Bob is allegedly a journalist;[3] mine we paid for - $96. The flight lasted four and one quarter hours. The entire area [Hong Kong] was [shrouded] in fog. The airport is surrounded by mountains, very spectacular but not the safest airport in the world. Anyway, there is

---

[3] Among the Ransom's letters was one from the Manila paper, The Evening News, dated 8 May, 1947, that declared: "TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN: "This letter will introduce Mr. Robert Ransom, who has been assigned as roving correspondent by *THE EVENING NEWS*, to do a series of feature articles. Any courtesies extended to Mr. Ransom to facilitate his work for us will be acceptable." Followed by a postscript: "Mr. Ransom is authorized to forward collect cable messages to *THE EVENING NEWS*." This proved very useful and apparently got Bob free airfare courtesy of the U.S. government.

> usually a clear patch which enables the airplane to go down.

The clear patch sounds like a metaphor for their entire trip. There was always a clear patch.

The Philippines was foreign and exotic, but often in an American way. China was different. It had had coastal colonial incursions, which were less complete and had not resulted in a lasting overlay of Western culture. Although wealthy Chinese went to Europe and the United States for education, they were not overawed in the same way as the Filipinos. They had their own traditions in which they took pride and in many ways it was equal or superior to anything in the West. It was certainly more ancient. Most Westernization has occurred in China since then and by choice.

China was also a major western ally, although they fought Japan their own way, often to the frustration of the American military. Partly because of corrupt wartime policies and partly because of antiquated and dysfunctional economic and political systems, by mid-1947, the Chinese were at the threshold of a great revolutionary change, which would alter and brutalize their country to a degree not seen for centuries.

Their great hero in American eyes, Chiang Kai Shek, would be defeated and exiled. Bob and Vera arrived at a time that confounded many western experts. In particular, American Republicans and Henry Luce and his *Time Magazine* put their hopes squarely on the Generalissimo and the Nationalists.

Vera's first letter from Hong Kong in May 1947, does not even mention the Communists:

> We are staying in a second class hotel and paying more than we would in a first class hotel. That's how crazy China is. This room costs $28 Hong Kong dollars. We could stay in the Gloucester Hotel for $16, with a bath which we do not have here. There are $4.50 Hong Kong dollars to each U.S. dollar. But the town is very crowded and the first class hotels are always filled. Of course it would have been easy enough for us to make a reservation, but we were unaware of the situation.

What ensued was a period of more conventional travel by riverboat or rail on what before the War had been well-developed commercial and tourist routes. While they enjoyed staying in decent hotels and eating in good restaurants, they were already thinking up unorthodox plans similar to those they had enjoyed in the Philippines. These, however, were plans, not arrangements. They still would depend on what turned up along the way.

Hong Kong was crowded and expensive. To the north the Communists pressed ahead, slowly seizing resources which might have allowed the Nationalists and what was left of the country to function normally. Refugees flowed toward the coastal ports which were Bob and Vera's first destinations.

In their first letter from China Bob and Vera worried about their money lasting the whole trip. They quickly learned to calculate the rates for the inflated colonial currency, something they would have to learn all over again once they left Hong. Their room was less than $6 U.S. per night, but it was still more than what they usually had paid at hotels in the Philippines. Their finances were little different from many who traveled the hippie road to India a generation.

Rather than the prospect of seeing the Great Wall, at this point Vera wrote mainly about their travel arrangements. She nonetheless appreciated Hong Kong:

> We are staying in Kowloon, which is on the mainland. We take a ferry across the bay to Hong Kong, an island. The ride is about 10 minutes or less and the ferries run constantly. Hong Kong is mountainous. The first two blocks along the waterfront are about the only level parts. The weather is wonderful: cool fog rolls in over the hills. In fact, we are reminded very much of San Francisco. The bay is fascinating and full of big ships, several war ships and hundreds of sampans and junks. A tram goes

> up the Peak, the fashionable place to live. We took the ride Sunday. It goes straight up to 1500 feet. There is a walk around the top, which we did. Many of the houses on the Peak are mere shells. They were looted just after the Japanese left. A few have been destroyed by shellfire. And no one takes advantage of the breathtaking views. The windows everywhere are tiny, or casement windows with small panes.

Compared to the Philippines, the climate was invigorating, as was the generally civilized city. The small windows Vera mentions were protection against typhoons and thieves.

If there is a theme for the first part of the Ransom's trip, it was the effect of the War. Hong Kong, as a British colony, had had a hard time during the War. Westerners caught there were interned under harsh conditions. The destruction reached far across Asia, as did the death. Although the generations affected now are dying off, it is still not uncommon to meet someone in Hong Kong or elsewhere who saw someone killed on the street, shot or even slashed by a Japanese officer's sword. Vera did not remark this. What she did note was that the pre-War society was back in place:

> The British are in evidence, naturally, and dowdy as ever. The women, I mean. They are absolutely styleless creatures and rather large and horsy or short and dumpy. The men are red-cheeked and determined looking. They wear white suits, lightweight, woolen suits, or white

> shorts with matching coat, shirt and tie and white woolen socks which come up to the knees. Rather odd.

Then Vera made a remark that hints at the nature of colonialism:

> Indians are everywhere. Some beautiful women with diamonds and exquisite Indian gowns. But for the most part the Indians are guards in front of banks, business houses or private homes. They look out of place in such a job, because they are very handsome, tall [and] strong with nice features. We even saw a South African, black . . . but with straight hair.

She also watched the Chinese.

> All the Chinese women wear those tight-fitting Chinese dresses. The younger men wear western clothes; but the older and distinguished ones do wear the long gowns, and sometimes the tiny black skull cap.

China otherwise was overwhelming:

> We walked through the Chinese market part of the town on Sunday. Thousands of people were everywhere. I simply cannot describe the teeming crowds and multitude of different sights: one man is cutting broken pieces of glass into small squares; a woman is having her hair combed – it is a long, tedious job; first they brush oil into the hair which makes it shine, then braid it very carefully. The braid is tied near the end with thin thread. A shoemaker is sitting on the sidewalk making shoes. Others flatten tin cans and shape them into all sorts of things. . . .
>
> There are few automobiles and few jeeps, thank goodness. The small Austins and other small cars are very popular. They cost about $1,200 Hong Kong

> dollars, but the waiting list for them is very long. We took a ride in a rickshaw, and [had an] odd feeling to have a person pulling . . . [us]. They trot, too. They have very strong legs and arms. We have also ridden in a pedicab. This is a two seater with a bicycle in the front. They also have sedan chairs carried by two men, but we haven't tried that yet.

Hong Kong remained unchanged in most ways during the War. The great burst of development, when menial transportation became obsolete, hadn't occurred.

> The Chinese lower classes wear pajamas of shiny black cotton or a grey or blue and made just like the Chinese pajamas that I have. They go barefoot, or they wear a sandal made of a piece of leather fastened around the ankle and the second toe, or they wear black slippers, which have always been for sale in San Francisco. The women are beasts of burden here. They carry huge loads on their shoulders; they work on the roads, carrying crushed rock, and they work on the sampans, which means lots of rowing.

The Philippines had been poor, but Vera and Bob had never seen anything quite like the poverty in Hong Kong. The British were not known for helping colonial populations raise their living standards. Singapore was the poorest larger city in Asia, and Hong Kong was not much better.

As westerners Bob and Vera were insulated from most of this, enjoying the amenities which the British had built for themselves.

Although the bath was down the hall, their hotel, compared to many places they had stayed in the Philippines, was luxurious. They bought things:

> We have too much baggage: 120 pounds in five pieces, plus the Mexican hammock filled with books and magazines, a musette bag with the air mattresses and a pair of Bob's shoes and two coats. We will discard it whenever possible.

But they also had access to cheap porters, and they already had plans for an excursion before they departed for the north:

> Tomorrow we are planning to go to Macao. . . . It is a wide open gambling town. Then to Canton where there are a dozen Stanford graduates. Then back to Hong Kong. And right away we will go to Shanghai and Peiping. We think we will stay in Peiping for a month or so. Though you might be interested in this article on Chop Suey.[4] The Danish beer is the best I have ever had.

At that point they had been planning to go to Thailand, which Vera calls Siam. In an addendum to the same letter, Vera writes:

> We have changed our plans . . . . We have decided to leave tomorrow for Macao, then to Canton and then by train to Hankow and by steamer on the Yangtze River to Nanking and Shanghai. We might be able to go on a convoy to northwest China 700 miles northwest of Chunking. An American and an English Quaker are

---

[4] The article on Chop Suey, from an unidentified English-language newspaper, reports that in Chinese the words mean, 'leftovers,' and the dish was invented by a chef on the spur of the moment to satisfy non-Chinese who arrived after the items on the menu were gone.

> taking nine trucks of machinery for spinning wool and weaving cloth. They have not yet received permission to take the trucks into China and it is a 50/50 chance that the trip may fall through. We would like to wait around to see if they are going. The trip would take about two months and the expenses would be about $1 U.S. per day each. It's a wonderful opportunity. If they were only leaving within a reasonable time! There is no civil war in this area.

Nanking had suffered one of the most brutal sackings in modern warfare, and Chunking had been China's wartime capital; so Bob and Vera apparently were still ready for anything.

What they planned to do about the large parts of the country that were by then in Communist hands, or if conditions changed rapidly, as they eventually did, Vera does not say.

But they were still in Hong Kong and taking in the sights:

> I forgot to mention a few interesting things in the body of this letter: For instance, my raffia shoes have caused a sensation, chiefly among the Chinese. When one sees them, they call their friends to come take a look . . . .

It is easy to imagine them wandering along a narrow Hong Kong Street, Bob towering over Chinese, who hurried past. Perhaps the Chinese thought that they could have raffia shoes made for themselves from what appeared to be straw.

Vera's single comment about traveling in the nine trucks north from Hong Kong was, "There is no civil war in this area." She was correct, of course. The revolution was moving forward in the north. Communists held enclaves and interdicted certain rail lines on a regular basis - one *New York Times'* headline during the period said, "Reds Seize Key Rail Junction" - but overall control in the south remained with the Nationalists. If the revolution seemed remote from Hong Kong, it was even more distant from Macao. Bob and Vera arrived there in the mid-May, 1947:

> This is the oddest, craziest city. It is Portuguese in architecture and layout, but almost all the people are Chinese. We are staying at the Grand Central Hotel – a glorified house of ill-fame. They say you can do absolutely anything here. They play fan-tan on the lower floors, a reasonably simple game of betting on numbers. And they play another game with white buttons. A brass cover is put over the buttons; you place your bets on one, two, three or four. The buttons are then counted out in groups of four; you win depending on what number of buttons is left over. You can bet in fan-tan from the dining rooms. The game is flashed on a large board; pretty girls place your bets. On the streets there are many lottery places; and everywhere you hear the click of mah jong.

The gambling sounds better than most table conversation and the two of them after so many months were largely talked out. It was exciting to explore a place where gambling and sex were a way of life.

Vera recalls that she and Bob could hear a slapping sound through the walls of their room as the hotel's ladies gave massages.

Macao was exotic in other ways:

> There are black soldiers here from Mozambique, and we just met one at the fort who is Melanesian, from Portuguese Timor. A Portuguese ship calls here twice each year from [their colonies].

Bob and Vera had stepped into a corner of a small colonial power. Referring to Portugal 20th Century, it is hard even to use the word "power," although what Bob and Vera saw would last for some years yet, a monument to the inertia of the international community and the stubbornness of the fascist regime in Lisbon.

They returned to Hong Kong and further planning but also to sampling the city's restaurants. They had dim sum for the first time, something that was unknown in the United States even in San Francisco:

> "Apparently the custom is to bring you little tidbits at tiffin time (lunch to us Americans). Girls walk around with trays of various types of food. You see first and select what you want. And you have to know how to use chop sticks. There is no silverware in these restaurants. And we drink gallons of tea.

In 1947 Hong Kong seemed foreign for other reasons:

> The newspapers are very interesting to read. They are so international. They contain news from every corner of the world, whereas in Manila and the States, the news is mostly local or U.S. news only . . . . Hong Kong is a city of banks. There must be several hundred here, all as busy as can be. Hong Kong money is very inconvenient. The notes are huge, but when they get down to 5-cent notes, they are very small and ragged and torn. Since the War they have had no silver coins.

Tucked in among the Ransom's letters are notes in denominations from five cents to a thousand Hong Kong dollars. This provides a further idea of the War's effects. The Japanese had looted much of the coinage, and the Chinese, adhering to Gresham's law, were hoarding was left, or even converting it into jewelry and ingots, which could be carried more easily than loose coins

In Macao this had become an industry. By Vera's account, if you were any American, they had Double Eagles ready to be made into rings or pendants. Many of the Chinese who fled as the Communists pushed ahead did so with "something sewn in the hem of their garments," and Macao and Hong Kong were destinations for major capital flight.

Hong Kong left other impressions:

> Cars drive on the left side of the road, most startling when you cross the street because you look in the wrong direction for the cars. And when you are in a car and see

> another coming toward you, it just seems that a crack-up is inevitable.

On May 13, 1947, Vera wrote to her mother-in-law that she and Bob visited the Supreme Court in Hong Kong:

> The judge wears red, a funny, fuzzy grey wig, the barristers wear black gowns and grey wigs with set curls; the accused is confined in a box with his own private stairway. It's all conducted on a very dignified plane. There are only 5 barristers in Hong Kong at the moment. They need more, but for some reason no one wants to come out from England. Can't imagine why because here there's plenty of food, and it is an attractive place physically.

The courtroom was a contrast to the military courts she had spent hours watching in Manila and a bizarre anomaly that spoke of the British irrelevance to what was really happening in China.

She returned to descriptions of British women:

> As for the hair – the style here seems to be the short bob [of] curls. Makeup, I guess, is considered vulgar. But I do notice that they almost all use perfume, and, of course, it is good perfume, France's best . . . .
>
> They always have tea at 6, too. The hotels are jammed at that hour. They really have tea, too, with cake and sometimes a thin sandwich. The hotels, the Honking and the Gloucester, are a little shabby. Of course, it may be that they can't afford to do much renovating of furniture, tablecloths, etc. But I should complain. We are staying in a very shabby Hotel, the Kowloon, . . . And what hurts is that it is more expensive than the first class hotels. We are paying $28 (Hong Kong) per day for one room, a

> washbasin, but no bath. We could stay in Hong Kong at the Gloucester for $16 with a private bath. The hotels and in fact everything are extremely crowded, so it was impossible to get accommodations at the better [places]. It makes us mad that no one told us, because we've known for months that we were coming to Hong Kong sometime. It's a racket. The worst racket is house or apartment rents. To [find] anything to live in, you first have to pay "key money" which on an ordinary five room house amounts to $10,000 Hong Kong. . . . [The city] is so crowded because so many Chinese have migrated from Shanghai where life is much more difficult.

At that point they still had in mind traveling through China and eventually reaching Thailand. "We shall be there in about three months . . . ." Vera writes. "We are going to Peiping and staying there for several months. One month, anyway. "

Their plans remained vague. Vera also asks that Bob's mother save their letters, which she fortunately did.

Bob inserted two neatly typed pages of his own in the envelope to his mother, mostly about her helping sort out some financial arrangements, including forwarding funds from his last Army paycheck:

> We plan to leave here in a couple of days and take the riverboat to Canton, then by rail to Hankow. Then do one of two things, go to Shanghai and take a plane to Peiping, or go up river to Chungking and work up to Lanchow. If we did the latter, we would leave some

> baggage in Hankow and return there and then go to Shanghai and later fly to Peiping.

He also continued to discuss money:

> There is a note in the paper today that China might double the value of the dollar officially, which would mean that things would be a lot cheaper for us. We would not have to play the black market, or if we did, [we would] get a much better rate.

And then he provides a detailed description, which he had received, from his Mother's doctor of the condition of her leg, which she had broken for the second time. He continued to keep an eye on his former clients:

> There is a persistent rumor that Konishi's case is to be reversed. This is to keep it out of the Supreme Court. They are afraid that [an] . . . appeal might upset the whole applecart out here.

He closes by saying:

> Well, today is a beautiful day, and we have decided to take the riverboat up to Canton. Leaves at 3 p.m. and arrives tomorrow morning about six. This Macao is a bit of Europe. Portuguese vin ordinaire in the restaurants, a good library. But nevertheless a Chinese City. Much Fan Tan. We ride in Rickshaws and have a fine time of it. In Canton we can get information about the state of the civil war from the Stanford Club, and know how to proceed from there.

Vera wrote that Bob would be able to give them the secret handshake, but the account, which they sent from Hankow, does not indicate whether they had met anyone from Stanford or not. In a letter dated Memorial Day, 1947, Vera wrote to Bob's mother:

> We go absolutely first class, you will be glad to hear, and it's quite comfortable even though it corresponds only to second-class pre-War. [The] first class trains, etc. were used up by the Japanese.
>
> It was hard to pull ourselves away from Macao, it is such a charming, pretty, little place. We took a boat from there to Canton, an overnight journey of about 14 hours. We traveled up the river; saw a lot of activity, villages situated near the river banks, sampans everywhere. The boats are a funny sort of river steamer. First class consists of upper and lower berths, . . . attached to one another, and all open to one another. A narrow passageway goes along each side, but it is so narrow that two persons can barely pass at the same time. The berths are narrow and short, too. We had to push our air mattresses into place. But, surprisingly, it was pretty comfortable.

Vera remembers clearing customs when they landed. Bob's papers were thoroughly checked, while she says that she could have walked through without presenting hers at all.

> Canton is a . . . river port of two million people. Hundreds of sampans, junks and river steamers line the waterfront. The owners of sampans are real water people. They are born on those boats, live on them for their entire lives. We stayed at the New Asia hotel and slept little; the noise was unbelievable. Two nightclubs were nearby, one on the very roof of our hotel. Besides that, noise came up from the streets. Every night sounded like a New Year's Eve. There are few automobiles, but the streets are crowded with traffic, . . .

> pedestrians, coolies carrying incredible loads, pushcarts, and rickshaws.
>
> It is appalling to western eyes to see how humans are used as beasts of burden, women, too. Carts with two screeching wooden wheels are loaded heavily with merchandise from incoming ships, one or two ropes are attached, ... men put the rope over one shoulder with just a piece of material underneath to ease the friction, and pull. They are helped by . . . pushers at the back. Women, mind you, do the same thing. The strain is apparent on the faces of these people; and [their] muscles ripple . . . . Women row sampans, too, often with an able-bodied man sitting in front.

They managed to make it to a restaurant or two:

> Canton is famous for its food. [Many] . . . Chinese from the States come from that area, as you probably know. But we were disappointed in the food. It is also more expensive than European [food]. One night we were taken in tow by a Chinese who did order a fine meal for us: Chicken made into three dishes, soup, fried, and with mushrooms. It was delicious and unusual. But to our amazement in none of these restaurants do they use Chinese teacups or serving dishes on pedestals. They have heavy cups and platters just like in a drug store at home. . . .[Y]ou really have to use chopsticks; silverware is not very popular yet.

They left Canton almost immediately:

> The train was scheduled to leave at 4 p.m. It was delayed, as they always are. It did not arrive until midnight; we boarded it and slept, even though it did not pull out until morning. We were on the train two nights and two days we before we reached Hankow. . . . The berths were comfortable, four to a compartment, wide and long, upholstered in black leather. The dining car was more of

> a kitchen for the crew, but the food was palatable. . . .. We always had tea in our compartment. And for between times we had chocolate bars from Army rations sold along the way. At the stations [they] . . . sold eggs boiled right in the tea, and also oranges.
>
> The scenery in Kwantung province is lovely: beautifully arranged and cared for rice paddies, with flag stone paths and arched stone bridges to relieve the monotony. The villages . . . float like islands in the mist of a series of endless ponds, . . . rice paddies flooded with water. Most of the paddies are planted now. The buildings are all alike in the villages, some with arched eaves, and [made] of adobe brick. Everywhere people work. They wear very wide, peaked hats made of straw.
>
> Hunan Province is not so prosperous. They have not been able to [rebuild from the War] so quickly, so many of the rice paddies are [filled] with weeds. [Again] all of the towns are [adobe buildings] but seem very poor in comparison with the south.

The train finally steamed into Wuchang, across the Chientang River from Hankow.

> [We] battled with the coolies about the price of carrying our bags onto the boat, and argued with the rickshaw [drivers] on the other side. This is quite common procedure, apparently.

Unlike the Philippines, no one asked them how much they would like to pay, an indication, perhaps, of harsher conditions.

They found still more missionaries:

> We are staying at the Lutheran Mission, which runs a hostel. This is a Swedish group of Lutheran Missionaries

> – Stella please take note. And it is as you would expect: very, very clean and well-managed. The food is excellent, American style and all most inexpensive. They are most accommodating, . . . and assume the duties of a travel agency gladly.

It must have been like coming home to at a well-organized mission compound where everyone spoke English and the room rates were comprehensible. Bob and Vera's culture shock lessened. They also now knew of a network on which they might depend. Vera wrote:

> There must be thousands of missionaries in China, and they have done wonderful things. They are responsible for much relief work, building schools, hospitals and clinics. They all learn the language, travel into the hinterland, and set up stations in the most out of the way spots. This is more than the foreign businessmen living in China ever did. Theirs was a life of office to club to racetrack to home, with as little intercourse as possible with the Chinese. It is impossible for them to pursue such an insular life because [now] all of the foreign concessions have been returned to the Chinese. Hankow had a Japanese, Russian, French, German and British concession. The architecture varies in each. . . . The mission is in the former French concession, . . . the chimneys [look like they are from Paris] and are all around us. You know how Bob reacts to that.

Two years later he and Vera bought a sixth floor garret in Paris near the Porte St. Denis with a view of dozens of chimneys.

They had now been in three southern Chinese cities, Hong Kong, Macao and Canton. Hangkow was their fourth. All were very different from the Philippines. In China they were isolated, and had to amuse themselves as best they could:

> There is not much to see in the way of sights. The other day we went to the Chinese city, which is a maze of narrow, twisting streets. We had an awful time avoiding the rickshaws and bicycles. It was interesting to see the many different kinds of crafts and shops. We noticed several teashops where young girls and older women sit at long tables with a . . . round tray of tea in front of them. They are picking it over, discarding the stems. Their hands move so fast you can hardly seem them.

But they could not speak to anyone on the street.

> In another place they are hammering iron into tea kettles and . . . frying pans. We [also] saw men weaving mosquito netting, combing hair to make small brushes, and carving mah jong counters. Everyone is doing something; and of course, there is a lot of child labor. And what I cannot get used to: . . . women with bound feet. Their feet are so tiny. How they stand on them is a mystery to me. They are about the size of a horse's hoof. Their stride is very awkward, of course.

The Communists put an end to this ancient practice, an emblem of status for those who did not have to work and a national sexual fetish.

> We love the private rickshaws. They are painted black . . . and shine, as do the silvery spokes of their large wheels. Inside they are lined in white cotton, which is

> cleaned frequently. . . . [T]he public rickshaws, in comparison, are very ratty, indeed.

Without Chinese, Bob and Vera could do little more than watch.

> The Chinese people here look entirely different from the Cantonese who are the people we see in the States. Here I notice the faces are more oval, resembling what I think of as Mongol features. We see people who look like Fu Manchu. In fact, the Chinese quarters of this city seems almost synthetic, like a movie set. It is just exactly what you would expect to find. In fact, Chinatown in San Francisco has many of the same features, but to a lesser degree. The straw hats the peasants wear are different, more like a Mexican sombrero. It's made out of rough straw . . . .

They soon met the head of the Lutheran Mission, Reverend Hanson. Hanson was a tall, somewhat dour Swede, courageous in his effort to begin the mission's work again after the War. The Lutherans had been interned by the Japanese before they even knew that Pearl Harbor had been bombed. Most were repatriated to the United States in 1942. Hanson gave Bob and Vera free run of the Mission library, and they took advantage of it, plowing through books about China.

They eventually made a few other contacts:

> We have met some interesting people: The French Consul who wined and dined us at his house and plans to meet us in Paris the next year; Bill Meyers, an American Red Cross official, who also invited us to dinner at a

> Russian Restaurant. And a Scottish boy who is a Quaker. The Quakers are apparently doing relief work all over the world; but this year they did not receive their quota of money, so 25 or so must be repatriated from China right away. After all this talk with so many people we have decided that we must go into the interior of China. For instance, up the river to Chungking, passing through the famous Yangtze gorges, the by road through Schezhuan Province, which is supposed to be beautiful, and to Chengtu, an old Tarter City. Then further north to Sian and Lanchow, the latter a fertile oasis in the midst of a desert. And we would like to push further into Sinkiang, north of Tibet to Urumchi. An airplane flies in once a week, and there are American and British consuls.

They had begun to get some solid information, and Bob had gotten hold of a map and was beginning to consider remote places. It was a superb luxury to be so free, to be able to decide to go to somewhere because someone told them that it was interesting or beautiful or both.

Bob again began writing thank you notes:

> Each one was very amusing and clever. I'm sure that they will think it was worthwhile entertaining the Ransoms. We sent snapshots, too, when and if appropriate. There were about two dozen letters.

These were lost. There were other minor problems:

> Bobby has been so well dressed so far. But we wonder how much longer he will be a sartorial plate. Two pants have given way entirely. One more is starting; the other is intact so far. The threads woven over the cord of the seersucker give way just above the knee where there

> must be a strain. Then the material breaks away from the cord; the next cord does the same thing and so on. It's just like a run in a stocking. There is nothing to stop it. I think Bob will be wearing Chinese style pajamas soon and a long flowing coat. He thinks they are wonderfully comfortable. We're expecting to solve all these matters when we get to Peiping.

And:

> The capitals are acting up on this typewriter. I will dispense with them from now on. Bob can remedy the situation with just the right poke at the back, but I have been unable to find the right place, and he is out visiting.

Fortunately the typewriter lasted for the trip across China.

They arrived in Shanghai in early June, and its luxuries were an immediate lift. Vera wrote to her parents on June 7th:

> We are being very lazy this morning, loafing in our beautiful room. It is on the 6th floor of the Cathay Mansions, a 16-floor hotel in the former French Concession. Our room is the most spacious I have ever been in. The bathroom has a tub long enough for Bob, a perfect shower for me, and a luxury we have seldom known in the Far East – hot water. We have two closets: one for coats, the other almost a dressing room fitted out with drawers and shelves. All this costs us $170,000 [Chinese] per day. We've been here since Tuesday night, so you can see how astronomical our bill will be.

Inflation had set in, and the Nationalists were creating the shambles that would lead to their defeat. At that point the official ratio of Chinese to U.S. dollars was approximately 12,000 to one U.S.

and 30,000 to one on the black market, so Bob and Vera's room cost no more than $15 and more likely less than $6. The effect within China was devastating, especially for the poor who could afford very little even when the economy had been stable

Vera reported: "We like Shanghai. It is the first real city we've seen." By that she meant a city with tall buildings and western amenities. It was certainly famous for all that throughout the Far East and also for a very stylish decadence that is part of our image of pre-War China:

> There are many alleys and streets to explore. In that respect it reminds me of New York. It even looks like certain parts of New York, especially Greenwich Village. It's easy for us to get around, too, because everyone speaks English in the hotels, restaurants, and so on. Many of the foreigners have not returned after the war, so the international crowd is not so substantial as it used to be. Most of the French have gone; [and] all the Germans and Japanese, except for a few technicians. The foreigners are mostly Russians. Pre-War there were 25,000. Even now you see them everywhere. They have many shops and the names are always written in Cyrillic.

As the revolution grew in intensity, the flow of westerners out of China would increase. For Russians, who had fled their own trouble 25 years before, it was very difficult to move on again. There was also the difficulty of obtaining visas for anywhere else. The

Nationalist Chinese were little help, increasingly pre-occupied with their own plans for escape.

Vera and Bob would be among the last westerners to enjoy Shanghai's bright lights and luxury for many years.

> Our first night we dined at Chez Louis, a cozy restaurant with French food. We met Slim Langdon, who is sort of financing the place. He is an American from Des Moines, a representative here for heavy machinery manufacturers. Anyway, he got us a card for the French Club which is right across the street from our hotel and which has been a godsend. Until yesterday we hadn't changed any money, so we were almost broke. But at the Club you sign for everything. It is a pleasure because the prices are 1/3 to 1/2 less than at public restaurants. The food has a real French flavor. The chefs are Chinese, but supervised by several French stewards.
>
> For breakfast we always have a rum omelet, the most beautiful, fluffy thing imaginable. The price is $10,000 [Chinese Dollars or 80 cents U.S.]. For lunch and dinner we have T-bone steak for the same price or chateaubriand for $18,000. You can also dance at this Club every night. They have a tremendous swimming pool, but it has been too cool to take advantage of that; and they have 25 tennis courts and a bowling green. There are only 2,000 members of all nationalities, including some Chinese. The drinks are inexpensive, too.

The inflation and the strong post-War dollar made them plutocrats. It was a far cry from traveling rough in the Mindanao highlands. Bob was a good tennis player, but Vera does not report if he made use of the 25 tennis courts.

Vera continued to focus on food:

> Last night we had dinner at Sun Ya, the famous Chinese restaurant in Shanghai. It was good but very rich. And we were disappointed in the rice. The fried rice was greasy – of all things; and the white rice is cooked Cantonese style in individual sort of custard cups and then steamed. The result is sort of gummy and has a crust on top. It is not the fluffy, dry kind of rice we like. We have become so used to the American style of Chinese cooking that we can't be won over to the real thing. Last night we ordered shrimps with peas, beef cooked with oyster sauce, and fried bean curd with minced meat. This last was delicious, the bean curd fried in small pieces, is light and fluffy, like a soufflé' and the meat was ground up fine and of the consistency of a sauce. Very unusual.

Considering Shanghai's reputation throughout Asia, Sun Ya may have been the most famous Chinese restaurant in the world.

Bob and Vera continued making new friends:

> We had guests: Clyde Farnsworth and his girl friend, Dolly, from Yugoslavia. After dinner they took us to the Austrian refugee settlement. About 10,000 to 15,000 Jewish refugees, mostly from Austria, came here to escape Hitler. This was a free port; no one needed a visa or passport. They lived in the French concession until the Japanese arrived. They . . . [settled] there because it is convenient and more modern than other parts of town. [Later they] refugees moved out to another area entirely. We went over there for some real Viennese coffee, the kind with whipped cream on top, and delicious, rich pastry.

The Jewish community in Shanghai dated from 1900 and played a considerable role in the city's modernization during the early 20th Century. Because it was one of the world's few free cities, it became a destination for refugees with no other place to go.

Considering how difficult it was to cross the Soviet Union in 1938 and then travel down by ship or overland to Shanghai, it dramatizes how hard it was to get a visa for England or the United States.

Dolly had fastened onto an American hoping to get to the United States. Vera suggested that her parents invite her to call but added, "It's . . . doubtful that she will, but she may, and I'm sure you'd enjoy her if she does. She's very pretty, . . and she's a dressmaker, which she does very well." Dolly needed a Visa and money and lacked both. In less than two years the Communists closed China and Shanghai down.

Vera describes the old Jewish quarter:

> [It has] . . . several cafes. They also have German restaurants. Of course they all speak German and very little English. It's just amazing to see them there, mixing with the Chinese. On one corner is a large café, with a sidewalk terrace, and across the street Chinese stores and businesses. We wanted to go back and wander around in the daytime.

The quarter had been interned *en masse* by the Japanese, but not as brutally as the Nazi ghettos, although special passes were required to enter or leave.

Things in China were coming apart in other ways:

> Everyone is . . . hollering about the good old days. For the businessman it is tough because he cannot import anything. Only the importers of heavy machinery are encouraged; and, of course, they have trouble getting the stuff from the States. They have to pay for everything in Chinese dollars, which have to be converted to U.S. dollars, a very difficult transaction. Importers of luxury goods, such as radios, specialty groceries, . . . and cosmetics are almost out of business because . . . they cannot get a license to import such things. And if they do, the duty is impossibly high, [making] the price prohibitive. So there is a black market for such things, but still not enough to keep all the importers busy. They also complain about the crowded streets and . . . buses and trolley cars, [which are jammed]. The old-timers are also unhappy because so many of their friends have left and gone home or to the United States. It is also very difficult to find a house to live in. It is necessary to pay key money from $3,000 . . . up to $30,000 to find something decent.

It was a classic description of a country about to fall.

Vera writes on June 7th that their departure from the coast was imminent: “We are going to Peiping Sunday [if] we can get reservations. If not, we will go on Tuesday. We have definite reservations that day." And then added in pencil "Yes, we leave Sunday afternoon about two p.m. . . ."

Despite Shanghai's luxury they were ready for something new:

> Everyone says that we will like Peiping. Bob's Stanford friend, Arthur Wright, who has been in Japan and China ever since he graduated, and has been in Peiping since the end of the War, just left for the States. We had hoped to meet him there and have him lead us around by hand. However, there are many foreigners up there, mostly scholars or students, and many English speaking Chinese, so we should have a fine time. If we like it and can find a house or apartment, we want to stay for a month or so.

Beijing remained safe, although the revolution would spread around it. Bob was already involved in arrangements for a much longer trip west:

> Through newspaper connections we have a promise of an air hitchhike from Lanchow to Urumchi in Sinkiang. Take a look on a map. That is far north of Tibet. There is an American Consulate there, and a British one, too. No one ever goes there except camel trains and Ransom-Procks. After Peiping, we plan to fly [first] to Hangkow and the go up river to Chung King. We have dozens of letters to missionaries, diplomats and University people all over China, and we think that the interior will be most interesting.

For the moment they made a short excursion:

> Our trip to Lanchow and Urumchi . . . fell through, so we left Hankow the very day we heard the bad news. We were lucky to get passage on the An Kong, the best steamer that goes up and down the Yangtze. We were in

> saloon class, very comfortable and extra-first class. It accommodates only about 35 people. The cabins were nine feet square, with two single beds, to large windows and two folding washbasins. It was fine. The food, however, was not very [good] or ample; Chinese, of course. You could order European food, too, at an extra charge, but it was bad, too. The service, however, was good, and the whole trip enjoyable. On board there were many nationalities: Russian, Norwegian, Swedish, English, French, and Chinese. We were the only Americans. It took us two days and two nights to reach Nanking. It was rainy and overcast all the way, but you still could see the beautiful green hills on either side of the river, an occasional village, several walled towns, and a few monasteries. The second day's trip was not so scenic: [the countryside was] flat and the river widened so that we were father away from the shores.

The scene she described was tranquil; the area between Nanking and the coast was not yet controlled or even disputed by the Communists.

> We stopped at Kiukian and got off to take a look. This town is famous for its pottery. At least half the shops were selling rice bowls and tea sets, but none that they make since the War are good looking. The designs are garish and uninspired. This town is also famous as the starting point for Kuling, a summer resort for foreigners. You ride in a car for an hour or so and then go up the mountain in a sedan chair for two more hours. Chiang Kai Shek now goes there for vacations, too.
>
> In Nanking we had the longest rickshaw rides. It is about six miles from the waterfront. When we got there we couldn't find a vacant room. We were sent from hotel to hotel with no luck whatsoever. Fortunately we had the name of a missionary woman. We finally went to her

> doorstep and presented our problem. She solved it by taking us to a Chinese hotel and having the management put us up in a new room they are building but which is not yet finished. Fortunately we have our air mattresses and mosquito nets, so we were comfortable.

From a luxury hotel in Shanghai to a half-finished room in Nanking, a place that the Japanese left in ruins, Vera is nothing if not game.

> We were in Nanking for only one day and two nights, but it was time enough to go out of town, beyond the wall . . . to the Purple Mountain and see the Ming tombs, which is a mound of dirt enclosed by walls, which has been renovated. The best part of the tombs was the tea house, large, comfortable and relaxing. From there we went to Sun Yat Sen's tomb, which is some monument. The tomb is located high up on a mountain. We climbed up hundreds of steps. There are two . . . arches [along] the way. It is all white, with blue and gold trimming. In the tomb is a statue of Sun seated in a chair. When enough people are there, a guard unlocks a bronze door and takes you into the tomb itself, an eerie business. Lying in the center of the room below a railing is a marble effigy of Dr. Sun lying on top of his own tomb. The guard walks ahead, flashing two flashlights on the statue. There is no other light, so it's dark. The guard rushed us through for some unknown reason. Not very impressive. There are large Ming statutes near the tomb. They are handsome, of horses and elephants and simple in design.
>
> We left in the morning by train. It takes eight hours . . . to reach Shanghai. We had sent a wire to the Cathay Mansions reserving a room. We were surprised to get one, Shanghai is so crowded. The train goes through rice fields and peanut fields (very good peanuts grow here). We saw peasants running on treadmills to pump the

> water to flood the rice paddies. We also saw them harvesting. The countryside is flat.
>
> By the way, we do not find the anti-foreign feeling in Shanghai that news correspondents would lead you to believe [exists.] No one has spat on us yet or pushed us off of the sidewalk. I think it is because Shanghai is a city and operates like [one].

After the colonial humiliation of China and the establishment of foreign concessions, xenophobia was widespread. The Japanese occupation did nothing to dispel it, nor did the aid given to the Nationalists during and after the War, much of which was misused or simply stolen.

Back in Shanghai she wrote:

> I have to shower now . . . before noon when they turn off the hot water. The system is being repaired for the next 20 days except from 6 a.m. to noon.

"Repair" was a euphemism for a shortage of fuel oil to keep the boilers operating. Bob and Vera were lucky that they weren't in Shanghai during the winter months when it can be cold and heating a hotel as large as the Cathay Mansions, even when possible, expensive.

> We have just returned from a lunch at a Japanese restaurant, the only one in town. It was fun. We removed our shoes at the entrance and walked to our private dining room in slippers and removed them at the sliding doors, which were kept shut all the time, giving us complete privacy. We sat on the floor on pillows;

> Bobbie was quite comfortable because he had a wall to lean against (which is not proper, however). A servant, a woman, cooked the sukiyaki, served us, and when we got warm from drinking hot tea she fanned Bob vigorously.
>
> Then we walked to the refugee colony. There are about 10,000 still here, all from central Europe. 5,000 have already been repatriated, either to their European homes or Australia or the U.S.A. 500 more are going to the States next week. They have all lived here for seven to nine years; and the older ones have been very unhappy and broken in spirit. They were so deeply rooted in their culture and felt sentimental about their homes and all the familiar sights that they have not been able to readjust in so foreign a city as Shanghai. Also many had never even seen a Chinese, and they are certainly much different from a European. We walked around the colony. Some are just living in a communal camp, sponsored and financed by the American Joint Distribution Committee. Others are more fortunate to have some money and to be able to live in a room. But none of the accommodations are elegant. The young and able have found jobs, though the salary does not always meet expenses. Some are too old or too ill to work. We stopped at a sidewalk café and watched the world go by: Only Germans were at the café'. A Sikh guard strode along the sidewalk outside making curious Chinese move along. The Sikh was a tall, handsome, bearded creature from the Punjab in India; and, of course, there were many Chinese passing by, too. A very cosmopolitan combination. We had more coffee with whipped cream; Bob ate a Wiener schnitzel, and I had an omelet, like a pancake with jelly in the center. We took some pictures and hope they turn out.

After some fits and starts Bob and Vera got ready again to leave. Bob wrote to his Mother:

> Vera is packing, and within half an hour we shall be on our way to Peiping by air. Just found out that Arthur Wright is not there, having returned to the States to take his orals in connection with his PhD at Harvard. However, there is some gal living in his house, and we have a letter to her. . . . We are in hopes that she will ask us to stay. She is working with the Hoover War Library. We have been very lucky in keeping within our budget in China. Even including our expensive stay in Shanghai, we are still under $10 per day.

Things again were working out. And they had been able to have considerable luxury and fun:

> Enclosed is a clipping from *Time*, which describes travel in Europe and how American money goes so far. The situation is the same out here. We have had a wonderful time in Shanghai. We really saw some of the social life. We walked through the old town and along the waterfront, had lunch with the AP man in a penthouse, and sat for hours drinking Viennese coffee in a refugee settlement. We have been disappointed in the Chinese food at the fancy places (or any place, for that matter), and believe that in some ways it is much better in San Francisco. Everyone moans about the old days, but we find the place fascinating, filled with Russians, both Red and White, all mixed together on the street, somewhat like San Francisco. This letter will go APO; we are in a hotel that houses a lot of army officers, and there is a box right down stairs to put the letters in.

In many ways America was on top of the world, and Bob and Vera took full advantage. After nearly sixty years of American responsibility as a great power, we often forget how many felt about the British clinging to remnants of their empire: "The Chinese seem to dislike the British (as do the French, Dutch and everyone else) but Americans are most popular, and everyone is helpful and polite." This made travel for Americans easier, and the strength of the dollar made it easier yet: "We always travel super duper first class and are most comfortable. We ride in rickshaws and get in violent arguments with the so and sos who run them."

8. BEIJING

On June 11, 1947, Vera wrote to her parents from Beijing:

> We have been traveling and living in the greatest luxury! And all within our budget. A brand new DC-4, accommodating passengers in soft reclining chairs brought us from Shanghai . . . in three hours. The plane is decorated in soft chartreuse . . , upholstery; the walls and ceiling covered with great leather. A hostess brought us hot or cold drinks and a box lunch. There wasn't even the slightest bump all the way. It was heavenly after the bucket seats of the cargo planes we had become accustomed to.

One gets the sense of the use of American aid by the Chinese Nationalist government. After a luxury liner or Pan American flight to Shanghai, it was considered necessary for American officials to travel on in style to Beijing. Or at least the Nationalists thought so. The DC-4 was a state of the art aircraft of the time. This helped convince Americans that the Nationalists would defeat the Communists.

> We flew over the water until we reached the Shantung Peninsula (Shantung . . . is where the silk comes from and is now held by the Communists.). There we crossed [the coast]. We saw a perfect pattern of neat fields, every single inch cultivated except for the mounds of earth where the ancestors are buried. The villages are clusters of . . . huts. If you sought a particular village, it must take a great deal of searching. On the peninsula's [other] shore are also neatly patterned salt ponds. Then we flew over water, the Gulf of Chihli until we reached mouth of the Yellow River. Since 1938, the year of a great flood, which drowned thousands, perhaps millions of people, the mouth has shifted . . . . The land is all waste, . . . barren and gray, . . . like something on the moon. The Shantung Peninsula . . . is one of the most thickly populated areas in the world. All . . . [that] we saw is as flat as can be. There are some hills just beyond Peiping which we saw as we flew in. It was still light, so we had a fine panorama of the city and the Summer Palace. You would be amused to hear houseboys, waiters and rickshaw boys calling me "Missy" and Bob "Mastah."

Bob and Vera's plane appears to have flown a complicated route to avoid certain Communists areas. Apparently crossing the Shantung Peninsula was safe but flying over other areas not. Vera gives no indication that there was any danger of anti-aircraft fire.

She closes that letter from Beijing by saying that she and Bob will be there for three more weeks:

> We are staying at the Wagon Lits Hotel, famous all over the Far East as the best hotel in Asia. It is a . . . long building only three stories tall, with gracious lounges, halls and rooms. Large Acacia trees line the sidewalks in front. There are only 150 rooms, all of which used to be filled. The Marines have moved out, and you can reach Peiping only by air and an occasional boat, which lands at Tientsin, so not so many travelers are here now.

Beijing was another luxurious stage of their trip:

> Our room is a large square, with two huge windows, and a tremendous bathroom. It is odd, though, that the furniture is antique replica, with not a little influence of the Chippendale. I wouldn't be surprised if it came from the States. It is comfortably furnished . . . with twin beds, a rarity, . . . a high chest, a low chest, desk, three end tables and a coffee table. It costs $111,000 per day [five to eleven U.S. dollars, depending on whether they exchange on the black market or in a bank]. Rickshaw boys out front clamor . . . for [our] patronage as soon as {we step out]. They really drive pedicabs . . . a recent innovation, . . . [and] charge about $10,000 for three to four hours. Most of them speak English quite well.

Vera had grown used to this civilized life, riding the post-War dollar. She and Bob celebrated her 35th birthday.

> Bobby gave me a present. I am very fortunate to be here . . . because it is the only place in all our travels that I have found anything that I want to buy. The present is a string of beads, very unusual. . . a series of flat wooden beads from an old Mongolian chain. They have a fine . . . patina of various shades of brown. In between [each] ten are four chains of smaller beads: first a gold washed disk, then a small coral bead, then gold, then coral. The pattern . . . is repeated seven times. It just fits my neck and looks beautiful with my suit, which I have worn all

> the time. The clasp is interesting and works well: a long piece of coral, which slips into a circle of coral and gold beads. Bobbie took my picture in the Forbidden City admiring my necklace, so you will be able to see how things were . . . .
>
> We saw [only] part of the Forbidden City. It will take us about four days to see it all. It is all walled. . . . The buildings are massive, and the courtyards more than spacious. The buildings are painted red with a rust cast, and roofs are tiled in what is called imperial yellow, which has a lot of orange in it. The eaves and ceiling decorations and walls are ornate and multi-colored. The courtyards are paved with flat stones, and on the pathways they are very large. You usually enter the buildings on marble steps. A flat, marble slab, carved in the form of a dragon separates two stairways. They carried the Emperor about in a sedan chair. There are great iron cauldrons spaced around certain courtyards. These were filled with water in case of fire. Large copper cauldrons, fixed with wicks and filled with oil served as lamps. The city has massive palace after palace, a few small ones here and there. It is really a maze and takes a long time to learn one's way around.

The international section of the city was easy to explore:

> Our hotel is in the Legation Quarter. All the European countries have huge establishments here because this was the capital and ambassadors were sent . . . Each Legation and each private home is also enclosed by walls, so when you walk along the streets, you see nothing but walls, and trees, and an occasional roof above. A wall was built around this Quarter after the Boxer Rebellion, when many foreigners were killed, [and] even a moat runs along the wall. It's absurd and ineffectual protection now and even then, I suppose. Anyway, the gates are always open. The area is very nice, quiet, [with] little traffic, and the streets are lined with trees.

She and Bob were serious about a longer stay in Beijing:

> We have seen several sections of the city in our quest for a place to live. We visited one couple, whose name was given to us, in a northern part of the city about half an hour away by rickshaw. It was a wonderful sightseeing trip on the way. [We saw] wooden carts drawn by donkeys (these are seen only in northern China); merchants with their wares, pottery, vegetables, etc. spread out on the spacious dirt sidewalks which line the wider streets; men with portable kitchens; girls bicycling along with red or blue chiffon handkerchiefs tied about their faces and heads to keep out the dust; pedicab boys waiting for customers or sailing by. They often tie a piece of Turkish cloth around their heads, tied at the back, a very roguish sight; knife sharpeners; blind beggars playing musical instruments or telling fortunes; commodity sellers, with little carts built for cooking oil, green onions, cake, thread [or many other necessities]. Each has a special cry and carries a special noisemaker because all of the houses are behind walls, and it is only by sound that people can tell who is selling what. And, of course, there are always the people. They are much different . . . from the Chinese we are accustomed to seeing. They are tall and well built, with Mongol faces. They are very impressive and have dignity, . . . from the coolie and rickshaw boys to the highest official. We see many with long, sparse grey beards and an occasional round, black, Chinese cap. And everyone, with very few exceptions, wears either Chinese pajamas, for workers and coolies, or long, Chinese gowns, for businessmen or scholars. The pajamas are just like the one's Lu [Vera's sister] and I have. The servants and houseboys at the hotel wear black slippers, long, black trousers tight at the ankle, and over this long white gowns.
>
> Anyway, to get back, we visited a couple that have a charming house, which they rent, furnished for $60 per month. It is a series of three rectangular courts and a

> front court behind the street wall. The servants live and cook in the very front. The couple lives at the very back and have three rooms, which are beautifully and sparsely furnished in the Chinese style. A covered veranda goes around the inner court, and there are trees and large pots with plants. Their house is designed for the utmost privacy, and they provide it better than any architecture that I've ever seen. Unfortunately they know of no place where we could live.
>
> We met a woman who is half German and half Chinese (and she looks French) who knew of a place. We could rent this apartment, furnished, with four rooms and a bathroom; the rent was $80 per month; but we did not like the way in which it was furnished, all nice things but much too cluttered. There was hardly space to turn around. Also, the servant girl would cost another $10 per month. Experienced help demand much more. She does not know one word of English and our Chinese is limited to about 5 words. So we gave that up for two adjoining rooms in the College of Chinese studies. It is really a language school for orienting businessmen and missionaries who come to China. They specialize in both Chinese and Chinese culture and the course is four months. Some attend longer. When the dormitories are not filled, they rent rooms to others for $1 per day and the food costs the same. We understand that the food is not prepared by a French chef, however.

So they found a bargain, which would allow them to live for less than their ten dollar a day budget.

> The rooms and the building are just like those in any college dormitory, and the atmosphere is the same, too. But there is an excellent library on the grounds, and the professors are well informed about China and will answer our endless questions.

And not only a bargain, but also a secure place that could give them an introduction to the country and information on places they wanted to go.

> We met and had dinner with a Moslem Tartar from Chinese Turkistan, or Sinkiang as it is now called. This is a large province north of Tibet. He is a pure scholar, and for years has been working on a dictionary of his people's language, with both Chinese and English meanings. He has been trying to get a group or a university in the United States to finance his work, but with no success so far. He is self-educated, and has taught himself English, German and French. He speaks them with great fluency. He told us many things about Sinkiang and what we should visit after our month here.
>
> He took us to a Chinese Mohammedan restaurant in the Chinese city, where we had a Peking duck dinner. It arrived as follows: tea, perfumed with flower and melon seeds; six cold dishes (and never, traditionally, less than four); these included ginger, pickles, cold chicken, corned beef, pickled roof of some sort and a sweet made from sweet potato and sugar. The beef dish was excellent. Then came the duck. It is cooked in a way peculiar to this area. The skin is simply delicious. The waiter shows you the whole duck, a beautiful brown color, the skin taut on the bones, and without a split anywhere. The waiter slices off pieces and lays them on a plate. With each piece of skin is a layer of fat just beneath and a sliver of meat. The head is sliced in two. Bob and I ate the brains, which were very good. Then the carcass goes back to the kitchen and reappears in a few minutes in a soup. We stopped right there, but the tradition is to have two or three more hot dishes and then a sweet. No rice is served until just before the sweet. And tea arrives only at the beginning of the meal and

> afterward. The duck is very wonderful, and I know you would like it immensely.

Their friend rose above many others they met, not only because he spoke so many western languages, but also because he saw quickly saw how much Vera and Bob would appreciate such a meal. The whole experience, from staying in dormitory rooms to the Peking duck and brains is much more typical of them both than Shanghai's luxury.

> Peiping is a fascinating city. In fact, all of north China is supposed to offer, but unfortunately for us, most of those places are held by the Communists. People here are friendly without exception. And as I said, they are very handsome and exotic looking. They also have very different costumes from southern China. They also eat garlic. From the smells, you'd think you were in southern Italy. Outside the city's north gate you can see camel caravans, which will be one of the biggest thrills for us. There is the summer palace, a Lamasery in the north of the city and many Chinese temples. And the great wall is just 35 miles from here. Jade Street [is fascinating]. The trading in Jade and jewels is done at 5 a.m. [There is also the rest of] the Forbidden City, and hundreds of . . . scenes of people, bazaars, handicrafts and on and on. . . .

Vera and Bob were also excited about striking off to the west into Moslem regions where transportation might be the camel. They hoped to see remnants of centuries-old China, from before the War.

> The city is spacious . . . [and] every place seems to be . . . distant. . . . [I]t is necessary to hire a rickshaw. As for the population, I've read that 1.7 million people live here. And, of course, we will have to investigate many more restaurants.
>
> It is [early evening], 7 o'clock, but still light. China uses daylight saving time, which is very nice because it doesn't get dark until about 8:30. We had tea and cakes in our room about 5. No one eats until 8 or 9, Very civilized. The sun is shining through the trees. The weather is perfect, like a warm spring day at home. They say it will soon be very hot, with dust storms. In winter it is very cold and coolies wear clothes padded with cotton, . . . the rich gowns lined with fur.
>
> We have met two young men sent here by Standard Oil. They get a good deal. Four months in Peiping to attend the language school and learn Chinese. The salary is $200 a month, plus living expenses. The company has rented a house where eight of them will live a bachelor's existence with Chinese servants to take care of them. Every year they get a month's vacation; and every third year they get six months' leave to go home, plus the price of a round trip ticket. At the age of 55 they retire to Connecticut to putter around a garden; at least that is the goal of one of these boys.

Bob and Vera were always interested in Americans who lived a comfortable life in exotic places.

Then Vera told her Parents:

> You would surely go on a buying spree if you were in Peiping. The rugs are famous; many connoisseurs prefer them to any other Oriental rug. The furniture is handsome and certainly inexpensive compared to U.S. prices. I have sketched a few pieces from memory, so

the details and sized are probably a little off. All the pieces are very, very plain, made of beautiful dark wood. Many of them are old . . . . Of course, the jewel boxes are small and have interesting compartments, but they are not the things of beauty that a Chinese cabinet is. I know that these shops, run by Europeans, ship things to the States. They pack them and arrange for the shipping, but there is no guarantee of safe arrival, though no complaints have been received. Perhaps you could insure with Lloyds of London. Gump's in San Francisco is importing things, so I don't see why you can't, too. But let me know if you are interested, and specifically what [you want] and how much money you want to spend. . . . The pieces are large, and you would have to remove something you already have. They are beautiful, though, plain, . . . [with] very simple lines . . . [which] would be very well with better-designed modern furniture. Maybe you would like them as samples to duplicate. Well anyway, let me know. In the meantime I will find out more details . . . .I've seen other, [smaller] nice things, like silk Japanese kimonos for $10 each. There is not a wide choice and most of the patterns are somber. Cocktail dresses with evening bags or a plain but dressy summer outfit made of Japanese obis are lovely. The patterns are gay, well designed, like damask. Luncheon sets cost $36 for eight covers. I liked one the made of grass cloth with a simple rust colored, embroidered border. There is not much choice, though, because these handicrafts are dying out. There are nice necklaces and rings using semi-precious stones. I've heard that real jade is expensive. There is a lot for sale but the rumor is that a lot of it is fake, which is easy to do with glass or even a plastic toothbrush handle. We have not searched for authentic jade so far. We will have to pay duty unless we can wangle them through APO.

She wrote again on June 29th: "I never thought I'd do it, but here are my Philippine notes written up. I've been doing this in the mornings, and whenever I've found a spare moment." This is the journal that provides much of the account of their Philippine trip. They were close to launching an even more daring adventure in China:

> Today and tomorrow we will [make] final preparations for our . . . trip into the interior. . . . We are going overland from here to Sinkiang. It will take about 12 days. But, of course, we will be stopping off along the way. The first [stage] of three days will be . . . by train. Then from Paotow to Ningsia by truck [for] five days, stopping at inns each night. We want to reach Ningsia by the 11th [of July], because trucks run from there to Lanchow only three times each month. Lanchow is two more days [by] truck. In Lanchow is a very nice hotel, which we will thoroughly enjoy after the tough trip. Our [next] destination [will be] Sining and Kumbum, 20 kilometers further. Kumbun is a monastery, with a famous Llama. It is the second largest [after Llasa]. At Kumbum lives the Panchen Llama who is supposed to be the reincarnation of the Buddha. He also is supposed to be greater spiritually than the Dalai Llama. Then we will return to Lanchow and prepare for our trip to Urumchi (also called Tihua). From Lanchow to Tihua requires 14 days by truck, but we will . . . stop off at several [points] to see caves and ruins. We have been talking to people from the consulate who have just recently been over this territory. They have given us all kinds of helpful information. One man who has traveled many places says that the country through which we will travel is different from any other place in the world. I forgot to mention that a Tibetan fair will be held in Kumbum on

> the sixth day of the sixth moon, which is July 23rd, and we [want] to see it.
>
> I haven't heard from you since we've arrived in Peiping. We left a forwarding address in Shanghai. Isabelle's letters have been forwarded there. Bob has been keeping in touch with [her] by cable. So she will always know the latest address. The rate for cables will be increased tomorrow 200 percent. The newspaper said 500 percent. . . . the increase makes cables expensive. Postage is being increased, accordingly . . . . Inflation [is] an awful thing, and I hope it never hits the U.S. We are trying to pack our clothes in one less bag. It is some job, because air mattresses and mosquito nets are bulky and heavy.

Bob and Vera soon would reach the end of various lines of communication and soon contact with the United States would be impossible until reaching the U.S. consulate in Urumchi. In a country in the midst of a revolution this became a growing concern, although Vera typically underplays the danger. It was possible, however, that they could disappear and no one would know. The steep rise in cable and postal rates was one more indication that by fall, 1947, China was well on the way to falling apart.

9. BEIJING TO URUMCHI

Bob and Vera had taken travel through outlying areas of the Philippines quite casually; the revolution there was less serious than in China. The American military also had been an occupying power and still had considerable resources on hand.

China was different. There were no American occupation forces. The situation in an area could change quickly, and as westerners, and especially as Americans, Bob and Vera could not be certain of treatment they would receive from the Communists or even certain warlords. They put aside whatever misgivings they had and moved ahead:

> July 1: Left Peiping on 8 o'clock train. Better arrive one hour early to get seats, but can sit in diner, if necessary. First class [from] Peiping to Kalgan [cost] $72,000. Regular meal in dining car [cost] $5,000; Beer, $9,000. Arrived [in] Kalgan about 6 p.m. in time to catch train for

> Tatung at 7:20. Kalgan-Tatung train has 1/2 car of first class. . . can place baggage between seats to for a berth for the [the] night. 1st class Kalgan to Tatung $56,000. 2nd class very crowded; would have to sit up.

The exchange rate remained approximately $12,000 Chinese dollars to one U.S. Vera presents all this as if someone else might make the same trip. Besides the Christian missionaries and a few consular officials, there would be no one else for decades, although the Chinese themselves were on the move and would remain so for several years. At the beginning of each stage, Bob and Vera also were concerned about the money, although with American dollars, plus a money belt with gold bars sewn into it, they needn't have worried. The extreme inflation worked in their favor, the U.S. Dollar rising the more progress the Communists made. The first few nights the Chinese Inns the turned out to cost less than a dollar and, as they moved west, even less.

Bob described this leg of the trip in a long letter he wrote later to his Mother:

> We were three days and four nights on the train. We were delayed 36 hours because bridges had been washed away. Traveled first class. Seats upholstered and face each other. Vera and I occupied one seat to leave room for other passengers. This was a mistake. The thing to do is for each of us to ensconce himself on one double

seat, spread out and surround ourselves with baggage. Then we can sleep, each on a double seat, something in the shape of a jackknife, . . . but that is better than sitting up. Well, the first night we sat up but the next day we got wise and spread all over the place. At night we put our bags between the seats and blew up our air mattresses, and we were as snug as in berths.

We ate at the stations: huge red radishes, peeled, of course, and fine whole, barbecued chickens (well-fed and huge for 25 cents each). We also ate several pounds of chocolate and drank much of our tea from one of our own containers (boiled and boiling water is sold at the stations). We carry our own tea, and also water purifiers if things get rough.

The countryside was interesting: dry, barren hills, herds grazing, mud towns. In Tatung we had five hours to wait for the train to leave. By waving around Mr. Hoover we got a Chinese Army jeep to drive us outside the city 8 miles to some famous caves. Thousands of Buddhas are carved in the rocks. You will see in the pictures that Prock has sent to you.

At the end of the rail line we saw our first camels. This is the end of the camel caravan route into central Asia and is quite a romantic place. At Paotow we got a truck right away, but the dishonest Chinese owners did not tell us we could only go as far as Shenpa, a two day trip. At Shenpa the trucks' owners were afraid to go further because the Warlord in the next Province grabs all trucks to use in his war against the Communists and also grabs all the truck drivers and puts them in the Army.

We stayed with the Belgian Fathers. The Catholics out here are so nice and considerate and sophisticated, and the food is so good. Give me the Fathers anytime in preference to the simpering Protestants. That is really not fair. The Protestants are not simpering. But God

> they are drab! They do not make with the jokes and they do not speak four languages, and they do not make their own wine.

The Belgian priests also brewed memorable beer.

> Well, it looked like we are going to have to spend the winter in Shenpa, but I sent a long wire to the neighboring warlord, waving Mr. Hoover [again] and my great service with the War Crimes [trials], but before he could send a truck for us or ignore our pleases, a truck came through that was not afraid to proceed, and away we went.
>
> Lunch with the Bishop at another mission. Said Bishop had just come over the Ordos desert in a cart for five days to get away from the Communists. Said Communists, when they catch up with the church toss them out of the Communist held territory. . . . Across the deserts and the trackless wastes of Central Asia, where we actually saw the nomadic Mongols, right from the truck . . . which broke down and we slept the night on the desert, in a cave.
>
> At Ningsia the Warlord had a couple of dinners for us. Fifteen dishes and much Chinese wine and stilted talk. After a couple of days we got out on top of another truck and two days to here. Here, in this remote place, we are in a comfortable, scrubbed hotel run by the China travel service, with a manager who speaks English and steaks to eat if we want them. Enclosed is my invitation to the Ningsia Governor's feast.

Vera says that they were the honored guests at the banquets and expected to give speeches. Again, this relates to the belief of certain local officials that Bob and Vera were on a fact-finding mission to determine American aid recipients or some other essential matter. The delay on the way to Tantung was more likely to have been because the Communists had cut the line.

They arrived in Tatung early the morning of July 4th, 1947. After the trip to the caves with the Buddha statues, they spent a morning bouncing over rough roads and made it back to Tatung by noon to catch the 12:20 train for Paotow, again first class. Vera remarks in her notes: "More chickens." They were a staple throughout China.

The train meandered all night across the Chinese countryside. When they arrived, once more missionaries took them into their mission. Vera wrote

> July 5th: arrived Paotow at about 6 a.m. Using Swedish missionaries as interpreters got passage to Shenpa by truck. . . . Obtain outside seats right hand side right behind the cab. By bribing driver, you can sit in front, but this rather stuffy and sometimes they crowd many in front. Tried to buy tickets to Ningsia but they said they only went to Shenpa; neglected to tell us the difficulties [of] getting south from Shenpa. Trucks very crowded. They will try to charge you extra if you have a lot of baggage. We had about 120 pounds, and they tried to charge us $70,000 [about $6 U.S.]; but we paid $20,000, and probably could have refused to pay anything. Recommend giving driver a tip and telling him you want seats indicated – and fight to keep them. Truck stops often for tea, etc. and although your seats are the same

> when you get back, they are somewhat reduced in size – some 30- or 40 very uncomfortable people continually edging your way. In such case, swallow your manners and make them move. If you just squeeze in, you will travel like a sardine the rest of the trip.

They had reached the end of the line. They were traveling in a marginal, near famine region, reduced by the War and now by revolution. There would be no luxury travel until months later when they reached what had been British India:

> First night in Chinese inn in Wuyuan; spread around some DDT; clean and comfortable; good Chinese food in Mohammedan restaurant 1/2 block away; dinner for two, rice, meat dish, soup, fire water, about $6,000 [or around fifty cents U.S.] Inn charges for two, including tip, $8,000.

Needless to say, there were no rum omelet's or Chateaubriand. Vera continued to cite the cost of the tickets for the trucks they rode, but because everything was so inexpensive, soon dropped references to the cost altogether. Chinese money had become just so much paper, and they didn't buy souvenirs because they couldn't carry them. So they couldn't have spent much if they had tried. They never did cash in the gold sewn into pockets in their special belt, and Vera still has the bars as souvenirs.

> July 6th: Many stops for tea. Recommend for trip carrying own bedding, flashlight, toilet paper, cup, tea

> pot or something to brew tea. Hot water [is] available everywhere but tastes terrible without tea in it, canteens, emergency food (we took much chocolate), and DDT powder.

The roads became rougher, and at one point they had to cross the Yellow River. Although thousands of miles from the sea, it was still a formidable barrier. Vera described Bob and her sitting on the top of a truck resting precariously on the ferryboat, which was pulled across on a cable by hand.

They also encountered typhus. The Missionaries they met told them that in the days before a vaccine they used to lose half of those working at the mission. Vera recommended vaccination:

> The shots made in China from ground up lice are supposed to be a little better than the U.S. Army shots made from egg embryos; (we had the army shots). Arrive in Shenpa that evening and went to Belgian Fathers' inn; very well-received. Good Chinese food. Would recommend bringing them a bottle of something, as they refuse payment for hospitality.

The revolution began to intrude. Bob wrote:

> July 7: found out trucks afraid to proceed to Ningsia as General Ma down there is fighting [the] Communists and will take over any for military use any visiting trucks. Sent a long wire to General Ma waving the American flag and our letters of recommendation, and asking him to assure safe passage of truck.

The entries for July 8th and 9th simply report, "waiting, waiting." The next day they pushed on, and Vera wrote:

> Truck proceeding from Paotow to Ningsia came through Shenpa. Either this truck is a Ningsia truck or General Ma has given it safe passage. But, anyway, we get aboard it. [We] recommend taking little baggage, because with 30 to 40 people on the truck they sit on it, walk on it and stomp on it. We fought to put suitcases on the bottom and bed rolls on top but the covers got ripped up anyway. Would recommend wrapping up whatever you take with you inside the bedroll and tying it up with rope, then sitting on same. If you take a suitcase, rope it up securely and pray. We lunched with the Belgian Father's in Sanshengjung. . . . Trip to Ningsia takes two or three days. South of Sanshengjung is best part of trip. [saw] nomadic Mongolians with felt tents and herds of camels. Spent night on the desert. Passengers mostly slept in two rooms in a tiny hut; but we slept in a nearby cave. Very comfortable; no wild animals.
>
> July 11th: Arrived Ningsia in the evening. Went to Belgian Fathers' [mission]; hearty welcome. Good wine, good European food and good conversation. Stayed through July 15th. Saw General Ma and was entertained by his representative. Commercial trucks are supposed to leave for Ningsia for Lanchow on [August] 1st, 11th and 21st, but I don't think the bus left on 11th [last month] Belgian fathers are very nice to us. Americans evidently took care of them for two years [during the] War, and they are very grateful.

Vera added in a later letter that the Fathers put them up in the Bishop's room and served them ham and red wine at every meal.

They also held a dinner party in their honor, complete with Belgian chocolate.

The Fathers only asked for a help in the form of a few English grammars and old American magazines, which Vera asked her parents to forward, and a set of spark plugs for their aged 1200 cc Harley Davidson with a sidecar.

The image of a Belgian Catholic priest speeding through the unpaved streets of a remote Chinese city on a Harley, a nun hunched in the sidecar, is a vivid one. Perhaps the Chinese concluded that all Catholic priests rode motorcycles.

> We met [an] assistant postmaster in a sub-post office. We happened to be passing by, looked in and noticed these nice looking people. They were having a sort of party to congratulate the manager of the sub-post office on the anniversary of his first year in that position. We had some questions to ask [and] thought he might speak English, which he does perfectly. Later we asked if he could put us on his trucks. It is a great favor. We will go up the Kansu corridor, all through the loess country (. . . mountains of dust blown out of the Gobi desert). It has the appearance of a desert (itself). We will stop at Lanchow, Kanchow and Suchow. There we must change trucks and perhaps wait a few days. The next jump is straight through to Hami in Sinkiang Province. There we change again for Tihwa. The actual travel [will take] about ten days, but we will probably have to wait several days in both Suchow and Hami. The American Consul in Tihwa is very hospitable. He puts up foreigners in the Consulate; if it is overflowing, guests are sent to the

> British Consulate of which he is in charge. The British Consul has been transferred; and at present the Americans are handling British affairs.
>
> We haven't seen or heard any news since we left Peiping, except vague rumblings and rumors that all is not well in world politics. In Tihwa we hope there will be lots of *Time* magazines so we can catch up on . . . the last month.

The meeting with the Postmaster was one of their major strokes of luck in China, because it provided them with a reliable source of transportation all the way to Urumchi.

Vera described the first stage of this part of their trip:

> July 17th: Arrived in Lanchow. Stayed at Northwest House run by the China Travel Service. Trucks leave here every few days for Sining . . . Have presented our credentials to the local representative of General Ma (a second General Ma!)), and we are leaving on military truck for Sining in two days. The Truck will get to Sining in two days, or maybe one. . . . Trucks leave Lanchow for Tihwa around the 15th and 30th of each month. We could also fly. Trucks take 14 days.

Bob wrote his Mother from Lanchow on Friday, July 18, 1947:

> We arrived here last night, a couple of days late due to the usual China transportation difficulties. Seventeen days of travel, six sitting on the top of crowded trucks in desert or semi-desert country. But it was worth it. We saw nomadic Mongolians with their felt tents and their horses and sheep. We were within a hundred miles of Outer Mongolia where no man doth dare to tred for fear of the red Russians.

After a day on top of the truck's baggage, they arrived each evening covered with dust; but neither Bob nor Vera complain about this in their letters, although there was no place to bathe in the Chinese inns.

They were pushing on, hoping at every stage that their credentials would be sufficient. To this point their status as Americans smoothed any problems.

Bob commented in a letter later that it was essential to have a travel permit, which can only be obtained in Beijing. "They look at it ten times a day but generally leave your baggage alone." He also recommended: "Bring a lot of personal cards. Take some good cigars and American cigarettes to hand out. And U.S. magazines." The advice remains sound. Among their papers also is one of Bob's cards, one side in English and the reverse in Chinese.

But they also traded on supposed contacts:

> Now as to where we shall be in the next month or so, we are leaving here tomorrow or the next day to take a trip to Sining, one day by truck . . . . The local general who runs this Province is going to entertain us since I am such a close friend of Herbert Hoover and Cordell Hull and the Mayor of San Francisco.

The reference to Herbert Hoover was not a lie. During the 1930's many Stanford students, including Bob, met him. Hoover was also a member of the Bohemian Club. Bob had shaken the former President's hand on several occasions and had met the mayor of San Francisco. He made up only his acquaintance with Cordell Hull, who had been Roosevelt's Secretary of State.

Lanchow is on the Yellow River, near where it flows off the Tibetan plateau, not far from the western end of one spur of the Great Wall. The Wall generally parallels the river, although to the north. Its main extension runs even further north and westward as far as the Gobi, a human structure on the scale of the great river itself.

Vera wrote her parents from Lanchow on August 1st:

> Our trip to Tshinghai Province was fabulous. The famous Governor Ma P'u Fang is all powerful there. He is a Moslem, as are so many in the northwest. We were taken to Sining, the capital, in one of the government's trucks. We stayed for free at the Governor's own hotel, . . . and were entertained at a show put on by young schoolgirls. We had an interview with the Governor. He asked us our plans. We told him exactly what we wanted to see, and he arranged everything.

So far west Americans were thin on the ground.

> We went to Kumbum in a station wagon for two days and a night. We stayed in his rest house and were very comfortable. We were amazed at the fabulous people

> who came for the fair: native people of the province who wear their hair in tiny braids. Each woman must have fifty . . . which are made longer by braiding in silk cords . . . . To this long brocaded material is attached, decorated with large silver disks, coral beads and even embroidery. It must be very heavy and uncomfortable to carry around all the time.
>
> We saw aborigines with long hair, the men, too. Lamas, of course, were everywhere. They wear red gowns, [which are] very faded. The skirts are full and tucked at the waist. The blouse is handsome, with broad, padded shoulders – [the same] style as in New York. Over this is a long, wide piece of material that is thrown over the shoulders. They are very dirty, though, and smell of sheep butter, which they rub all over their bodies. Most are Mongols, although his is a Tibetan monastery. The abbot is a Tibetan and speaks no Chinese. We had him write in our passports. He addressed it to . . . Tibetan representatives in Nanking, and [stated] "These people are good for us." We wanted a more general letter of introduction; however, this is pretty fabulous.
>
> The day of the [actual] fair was dull. The village was too crowded with [local] farmers, . . . so the fabulous people did not stand out; and the devil dance was a complete flop. They need a good choreographer . . . . The Lamas are not very religious. Only a few are praying Lamas. The rest are businessmen; . . . mostly they just sit around. There are two to three thousand in Kumbum. It is the custom for the Mongol families to give at least one son to the monasteries, which is certainly bad for the survival of their race. In Russian Mongolia this custom has been [abolished].

Prayer often is a quiet activity and may have gone unnoticed.

Despite the spiritual letdown, Kumbum was a high point, and they especially enjoyed their status as official guests. The Governor's help did not stop at the monastery:

> Our other even more marvelous trip under Governor Ma's patronage was to KoKoNor – The Blue Lake – [which is at] 10,000 feet. We went in a [six wheel omnibus] with our interpreter, two drivers, and a professor. The road is bad, so it took us a long time to go the 80 miles or so. We came, [then] to an expansive, green plateau surrounded by higher hills. We stayed in the Governor's camp of tents and small [huts]. We had a tent to ourselves, furnished with a large bed covered with furs. There were also furs on the ground and an oriental rug. This was thrilling. A bus full of newspaper people from Lanchow also came along. Several Tibetans stood around on show. They are very handsome people, with high color on their cheeks . . . dressed up in their very best. The women are gay and not at all retiring. Only one of them spoke Chinese. We walked for several miles on the plateau and saw great herds of horses, yaks, goats, sheep and cattle. The lake was rather an anti-climax. It is very blue, [the water] is salty and brackish in taste. [The lake] is very large and surrounded by sand dunes, and in some places, marsh. . . . it was cold.

There is a black and white picture, so we must fill in the color, the dunes running to the water's edge, pale against the deep blue water. Only the smiling Tibetans relieved the scene's austerity.

> We were delighted to be cold, for once. There was little sun . . . .Only one corner of the lake had clear sky. This province of Tshinghai was carved out of Tibet by a Treaty in 1927. Sining has always been Chinese but KoKoNor was Tibetan. The Province is vast and [largely uninhabited,]. . . only about one and one-half million people. We were presented with two fur gowns. The

> Chinese wear them as a lining for their gowns in winter, since their houses have no heat. The fur is black, baby lamb [and with two] we have a lot of it. They would make a nice cover for a bed or upholstery for a chair or perhaps the lining of a coat. When we get around to it, we'll send them home.
>
> In Sining and Lanchow we visited at the German Catholic Missions, drank their delicious homemade beer and wine . . . . Several of the fathers spoke no English, so I had to converse in German, which was lots of fun. I was amazed at how much I could understand and speak myself; and although I have forgotten much vocabulary, when I heard the words, I recalled the meaning.

The western missionaries lived as if castaways, shaping their lives with customs and comforts from home. Vera is a good judge of beer and wine, and even allowing for the long days outdoors, what the Father's made must have been good.

From Urumchi the Ransoms mailed a single roll of film back to Beijing for processing:

> The prize picture is of Bob and me and Governor Ma Kung Kwei . . . . He is the famous governor of Ningsia, a Moslem and one of the last three warlords remaining in China. We are standing in front of his palace where we had our interview. Actually, the palace is to the left; all that you can see in the picture is one of the dragons guarding the entrance. The woman near the rocks is Mongolian. This was on the edge of the Ordos desert. The temple is also Mongolian; the woman in the foreground, too, [as is] the brass water jug just behind her. And behind all is [is] the truck which brought us from Ningsia to Lanchow.

Even in this isolated region Bob and Vera met other westerners:

> In Sining we also became quite friendly with an Austrian who writes travel books. He was all set to go to Tibet with a group of Lamas, but the Chinese authorities denied him permission. He already had his permission from the Tibetans. He is friends with a high ranking Lama in Llasa, and through his influence we are going to try to get permission to enter Tibet through Darjeeling. It takes only three weeks by horseback to reach Llasa. From Sining, through China. it takes three months. I hope you have a map . . . to refer to. Otherwise, these names mean nothing.

In Lanchow they were able to take care of tasks, which if left undone might have caused serious problems later:

> We are well protected against . . . diseases. We just got booster injections for cholera, typhus, typhoid, tetanus and plague. There is no plague in China, but maybe [there will be] in India. The two English doctors are the Inland Mission Hospital [took care] of us. They have been very friendly; invited us for tea, supper, and Bob [to watch] operations. He's fascinated. This afternoon he's going over again and hopes to see a juicy appendectomy.

Considering the areas through which they passed, the vaccines and whatever other precautions they took must have been good, because other than a cold or two, their health remained was excellent.

Vera also reports:

> [The] hospital has a leprosarium. Lepers are thrown out of their homes. Their wives commit suicide. When the

> lepers stay in the hospital for a while, they automatically get better because they are assured good treatment, a home and sufficient food. This leprosarium is known as far away as Tibet. Just the other day several Tibetans came in. There is also a section of the hospital given over entirely to Tibetans, where they live . . . until they are cured of their ills.

In a letter to his Mother Bob described the visit to the hospital in greater detail:

> We were very lucky to have been given gratis five booster shots, which will protect us . . . for many months to come. Had them all at once, . . . and had very sore arms for a couple of days. Have also been watching operations, one for the removal of an enlarged vein in the lower leg, one removal of a cyst under the eye, and one for removal of a kind of membrane which grows over the cornea after years of dust irritation. They just skin it back, fold it over and stitch it, and if it continues to grow it grows away from the eye, . . . Very neat. Also attended the tapping of fluid which had gathered in the peritoneal sac due to heart failure. Heart too weak to pump fluid from lungs, so it accumulates. [They] just stick in a tube and drain. Three docs here, all [using] very different techniques. Saw two spinals given, very simple and clean. The doctors were very nice and gave me lectures all through the operations pointing out the muscles and the theory of the cuts, relative toughness of the tissues. . .
>
> Saw a gal who had cut her own throat over mother-in-law trouble. They really have that trouble in China. A girl is a slave to her father, mother and brothers until she marries, and then a slave to her mother-in-law . . . most families are too poor for the groom to put up a separate establishment. The plum in bridegrooms: one without a mother. This gal cut her throat so thoroughly that she

> must breathe through one tube and eat through another. They are sure she will die.
>
> There are Tibetans in the hospital who come in from hundreds of miles from the center of Tibet. Sometimes they are carried on litters. They bring fox furs as payment.

While they were in Lanchow, he also wrote of another interesting side trip:

> [We saw] the tomb of Genghis Kahn today. Went out in a government jeep to a beautiful, pine covered ridge. There were Chinese temples 300 years old. In one is a silver box containing what is supposed to be left of Genghis. Today is the deceased's birthday, so there was much sacrifice of mutton and rice and a lot of Tibetan Yellow sect mumbo jumbo. With us was the Minister of Education for the Province, a PhD from Cornell.

His reaction was the same as to his stepfather's funeral. It is unlikely he shared these thoughts with the Minister of Education.

There was a more practical matter:

> Bob's seersucker pants are nothing but shreds, so we had them copied in white material. He now has three pairs of white ones and they look very nice with the seersucker jackets, although he seldom wears them. None of our clothes look so spruce anymore, except the heavy, rough stuff, like my khaki pants, because the laundresses in China are not very good. They save on soap and water, I think, because both are expensive. And there are not bleaches and no starch. To make things even more difficult, the water is very hard. I just wish we could have taken Maria, our laundress in Manila . . . she's a gem.

The lower elevation brought change:

> . . . today is hot and stuffy, the first hot weather we've had for several weeks. I'm glad I can stay in the hotel. Bob is doing the errands, and my job is to write this letter and pack. We have been very lucky on weather. Ordinarily it has not been hot, and we've seen rain only a few times, and [it] has never really inconvenienced us.

The postal trucks remained reliable:

> We are most fortunate to be traveling on postal trucks to Tihwa [Urumchi.] They are the best trucks in all of China, and have the best drivers. We will both sit up front with the driver, too, which will be absolute luxury after sitting on top of the luggage outside and being windblown.
>
> Our luggage was cared for; no one was permitted to sit on it or jump on it; our driver always pampered and petted us. He would lead us to the best restaurant, order our food, and usually insist on paying for it. He would see that we had the best accommodations at the inns.

When they reached Suchow on August 7th, 1947, Bob wrote a letter to his mother:

> We are staying with the Catholics again, this time with a German order: Society of the Holy Word, or something like that. Here in Suchow we have a nice room opening into a courtyard filled with huge sunflowers, morning glories and little boys who stare in the window. They just look unabashed; one face is about two feet from this typewriter . . . . Vera is conducting an English lesson, which she gives wherever we go. The young Chinese are pathetically eager to learn English, and they have no competent teachers. They work like mad, using

> ridiculous instruction books written without any scientific teaching basis.

This long report was written on notepaper with vertical lines ruled for Chinese characters. Bob's uncertainty of the mission's German name was typical of his lifelong resistance to foreign languages.

A language barrier produces a particular kind of travel experience: One is always subject to the limitations of the few locals who speak English. Otherwise one moves in linguistic isolation. One sees everything, and hears all, including all the words, but understands nothing spoken. This turns one inward and was what Montesquieu meant when he wrote that travel is an introspective experience.

In the period just after the War many simply loved Americans:

> The Chinese have been extremely friendly: hardly a single instance of rudeness or lack of consideration. This seems remarkable to us, since we heard such horror stories in Manila from returning [members of] the press . . . . We . . . almost decided not to come to China. People were supposed to spit on Americans, the government was so arbitrary that there was . . . . danger of being thrown in jail, one could not travel without difficulties, etc., etc. The head of UP said that China was overrun with disease. This turned out all to be bunk from the very beginning.
>
> Americans have tremendous prestige in China. There is much talk of Communist pressure, especially in these provinces near to Russia and the Russian dominated

> Outer Mongolia . . . . We are leaving for Tihwa this Saturday, August 10th: one mail truck will take us to Hami in four days, and another on to Tihwa in three. So, with luck, we will get to Tihwa August 17th. There we shall have the chance to see Russian pressure first hand. We shall try to go on to Kashgar , and [then] over into India, but it may be too late to take the pass over the Himalayas. In that case we shall fly back to Lanchow, take the truck to Kunming in the south, and fly to French Indochina. Please continue to write to us at the U.S. Consulate in Tihwa. If we go to Kashgar, we will leave mail there until we can find out if we can go over the mountains. If we can, we shall wire to Tihwa to forward [mail] to someplace in India. If not, we shall return [to pick it up].

Bob's mother was going to have an operation on her broken leg, and Bob was concerned. From so far away there was little he could do. Mostly he tried to reassure her about their trip:

> We have been pretty well in China, though the food is such that it is hard not to lose weight. As you know, we like Chinese food, are expert with chopsticks, etc., but it is hard to eat enough to compensate for lack of butter, steaks, milk, and similar stimulating food. Here we are supplementing our meals with K rations and much chocolate.
>
> Kansu Province, in which we are, is a corridor between two mountain ranges. From the [warm, sunny] mission garden, we can see snow-capped mountains. Invading armies from Central Asia have gone through here for centuries despoiling the countryside. There are numerous ruined towns and abandoned irrigation projects. With the continual threat today from Russia, . . . [they] are again in the path of [an army].

Bob also refers to an incident that Vera did not mention:

> We came from Lanchow on postal trucks, sitting very plush in the front with the driver. There is supposed to be [nothing] better than on top in the sun, but I got a dose of carbon monoxide poisoning which raised a rash all over my body. Quickly recovered with fresh air and no ill effects, but it is rather disconcerting. Something you don't think of, like rat urine in Acapulco! We have been lucky on this trip to have a nice Chinese boy, aged 25, who lives in Tihwa and looks after us, ordering food, arranging for us to get good rooms in the inns, . . .

Carbon monoxide poisoning comes on suddenly, and Bob was lucky that he didn't fall off the truck. The stopovers were more pleasant:

> [A] Chinese inn is a wonderful place, [a] series of rooms around a courtyard. A sort of built in shelf, very large, made out of dirt [serves as a] bed. We scatter around DDT and put down our air mattresses. We have between us three coats, one blanket, two mosquito nets, and can sleep in our clothes if it is really cold. Usually Vera uses a coat, but I am so warm, that one mosquito net used as a cover is enough. There seem to be no mosquitoes here. . . . They bring us an endless rounds of boiling water to make tea (we carry the tea) and to wash ourselves, and it really is very comfortable. We pack up everything the night before and have them call us just when the truck is about to leave, maybe 5 or 6 a.m., jump in our clothes, and hop aboard. We buy a few dozen hardboiled eggs when the truck stops and gulp down tea. We are generally bedded down in the best inn, but in even the best . . . farmers are likely to stop with their horses and burros, and they are just put in the stable. I am certain that conditions are not that different form 2000 years ago.

In his letter to his mother, Bob added a note about the world political situation:

> Though I am not as pessimistic about the immediate future of the world as far as peace in the United States is concerned, I surely think that all of us should think much of the present during the next five years. Our new and strong foreign policy will probably do much to keep Russia from engaging us in an immediate war, but after five years it may be possible for her to produce the bomb; and then I am not so sure. The thing to remember about Russia is that temporary peace or peace in our time is never her objective, as it may be ours. I am sure that she would not hesitate to start a war which would kill half of the world's people, including her own, if it contributed to . . . ultimate peace in a Communist dominated world.

He was right. Vera added a postscript:

> [Bob] managed to order fried chicken, which turned out just right. Our Chinese interpreters, and even the Catholic Father who speaks excellent Chinese, failed to make the waiters and cooks understand. Bob did it all by pantomime.

Her priorities remained apolitical and largely gastronomic. She also reported:

> Bobby has a beard again. It is very becoming. And he has very short hair, chopped off by a missionary in Lanchow. He wears shorts, of course, all the time. The Chinese are simply amazed at exposed and hairy legs.

The shorts became a life-long habit.

They made the trip from Suchow to Urumchi in six travel days, seven days in actual time because they had to lay over a day in Hami:

> Hami was our first sight of a town that is not typically Chinese. Here no attention is paid to the city wall. In fact it has been allowed to crumble . . . . We saw no Chinese architecture, no Chinese temple. The houses are more like the adobe style [of our] southwest. They even have courtyards with flowers, vines and grape arbors. We stayed at a European [style] inn: wooden floors, wooden ceiling, beds with only wooden mattresses, however, [and] glass windowpanes. Chinese houses use paper. . . and in one corner a huge, round, black oven, reaching to the ceiling.
>
> From Hami we had to take the northern route around the Bogda Ula mountain range. The highest mountain, which has the same name, is 20,000 feet and has never been climbed in winter.

The Bogda Ula Mountains (Arz Bogd Ula) are part of the Tienshan or Celestial Mountains, which stretch north and east from Uzbekistan toward Mongolia and are one of the great mountain ranges in the world. They divide Sinkiang from the central Asian Republics, which once were part of the Soviet Union. Vera went on:

> There is some talk about the British Consul from Kashgar coming down here this winter to accomplish the feat. It seems like a cold and dreadful experience, however, I believe that he is an inveterate mountain climber. We had never heard about these mountains before, . . . This mountain is always covered with snow [and] is visible from every part of Tihwa. In such a warm climate, from the distance it looks very cool and inviting.

This is the first mention of Eric Shipton, famous among western travelers in central Asia for his pioneering journeys and climbs. He and a partner were second up Mount Kenya and the first in the Twentieth Century. He also was the first Westerner to explore many regions in the Himalayas, especially in the Pamirs and Karakorams. For several years he was to lead the British assault on Everest, but he was replaced before he could put his plans into effect. He would play a major role in Bob and Vera's trip. There is no evidence, however, that he ever climbed Bogda Ula that or any other winter.

Vera continued:

> . . . the usual route from Hami to Tihwa is via Turfan to the south of the mountain range. Unfortunately there was "trouble" there. Some native tribesmen revolted. The area is calm now. We were disappointed not to see Turfan because it is on the edge of the Turfan Depression, which is almost 500' below sea level. The geography of this province is fantastic. Turfan is also noted for its superb grapes. This city [Hami] and all those to the south are more native and less Chinese than the northern cities. In the center of Sinkiang is the Takla Makan desert, the largest sand desert in the world. If we do not go into Russia, we may go south to Kashgar. The trip takes 10 days by truck; [on] the last day you drive for . . . hours through this desert. All the rest of the way is desert, too, though . . . different . . . In fact this whole province seems to be varying . . . desert [and] high mountain ranges.

The last night they did not stay in an inn; Vera wrote:

> In Kitai, . . . we spent the night in an old temple, abandoned as such. Our bed, a large mud affair raised off the floor, surrounded by three walls. In Chinese it is called a kann. This so-called bed was covered by an oriental rug. I'm sure that the rug was dragged off the postmaster's very own bed. We were wakened just a half hour before they were ready to take off. The few other passengers always had to shift for themselves.
>
> The scenery was unlike anything we have ever seen, strange and weird, silent and lonely. Sometimes we felt as though we were traveling on the surface of the moon. The contour of the land and gray colors look just like a picture of the moon seen through a telescope. The desert is [all] stones, sometimes small and sometimes boulders . . . or the finest imaginable [dust]. The mountains are bare, sometimes solid rock, but more often a soft shale which easily pulls off in your fingers. There is . . . no human habitation except at a few oases. At some of these is a [very] lonely fort where one soldier is marching up and down, or standing in his turret. These forts are tiny things and look archaic considering what modern warfare is. They remind you of sand castles. They are just about as impregnable. [Travel] is slow, only about 100 miles a day, perhaps 125.

And then:

> Coming into Tihwa [Urumchi] was a wonderful sight. It was sunset and for . . . miles we could see the city cradled in a round valley at the base of . . . a lonely mountain which stands by itself in the midst of rounded hills. The sunset was colorful . . . red and great sweeps of white clouds. The city seemed a mass of green. . . . It is not green when you [arrive], because nothing else is green except the trees.

10. URUMCHI

Vera wrote to Bob's Mother on Wednesday, August 20th, 1947:

> We have been here since late Friday night, almost a week. No plane has arrived or left during that time, so we have had no earlier chance to write. There was no mail from you. But a plane arrives on Friday, which will probably bring news from you. It leaves again on Saturday, so it will be another week or maybe two before we can answer.

They had reached a very remote part of the world. Urumchi is four hundred miles west of the border between central China and Sinkiang Province; it was an ancient caravan stop at the foot of the Bogda Ula just north of the gap between Sinkiang and Inner Mongolia.

What Vera and Bob had heard about accommodations for Americans in Urumchi proved correct:

> We are staying at the American Consulate. There are no inns in this town; furthermore, the Consul General and his wife, the J. Hall Paxton's, are so hospitable that they invite visitors to stay with them.

At that time this was the most remote American Consulate in Asia, perhaps the world, and visitors provided relief from months of isolation. It was also a listening post, which had as its major task discerning Soviet activity in China's far west.

Paxton was a Virginian and an experienced American diplomat who had served as the Second Secretary of the American Embassy, first in Nanking and then Chunking, as the Nationalist's moved their capital away from the Japanese. He issued the warning in the fall of 1937 to Americans to leave Nanking before the Japanese entered the city. He was also involved sorting out the Panay incident, when Japanese planes sank an American gunboat on the Yangtze. His adventures in revolutionary China were recounted in an article in the Saturday Evening Post, "I Escaped Over the Roof of the World." (April, 1950).

After many weeks on their own, Bob and Vera had found a refuge:

> We have been so happy and snug in this little bit of America that we have hardly ventured beyond the

> confines; Bob has been very deep in philosophical books and medical journals; I've been avidly perusing the *New Yorker, Time, Holiday* and one issue of *Vogue*. We rise at 7 a.m. and breakfast at 7:30, lunch at 12:30, coffee and cakes at 4 and dinner at 7:30, followed by a short walk or political discussion, then early to bed.

Remarkably, all of the publications named still exist.

Vera had the luxury of opening her typewriter and beginning a long letter home.

> The cook is named Valentina. She is Russian, and her dishes do her national traditions justice. We are served things with lots of sour cream: stuffed eggplant, borscht, and delicious pastries with a kind of cottage cheese filling. Our room is comfortable, with the sun streaming in all day.
>
> Today is a holiday, the last of three consecutive holidays. They mark the end of the Fast of Ramadan, when they really do fast for a whole month. . . . [T]hey eat only before sunrise or after sundown. We practically starved to death the day we reached Hami. We were hungry as bears at 5:30 and wired [ahead that we] wanted to eat and retire. We went from restaurant to restaurant with no luck. Finally we were led to a Russian cookie shop where we literally stuffed ourselves with cookies, coffee, and at last prevailed on the proprietress to cook some eggs for us. For dessert we had the finest watermelon that is grown in the entire world, and white grapes.

As Americans Bob and Vera were not used to being hungry. The end of Ramadan and the arrival at the American Consulate in Urumchi marked a very welcome end to long days passing through towns and villages closed until sundown for the holy month. Unless they were able to bring something with them and also were willing to eat in front of local people who were fasting, they had to wait until sunset like everyone else.

It is interesting to compare the Sinkiang stages of Peter Fleming's journey in 1935, including Kumdum and KoKoNor. Westerner missionaries had made the trip by railroad as far as Lanchow and on by highway to Suchow frequently. From there, the only other westerners to that time in the 20th Century to have traveled on to Kashgar and crossed the Himalayas were Owen Lattimore and his wife, in 1926 and 1927, and Eric Teichman, later in 1935. From Lanchow Fleming and his friend moved south, traveling by camel and horseback, rather than north to Hami and Urumchi by truck. In early spring, 1935, KoKoNor was frozen solid. Fleming avoided Urumchi because of rumors that Soviet irregulars had taken that city and controlled the surrounding oases.

Unlike Bob and Vera, Fleming also had no reliable travel documents and depended instead on a friendly reception from Tungan Moslem rebels who controlled his eventual route, something that required considerable nerve, even for a correspondent for *The London Times*.[5]

In 1935 the central Chinese government, such as it was, had no reliable control of western China. By 1947, the Nationalists could provide Bob and Vera with a permit that took them through Sinkiang all the way to Kashgar by way of Urumchi, where the Chinese had reasserted control. It was also possible to go more places by road in trucks that traveled regularly even to the far west, a considerable accomplishment for the Nationalists while fighting the War. Fleming and his companion bumped their way up to KoKoNor from Lanchow by horse cart and from there rode horses.

Fleming reported that he and his friend often went hungry in the southern Takla Makan; they rested up in Kashgar at the British Consulate, where he discovered that his dinner jacket had been ruined earlier fording a river.

Bob and Vera had a very different experience, but even to the north the terrain remained the same, desolate and often hot, with nothing but a dirt road that dwindled to a rutted track or sometimes disappeared altogether. This was a difficult journey, with long, jolting days but no hunger, and Bob's seersucker jacket was not ruined.

---

[5] Peter Fleming, *News From Tartary*, Scribners, 1936, 29 *et. seq.*

In Fleming's time there had been few western officials. After the War and at the beginning of the Cold War, Urumchi had diplomats from the two major powers:

> Yesterday we visited . . . the Russian Consulate. We were ushered into a salon – pink walls, maroon draperies, dull green furniture, and a round table in the center covered with a white, billowing tablecloth reaching the floor. We could see a maid fussing with [the] tea things. The big surprise was for the Consul to bring out a bottle of Russian champagne, a very heady. . . wine. We liked it and the hospitality. Five of us sat around the table: the U.S. Consul, the Russian Consul, an interpreter and we two. The talk went from English to Chinese to Russian and back. The U.S. Consul speaks Chinese, [as does] the Russian interpreter. Our purpose was to request a Russian visa. The Russian Consul is hopeful of our receiving same, though he will refer the matter to Moscow, and we will not know for sure for a week or ten days. The plan is to enter Russia west of here, go to the Caspian Sea, cross it, and continue on, probably into Iran. Later we will double back and visit India, Siam, Indochina and Java. Bobbie got this brilliant idea of going through Russia from a very recent but thorough study of a map, which shows a railroad . . . . It should be a most interesting trip. We do wish we had a little background knowledge of this area. It is full of cultural and scenic interest, that much we know.

A little background knowledge on the Ransom's part would have been a very good idea, but their faith was boundless. The various Asiatic 'Republics' through which they would pass were under Soviet rule and were in one of the worst periods of Stalinist terror.

It is noteworthy that the American Consul in Urumchi, despite his reported overwork, was willing to help the Ransoms with their adventure. The challenge of traveling all the way to Iran, returning to Kashgar, and only then crossing the Himalayas was formidable.

This particular fantasy kept Bob and Vera in Urumchi for an entire month:

> The town is interesting to wander around, so many bazaars, men dashing around on horseback, an occasional motor car and many horse drawn carts which make loud jingling noises because of the many bells on the horses' harnesses. These carts are the local taxis. The bazaars sell [cloth] in many colors [and] oriental rugs of local design. They [have] violent color combinations and [are] pictorial in design, rather imitative and not very good. There are some Russian goods, like champagne, vodka, cognac, cigarettes, matches. Some Chinese live here, but you have the impression that mostly they are administrators or soldiers. The population is chiefly Uighur. They are all Moslems and have a slight Semitic look of Near Eastern peoples. Their hair is dark brown, and they usually have whiskers. Their clothes are [very] Russian, the men's trousers tucked into high, black leather, riding boots, and a Russian shirt with a sash tied at the waist. Their coats are either like the suit coats worn in the United States or some of the more affluent wear a long, fitted coat that seems somewhat like a riding coat. In Hami everyone wears coats made of white

> cotton or white silk. They wear skullcaps made of velvet in red, maroon, black, green or purple. Sometimes the hat is embroidered. Bob bought one for me with many colors. It looks more like something from Lanz than exotic Sinkiang.
>
> The other day we saw a woman completely veiled, sitting near a tray of soap. Each bar looks like a horse's hoof. She was counting money, but how she could see through the heavy, black, hand knitted shawl I do not know. The Sinkiang money is all in 100 and 200 [denomination] bills, five Chinese to one Sinkiang. They accept Chinese money, too. But they are also familiar with the Chinese money we have. It was printed recently and is confusing. The figure 500 is printed on a note worth 10,000, and most of the people here in Sinkiang think it is worth only 500.
>
> Also of great interest to Bobbie are spears of lamb and lamb kidneys barbecued over a low trough of coals. We eat this at every opportunity. It is really wonderful. The lamb is really mutton, so it is not tender, but barbecued in small pieces it is quite delectable. The flat, crisp bread is also delicious.

Vera doesn't indicate how they managed to figure out the right exchange for their money, but they apparently had little trouble because she no longer wrote so often about it. Waiting for their visa, they were enjoying a central Asian city that had not been destroyed in the War nor had its economic or cultural existence rubbed out by a socialist revolution.

Although both she and Bob enjoyed the markets and the local food, Vera now says that, although they were very nice to them, Mrs. Paxton was fussy about eating anything local to the point that she favored canned butter from U.S. Army stores in Shanghai over the local yak butter. The Paxtons also did not eat any local meat nor was anything alcoholic was served except at official Consulate functions.

When the Paxton's went off for a few days, Bob and Vera provisioned the house to suit themselves. They also became friendly with the cook.

> Valentina was married to a high-ranking [German] officer. He is dead, and she has had bad times and now has to cook. She is very good at it, and full of personality, besides. [In addition] . . . we have had . . . beef with sour cream, stuffed rolls of beef, round squat eggplant stuffed with meat, onions and tomatoes, and cookies with jam.

The food was Middle European and Russian, including German Kalbsvoegel and Beef Stroganoff. Valentina spoke good English and was an amusing person. How the wife of a *Wehrmacht* officer had ended up in Urumchi raises questions, but she took to Bob and Vera and would cook anything that they brought back from the markets.

> The only Uigar servant is Fatima. She drapes a red scarf most artistically on her head, and her dress is blue silk, her shoes red and her stockings peach colored. She serves adroitly. One chauffer is German, the other Russian.

There also were other Americans to talk to, including one with a very American name:

> Another guest is . . . Pegge Parker, an AP correspondent from Shanghai. She is young and thinks that over 30 is a most horrible age. She is also quite successful. Besides this trip to Tihwa, AP sent her to Harbin [in Manchuria]. She also sold a story on Alaska to the Reader's Digest, and received quite sum for it. With that she started junketing around the world.

Only the most intrepid made it as far as Urumchi, something that is still true. Pegge Parker ended up marrying Doug McKiernan, who worked at the Embassy, and while still in Urumchi they had twins.

Bob and Vera reported that McKiernan worked as a meteorologist. It may be that he did so during the War when American pilots bombing Japan needed to know what weather was moving in from the west. Vera wrote: "He liked Sinkiang so much that he has returned. Apparently it's difficult to persuade employees to accept this post, so they are understaffed."

Doug McKiernan actually worked for the OSS, the predecessor of the CIA. In 1949, as the country disintegrated further and the Consulate closed, McKernan tried to escape south through Tibet and was killed at a border post. Pegge Parker and the children had flown out earlier. Vera and Bob managed to precede such disasters. McKiernan chose stay on too long or was ordered to do so. The Paxtons barely made it out.

Pegge Parker later married another American diplomat and published a book called *Alias Pegge Parker.*

Other matters occupied Vera:

> We are saving money again and are so far ahead on our budget that I'll be able to buy an original in Paris and probably some of Lilly Dachet's creations, as well. I'm doing laundry again. The laundress is reputed to rub holes into everything; and doesn't know about ironing, either. This is a difficult feat to accomplish in a washbasin with toilet soap, but I notice that the clothes are cleaner than they have been for some time. It is necessary that I slave away because many of our clothes already have holes. Bob's short-sleeved white shirts . . . will not last much longer. And he is such a beau brummel – he will be unhappy wearing those dull tan army shirts.

Vera described the trucks used for land transport in western China:

> I forgot to mention the new Dodge trucks that come here from Lanchow, piled twice as high with cargo as they should be. Also with twice as much weight. On top of all this sit a few passengers, clinging on with their fingernails. When the trucks strike a hole or turn a corner, you wonder why they don't topple over. Sometimes the load is so heavy that the fenders barely clear the tires. But the profit for a single trip is enormous . . . .

Later generations of similar trucks still cross Central Asia, many of them brightly painted and embellished. She added:

> Bobbie . . . is now known as Lan Son or "Blue Forest," I can write it and will do so for you . . . . The character for "forest" is supposed to represent trees . . . .

Bob answered his Mother's letters, which had been forwarded from Beijing. His are dated August 21st and August 22nd.

There was still hope for the Russian visa. Bob wrote:

> "If we take this Russian trip, our next address will be in Iran at the American Consulate in Tehran, so if we cable you that we are leaving for Iran, that is the place to start sending mail.

He added a postscript:

> Big storm yesterday, but they are expecting a plane today. The Consulate is very excited, as there will be a courier, and the latest dope on the Sinkiang situation must go to Nanking and then to Washington . . . . Well, must seal this letter and give it to the AP correspondent who will take it to Shanghai and send it by her APO. You should have it not too far beyond your birthday.

A week later, on August 29th, Bob wrote:

> We have just heard that an army plane is supposed to come in here today, so we must get off a short note at least . . . . We have been reading, reading and more reading and waiting for the Russians. Reminds me of the Long Wait in Riga in the fall of 1939. And in '39, when hope [ended] and I had gone to Estonia, the permission came through. We [do not have] much hope now, and have been asking around for a truck to Kashgar in case the Russians say no. We are really all set to be off again, and hope that we shall be soon. We are certainly looking forward to seeing you in Europe in the spring. Know we shall have a fine time together. . . . Will write more when we know more about our plans.

Vera wrote her parents on September 2nd:

> We have just heard a plane leaves in a few hours, so here goes a . . . hasty note. Until just a few minutes ago, we thought no plane would leave until Saturday. But this is trip for some special passengers.
>
> So far we have not had any reply to our request for the Russian visa. But the two-week waiting period is not up. If we do not hear by Saturday, we are leaving on a military truck for Kashgar. It will take about two weeks, maybe a few days less. We have already wired and received a reply from the British Consul. He says it is very easy to arrange to cross the Pamirs into India during September and October. We will probably be going over in October or at the end of September.

It may seem unusual for a foreign consular official to be helping with arrangements as if he were the Ransom's travel agent, but that is the way things were then in that part of the world. Vera was concerned about how it would be in the high mountains: "The trip takes one full month, all on horseback. I know nothing of horses . . ."

Vera continued her letter:

> Just out of the goodness of our hearts, we have made an inventory of office furniture and . . . supplies for the Consul. He is very grateful that we took this detail off his hands. In return he has promised to lend us the jeep to go looking for Kazaks. They live in the mountains, always ride horses, and drink Koumiss (mare's milk). They kill a sheep when a visitor comes. They live in felt, conical tents. We have tasted Koumiss. It has an astringent taste, rather odd, but it would be easy to acquire a taste for it. The Kazaks always put koumiss in sheep hides. After a few days in the hide it becomes alcoholic, though the usual way is to drink it when it is fresh.

Word had also gotten around Urumchi that the Ransom's were interesting guests:

> We have been wining and dining with the local hot shots. The general in charge of the northwest invited us to dinner on Saturday. His cook must have come straight from France. The food was so delicious. He is the nicest general we have ever met, but we cannot speak a word to him because he knows no English. Almost all the guests can speak English or understand, so we did not sit around silently. After dinner we saw a Chinese movie. Atrocious! I would like to see an American movie. From what I read in the magazines and newspapers there are lots of good movies in the States now.
>
> Bob played tennis yesterday with another general. And on Sunday this same general took us to the country to

> look at an irrigation project that the army has started. The idea is to irrigate land and grow enough to feed the army. Importing food from central China is expensive, and there is not enough food produced locally to feed all the soldiers.

The focus had, however, become their departure:

> We will be all set for this next excursion. All our clothes are mended and in as good shape as possible. I've just saddled soaped Bob's shoes. Our suitcase has had another repair . . . .
>
> We've written all our thank you letters. There was a huge pile of them because everywhere we've been on this trip we've been entertained.
>
> We spend a lot of time wandering around the streets looking at the vendors. The colors of the material would make a dress designer or decorator go into ecstasy. At least that is the affect on me. Brilliant pinks, magentas, and bright greens. A bright but light blue. They are all combined together regardless. I have been looking carefully for some suitable material, but little of the cotton is in these wild colors. And the silk is sleezy or if not sleezy has a design of the same color woven into the fabric. The design spoils it completely. I think these colors are from the Near East. When we get there, I hope I can find some suitable material. The colors would be wonderful for peasant or beach clothes.
>
> Bobbie wears his Russian-style brown felt hat and eats shashlik every day. There is a barbecue nearby where they cook lamb and beef on individual spits over hot coals. And we can eat melons until they come out of our ears. They are excellent quality and varying sizes and colors on the outside. But the inside is white, except for one, which is sort of salmon color.

> The camels also fascinate me. They move through the town so serenely and unperturbed, never for a moment realizing that they are absolutely prehistoric. These camels have thick coats and two humps. They walk at a slow but very even pace. The last camel in the caravan always has a huge bell hanging form his neck. It's amazing to see them get up or down. Their legs have three joints. And they lie on the upper joint. It looks most uncomfortable. They spit and bark when they are pulled up. And they object to being forced to go down, too. Apparently they're most uncooperative in every way. We usually see them bringing coal into town.

The region had changed little for centuries, except for the addition of trucks, the telegraph and airplanes, none of which had much affect then on the local people.

Bob wrote to his Mother the same day, September 2nd:

> I went over to see the Soviet Consul this morning, but he says nothing yet from Moscow. He promised to send another wire, to phone if there is any word before the truck leaves for Kashgar, and if word comes after we leave, to forward it to the Soviet Consulate in Kashgar. If no word comes this week, we shall go to Kashgar. . . .

The days and season were passing but they waited.

> We have our hands on a couple of good American sleeping bags. And we have a wire from the British Consul in Kashgar that it would be easy for us to join a caravan over the mountains into India. So unless we hear from the Russians (and even perhaps if we do hear) we shall probably leave from Kashgar for India around October 1st. The trip over the mountains on horseback should take about a month.

> Our two fur coats presented by Governor Ma of Sinkiang will be good for going over the mountains into India . . ..

It is hard to tell from Bob's letter whether he really wanted to go by train and truck across the distant Soviet Republics or to cross the Pamirs.

Urumchi had its own attractions:

> This town really is the most fabulous I have ever visited anywhere in the world. Regular frontier, with horsemen riding hell bent, and much contention and quarreling. We shall have some good pictures. You might as well not send [back] any pictures until you hear further from us. . . . because the mail from here to Kashgar goes overland and takes two weeks . . . . By the way, even a cable to Kashgar would probably take about five days, though perhaps they would come by way of India, and therefore take less time.
>
> Kashgar, my spouse informs me, is 1,370 miles from here . . . . I have a long, two months beard. The British Consul in Kashgar is supposed to be a famous mountain climber, so he should be able to advise us about going over the pass. There are supposed to be caravans that do it, trading between India and China, so I guess it will be simple. . . . If there is anything you want to know or anything I should know before we leave for over the mountains, you should cable the British Consulate, Kashgar, China, now.

This uncertainty of arrangements for what was one of the most difficult journeys in the world did not seem to bother either of them. Vera wrote to her parents on September 5th:

Today we are being cozy in our room because the wind is blowing like mad. A thick coating of dust has seeped through the closed windows to cover the windowsills. And an even thicker coat has come through the door, which we've left open. The sun is shining, and it is warm. This afternoon the plane is scheduled to arrive, although this strong wind would be reason enough for it to come only part way. Bobbie is absolutely engrossed in *War and Peace.*

Social life has been gay. On [the anniversary of] V-J Day the General gave a large cocktail party. It was fun and oh so different from our parties. Chairs stood along the walls of the large reception room, and guests sat in them. As more arrived, those seated would rise and bow. The big shots – that's us – were taken up to the far end of the room where the women were seated in comfortable chairs. When the General decided it was time to commence, we rose from our chairs, walked the few steps to the long, narrow table – there were similar tables for all the guests – and a band concealed behind a curtain played the Chinese national anthem. The General and the local minister of foreign affairs then gave toasts which were translated into English and Russian, and finally all drank Chinese cognac. But only a sip, which is the custom. And you only drink when you are drinking to someone. It is very stilted and stylized the way they walk around to you, raise their glass, and say "Mrs. Ransom." Then each of you holds up your glass and takes a sip.

Except for the occasional walking around to toast someone – you can holler the name across the table – everyone stands at his place at the table. Each of us had a plate and a fork and helped himself to the food: cakes, potato chips, cold chicken, sausage, sliced tomatoes, grapes and apples. Toward the end of the party Bob and I really warmed up and enjoyed ourselves. We walked around the entire room and toasted only the fabulous

> looking characters. Some wonderful looking Chinese were there, wearing black velvet gowns and hats. Some of the men had distinguished, long beards. We also toasted all the Uigar groups. We hated to be dragged away, but everybody left. Cocktail parties here do not go into the night as they do in San Francisco.

It is unclear which is more ritualized, the heavy Chinese toasts and social formality or steadily drinking on one's own while maintaining light conversation at a western cocktail party.

> Three couples from the Russian Consulate were there. The Consul had just returned from Moscow. They arrived in a very long, fancy car, like a Chrysler or a Packard. One of the wives drove. The Consul was very friendly. He speaks a little English. We discussed our passion for caviar. He promised to see that we got some, and we are waiting with our tongues out. We have been given some real Russian vodka, and the two together would be perfection! Their vodka is far better than any we have ever had, even than the Russian vodka we have had in the States.
>
> So far no more news concerning our Russian visa. . . . Perhaps we will hear in Kashgar. There is a Russian Consulate there, too.
>
> We have wired the British Consul in Kashgar to make arrangements for us to join a caravan going across the mountains into India. It takes a month. We will be going over Kilik Pass, which will take us through the Hindu Kush, then on to Gilgit and Srinagar.
>
> Shipton, the British Consul . . . has attempted Mt. Everest several times. He has also been over [Kilik] pass so he will be a good person to advise us. The American Consul here has offered to lend us two Army sleeping

> bags. In Kashgar we will buy other things, like the thick, felt boots which keep your feet warm in the coldest weather. We also will buy great coats like the ones the natives wear. We will get sheepskins to put under our air mattresses. As for food, we haven't been able to discover much about that yet except for dried milk and hard cheese. Besides taking all your own provisions, you have to take feed for the horses, too. We will know much more about this when we reach Kashgar. But from there mail will be slow. Postal couriers go over the pass into India once a month, and trucks carry mail from Kashgar to Tihwa, when they make the run, which is seldom. There is no plane service from Kashgar except for two times a year and these trips have already been made.

Vera's thoughts turned to a more immediate matter:

> The Consul has a hard time keeping the peace within his family of servants. Chinese, Uighur, Russians, and one German work for him. They squabble and insult one another, and it is not uncommon for one of them to come running with a tale of woe. He has to be a great diplomat to straighten out their problems, and so far he has been successful. This sort of strife is just a microcosm of the problems of the whole province. The nationalities, politics, and customs are so diverse that they never agree on important matters . . . .

In a letter to her mother-in-law Vera wrote:

> I have discovered a beauty secret. It is an egg shampoo. To egg yolks rubbed into my hair, after a rinse of hot water, will remove all the dirt. After another hot water rinse, the hair is shiny and clean. It really is miraculous and so easy. No soap to sting your eyes. However, my hair smells like a royal fizz all day – Bob says it makes him very thirsty. The egg shampoo is particular good for

> Tihwa because the water is so soft it is impossible to rinse out all the soap.

As they continued waiting, the social round continued:

> Tomorrow night we are going to a dance. The hosts are the four men in the communication ministry (customs, roads, telegraph and post). Sunday we hope to go on a search for Kazaks. They are always on horseback and live in yurts in the mountains. They drink mare's milk and kill a sheep when a guest spends the night. They throw the bones to their wives.

What eventually ensued was a remarkable adventure, something for which present-day touring companies would charge thousands of dollars. But first there were the practical arrangements to be made so that they could leave for Kashgar:

> The military truck for Kashgar will not leave until Wednesday, the 10th (of October). . . . The roads are not super highways, but the delay must also be blamed on the drivers who poke along, stopping here or there for tea or to repair the truck, which should have been done the night before.

The remark about the road was extreme understatement. In sandy or rocky places all traces disappeared, and the driver headed cross-country.

The food at the Consulate coupled with the frequent stops at the kebab shop near the Consulate, began to catch up with Bob:

> Bobbie is getting a nice round stomach again. He takes two of the Vigran vitamin pills each day. And he sleeps at least ten hours every night and rests on his bed reading about six hours a day.

Bob added in the margin: "Amazing!! That just leaves 8 hours to eat and bathe!!"

Arrangements to travel to Kashgar, the very end of a very long line, proved complicated. Vera wrote Bob's mother on September 16, 1947:

> Bob is conferring with the General trying to arrange for a military truck to take us from Aqsu to Kashgar. We are promised a ride as far as Aqsu, three-quarters of the way. This truck is supposed to leave some time Thursday, September 18. Mr. Yuan is going with us. He is the chief hydrological expert in China, a charming man. He was educated at Cornell, a break for us since we'll be able to communicate with someone on this trip. They expected the truck to leave on Monday, but maybe departure will be postponed again. In a way we hope so because a plane arrives on Friday, maybe bringing some mail for us. If any does arrive, it will be forwarded to the express and takes fourteen days. Not a bad time for a run of 1375 miles. In fact, the mail will probably reach Kashgar before us. We may have to wait in Aqsu, but we hear it is an interesting place.

Aqsu is an oasis in the Takla Makan, a large desert created by the Bodg Ula's rain shadow. The area is among the driest in the world and has fierce dust storms.

> We have been gathering together stuff for our trip over the mountains into India. . . . Bob bought a U.S. Army parka on the street yesterday, brand new, for $3.40. We have an excellent set of detailed maps which show every village, mule path, ruin, glacier, and so forth. They belong to the British Consul of Tihwa who came over the pass in December. He is on leave, so we have not met him. We will have a further burden of luggage as far as Kashgar: two bottles of pure bourbon, cheese, and film to deliver to Frank Richardson who is now in Kashgar. He is an Australian freelance correspondent. He left Tihwa the day we arrived.
>
> Bob bought me a present of very lightweight, thin silk in a magnificent shade of magenta. The material is China silk, I think. A little more than two yards cost only $1.25. I have hemmed the ends and will wear it as a scarf. It would be wonderful as a sash, too, with a suitable dress. I also have a Moslem beanie embroidered in various colors. Bob sent one of these to Lucile, Priscilla and Maino's wife. Moslem men and women wear these all the time. Unfortunately the colors fade rather quickly.

They also continued to meet any American who came through Urumchi. Vera wrote:

> I wish you would keep a look out for articles in *The New York Herald Tribune* signed by Christopher Rand. His is their correspondent for China. He arrived in Tihwa on the last plane and has been here [since then]. We've taken several trips with him which he has written up. Of course, whether they will be printed is another thing. If you see anything by him, please send us the clipping.

By then they also were close to their final travel plans:

> Apparently we are not going to get a Russian visa. They keep saying "We haven't heard yet." That seems to be their policy for handling requests for visas. They figure that eventually you will be tired of waiting. On the other hand, they never definitely say no, which protects them so that no one can say it is impossible to get a Russian visa. We are disappointed because southern Russia must be very interesting with so many different cultures.

Vera continued her letter:

> We had some interesting political discussions about China [with] Christopher Rand . . . . News about China in the U.S. press must be read with a critical eye. *Thunder out of China*, by White and Jacoby, is an excellent analysis of the problems. *Time Magazine* is considered downright dishonest. The reporting is distorted . . . because of Luce's personal admiration for Chiang Kai-Shek, which he puts before the facts.

An unwillingness to put the facts ahead of prejudice was particularly evident during and just after the War, when the Nationalists' corruption was ignored, and the Generalissimo portrayed as a great Allied hero.

Bob and Vera's route remained open because the Nationalists still controlled western China. The Russians had alienated the local population by backing several uprisings in western Sinkiang, all of which failed.

Before they left Urumchi, Bob and Vera also had another remarkable experience:

> We had a most marvelous weekend with the Kazaks. They are a minority group in Sinkiang, [and] the most interesting group of all. Ten percent of the population is believed to be Kazak, about 400,000 people. They are nomads and live in yurts, felt tents, and ride horses. The government financed a party for the Kazaks in the mountains nearby, which indicates that at least some of the Kazaks are friendly with the Chinese government. We were the first to arrive that Saturday morning. The Consul loaned us the command car. We were met by an entourage on horses. They rode along side and escorted us to our tent. [There we were] served tea with milk, mutton stew with French fried potatoes, a sort of hard tack, rich butter, cubes of sugar, dried apricots and squares of dough which were fried in deep fat. A very hearty meal, interrupted, however, by the arrival of Masud Sabri, the governor. He is a native Uighur, old and quite handsome. His car was parked out of sight so that he could mount a horse and ride into the valley in style. He looked most distinguished seated on a large brown horse. He has handsome, grey whiskers, a black fur hat, and an enveloping black cape with a brown fur collar. He rode down a path. On either side stood Kazaks. Several of the women held a plate of Kazak cheese and dried apricots. As he came by, they threw them at him. . .

If one meets a band of Kazaks, a one-sided food fight is apparently an honor/

> Afterwards there was a mad rush to pick up the food. It is considered good luck to get a piece of food thrown at someone so honored. The cheese is hard as a rock, and looks like rocks or slacked lime. It has a pleasant, mild taste, but what a laborious task to scrape it off with your teeth.

> The rest of the afternoon we sat around waiting for something to happen. It was bitter cold, the sun had disappeared early in the morning. There was much to see, [including] the slaughter of . . . several sheep. They are supposed to have killed fifty. . . . [They use] a sharp knife to slash the throat, hold back the head during the last death throes . . . until all the blood flows out, [and then] remove the skin in an adept fashion.
>
> The two cook tents were lined with chunks of mutton. . . . cauldrons were ready to boil the meat. The [Kazaks] dig a pit on a hillside, and in it they build a fire. The sides of the pit are rounded, and they set the cauldron and pack dirt around it so that no flame escapes. The other end is open for the draft, I suppose. The chief had a flare for cooking. Into his mutton stew he put carrots, cabbage, very spicy seasonings (chili, I think) and he skimmed off the fat. In other cauldrons water boiled for tea. And in the largest cooked horsemeat encased in intestines. Killing a horse is considered a great honor and is reserved only for special occasions.

She continued:

> When we had begun to despair of anything in the way of entertainment, we noticed a circle of people at one end of the valley. [They were] holding wrestling matches. Kazaks strip to their underdrawers and try to down an opponent. At the finish they jump on a horse and dash off. The Kazaks have strong, handsome bodies, which you would never detect when they are clothed. Their clothing is large, bulky, and far from form-fitting. But you know they must be healthy because of their life out of doors, the constant exercise on horseback, and the diet of mutton sugar, butter, and mare's milk. They all have rosy cheeks.

> The other game was between a girl and man. The man kisses the girl, and she chases and whips him. All this takes place on horses. In the evening we sat in the entertainers' tent next to ours. They were Uighers and Uzbeks from Kashgar. They played on their mandolin like instruments, a violin and the sweetest flute, just for the love of it, like gypsies. They sang in a high, nasal voice. And they danced in their native way, with rather delicate hand and arm movements, until a fire was built in the center of the tent and there was no more room.
>
> Later the Kazaks put on a play in an outdoor theatre. It was freezing cold by then, but I sat through half of it. . . There was no action, the costumes [however] were colorful, and every once in a while the actors burst into song. The story was about a girl and a boy who wanted to marry; the cruel father had another suitor in mind. The two suitors then had it out; the one the girl favored was killed, and this she did not discover for eight years. Then she married the brother of the one she loved. Only the Kazaks understood the finer points . . . .

Bob and Vera stayed the night:

> Sunday was sunny and warm. Kazaks are not early risers. It was not until 9:30 that we got a bowl of tea. We walked around the valley and up onto the low hills to get a better view. It is an idyllic spot, a small green valley, mountains topped with rocks tower behind. The valley floor is dotted with yurts and many horses. The flutist – he must be a romantic soul – sat among the pines on the hillside and serenaded the whole encampment.
>
> [Later] the dancers and orchestra performed for us in valley's center. We sat . . . [in] an intimate rectangle. The whole valley floor was like a yard. The governor and his party were provided with rugs. Behind us stood mounted Kazaks. Later they engaged in their national game, *Ulagh*, or a sheep pull. Two riders reach down

> and take a firm hold two legs of a dead sheep. They pull, and whoever gets the sheep gallops off followed by all the other horsemen. They stampede him and try to get the sheep away. Whoever finally gets it takes it to a wealthy Kazak – only at this party it was the governor – and throws the sheep down before him. The rich man gives presents. Actually, the ulagh we saw as not so simple as that, and it was difficult to discover just what the rules were.

A similar game is played in other places in Central Asia. In Afghanistan, it is called *Buzhkashi.* The rules, to the degree they exist, are more or less as Vera describes, although in some versions the sheep is carried into a goal circle and dropped, while in others it is thrown over a wall. Beyond that nearly anything goes, or at least that is the impression many western observers have. Although it sounds quite exciting, it often devolves to a milling herd of riders, surrounding a central scrum struggling for possession of the dead sheep.

> During the festivities, Bob and I looked behind and discovered a falcon resting on the arm of a Kazak mounted on a horse. The falcon was huge and handsome. His feathers were dark brown, nearly black, with pure white on the tail and wings when they were spread, and a small yellow patch just behind the curved beak. He arrived hooded, but the Kazak removed the hood to show him off. A majestic bird with absolutely piercing, clear eyes. Kazaks use these birds to kill foxes and wild sheep in winter.

While the *Ulagh* swirled slowly on, it is not surprising that Bob and Vera's attention shifted.

> We took pictures of everything but will not have a chance to have them developed until we reach India. We had a marvelous time. The Kazaks are very swash-buckling characters. Bob kept thinking that he was in a grade-B movie. They are excellent fighters and superb horsemen. Apparently the Chinese are anxious to make friends in case of an attack from Russia. Russia would also use cavalry. No other troops are feasible in these mountains. Cavalry are most effective in winter, so the Sinkiang people are always relieved when spring comes. The Chinese are foot soldiers, so the government is fortunate to have at least some Kazaks on their side.

Genghis Khan's legacy survived. Elsewhere, by 1947 cavalry was definitely an anachronism, but for a few more years in Sinkiang horsemen were still the best way to seize or maintain control, especially in winter. It also indicates how few Kazaks and Uighars lived near any road.

> The Kazaks stick to their horses as though they were a part of them. They do all their business from atop a horse. Even the waiters who brought the food from the cook's tents were mounted. This was the second time we visited this valley. The previous weekend we were also there admiring the Kazaks. The Consul promised this trip as payment for completing his inventory.
>
> I have forgotten to mention the mare's milk, koumiss. It's the only area in this part of Central Asia where this is drunk. Mares are in season from spring to fall. The Kazak women do the milking and put it in a bag made of

> sheep's skin. This has a narrow opening, and it spreads out to enormous size at the bottom. They insert a wooden churner. Koumiss must be stirred every once in a while. They pour it from the bag into a wooden bowl which is carved out of a large burl. One person sits over the bowl stirring the koumis constantly and serving it to guests. Koumiss is always drunk from a bowl, similar in size and shape to a rice bowl. Kazaks can drink quantities and do. Forty or fifty bowls is nothing for them. I think Bob could do the same if he had the opportunity. Koumiss is grey white in color, thinner and more watery looking than cow's milk. It has a slightly astringent taste for good reason: it contains the vitamin C found in citrus. Another heavenly thing they eat is cream. I'm sure it must be Devonshire cream. It is cooked slowly for hours until it is thick and creamy. It's marvelous. You can imagine how happy Bob is in this country with so much milk and also lamb stew.
>
> When we go over the mountains between China and India we will meet more of these people . . . . In fact, all along this pass we will meet people. We have talked to a Chinese who took this trip ten years ago. He said every night except one he slept inside a tent. And that in India there are regular bungalows erected by the British government expressly for such travelers. Sounds almost too civilized.

They remained in Urumchi, still very much involved in the social life:

> Friday we attended a dinner dance in honor of a Mrs. Soong. She is the wife of General second in charge in Sinkiang. She has been in the States for high blood pressure at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston. About one hundred people were present, including the young son and daughter of the Soongs. We had good food, foreign style, but we had the greatest difficulty in

> eating it. Every minute or so someone would come around to drink a toast, and it is the polite thing to stand up. Such bobbing up and down. Twenty-one generals were present. We went around counting them. Four were two-star; the others one-star. There are probably more generals in the Chinese Army than all other officers combined. The dancing was fun. A band played loudly, alternating with phonograph records. Bob danced with all the women except those who don't dance and the second Soong daughter who was afraid of him. (She is nine.) There were not enough women to go around. Most of the officials do not bring their families up here because they know they are going to be here for only two or three years. Chinese do not like this Province. It has a history of violence.

Only a year or so before, there had been a revolution led in Western Sinkiang by Kirghiz tribesmen who cut various trails from Kashgar to India. Vera does not mention that particular event, for now the Chinese were back in force, the Russians less influential and the security situation quite good by Sinkiang standards.

This Mrs. Soong was a relation of the wife of Chiang Kai-Shek, a doyenne of the well-known and corrupt family that more or less ran China.

Vera had been doing some reading in the Consulate's library and wrote to her parents:

> If this place was in the United States, we would develop it as a vacationland. It has all the requisites. Fine weather, mountains, sports, horseback riding, skiing, and

> a variety of topography from the mountains to the desert. Tihwa is at about 2,500 feet [and has] a dry climate. . . . Sinkiang is tremendous in size, more than twice as large as Texas, with a population of about four million. Some say seven million. It is undiscovered and unspoiled. Few foreigners have been here, and only five American women: The Consul's wife who came about a year ago; Barbara Stephens who traveled around for about six months; Pegge Parker who was here for AP for a couple of months and whom we met; And in Kashgar there is someone named Jackie Brown. There have been several other western women in Kashgar, wives of British Consuls. The British have had a consulate there for forty or fifty years. There were also three British missionary women who came through after World War I traveling by horse cart. A French Swiss girl went through during the 1930's traveling with Peter Fleming. Both of them wrote a book about their experiences. Several Swedish missionary women have been here, too. That's all people here have seen of western women, except for Russians and some Germans who live here and in Kulga. I forgot to mention the first and most important American woman to come here, Owen Lattimore's wife. They were here in 1926. Lattimore is an expert on Mongolia and Sinkiang. He's written many interesting books about these border provinces.

Owen Lattimore was one of America's best Sinologists and later was attacked and marginalized during the McCarthy era because he told the truth about the Nationalists: they were corrupt and had worn out their welcome with the Chinese people.

In a letter Vera wrote to Bob's mother, Bob added a final section:

> We have talked the Consul into selling us three bottles of Scotch for taking over the pass (three bottles for $10!). We are glad to hear that on the Indian side there are rest houses to stay in, and on the Chinese side the tents of the Nomads. We shall, of course, cable you when we get there. Our mail address will be: General Delivery, Srinagar, India, since this is where the pony trail ends. It is supposed to take 30 days from Kashgar to Gilgit, and about ten more to Srinagar, all by horse. We shall probably rest at Gilgit. So it will be six weeks or longer between Kashgar and Srinagar. But anyway, you will hear from us from Misgar, and I know we shall hear from you. We shall wire you from Kashgar when and if we leave, but unless you hear from us further, the instructions just given are to be followed . . . .

But Bob and Vera did not go to Srinagar. The Hindu-Moslem unrest that afflicts Kashmir today broke out catastrophically during partition. They had to climb back toward Chitral, to the northwest, before traveling south down into the Indus Valley and Peshawar.

The statement, "and I know we shall hear from you," reflects Bob's concern over his mother's health.

Bob wrote:

> We have been here at the Consulate for just a month, have read a hundred books from the library, numerous *New York Times, Times* and *Lifes*. The Consul offered me a job for three months at the same salary that I used to get in Mr. Lillick's office. But soon it will snow, and besides, this Russian border country is a ticklish place and the Consul's wife is somewhat of a puritan and not compatible. We have a lot of places to see before we meet you in England, seven or eight months from now.

Bob wrote two days later:

> It is now the morning of September 18th, and the departure of our truck has been put off until tomorrow. It they will just put it off another day, the mail plane will come in and we shall hear from you and the Procks.
>
> Big dinner at the Consulate last night, 15 people, hot shot Chinese. Very gay, not at all like the usual language difficulties, with questions like "How long have you been in Tihwa?" constituting the conversation. The Consul speaks Chinese, and there were a couple of good people to translate, so we got along fine, Vera and I and *The New York Herald Trib* correspondent left after dinner to attend the performance of some dancers from Kashgar, the same people that we saw up in Kazak country. Much yelling by a fat gal in a wild eastern voice. The dancers mostly used their arms and hands and very subtle movements of their bodies.
>
> Have been checking over the Consul's will. He is from Virginia, and is leaving some of his estate to one Birdie Mushroom Dunlap.

The estate planning help may also have been part of the *quid pro quo* for the bottles of scotch. They were getting excited about the Himalayas:

> According to a wire from the British Consul, horses over the pass will cost us about $50 each. This, I believe, includes a driver who walks all the way. We shall probably ride the two horses, have one more for our baggage and bedding, and one more for fodder and whatever food we take. We should, then, be able to make the trip under our budget . . . . We have an idea that we would like to get into Nepal; look on the map and you

> will see that it is a separate state between Tibet and India. An American mission has just gone in there, and so we might be able to get permission.

Nepal was closed to the civilian outside world until 1950. Eric Shipton eventually obtained permission to go there and scout Mount Everest, which he did, discovering the route to the South Col that proved successful for Sir Edmund Hillary and Tensing Norkay in 1953. Bob and Vera had no luck obtaining permission for entry, nor could they enter Tibet, which was under pressure from the Chinese:

> If we were lucky to get permission to go to Tibet, it would probably be too late in the year, so I guess that is out. Of course, we want to see Banares, the holy city of the Ganges, and have some tea in Darjeeling. The Chinese government just made the legal exchange rate 40 to 1 between Chinese and American dollars. This is pretty close to what the black market has been and is for export use. We have arranged with one of the local generals to change at this rate with a friend of his in Kashgar, so things should continue to be cheap. The Consul here gave us $300 in cash, American, in exchange for a check, so we shall have sufficient money if the Indians don't like travelers' checks. We are a little bit afraid to go to Iran because they are supposed to have 60% gold backing for their currency, which may mean a bad dollar exchange. However, we shall find out in India. It is hell passing up Siam and French Indochina where the dollar is God, but you can't have everything. We see by the papers that Luxembourg has been making special concession to travelers in exchanging their money, so I guess that Europe will make it easy to travel. I hope you will want to go to Prague. None of us have ever been there, and it was not blown up. The Iron

> Curtain has apparently drawn back from that country. I remember going through Slovakia before the War on a train which did not stop, of course, and seeing some old castles and fine farm land. Have been reading in Foreign Affairs about the division of big estates in Hungary.

The plan was for Bob's mother and Vera's parents to meet them. By 1948, when they all reached Europe, the Communists had defenestrated Jan Masaryk and the situation in Czechoslovakia changed.

> I think when you come over to Europe you will have a lot of company. The magazines are full of travel. I hope this will mean that Americans will really take an interest in peoples and customs abroad because I think this is going to be a rip snortin' world over the next ten years. I do hope that you will not put off coming over next spring if your health will stand it. Under Vera's bed and a few feet from where I am writing is a small suitcase belonging to Jackie Brown, an American gal who is now traveling down to Kashgar. On the suitcase is the remains of a travel sticker; you can only see a brown sail against an orange background, but I know it is a sticker from the Royal Danielle in Venice. We certainly had a good time in that fine place. My God, 20 years ago!

But first they were off to Kashgar over 1,300 miles away, and then across the Himalayas and down into what had become Pakistan.

11. KASHGAR

Vera does not mention date, but they left Urumchi on September 20, 1947:

> The truck appeared, [and we were told that the driver had] asked if we were still interested in the trip. We gathered our stuff together in a hurried hour, said goodbye and went off. We were very lucky to be traveling with Mr. Yuan. He is a leading hydrological expert . . . . He has just finished the largest dam in China, near Suchow. It took four years to construct. It is made of earth and is 100 feet high. He studied in the United States and is a thoroughly charming man. It was a break for us to travel with him because everything was so nicely arranged. We had good food, the best accommodations, and good English conversation. Along the way we also were entertained by various generals. At Yenka [Yanqi] they gave a party for us. In the banquet room was a large sign, "Welcome Mr. & Mrs. Ransom."

Their month's stay at the U.S. Consulate bolstered the rumors of their official status. In Yenka their host was a General named Tschou. Since at that time there were no tourists and Chinese officials were so used to looking beneath the surface, despite Bob and Vera's protests their "official status" was assumed.

They moved on to Aqsa:

> We also took my first horseback ride there to visit a Mongolian settlement. I enjoyed the horse but got very stiff after four hours of riding.
>
> * * *
>
> At Aqsu General Mo held a small dinner party for us. He is very friendly, extremely interested in politics and well-informed on the subject. The food he served was superb.

The soreness after only a few hours gave her an idea of the long days to come in the Himalayas.

Vera reported on other matters:

> We were almost comfortable in the truck, most of the way only three in the back with enough baggage for six. Bob was most ingenious in arranging a chaise longue for himself. It took twelve and a half days to reach Kashgar with two stops each day.

The trip was over 1,350 miles or roughly one hundred miles a day, which gives some idea of the road. Assuming they drove eight hours each day, they averaged little more than twelve miles an hour. The road skirted the northern edge of the Takla Makan, one of the world's harshest deserts.

Further north, they could see the Celestial Mountains called the Krehbet Kok Shaal Tau, which mark the border of Sinkiang from what is now Kirghizistan. One of the range's great peaks, Khan Tengri, is over 23,500. Other than in the few towns, most of which are oases, the region is treeless. So they crawled day after day through a rocky expanse on a track which had changed only slightly from the old silk route followed by Marco Polo.

One of the snowmelt rivers that runs out of the mountains flows through Aqsu and dies in the Takla Makan.

> From Aqsu we [drove on] with a convoy of three trucks loaded with boxes of ammunition. Bob and I had a truck to ourselves. For once no one sat on or even touched our luggage. But the bumps were so terrific that they did almost as much damage. This typewriter has suffered, for instance. Wherever the water from the mountains drains across the road, there is a bump, and they are very frequent.

None of the water flowing out of the mountains to the south reaches the sea.

During the insurgency stirred up by the Soviets the routes over the Himalayas, were closed. The Chinese suppressed the rebellion and in 1946 garrisoned the towns on the edge of the Takla Makan, including Aqsu and Kashgar, although the small fortresses that Vera describes were more symbolic than actual strong points. Whether the Soviets actually were deterred or wished to wait and see if the Nationalists won is unclear, but the area was generally quiet until the Chinese Communists took power.

The City of Kashgar that Bob and Vera entered on Friday, October 3, 1947, was as close to an ancient Asian capital as existed in China at that time. In his memoir, Eric Shipton described it as it was in August 1940, just after Britain's entry into World War II:

> Surrounded by a massive wall fifty feet high, its narrow streets were lined with open-fronted shops of metal workers, potters, cloth merchants, bakers and fruit sellers. In the center was a large market square and a mosque with a dome of blue tiles. On the ramparts high above stood an old Chinese temple, in curious contrast to the indigenous architecture of the rest of the town. The streets and the square were always thronged with people, mostly riding donkeys; for the Turkis never walked, even to cross the road, if they could help it. For an oriental town there was a remarkable absence of squalor and poverty. The men wore long, padded coats, black leather riding boots, and embroidered caps, black and white or brightly colored; but some had white turbans denoting that they had made the pilgrimage to Mecca. The women were dressed in similar clothes to the men; some, but by no means all, were veiled. They were a handsome crowd, and surprisingly cheerful considering the harsh, often cruel, tyranny of their rulers. By 1940 Southern Sinkiang had changed but little in the past several hundred years. That great scourge of modern civilization, the internal-combustion engine, had only recently appeared; it was still a rarity, confined to the

> two main highways to Urumchi and Khotan. All other journeys were made by pony or camel, or on foot.[6]

It had not changed during the War. Bob and Vera were quickly established at the British Consulate as guests of the Shiptons. Vera wrote:

> [Eric Shipton] and his wife are simply delightful, charming . . . people. We have all been having such a good time that we've seriously discussed the possibility of spending the winter here. Also in the house party are Jackie Brown an American girl, and Frank Robinson, an Australian correspondent. Well, the six of us are in this whirl and having the time of our lives.

The feeling was mutual. Bob and Vera are mentioned and described in both Eric Shipton's memoir and also in his wife's. Shipton himself wrote:

> [Fall, 1947] was one of the periods when Sinkiang was politically accessible to Western travelers, and as Urumchi could now be reached by air from Central China, we enjoyed occasional visitors from the outside world . . . . Among the most rewarding were Bob and Vera Ransom from San Francisco. Bob was an attorney who had been employed to defend the Japanese in the War Crimes Trials in Manila. After that, he and his wife had visited Peking. . . . Acting as usual on the spur of the moment they came from [Urumchi] to Kashgar by lorry, hoping to travel on to India. Bob, widely traveled and with otherwise liberal views, had strong anti-British feelings, not uncommon among even the most

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[6] Eric Shipton, *That Untraveled World*, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1969, 124-5.

> enlightened Americans; and as they approached Kashgar he and Vera had discussed the problem of how to avoid meeting 'this bloody British Consul.' However, they were compelled to face this distasteful ordeal by their need for Indian Visas.
>
> We had been warned of their approach and, though happy in our exile, were excited by the prospect of fresh company. They came at tea-time one hot afternoon in early October and were conducted by the scarlet-coated guards not to my office but to our sumptuous drawing-room where they were greeted with thoroughly un-English warmth by Diana. It happened that I had a frost-bitten foot sustained two months before while climbing . . . . . at 24,000 feet in the Pamirs; and when I hobbled in on my crutches, making casual reference to my infirmity, our guests were clearly shaken by this evidence of the rigours of the journey ahead of them.[7]

Vera now admits to being terrified of crossing the mountains.

Shipton continued:

> Bob's prejudice was not revealed until, three days later, I took him with me to an official Chinese banquet, where, under the disinhibiting influence of a great deal of vodka, he treated me to an eloquent resume' of the disagreeable traits of my fellow countrymen. Nevertheless, we became and have remained firm friends.[8]

Bob's announcement of his anti-British views was so typical of him. He never avoided saying what he thought. Intuitively he stumbled on the surest way to form a friendship with a certain type of

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[7] Shipton, *op cit*, 149-150.

[8] Shipton, *op cit*, 150.

Englishmen: insult him as soon as seems reasonable. Perhaps those who do are seen as forthright and therefore good to know. Whatever the reason, the Ransoms and the Shiptons became friends, a relationship that survived the Shiptons' divorce and lasted until Eric Shipton's death in the 1970's.

In his book, Shipton went to the point of character analysis of both Bob and Vera:

> The Ransoms stayed with us for a fortnight. Their lively response to everything they saw and their wide range of interests were immensely stimulating and gave us a feeling that the days were not half long enough for the full enjoyment of their company. Their characters contrasted sharply: Bob was vital, dynamic, restless, while Vera was placid, imperturbable and utterly content with the present; she also had the rare quality of complete naturalness. Our nightly discussions, always protracted until 2 or 3 o'clock, covered a great variety of topics, though we often reverted to the subject of Bob's *bete noire* in a vain attempt to persuade him that as a nation we were not really more arrogant, hypocritical and oppressive than others. Before they left I gave him letters of introduction to twenty of my friends in England; and though perhaps we had implanted a germ of tolerance, it was one of these that wrought his eventual conversion. For their long trek over the ranges to Gilgit and Kashmir we provided them with an escort of Hunza guards.[9]

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[9] *Ibid.*

Bob and Vera decided they could not stay the winter because they had agreed to meet their parents in Europe in the spring. The alternative was to retrace their steps, something that they never seriously considered.

Vera wrote to her parents during their stay:

> Let me give you an outline of our day: A Tibetan brings tea to our bedroom at 7:30. We sip until 8:00. Rise and dress and eat baked eggs for breakfast at 8:30. After the eggs we remain seated at the table and talk. The next few hours are spent arranging for our trip over the mountains. For instance, shopping for clothes, hiring muleteers, buying food. Lunch is served at 1:30. We must sit at the table for at least one and a half hours eating and talking. Then we have a free hour or two for more shopping. Tea at 4:30 certainly lasts an hour. Three days a week everyone plays tennis until dark. And even on the other days there seems to be only enough time to change your clothes and have a drink before dinner at 8:00. In the evening we all sit around and talk until all hours. It was 2:30 last night.

Shipton described the staff and the Consulate's operation:

> The British Consulate-General . . . was in a large walled compound outside of town. The staff included an assistant surgeon, . . . who acted as vice consul, Indian and Chinese Secretaries, an accountant, numerous chaprassis (office servants), a platoon of Hunza gatekeepers in scarlet uniforms and a dozen mail runners. These last operated the first leg of our weekly diplomatic courier service, one of the more bizarre features of this extraordinary establishment. Riding in pairs on tough little horses, Union Jacks stuck in their saddles, the couriers took our mail bags at high speed across the

> Pamirs to Ashkurghan where they exchanged their burdens with others operating the section across Mintaka Pass to Misgar; and so on through Gigit to Srinigar.[10]

Among those who familiar with travel in Central Asia before World War II, this service has the mythic status of the Pony Express. Vera wrote that, in addition to mail, extraordinary freight came over the pass: "You should see the things here at the Consulate which have come over the pass: upholstered chairs and sofas, Victrola records, dining room buffets . . ."

To that list Shipton added:

> My own house was a large, castellated mansion with spacious rooms, comfortably furnished and superbly carpeted. It had no modern conveniences, such as electricity and running water, but with plenty of servants this was no hardship. Owing to the difficulty of transport, it had long been the practice of my predecessors to leave behind all amenities they had brought with them or acquired locally. Among the treasures that I inherited were a droshki or Russian carriage. . . an excellent E.M.G. gramophone with hundreds of records, classical and pop; enough toilet paper to last twenty-three years, and a fine cellar of French wine which had been ordered direct from the growers. Best of all was the enormous library, which reflected the manifold interests of the original owners – history, poetry, botany, detective fiction, Shakespeare, Muslim history – and included a comprehensive collection of books on Central Asian travel, some signed

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[10] Shipton, *op cit*, 125.

> by the authors, grateful for the hospitality they had received.
>
> Two of the reception rooms opened through French windows on to the terraced garden shaded by massive plane trees and tended by six gardeners. The view extended northward, across the river to a line of buff-coloured loess cliffs topped by clusters of flat-roofed mud houses, and beyond over fields and orchards, willows and poplars to the edge of the oasis five miles away. [11]

They also could see the foothills of the ranges fronting the highest of the Pamirs. Vera wrote:

> The atmosphere here is so different from Tihwa. First of all, Kashgar is a more interesting town. It is a very fertile oasis, cultivated for miles around. There are trees everywhere. Tihwa is more austere, and the life is more Chinese than native. Secondly, the British Consulate is almost a palace. The buildings are numerous and the grounds very spacious. Bob and I have a suite of rooms, a bedroom, sitting room, bathroom and our private stairway and outside entrance. Every other night a fire is built under a water tank and we luxuriate under a hot shower. The other rooms are large and furnished with comfortable sofas. The food served is superb and lavish. Most of the fruits and vegetables come from the Consulate's garden. Well, in Tihwa we had none of these comforts and our hostess served very skimpy meals, only one egg for breakfast, for instance, one small sliver of meat for dinner, and so on. Bob always had to augment his meals in the market. [She was] almost allergic to good and got sick if she ate too much, and the thought that her guests suffered from the same thing. Also, the Shiptons are gay and interested in everything.

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[11] Shipton, *op cit.*, 125-6.

Whereas the American Consul in Tihwa was always slightly harassed with too much work, and his wife is quite prissy because of a missionary-nurse background. Bob at this moment is on the verandah negotiating with a seller of fur coats. We will wear great sheepskin coats [for our trip over the mountains.] Bob has had a terrible time getting one large enough. They say there is no such thing in the market so he is having one made to order. It will take three days to finish the thing. . . We have decided on mine, but we're trying to bargain down to $50,000 ($6.50 U.S.). This man wants $60,000. Bob just reported that we've bought it for $55,000. Bob is having his made to order for $10. They take a sheep, or rather several, tan the leather so it looks like a rough, white suede, A large black collar and nice edging around all the edges. The sleeves are very long, more than one needs, and the coat reaches to the ankles. They are huge things and incredibly smelly.

You should also see our padded suits, which have just arrived. The jackets are straight, with a slight flare. The lining is natural in collar with a slight block print. The pants have tapered legs. The padding between the outer layer and the lining is a double thickness of cotton. They are extremely well-made and look very smart. The sweet little man, our tailor, stayed up all night to finish the work. We had no idea that they would be attractive. They are so warm. I'm sure that they would be a hit in the United States. This man is also making us padded gloves with fur gloves to cover these.

The latest man to arrive is the milliner. Yesterday Bob selected the skins: a wooly tan and white baby lamb for me; and dark brown for him. The style is helmet-like, with a fur sweep at the back. I just had my head measured. They use string to make the measurements. For Bob's coat the man used his hands, which he spread.

> We will have sheepskin bags made to fit over [the U.S. Army sleeping bags we borrowed in Tihwa,] so we will be warm enough. And the Shiptons are loaning us an Everest tent to take to Misgar. From there on we will be sleeping in Indian Government bungalows. We will also have saddle bags that fit over our saddles for small things we will need along the trail. It's very exciting to get all this stuff together.

The details necessary to prepare for the trip helped Vera master her fears.

> Bob confers in the mornings about horses, servants and the money exchange. We are hiring five horses, two for riding and the other three to carry our luggage. And of all things, we are engaging a servant. It sounds too plush, really. An Indian in charge of the post at Tashgurghan is going as far as that place. This part of the journey will last eight days. He speaks English. We will rest there for a day or so. The other rest stops are, in order, Misgar, Baltit, and Gilgit. We will go only a single stage each day, which will take from four to six hours. We will go over several passes, the highest 15,000 feet.
>
> We will be going through . . . Hunza, a small state which occupies part of a valley and mountain slope. The [Hunzas] were always very warlike and preyed upon caravans until a hundred or so years ago. They are very friendly now and colorful. Several of the servants [at the Consulate] are Hunzas. They wear soft white woolen hats woven like a long stocking without the foot. You roll this up lengthwise until it forms a hat with a round brim. The Mir of Hunza will entertain us, and we must remember to take him a present.

The present ultimately included a pair of Russian boots.

> October 9: Today is market day. Bob and I have just walked around the bazaar. We would only spare an hour and a half. We have an engagement for a fitting again.

Life with the Shiptons continued:

> Today is Diana Shipton's birthday. We gave her a pair of nylons, which she had never seen [in Kashgar] before. Naturally she was delighted with them. We also made individual presents of band-aids, emery boards and an orange stick, and saffron which we brought with us from San Francisco. Jackie had some silk for her, and chewing gum. We arranged all the things on a tray and placed pink zinnias around them. Lu's [Vera's sister's] birthday is tomorrow, and I hope she has as good a time and lots of presents. We sent her a Moslem hat. I hope it has arrived by this time. At any rate, Lu can know that her birthday will be celebrated all over China. Tomorrow is called double tenth, the tenth day of the tenth month, the anniversary of the Republic. We are all going to watch a parade, listen to speeches and see displays of horsemanship. In the evening there will be a Chinese banquet.
>
> Tell Lu about the Tibetan dinner we had last night. A tasty, brown soup of mutton with vegetables and thin broth and lots of noodles. This was served in large soup plates. On top was an assortment of cold things, carrots, beets, cabbage, sliced peppers, tomatoes and peppers. The peppers should be hot. They add anything they can think of. All these seem very easy and good.
>
> Tonight we are having an Indian dinner here for the Indian employees of the Consulate. As you can imagine, we are looking forward to this.
>
> Our friend, Mr. Yuan, who came with us from Tihwa, would like to have something from the United Sattes. I wonder if you would send it to him. He couldn't

> possibly afford it himself. His salary amounts to $30 U.S. a month, and he has to support his wife and three children on it. Of course, they just barely manage. Anyway, what he wants is: *Transactions of the American Society of Civil Engineers*. It is an engineering magazine, one of the best in the field. If you get a subscription for him, he will be delighted.

"Lu" is Vera's sister Lucille. Vera also thoughtfully provided Mr. Yuan's address. If Lucille purchased the subscription, it is unclear if during the revolution any of the journals reached him.

There were other diplomatic missions to visit:

> There is a Russian Consulate here. We haven't been over yet because the Consul General is ill with malaria and a fever and apparently you cannot visit an underling. They say if we should drop over, anyway, he will get up out of his sick bed. People usually go about noon, and must spend the entire rest of the day. They serve food and drink and force it on you. Everyone comes back blotto. We will probably miss this experience. We've heard lots of interesting tales about the Russians. For instance, when they come to the British Consulate for dinner they never eat anything. No on knows why. It is very difficult to understand them.
>
> We've just finished a very nice lunch. It is 2:45. At 4:00 some people are coming to tea. This is our bath night, which we will enjoy before dinner. Dinner then at 8:00. In between, Bob and I must do some shopping for food for the trip.

Planning for the trip continued to occupy most of Bob and Vera's time:

> Our tent is tiny, only large enough for two sleeping bags. The trip, with horses, warm clothing and food will cost about $300. Not bad for six weeks travel. We have two Chinese gowns of black caracal which were given to us by General Ma in Sining. They tell us we can sell them for $100 [U.S.] each in Kashmir. For much of the trip we will be walking, It's too tiring to sit on a horse all day. The letter from Tihwa is covered with stamps , overprinted with "Sinkiang." This is very unusual and no longer used. We had the postmaster dig the stamps out of the back of his safe.

In her last letter to her parents from Kashgar, Vera comments about the postal options:

> Today a letter from us went out in the Consul's bag. This mailbag is taken by horse and on foot by special mail carriers all the way to India. It is a unique mail route, and we thought you'd get a kick out of it. The postage is 66 cents. The letter is a long one. This letter is just to augment it; and it is possible that you will receive this a week or so sooner than the Indian one.

During their stay in Kashgar Bob and Vera also climbed some nearby ridges with Eric Shipton. This went very well Bob was elated because he usually had trouble with both altitude and heights. Kashgar is at 4,500 feet, so perhaps he had become acclimated, and Shipton's guidance may have helped him overcome some of his had helped him overcome his fear of heights.

Shipton continued helping Bob and Vera with arrangements.

Vera wrote:

> At this moment he is giving Bob all kinds of advice about what to see on the way. The trip does not seem difficult. The caravan is very slow, covering only ten to twenty miles in a day. Of course, it is all up or down high mountains. We will be in the mountains all the time from the first day to the last. Eric has also given us a great batch of letters for people in India.
>
> We have warm clothes to wear. In addition to the huge sheepskin coats and cotton padded suits, we also have thick felt boots. We also have socks knitted from camel's hair. Bob's hat is finished. It is a big wooly brown lambskin with flaps that tie under the chin. We will wear the felt boots while on the horses. But I understand that most of the way we will walk. For this we will wear ordinary shoes. I had none that were suitable, so the ingenious Tibetan found a pair second hand but in beautiful condition. The soles are very thick and the tops of scotch grain leather. They were made in Kashmir. He must have filched them from someone working here at the Consulate.
>
> Tomorrow Bob has an appointment with our cook to shop for more food and utensils. We will eat rice, flour and take along as much as possible. We'll also buy some sugar, dried apricots, raisins and a large pack of vegetables and melons. We have one horse to load only with food. A single horse can carry 200 lbs. We must also include tea. On most of the trip, especially in India, we can buy food along the way. There will be five horses, one for Bob, one for me, one for the cook, one for our luggage, and one for food. That will be our group. The owner of the horses also goes along with the retinue to care for the horses and also to carry trade goods to India.

> We are really looking forward to the trip. I'm glad the stages are so short, only four to six hours. It means we will have plenty of time to sit under a tree and read books or wander off into the nearby country to see the sights. Eric is very enthusiastic about the scenery. He says it is simply magnificent. All the advice we are getting is so expert. We are lucky.

There would be few trees and fewer moments to sit reading. Six or more hours of walking or even riding at altitude would be exhausting, and it was one of the most demanding routes in the world, with one pass above 15,000 feet.

In the meantime, there remained continuous social events:

> In my Indian letter I forgot to tell you about our tea with the Indian woman. She is the wife of the Indian who is second in command at the Consulate. She is young, only about twenty, and very beautiful with dark eyes and luminous skin. She has just come over the pass in record time. She insisted upon covering double stages each day. She sat on a horse all the way, and all the way was in purdah, her face covered with a veil. Only the women were invited to the tea. She is very strict about this. So is her husband. What a life. She told me that she enjoyed the trip. She had never been away from her hometown or her mother's side. So if she can do it, surely we can.

Eric Shipton mentions the same woman in his memoir, also remarking on her beauty. She traveled with him and his wife from India. Vera added:

> Diana Shipton has two saris, but never knew how to drape them. The Indian woman instructed us. They are exquisite things and most becoming as a gown. Bobbie liked the gold one on me so much. He says that we must get one. They come from Benares. They are either six or eight yards long. I measured the one I wore but have forgotten. They are quite wide. The material has a border, but on different sides at different times. Anyway, the drapery is very easy to arrange. These particular saris are the finest and cost $40 U.S. The material is sheer and stiff and reminds me something of the pina cloth from the Philippines. It is not silk, probably from jute or hemp or some other plant. The one border is thick embroidery in gold and so handsome. The other is grey and tulle-like, with a border of silver leaves.

There were still arrangements to make:

> Tomorrow we have more shopping to do. Sunday we will get organized. Monday we will be driven to a river 17 miles from here where we will pick up our horses and then we march the first day's stage. And from then on we will be in the mountains. Our address is Poste Restant, Srinagar, India. We should be there about the 22nd of November. Please excuse this dull letter. I am so excited about the trip, and we lead such an active life here. There's a Chinese banquet we must attend in about two hours. My literary sense has completely left me.

12. OVER THE PAMIRS AND THE KARAKORAMS

On Monday, October 13, 1947, Bob and Vera set off in a station wagon provided by the Mir of Hunza and driven by his chauffeur. The car and driver were very likely a favor to Eric Shipton. They rode 17 miles toward a small village, Tashmalik, on the bank of a river, a place so small that it does not appear on the remnants of the highly detailed map they carried. The day did not go particularly well:

> Muleteer in the car wants us to stay at his house rather than camp outdoors. Station Wagon overloaded, springs grind. Car in mire for night. Mir of Hunza's chauffeur and Arab Jon [their servant and cook] cook pilau. To bed under the stars, Sheepskin bags over Army ones work fine.

It took all day to make the few miles. The mired car apparently solved the issue of where to camp. The muleteer's hut, its door shut against the cold and smoke rising slowly from a dung fire, was not inviting. After the battering they took in the overloaded car they were happy to crawl into their double sleeping bags out in the open.

As they started the next day, things continued in the same vein:

> Horses waiting at wrong place on the river. Our five horses were there but none for Fateh Ali. Argument with the muleteer; threatened to jerk his visa. Finally we go ahead. Fateh Ali walking. He is a fabulous character, marching along with a lance. Horses horribly overloaded. Fateh Ali hires a horse for $5,000 [Chinese dollars, by now less than $5 U.S.] at the first village. We eat watermelons. The headman and a soldier get the horse. The owner comes along on foot, protesting all the way. We have our first experience wading across a river. It is deep and swift and our flour and rice get wet. Soon we leave the oasis and cross the desert to smaller oases. We stumble through the darkness to [the] estate of Ahmet Beg. He is very rich. Women and children husk corn under a huge tree beside an irrigation canal. They throw the husks in a bag. A musician is playing and singing. A boy dances for us. Our lantern is hung from a spike thrust into a dirt wall. We have pilau, mutton, bread, tea and melon for supper.

Fateh Ali was in charge of the British mail couriers and a no nonsense sort. Without him Bob and Vera would have had a very hard time.

The following day Vera wrote:

> We refused to leave Tashmalik. No food for ourselves or for our horses. Must wait for headman who eventually appears with six horses. In the meantime we walk

> around the oasis. [There are] lanes with tall poplars planted close together along both banks of the canals. We peered into a tomb. Women were working the fields. The brown corn husks rustled in the breeze. The poplars' yellow leaves shine in the sunlight over the five-tiered barns and houses. When we sit down, people come over to speak with us. The houses are quite spacious, with high walls, surrounded by one huge corral after another. Large courtyards within are half-covered with branches in summer. Now the lattices on which these rest are bare.
>
> [Ahmet Beg's] mother has a sore throat, and we are asked to help. We prescribe gargling with aspirin. Everyone is then happy. Later an old man comes up coughing profusely for our benefit. We give him aspirin, too. We also buy six chickens and 57 eggs. We skin all the chickens.

After a day re-provisioning they set out once more:

> Up a rocky valley with numerous crossings of a deep river. We waited at the deepest crossing for our caravan. All our stuff began falling in the river. We are twelve horses and two donkeys. Today we hired two camels to carry donkey loads. We reached a Kirghiz tent very late, wet and cold. The fire was going and tea was, thankfully, ready. We got dry socks. The camp was next to mud corrals in an oasis along the river. The snow-capped mountains are just beyond. We slept in the Everest tent for the first time. It rained, but we remained dry.

It grew colder. The Ransoms lay in their small tent, the other members of their caravan arrayed around them, all dependent on Fateh Ali. The possibility for misery was real, although their sleeping bags and tent, somehow stayed dry. Two days of rain would have drenched the tent and everything else, causing real hardship.

The next day, however, the weather cleared:

> [We] crossed two stone and twig bridges and continue up the valley. Snowy mountains are closing in. [At the fords] our baggage is protected high up on the two camels. Fateh Ali is hiring pack animals from day to day. We try to make the horses go without whips, but the caravan becomes strung out. First Fateh Ali and the camels, then us, and then the rest. There is no vegetation except for an occasional golden-leafed tree. The climb to Gez is steep. [We reach] a small, lovely plateau surrounded by mountains which are brown and gray and barren. There is a hut where we are invited to visit and offered yak milk. A boy plays a three-stringed instrument. He has soulful eyes, so big; he seldom blinks but sits in a classic pose with his instrument on his knees, wearing his sheepskin coat, a tight girdle, and a fur hat.

The scene Vera described seems out of a Persian miniature.

> The Beg brings in a sheep for us to feel. He says he will kill it, but Fateh Ali says no, the sheep is not fat enough for us to accept. We eat a good chicken curry with pilau instead. The Beg's wife has just died. He must marry again. We are in bed by seven. The night is very clear, as are the stars, the air cold and glorious.

Because he was able to provide them with food the Beg at Gez must have been very rich. After the first two day's shambles, Fateh Ali's subsequent arrangements eased their fears.

The Himalayas rise sharply from the surrounding terrain. Of the other four continents, only one, South America, has numerous peaks over 20,000 feet. Although in Himalayan valleys grass and a few trees grow, one is almost always above the timberline. On clear days the ridges shine metallically.

The next day they left before dawn:

> Sunny, clear day. Up and down rocks almost all day. [We follow] a river gorge strewn with boulders and the mountains loom up so quickly. Nothing grows here.

Vera recommended that anyone attempting the trip carry a whip because "the horses won't move unless you have one, and they expect it."

> Fateh Ali whips one of the pony men. We have to wait at a rickety bridge to help the caravan across. We lose nearly two hours. We ask where Bulukul is and all say that it is very close but we march on and on. Near sundown we reach a lake, which has been formed by damning a river. Then we must cross a wind blown plain.

The beating, apparently for negligence, shocked the Ransoms. It also underscored the brutality of the society through which they moved, to say nothing of Fateh Ali's authority and how close to the edge the caravan operated. A poorly packed horse or camel could mean that they would not eat or would have no protection from the cold.

They passed through the high foothills of the Kashgar Pamirs. Vera remembers that the wind blew the sand until it banked on some of the ridges like snow.

> We wander on up [a valley on] the mountain. It is still swampy but it is interesting geologically. We pass the ruins of a watchtower. All this is fine riding but we are lost. It grows dark and the new moon sets. We ride on and on until we finally stop. We curl up in our sheepskins and eat a can of roast beef from Uruguay. It is delicious, like corned beef. We also take some slugs of bourbon. We hear a dog bark but far across the river. Fateh Ali is with us. We are sleeping but awake later to cries and see a light. The caravan and soldiers arrive about the same time. We stopped at 8:00. The [rest of the] caravan arrived about 10:30. They put up the tent. All this organization takes another hour and a half. It is very cold. One of the horses fell, and there are now holes in the tent.

Despite the experienced Fateh Ali, the entire caravan had wandered off the planned route. The tent had been packed carelessly, on the outside, and tore on the rocks.

The maps indicated that they might have crossed the border into India. Fortunately they were still in settled country and stumbled on to their approximate destination for the night. The Indian ordinance maps showed the entire area as a swamp, yet they made over twenty miles.

The next morning they had their first glimpse of a glacier. As Shipton had predicted the weather remained dry:

> Another beautiful, clear day. We are just opposite Bulukul post. We came to right place, after all. The caravan is not organized until 10:00 a.m. Fateh Ali goes to Bulukul to hire a camel and another horse. The men make a fire with branches and dung.

On October 19th, they continued on toward Subashi, an abandoned village located on the Karakul Lakes, which means "black waters." This proved another very long stage:

> We walked up a steep incline from the river. Snowy mountains on our left, Mustagh just ahead. Large birds soared over the ledge above. We crossed gently sloping, grassy plains. The birds still sing. From a distance the lakes look turquoise. They are partly iced over. We throw stones and they skim along the surface before some break through. We see yurts across the plain. It seems idyllic. A boy comes to meet us. At the yurts a woman takes my whip, which is the custom. Yaks graze everywhere. They offer us rice cooked in milk with sheep fat poured over the top. Ugh. But I could probably develop a taste for it.

Or nearly anything else. They were settling into the journey, ready each day for a long stage on horseback with their rudimentary saddles. "Mustagh" is a reference to Mustagh Ata, a massive, rounded peak.

> [We rode] seventeen miles, easy going but we try to arrive early because fierce winds blow after sunset. We do not stay at the first lake but the second with a large colony of Kirghiz. We sleep outdoors but eat with the Beg. He provided us with food, a fine black sheep, which he kills for us. After rice they give us small, fried pieces of lamb, which are very good. In return we gave him presents, rice, flour and tea. It is one of the finest days we have had in Central Asia. [The] Karakul [Lakes] are at the base of Mustagh Ata, the most famous mountain in the Pamirs, over 24,000 feet. [In the morning there is] frost inside the tent. [It is] cold and windy but clear. Gruel for breakfast, flour sifted into boiling water.

The diet usually was rich in protein and fat, a necessity in the cold and at that altitude.

> [We lay over a day] and walk around the valley by the lake. [The Kirghiz] are fascinated with our tent. They giggle at the zippers. They are also curious about the contents of our bags. We go up a narrow ravine and sit in the lee of the rocks and read *The Education of Henry Adams.* The camels graze, as do the many yaks in the valley. We hitch a ride on a camel; [it is] more comfortable than we supposed it would be. The fur is so thick on the top of the head, and the ears are small.

Western technology, in the form of a zipper, gave them the status of wizards. The locals lumped them with the British, an abstract but considerable presence, and paid the necessary respect:

> They boil part of a sheep for us, serving first a soup, then various tidbits on the inevitable dirty cloth, the head, liver, and kidney. Bob eats an eye and likes it. The Kirghiz women are excellent weavers, making strong bands to hold their tents. They wear turbans and silver and coral jewelry.

The Ransoms were unique among Americans as to what they not only ate but also enjoyed. For Vera, however, sheep eyes joined Philippine dog on the "don't eat" list. Were they the first or only persons ever to read Henry Adams' classic while crossing the Pamirs?

> One of the women is named Chutan, her husband, Tashtimurbez. They invite us into their tent for a soft, thin pancake which one eats with sour cream. We are very near the [Soviet] border.

The delicacy sounds like a blini, which was apt considering that they were traveling near a Russian dominated area.

> Fateh Ali tells [the tribes people] that the Americans are coming. They reply, "Come into our tent." They do not know what sort of animal Americans are. They have never heard of Chang Kai Shek or Mesud [the local leader in Sinkiang]. They only know the magistrate at Tashkurhan and of General Tsahao in Kashgar. They did know of Chen Tsi Tai [the military governor of Sinkiang] and thought him the king . . . . They do not know about the world. That is the business of government and of God. They do know about yaks, sheep and where to find grass, so they say. Their greatest problem is finding food. They have no land to cultivate. They trade sheep and sheepskins and butter for rice and flower. During Chen Tsi Tai's time they could not speak with foreigners. If they did they would be killed. Now it is easier because

> there is more freedom. When asked if conditions have changed in the past 25 years they do not answer. They are afraid that there is a spy in their midst.

Bob crouched in the nomads' low tent in his furry Uighur hat, asking his questions, which either were not understood or yielded only guarded replies. In this region where three borders meet there had been unrest, and it was better to say little or nothing at all.

After a day's rest they went on toward the next police post.

> October 21: to Tagharma. Up early. Fateh Ali's camel leaves at 3:30 a.m., we at 6:30. We first eat some mutton. We also leave a present of 1/4 lb of Lipton tea, rice and flour. We also bought another saddlebag for another 1/4 lb of Lipton tea. We are in full regalia: sheepskin coats, fur hats and felt boots. We ride to the end of the valley. The sun rises into a clear sky but there are clouds over Mustagh Ata. At the police post at the end of the valley we stop for tea and fried bits of mutton. The police are Tadjiks and Uzbeks. They send one guard with us, one with the caravan. We can see mountains that are in Russia.

Fateh Ali's departure in the middle of the night indicated his desire to take advantage of a clear sky.

> We race up the pass, which is not high. Mustagh Ata looms on the left, Russian territory on the right, perhaps an hour away. There are many passes along the way to Tashgurghan into Russia. We ride through rolling country, the trail is bare gravel or dirt. A herd of Ovi Poli race across the trail. The soldier with us shoots twice but misses both times. We ride out of a gentle ravine into another valley. Bob and I are tired of riding

> and walk, stumbling along. Riding is pleasant and easy but very long, and I am sore. Fateh Ata makes the caravan do two stages.

Ovi Poli are mountain sheep. Fateh Ali pushed the caravan ahead as quickly as strength and daylight would allow.

> We meet other travelers along the way. We always say Salaamat, which means, "are you well?" Some of the riders leap from their horses to hold one's hands between their two hands. We meet more Kirghiz from Afghanistan. They have white camels. They are fleeing into China. There are too many restrictions in Afghanistan.

The Kirghiz were fleeing into a revolution with little idea what they would face, although for the next two years, and even after the Communists took over, the Chinese hold on the mountainous west was tenuous. The geography is so complex that it remains possible to move back and forth across parts of this border freely even today.

> We move slowly through the Tagharma Valley, two hours to the next police post. It is far away, though it looks so near. My entry is ignominious – I must walk because I am so sore. The soldiers come out to meet us. We are escorted to a granary . . . filled with much wheat. Bob scrambles some eggs, which are delicious. The sky is overcast at sunset, except for the horizon just. ahead. We are very tired from a long day – eleven hours. We must have covered at least 35 miles.

Thirty-five miles is a very long day, even if partly on horseback. The next day they pushed on.

> October 22nd, Tashgurghan. We ride first across a valley into a . . . ravine cut by a small river in which we can see fish. Just as we reach this beautiful place two black and white ducks with bright orange feet fly off, . . . We meet more travelers . . . who race to meet us, leaping from their horses. We make a triumphal entry into Tashgurghan where all greet Fateh Ali. Even he dismounts at the magistrate's office. . . . The people are Tadzhik, Uzbek or Kirghiz. There are ruins of an old fort. We ride up the last small hill to rejoin Fateh Ali. We have a guest room, which is lined with felt for warmth. They serve us tea and flat, round Indian bread, . . . butter, jam, black tea, sugar, milk and a hard sponge cake, all of which is excellent.

The stage that day was not particularly long, not compared with the thirty-five miles the day before, and they had the energy to join in the celebration of Fateh Ali's arrival in his home village.

> The Kirghiz chief comes to say hello and also goodbye. He is quite tall and wears a wonderful fox hat. He invites us to stay with him near Mitaka. I take a picture of Bob wearing the wonderful hat and we decide we must buy it or one like it. There are also three mail couriers at this station, one carrying a piece of the British flag, which appears to be his badge of office and protection. They wear oatmeal colored wool coats and pants. It is very nice material but seems to me much too lightweight. They also carry very special passports which have been stamped by the Chinese representative in New Delhi.
>
> We are served lunch, which consists of lots of tea followed very quickly by pigeon, which tastes fine but is very fatty. Fateh Ali's brother shot 26 of these birds.

Vera added:

> The Kirghiz chief has lands in Afghanistan and also China. He lives wherever life is better. He says there is no trade now into Afghanistan, which is 22 stages to the point where you can get a truck to Kabul.

Bob and Vera had come eight stages from Kashgar. Although they were more than 160 miles into the Pamirs and could see Mustagh Ata, they had not yet reached a high pass.

> Today is the most heavenly day, clear blue sky with fleecy clouds. We are both sunbathing in the courtyard in our shirtsleeves. We just hope that the weather continues like this. Next week we will have to cross Mitaka pass, which is over 15,000 feet. It is already covered with snow up to the knees, but they say it is not cold. Before we reach the pass, Bob is going to join a hunt for wild sheep, ovi poli, found only in this small area. The pass is the border [with India.] It will take eight more days of riding to reach Misgar, the first village on the Indian side.

It would take many more days after that to reach an actual road. Cold, of course, is a relative term. It may not have seemed cold to the local tribesmen, but at 15,000 feet, even a few hundred yards breaking through snow would be cold and exhausting.

> Our servant does all the camp things, such as building fires, making breakfast early in the morning, washing dishes and clothes and so on. Bob gets upset when he sees him cook. Reminds me of Dad and the servant problem. We ordered fried chicken yesterday. Bob happened to look in the pot and saw them stewing away. His blood pressure rose and his voice, too. There was no need for this because the chicken turned out to be fried

> and was delicious. Even Bob had to admit it. Arab Jon [our cook] has a different system: first parboil the chickens and then fry. He says otherwise they are tough, and I think that he's right.

Mr. Prock had a hard time instructing the household help in Pennsylvania. Even though Bob sometimes disagreed with the way things were done, camping with servants was luxurious. The Ransoms were awakened with bed tea. There was no need to gather fuel for the fire or to do much of anything else, although Bob sometimes cooked, usually dishes he had learned during his days fishing and camping in Oregon.

Bob and Vera had hired a servant only at Eric Shipton's urging. To do otherwise would have been bad form, he'd said. Though Bob and Vera had originally objected to this unfair system, few of the servants would rather have been unemployed. In a Third World economy, employment by Westerners is usually a plum job. Once they began their trip, both Bob and Vera apparently came to understand the value of assistance and to recognize the value of Fateh Ali and Arab Jon.

They even met Fateh Ali's wife, although Vera was not much impressed by her status.

> Fateh Ali has gone off to a nearby village for a holiday celebration. We were invited but declined so that we could write letters. His brother went along, two assistants and three young boys who sat behind the riders. The boys go everywhere. But the girls and women are absolute slaves to their small house and courtyard. I made an appointment yesterday, with much formality, to meet Mrs. Fateh Ali. Bob thought he was going, too, but that is not the custom. Mrs. Fateh Ali was dressed in her finery, and we drank tea, and the women stood around. Fateh Ali's brother acted as interpreter. Women from Hunza are not veiled, but they might as well be. They do not appear before men. Even in my presence she held a white cloth in front of her mouth.

Vera described Mrs. Ali's flamboyantly striped skirt, yellow coat, and a red hat. She looked shyly at Vera and only sideways. Vera described her as Tadzhik, with strong features.

They appreciated Fateh Ali's fine house, which was white inside, with cheerful, pastel decorations.

Vera wrote of recent events:

> In 1945 the Russians came over the mountains, probably simultaneously with the Ili incident. The Chinese military fled. The Chinese representative was killed. Fateh Ali's house was sacked and partially destroyed. The Russians stayed for over a year. At first [everyone] liked them because they had a good platform, but they do not like them now because they did not follow through. The Chinese government [currently] is better. There are probably many spies here.

Bob sat on the floor, asking Fateh Ali and anyone else his lawyerly questions, trying to learn about local political situation. The Nationalists were considered better because they were in power in the area and it was wiser to say nice things about whomever that was, especially to two Americans who, Fateh Ali knew, had been welcomed by the Chinese.

The Ili incident involved fighting between Uighur tribesmen and Chinese troops in the Ili Valley over Uighur independence. That conflict stretches back into the 19th Century and continues today, although now the Uighar protests rarely involve violence.

Bob and Vera also talked at some length with Fateh Ali about the status of local women:

> Women [are] prisoners. Fateh Ali says this is not good, [that] the Western way is better. Educated Indian women are different, but he cannot send his daughter to school [in India] until the Mir of Hunza does. Fateh Ali has four camels grazing near the border. A good camel costs 300 [Indian] rupees or about $175 U.S. He needs them to send to Kashgar for supplies. There is very little to buy here.

On the future of India, Fateh Ali commented with some insight:

> Says freedom a good thing but [he does] not think that the Indian governors are honest like the English. Indians give government jobs to family [members] regardless of qualifications.

During this short pause in Fateh Ali's village, Bob and Vera made further arrangements. As she described in a letter to her parents:

> The local magistrate has written letters to the headmen, who are called Begs, all the way from here to India. They are supposed to greet us and provide us with shelter and firewood. The Mir of Hunza is also expecting us. He speaks perfect English. I know I wrote to you about Hunza. It is a tiny state in a valley where polo originated.
>
> This is really fabulous stuff. You feel so medieval riding on horses, meeting other travelers on horses or camels or donkeys. You always say "Salaam" with your hand over your heart. And they look so fabulous with their fur hats, handmade leather boots, colorful shirts . . . , and beards of every description. We met some Afghans the other day. 56 Kirghiz families are fleeing from Afghanistan to China. They say that they fear the Russians; others say that the local government is too strict. It's hard to get the facts.

The southwest corner of Sinkiang is a crossroads, with Hunzas, Kirghiz, Pakistanis, Tadzhiks, Turkis, Uighurs and even Chinese mingling along the trade routes. At that time there was frequent conflict, between the Chinese and Russians, to say nothing of between India and Pakistan, all still engaged the Great Game in altered form. Although there was no warfare during Bob and Vera's trek, conflict was never far away. There also were bandits.

"We are very close to the Russian border, about seven miles, we think. We have been looking at Russian mountains for the past seven days." Vera viewed the fundamental problem as conflict among great powers rather than ethnic or tribal.

Vera wrote of other things in her last letter from China:

> Our camera still works. We have nine and a half rolls left for the rest of the trip. Wish we had more. Here in Tashgurghan we feel like professionals. So many requests to take pictures. We did photograph the magistrate and his family and our host, Fateh Ali. The film will be developed in Srinagar. We will have over 250 pictures!
>
> Our clothes are just right. You'd be amazed how warm we are in our padded suits. When the wind blows, which it has only one morning, we wear our sheepskins and felt boots and are perfectly comfortable. At night we are warm, too; our Army sleeping bags inside the sheepskin bags [provide] good insulation.

The U.S. Army down-filled mummy bags, which they had bought from the Paxtons in Urumchi, were very warm and adequate even at altitude. Encased in a sheepskin bag, the combination would have kept them warm at least down to zero degrees Fahrenheit. This gives some idea of how cold they expected it to be. There were other challenges:

> I thought I would learn to ride on this trip. I suppose I will learn something. But the horses are so slow and

> unresponsive. They are accustomed to walking in a caravan. It is necessary to beat them constantly to get them to go into a fast walk.

Bob added in a handwritten note at the bottom of the letter: "Your daughter is amazing on a horse. She rides like mad and seems to love it. Some centaur way back in your family, no doubt." And Vera closed, saying: "This caravan life is fine. Bob likes it, too."

Despite this, things did not necessarily go smoothly. Vera wrote:

> Delay, Delay. Holiday delayed until Saturday. There were no eggs, chicken or butter in the bazaar. The Magistrate sent an order that these be brought for us. We took pictures of him and his family, including a girl of 14, dressed in red, who was married a week ago to their 14 year old son. He is very tiny.

The Tadzhik policeman was born over the Soviet border. He wore a hat with a fur visor, like a Russian Hussar. They photographed him, and also a very rich Beg, who wore a velvet belt with silver ornamentation.

Bob and Vera busied themselves during the delay sewing more bags to carry equipment and food. They also located flashlight batteries on the bazaar but were upset that they cost 75 cents each. Bob repaired Vera's glasses.

Beyond remarking that they were held up, the delay did not seem to give them any thought of returning to Kashgar to winter with the Shiptons. They wanted to continue, and on Friday, October 24th, quite late in the year to begin a month more travel in the Himalayas, Vera posted the final letter to her parents. They would be in Pakistan before it reached its destination.

> Tashgurghan is the last important station of the Chinese post. This letter will go by pony express to Kashgar, from there to Tihwa by pony cart . . . . This will take 26 days under the most favorable conditions.
>
> We love the horseback trip. It took us seven riding days to get here. On one day we did a double stage. It must have covered 35 miles. We rode like mad from 6:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Bob and I then reneged and walked. Most ignoble to do this. Another day we didn't reach our campsite until 8 p.m. Pitch dark by that time. The way was so stony that it was impossible for the horses to do more than creep along. We curled up in our sheepskins and were sound asleep when the caravan arrived . . . .

It is unclear if they even ate dinner on such days.

> We always travel ahead of the caravan. We are 12 horses with three pony drivers. The pony men and packhorses walk the entire way, 675 miles. We ride ahead and reach our destination two of three hours ahead . . . .

At last she states distance they believed that they would travel from Kashgar over the mountains and ultimately into India or Pakistan. This was almost the length of California, but continuously at elevation. Also, without being aware of it they escaped one of the most violent revolutions in human history and descended toward the slaughter that resulted from the partition of India.

But they did not begin that day:

> We have been held up because a religious festival has been postponed. The Moslem priests says Saturday is the tenth day of the tenth moon; the native people were prepared to have a holiday today. The priest won out. Tomorrow we will go with Fateh Ali Kahn, our Indian friend, to visit all the hot shots and eat mutton.

They could do nothing about it because Fateh Ali wanted to be part of the celebration.

> [We] visited . . . 12 houses. Fateh Ali has a vast feast: mutton cooked divinely, also hard sponge cake, melon, raisins, nuts, a strange, small dried fruit from Hunza, mulberries, tea and bread. At most of the houses we just walk in, sit down and then walk right out again. But we stayed where mutton was served, the magistrate's, one trader's, the Beg's and at a rich man who's had four wives but no children. We also stay a reasonable time where fruit is served: melon, grapes, pears, and even pomegranates. We must ride to the Magistrates, the Beg's and the rich man's. There are 25 to 30 of us stomping off on our horses. The Police loaned Bob a horse so short that his feet almost reach the ground. At the last house they killed a sheep in order to play a game in the flat square at the end of the town. It is rough and tough. They ride their horses like mad.

They had been pushing hard for a week; this was a chance to restore themselves for the most strenuous part of the trip.

Late the next morning they rode off from Tashgurhan well ahead of the caravan, moving to the south and west just as the sun caught the high peaks of the Muztagh Ata. This range joins the Pamirs to the Karakorams very close where the trail begins the climb to the pass into India. It was a long time before Bob and Vera felt the sun's warmth. The two of them were alone, the only sounds the horses' steaming breath and hooves against the trail's stones.

Vera recorded her last impressions of Tashgurhan:

> October 25 to Julghar: The commander does not send two military escorts as promised. The Magistrate did lend us $100,000 Chinese [by then less than $3.00 U.S.] and orders six chickens, three pounds of ghee (we'd hoped for butter) and 28 eggs. Yesterday we had a long discussion with the military commander, the magistrate, and his assistant. Bob thumped for honest, fair government. They say that is what they have. We learned later that soldiers force men to sell their sheep below the market price. When the magistrate married off his fourteen year-old son, he ordered everyone in the District to send a present. He got 300 sheep, five camels, horses, yaks and money. He has a fine house, which he paid for with some of the sheep. The boy was never the less charming, a well-mannered *nouveau riche*. On the trail people kept asking Fateh Ali why he is traveling with the Russians [by which they meant Bob and Vera].

Problems arose:

> Fateh Ali's servant comes with us, a trader, and a representative from the magistrate [who] has a gun. He

> takes us on a short cut, which turns out to be very long. We go up into the right branch of the valley. It is better along the river. It is also clear and warm except at the nulas [ravines] where the wind whistles down. At the start my horse is struck in the leg by a stone. He is very lame. They say he will be better once he is bled. I exchange with Arab Jon. His horse is very slow.
>
> We meet a caravan coming out of India bringing mostly peppercorns. They also had 10-cent jars of Vaseline for the equivalent of $1 U.S. We bought 12 Indian Rupees from them. [The stage] was supposedly very short but we do not arrive until 4 p.m. The hut there is a dark hole with a blazing fire on the hearth and a huge cauldron set on top. The woman [who lives there] moans from a sprained back. Bob wishes he were a doctor. Dinner is rice and chicken; also wild sheep, which tastes excellent and is more tender than tame sheep. You can taste the wild animal. There is only one man in this establishment but many children. The ride was dull today, the trail stony with very few cultivated fields. There is no soil. We slept in the tent, and the wind blew all night.

With the wind howling, Vera died not sleep much that night.

The weather was holding, and despite her fatigue and lame horse, Vera seemed to enjoy herself.

> October 26th, to Dafdar: Fried ova poli for breakfast – superb. It is warm and sunny but the wind blows like mad. We are off early by 8:00 a.m. My horse is still lame, but even so we reach the headman's house by 11:00 a.m. He has a very large and cleverly built hearth with a platform around it; the pit for the fire in the center over which there is a large cauldron. The raised platform is covered with carpets and the walls with felt. Everyone suddenly is on a writing jag. Fateh Ali borrows a sheet of paper, then the trader who also wants a pencil. The

> ride was very easy, so short. We could have come through from Tashgurghan in one day. The land here is more fertile, with pastures and sheep. We followed the river. The walls were eroded. There are low mountains above with snow. It reminds us of chocolate with marshmallow sauce. We crossed the river and came into a fertile valley. Above the river are fifty or more houses. We stay with the Waji. One local woman's cousin was killed by Chen Doban, the ogre. Doban means "governor." They make a superb bread for us: Flour, melted ghee, sliced onions, milk, all kneaded into a stiff mass. You take a piece of dough, mould it into a cone with a knife, slash the sides in a twirl, pinch off the top, punch holes with a quill. These are then baked on the sides of the oven. They are really wonderful. We ate these as hors d'oeuvres with Scotch highballs. Then we had pilau with chicken and onions. Fateh Ali had them kill a goat. They cut it up in the courtyard and carry the pieces in the skin inside to cook.
>
> Bob and I walked up on the bluff facing toward the west. There are several large tombs along this ridge. They are shaped differently than others we have seen: square with wooden latticework in front. They are surrounded by still other tombs which are rectangles outlined by stones showing through the mud. There are horns of wild sheep around for luck. From the ridge [we had] a fine view of the valley. The ploughed fields form patterns. Then there are enclosed compounds with trees, and herds of sheep and goats. Later we meet horsemen and men on camels ride. These Waji have severe features. Some appear Semitic. It is a fine evening. The moon and stars are very clear.

Vera's notes provide the daily rhythm of the trip:

> October 27th, to Baik: Goat for breakfast. Very good, better than mutton. We are off early, at 7:30 by ourselves. We ride to the end of the valley and turn right,

> follow the river. We hear shouting. A man on the other side runs to stop us. He says that Fateh Ali says we are on the wrong wide of the river. Would have been okay. It would only have been necessary to cross later. Bob is very angry, wondering why we can't cross where we wish. Quite a decent river.
>
> The valley itself narrows and then widens again to grassy meadows with sheep and large yaks. There are also several poor yurts. Now there are patches of snow on the path. We climb a steep, rock-strewn slope. We are definitely in the mountains, now, and encounter more snow patches. The trail rises and falls and then reaches a small, place [out of the wind] called Baik Karaul, where there is a shelter. This consists of a small, mud fort with a lone soldier on the rampart holding a gun. Directly opposite there is a break in the mountains, which leads into Russia.

They had climbed to over 14,000 feet. Camping in the snow, with the prospect of leading their horses through the drifts or even being caught for several days in a village that may not have had sufficient food for them was not comforting. At least the security situation appeared in hand.

> There are also Tadjik soldiers. The commander is married to an Uighur. His child was born here. The women wear necklaces, which are very nice, strings of colored beads between silver bands, formed like a choker. Lunch by a stream, with mutton, bread and clear water. The whole stage took seven hours.
>
> We are given tea and also wild sheep, but this one is old and tough. I rode my pony today. He is better after the application of a hot, steel rod [to his hoof].

The risks of the trip were mounting up. The implication of a lame horse was serious but apparently turned out well. It was reassuring that Fateh Ali was able to doctor Vera's horse. Considering the number of skeletons of pack animals that Eric Shipton reported seeing when he crossed this section of the Pamirs, Vera's horse was lucky that it was not left behind.

> We saw a small boy wearing a fox hat riding a large yak and driving two more. We wanted to take his picture, but he jumped off the yak just we approached. We are given a private room with its own fire. We boil water and bathe. The Tadjik commander is very nice. We have more wild sheep for lunch and noodle soup for dinner. The commander arranges for dancing in the main room. Bob joins in. A soldier marches on the roof all night long. We feel as if we are living back in an apartment with a noisy neighbor upstairs.

Even though security was tight, that evening they definitely had fun, although not much sleep.

The next morning the wind returned.

> October 28th, to Mintaka: tea and scrambled eggs a' la Robert Ransom in our room. It is blowing hard and we are slow starting. Bob and I get off by ourselves. We climbed a narrow valley with the stream on the right, tall mountains on either side. Along the way I take a picture with Bob and a shepherd and the mountains behind. This is good grazing land and [there are] are large herds of sheep, goats and yaks on both sides of the river. It blows hard until 10:30, even though it is a clear, sunny day. We

> ride up to a tent beside the stream. The Tadjiks invite us in. They are affluent and friendly. They give us bread and a mixture of butter and cream which is excellent. We took a picture of them standing in front of their tent like wooden Indians.

By that point they were nearing the first high pass.

> After four hours we reach Karoul where we will turn toward the south. This is a large, sheltered place with a police post. It is the last post in China. There are clusters of yurts, and we take a picture of some Afghans putting one up, as well as three snaps of Fateh Ali. There are also large, handsome camels and one has a baby, which is so nasty that it was spitting. Their owners have inserted bits through their noses, which are all bloody.

It does not seem surprising that the young camel spit.

> There are many Afghans here. Better looking than the local Kirghiz but with few teeth. They wear red dresses, a tomato red. These have girdles, but worn low, below the stomach, so they all look pregnant. They decorate the dresses with mother of pearl buttons.

A practical reason for the low-slung belt-like girdles is that they can be hiked up when riding.

> We visit many of the tents. In one they are cutting up wild goat, while in another they are sewing a sheepskin coat, weaving, spinning and baking bread. They put the soft dough in a flat, round iron pan, press it down with their hands, cover this with an iron lid, and put hot coals on top. The result is soft and not very good. They always spread a tablecloth. Our guest tent is quite clean. We are offered tea. The custom is to drink and then pass around the bowl. They [also] slaughter a sheep, cut it up and throw the gall bladder to the dogs. They love it.

> Pieces of mutton hang from pegs set in the tent's framework. They also have handmade needles. These Afghans are all one family and speak Turki.

It is difficult to know who these people were because the Pushtuns, who make up the majority of the Afghan people, speak a dialect of Farsi. Afghanistan has a diverse population, with many Tadjiks, Uzbecks and other tribal peoples in addition to the Pushtuns. These very likely had advanced into the Pamirs from the Walkan Corridor, a thin extension of Afghanistan that reaches east to the border of Sinkiang.

> October 29th, At Mintaka Karoul: Today we will hunt sheep. Such confusion about where we will get guns. Then no yaks appear. Finally we are to take two belonging to the guide. Bob and I use one. The saddle is too deep in the middle and a silver phallic symbol keeps getting in the way. The stirrups are also ridiculously short. Finally I ride behind Bob on a coat. We are both in agony. We go up the first nula on the left above the yurts.
>
> There is a soldier on a horse with us. The guide and Bob are constantly peering through field glasses. First the guide thinks he sees something, then Bob says "here, here." They never get together on anything and do not speak a common language. Fateh Ali has a chest cold and so does not join us. We go quite far up the nula. There is snow and ice over the stream. The guide climbs a very high hill. He has watery eyes and is toothless. He motions that he will get a good view by climbing quite high, but he sees nothing. So we return. It's too uncomfortable.

On this halt, high in the Pamirs, Vera began to be more concerned about the weather:

> Clouds slip over the blue sky and the wind blows hard. The yaks snort like steam engines. They move slowly and are very stubborn. I find that I hate yaks, so I walk most of the way back. We are not triumphant hunters. A caravan has arrived from Gilgit. There are now many horses across the river.
>
> An Afghan named Batashani explains to us that 15 years ago there was a lot of trade that came along this route but no longer. He wears black padded clothing, black boots and a red cap covered by an icy blue turban and has a very strong face. He has a wife and children in Yarkand [near Kashgar]. Formerly he was the Afghan consul there. There is a rumor that the traders [used to bring] opium. Now they bring only horses, which is fine.
>
> Everyone is fascinated to look at our maps. A pilau finally arrives at 8 p.m. We set our watches by this and later confirm that we are right.

They were soon to part from Fateh Ali, who was not only well known and respected in the region but had arranged so many things and, perhaps more importantly, provided a sense of security. They now would have to deal with the language barrier with what little English their servant Arab Jon spoke.

> October 30, to Lupgas: Confer with pony driver and Arab Jon this morning. Our last day with interpreter. Ramon Jul Hahn, the Afghan Beg [is] here. Very curious about world affairs. Bob rah rahs for democracy. [We] give him a present of rice, flour and onions. We also

> gave Fateh Ali a U.S. dollar. He is very pleased. We say goodbyes to his camels, too. The young one is seven months old. Then we start down the river, which leads to the Kilik trail, and then left up to Mintaka Karoul. We follow a stream along a narrow, winding valley. It is very pretty. We can see several yurts up the Mintaka Karoul just before we leave the settled area. There is a caravan rounding a bend and entering the valley. We are headed toward a village called Lupgas.
>
> After lunching by the stream, we arrive at about 1 p.m. It is cloudy over the big mountain up ahead. They are putting up two tents and they prepare a small one for us. Bob has trouble finding 6'2" to stretch out. They give us fried chicken broiled over a yak dung fire. Women and children are always coming to visit. They have a huge herd of sheep and goats, nearly 300. We spend the night in this small, sheltered place.

On Halloween they were close to the pass they had to cross to reach the Gilgit and what had become northern Pakistan.

> October 31, to Murkushi: Up early and eat eggs, butter and bread. We give away 24,000 Chinese dollars and save 8,000 as souvenirs – red, handsome money. We are off at 7 a.m. It is a heavenly morning with the sun on a high peak. We move up a snow-strewn valley. We would have gone up over a glacier, but Arab Jon comes to get us. The trail goes off obliquely to the right. It is very sheer and winds around, making a series of switchbacks. Bob's horse falls down flat twice, so he walks. It's hard going. His horse's feedbag broke and it had the gloves tied to it, so they are now lost. Bob mounts near the top but soon falls off into the soft snow. His saddle came off completely.

Loss of the gloves seems a small thing, but it meant cold hands for the remainder of the high altitude stages. Without Fateh Ali things already had gone wrong.

> [We see] another caravan and pass Hunza mail carriers. It is very rocky coming toward the top. It takes about three hours. There is a dak [a bungalow.] The other side seems less precipitous. There are black stones among the gravel and jagged, rocky peaks. We are warm and remove our furs. We have lunch among the rocks. The caravan goes out of sight. The pass is 15,300 feet. A horse shies at a tree, really a dead stump, a very weird shape. We are now near the high peak we saw from Lupgas, and can now look down the stormy valley, past the glacier, toward Murkushi. [We are] looking into India.

13. HUNZA

We . . . go on the left side of the river after a while. It is less rocky. The glacier, a mass of dirty ice, terminates at the end of a precipitous down pitch. Then [we go] along a rocky ledge. We lose the trail several times among the rocks and cross the river, then back again. It is a long descent on a rocky ledge to Murkushi.

On this last descent the trees are windblown; [there are] evergreens on the right side, some with pungent berries. Leafless trees on the other side trail up the slope of the mountains. To go to Misgar we turn left. A caravan arrives ahead. We arrive at 3:30 after eight and a half hours. My legs are so stiff. The horses are so stubborn about [climbing] up and crossing an iced-edged stream. We lay down on white felt in a dak. It has a fireplace and a veranda. The walls are smoothed over inside and out. There are two other stone and mud houses and two stables. No one lives here. The pony men eat barbecued liver and stew. We have fried chicken again. The chicken is so cold that Bob freezes his hand putting garlic

> inside. [In comparison the air] seems warm. [But] at lunch the water in our canteen [was] frozen.

It was a very hard day, cold in a way that sapped the strength; they had reached the first guesthouse built and maintained by the Raj.

Without Fateh Ali Bob and Vera had to manage their servants themselves. Vera observed:

> Everyone can order around someone: At Lupgas, Arab John had a boy to peel and slice garlic, and ordered him to throw away water, or bring water. It is not only the same boy. They are friends of the women of the house.
>
> It is fun sitting here, sipping tea, the driver cooking, a mountain view out the open door and from the pane less window. After dark three men from Hunza arrive with yaks and sheep. They are from Kilik and one speaks some English.

Kilik is a village near a pass that Bob and Vera did not take.

> November 1, to Misgar: Five hours from Murkushi, down hill but stony. An English speaking Hunza catches up to us just in time to [tell us] to cross the river and go up the left side. We were about to go over stones and would have had a bad time. The trail becomes very narrow. The mountains are so high that there is no sunlight until 10:30. These mountains on this side of the pass are all jagged peaks and ridges. The gorge is very narrow. The river is fast, with lots of water. We see two scary bridges for sheep and a fort abandoned just two days ago. There is a lonely peak covered with snow behind the fort we can hardly see.

When Vera said it was precipitous, she meant a near cliff of hundreds of feet.

> Misgar is on a flat plateau about two miles long. All the soil is cultivated. There are rows of poplars, apricot trees and plums. The leaves are changing. It is a lovely sight.
>
> The water shed into the river is typical countryside. There are adobe houses with white verandas and wood trim. There are stone fences everywhere for corrals and to protect trees and fields.
>
> We stay with the telegraph master and his staff, G. Mustaga Kahn Durani and G. Mohammed Gilani, who is about 25, a poet and soulful. He wants to go to the United States to study engineering.
>
> They serve us Kashmiri tea from Darjeeling, with milk, sugar, cinnamon, and fine almonds and apples. The telegraph men insist on smoking a hookah (hubble bubble) which is very strong. We have a long talk with them about Pakistan and the Moslem religion which has three sects. Hunza men follow the Aga Kahn. These men are Sunni. There are also Shiites. Gilani is angry at their rulers, whom he believes are parasites and keep people ignorant. He is bitter because he did not receive a scientific education. We talk until eleven. Although Gilani is only 25, he has a wife and child. He is angry that his father made him marry at 20 and take on the burden and responsibilities. The Punjabi's are fighting the Kashmiri ruler who has declared for India. Ten miles from Srinagar the telegraph lines were cut off two days ago, so there have been no cables or word from home.

If the telegraph lines had not been cut they could have sent a telegram to the United States announcing their arrival. It was a major disappointment not to take the more left-hand trail down into the Vale of Kashmir.

> Bob chats with the Mir and gets a good reception. The Mir has just declared for Pakistan. He is Mir of Naga, too. He hates the Hindus. [According to him] they make cow urine holy and rub pots with cow dung. They also have a caste system. I have a nasty cold. Bob shaved off his whiskers.

Once they crossed the pass, Bob and Vera moved into the fringes of the Moslem-Hindu conflict. The news from Srinagar was ominous. Vera took time to write.

> November 2, to Gircha: [It's] warm and sunny. We only have ten rupees to last until Gilmut. The money has not come through from Gilgit because of the troubles.

They had expected money to be wired. Without it, they had to bluff their way the next few days.

> Today was a six hour march, a lulu. The trail is two feet wide. And there were places where slides have taken out the trail and we had to climb over large stones. There was a drop from 500 to 2000 feet down to the Kilik river. At one point a herd of sheep were being coaxed along the steep trail toward us. It was too frightening to look back and take a picture. The sun shone toward us all day, although Bob did get one of me going around a bend and I took one of a particularly precipitous cliff. We met travelers going from Yarkand [in China] to Bombay. Along the way we also met a relative of the Mir we met in Misgar, who was on his way to Yarkand to visit his land.

The travelers were the first Haji Bob and Vera met, although she does not yet identify them as such. It remains difficult for an American to understand religious fervor that leads a difficult a trip on horseback that begins with a journey across western China and over the Himalayas in order to visit a religious shrine.

> The trail practically fell down a steep slope to where two rivers meet. We made our way down to the bridge, then up the steep switchbacks to a rocky trail. Bob was very unhappy. He walks even though he has Arab Jon's horse, which is more sure-footed than any other. We crossed the river once more over a swinging, cable bridge that was terrifying. The pony driver led my horse over. The pony man leads a one-eyed horse on the worst of the trail.
>
> Once we reached Gircha, I took a picture of a 20,000-foot peak from the bungalow's window. Arab Jon and the head pony man posed for us. Our dak is at the highest point in the village, looking down. Gircha is like Misgar, with houses and trees, only smaller.

In other ways many things were now different. They were no longer among nomads but towns people used to trading. These mountain torrents, which merged into small rivers, eventually formed the headwaters of the Indus.

> The Nabob and everyone else come to see us. The pony men open up their wares: copper tea pots, fur hats with leather trim and ear flaps, printed material and black padded chaps for which they asked only 15 rupees, which is very inexpensive. The Mir's representative wants to

> buy it for ten, which would be impossible even in Kashgar. 15 is a fair price and I am surprised it is so low. They are like a bunch of old women who can't decide. They even cackle. No sales occur. The pony man lends us a leg of lamb and firewood, 15 good pieces for a single rupee. The mountains on the west side of the valley are so high that the sun leaves the valley before 4 o'clock. Bargaining and chatting continue after dark outside our window. The schoolmaster is there. He is unctuous and unattractive. He wants ten lbs of rice, and also a capon for 10 rupees. They sell for 15 to someone else and even at that are a bargain.

Vera zeroed in on the local market for food. It provided a diversion after what had been one of the most difficult and dismaying days of the entire trip. The next day was little better:

> November 3, to Kaiber: We traveled with a caravan today, down through several small villages, following the river. We crossed a wooden bridge with cable support. The way was easy although still stony. There were only a few places that were narrow and steep. Arab Jon, riding Bob's former horse, had to walk because the horse is so stumbly. It was cloudy and overcast. We reached Kaiber about 1:30 even though we stopped for lunch earlier. A pathetic character sat with us as we ate. We exchanged an apple for some apricots.
>
> The moment we arrived in Kaiber the pony men displayed their wares. Everyone holds up the copper tea pot to see if there are holes but no one buys.
>
> The arbob sold us a chicken for two rupees, potatoes for one and bread for one. The bread was similar to but not as good as tortillas. We also got seven flat hard breads. A dozen eggs cost one rupee, two rupees for a

> "chowkidar."[12] We are broke; only one rupee left. The arbor insists on his four and Arab Jon seems to agree. After all, he is an arbob. Okay, though, to forget the rupees for the chowkidar.
>
> Fire for dinner and breakfast. The dak reminds us of 21 Alta. The room is very small, with a corner fireplace and beam ceiling. It was furnished with a chair and a rope bed. We did not use the bed. There was a strip of rug on the floor, and a square room for a shower with a sloping stone outlet in the wall for the water. There was another small, square room for the toilet.

For many years Bob and Vera lived part of each year at 21 Alta Street on Telegraph Hill in San Francisco, spending much of the rest of the time in Paris.

> We invited the arbob and two others for tea. We put raisins and apricots before them. One guy put all of them in his sash. I think that the arbob got none, so I gave some to him. He hands these to the other guy who pockets them again. Arab Jon skins a chicken but throws away the wings, which I salvage. Now we will eat the entire chicken: back, liver, heart. Arab Jon thinks it is not worth bothering because these other parts are too small.
>
> The sky cleared in the late afternoon. We walked up the gorge until we could see the snow-capped conical peak. Eric Shipton told us that he climbed the peak behind the dak to see the thirty-mile long Baltura glacier. I cannot figure out what he meant by "behind." The mountains look ominous, shale slopes and rocky, jagged tops.

---

[12] "Chowkidar," literally "one who has the chowki or chair," also can mean a servant who brings the drinks.

They had their hands full completing the trip they were on:

> November 4, to Pasu: Bob and I leave first, following the river, along a jagged trail. We are out over our saddles because it is so steep, and it is tough on the horses. Then we wind down onto the black debris at the end of the Baltura glacier. It's an ugly nasty thing. Two men await us with yaks. We transferred some of our baggage. The glaciers ice was exposed only in a few places. It was otherwise covered with black stones and is quite dirty. In some places the ice had melted to form pools of green, muddy water. One can see a large snowy peak at the end. The trail goes way up and down over the ice. We are much more comfortable riding these yaks. The horses could not have made it with any encumbrance. Without the yaks we would have walked. We judge that it is about 1-1/2 miles across. This is a very short day, only about 12 miles. We soon reach Pasu, which is beside a wide, sprawling river bed. The mountains are still all around, the same jagged peaks. It is still extremely warm, beautiful and clear, but the wind blows in the afternoon.

And when the wind blew, despite the sun, in early November at that altitude they were cold.

> The dak in Pasu is quite fancy, with two rooms, each with a fireplace, and a separate shower and separate toilet. One room has carpet on the entire floor. There is a good single bed with woven straps, a carved chair and a simple chair. There is also a picture of the former Mir, . . . colored photos of the [King of England's] coronation, along with an explanation and an ad with the sponsor's name very small at the bottom. There is also a colored ad for ammunition, which shows the royal family.

So remote a place was still *de facto* a part of the British Empire.

> A tray of apples appears. This has been the custom since Gircha. The apples have improved and are quite good here. They do not have the custom here of wetting down the dirt. There is fine dust everywhere and in the throat, too. Men gather around the pony men and there is much talk. We give the yak men one rupee each. One is happy, the other not. There is more talk. A character appears with more apples, and he wants cigarettes but we have none. We gave him a piece of our last bread with butter and onions. Our lunch is so meager. In fact, our diet is near starvation. We do not have enough money to buy food, although it usually is unobtainable. Eggs are now one rupee for eight. In Kaiber we could get 12. Here we get only 20 lbs of wood for a rupee. In Gircha we got 30.

Somewhere in their baggage they had found a few more rupees.

> To us Hunza men look very similar to one another, and many look like westerners. The men spin. We seldom see women or girls. If they pass they will hold a sleeve to their mouths. At Kaiber one girl ran away from Bob in fright. Some Hunza men have bobbed hair or curls that show from under their hats. Some like to put asters in their hats. The men do not shave their heads.

The going was particularly difficult and the weather colder.

> November 5, to Gulmut: Bob walks ahead. [I did] not catch up until more than half way. Our character rides Bob's horse. I thought he was going to Gulmut and just being helpful. Instead he was chiseling [for] rupees. Furthermore, he got a free ride to his home which was half way along this stage. We crossed two glaciers on foot. We could see the ice of the first rolling up [ahead of us]. It is blowy, cold and overcast, the first day with no sun since Tokai.

The glaciers were a risk with which Bob and Vera had very little experience. Walking separately, if one of them had slipped off the trail or into a crevasse, the caravan might have passed right by.

> We met a large caravan bound for Kashgar, 20 horses, 20 donkeys, five camels and about 20 men. These Turki men look good after Hunza. There are also dogs walking with the caravan. The trail is easy, still rocky and with many switchbacks. We were motioned to a large parade ground which is used as a polo field. There we were met by the Mir's brother, who is also his secretary. He speaks English and invited us for lunch. We sat on the floor cross-legged on padded mats and ate from a low table with a white cloth, napkins, china and silverware. There were full courses, including soup, fish in cream sauce, an entire bird, a chagal which they hunted with hawks, followed by Jello with soft custard. The cook is from Hunza and did a fine job. He used to work for the English in Gilgit.

The Mir's brother brightened their day with an elegant lunch, a remarkable meal in such a place.

> During lunch we talked about politics. The Mir received a phone call from Gilgit's governor who asked the Mir to intercede so that he, the Governor, won't be killed. The Governor has been made a prisoner because he wanted Gilgit to join India, not Pakistan. He is an Indian and rules over 27,000 subjects. The Mir of Naga rules over 20,000. Mirs are absolute, his orders accepted without question. He settles all quarrels and believes that it would be a mistake to bring the machinery of the law here. 2,000 Hunzas served in the War and came back unchanged. The Mir's brother thinks that the empire will continue for at least another hundred years.

The empire to which he referred to is Hunza, which continued in federation with Pakistan until 1973, when Pakistan formally assumed all administrative powers.

> One Hunza studies at Oxford. The Mir hasn't heard from him in eight years. He is not a professor. The Mir has established schools similar to those established by the Aga Khan, who is reported to have said "Give a little education but not much." So in Gilgit they attend for two or three years. Aga Kahn provides 7,000 rupees to pay schoolmasters. The men in Gilgit are good infantrymen because they are good shots.

Gilgit had become part of Pakistan at independence.

> The guesthouse is at one end of the polo field, the Mir's palace is at the other. . . . We each bathed and I washed my hair. Now it is rainy and the fog is low. We had tea with the Mir and his Secretary. They served a good cake, hard with white icing.

The guesthouses had been built somewhat to a standard plan.

> I got to meet the Ranee. She wears cotton pajamas, which are full, a white sweater, and green, wedge slippers from Kashmir, which are very nice. She also has an embroidered skullcap and a sheer, pink scarf with white, randomly embroidered squares scattered across it. She also has many bracelets and two rings to a finger. She is poised and helps with the conversation but does not look straight at you but steals glances, lowers her head but keeps her eyes up. She has four daughters and one son.
>
> Then we saw three horses from Batashan on parade. They have long, thin legs and sleek, fringed trappings with leather reins. The Ranee's horse is pure white. We

> watch from a balcony. An orchestra sits below: three trumpeters, three drummers and three drummers who beat double drums. The percussion is wild and the orchestra keeps up. We could feel the rhythm. One musician looked like Groucho Marx. Several of the Hunzas dance, one with lots of style. They all have coats with long, floppy sleeves. They saluted the Mir both before and after.

Once again Bob and Vera are honored guests.

> Dinner was wonderful, with soup and fluffy rice with raisins and slivers of onions and curry. There is also a variety of watercress and lettuce. The main course was sliced mutton, potatoes, and turnips flavored with apples. Dessert was plums cooked with the white of an egg. Hard to describe but superb. And also apricots stuffed with almonds and, as always, clear, cold spring water.

After so many days on foot and horseback, eating when and what they could, the banquets were welcome.

> People here grow barley, wheat and vegetables, which include carrots, potatoes and turnips. There are also orchards with apples, pears, plums and apricots. In Baltit there are grapes. We listen to the Pakistani news and the BBC on a U.S. portable radio which runs on batteries. We also were able to borrow 100 Rupees. The Mir wants us to send things from the United States, ie: green sunglasses and neckties. We gave him Russian boots from the Russian Consul in Kashgar. He gave us 13 yards of narrow, brown camels' hair cloth and, for Bob, a Hunza hat. Bob also got a long whip with green and silver tassels. The Ranee gave me a Hunza hat, which she took two months to make. We slept by the fire.

The news from Pakistan was not good.

> November 6, to Atabad: We had breakfast beside the fireplace: cereal, scrambled eggs, bread and butter, and tea from a silver pot. We mounted and rode a mile. We followed two people who each had a hawk. We dispensed some Rupees, one to the arbob and two to the chowkidars. They wanted a half Rupee for the eggs I used to shampoo. We walked another mile and watched the men holler and throw stones to flush some birds, but it was too cloudy and none came. They let one of the hawks float down to a man below along the river. There is a ledge built for the Mir to stand on and let the hawks fly. The hawks respond to a call. The Mir and his men always ride stallions. The hunting dogs and the hawks accompany us. . . . The trail is built out from the rock on wooden bridges.

How Bob survived the trail suspended on the side of the cliff is unclear. It didn't bother Vera, and Bob once told us how she would call to him, "Bobbie, look down there." Bob rarely looked but kept his eyes straight ahead.

> The trail has a lot of slope to it but it is not too bad. We walk one section, which is just a ledge. It is scary but not so bad as at Misgar because it is not so high and rocks stand along the outside edge most of the way. Atabad is on a mesa over looking the river. The leaves are changing. Near the river there are eroded sandstone formations. The sun comes out and there is a fine view of the mountains.
>
> Two of the men fight over who is to be the arbob, and there is much screaming and hollering. The hawks also must be fed, and so there is much screaming and hollering about that. They want a Rupee to buy a chicken. There will be no hunting today, but perhaps tomorrow. There is also no food nor wood for our

> fireplace. The pony men give us a piece of their mutton. They tell us that the Mir's chef is coming, but that was the first that we had heard of it. Actually, it turned out that he was going to Baltit and will cook for us there. Down below the river roars. It is pale green, the color of a glacier.
>
> November 7, to Baltit: The trail is not too bad, with sand over firm stone most of the way. At Hammerabad we stop to hunt Chukor. Little boys chase up the hills and call and throw stones, but we have no luck again. There is, however, a beautiful lodge where we stop for the view. We leave Rupees for the arbob and two each for the men with the hawks. Soon we round a curve and can see Baltit. It is expansive compared to previous villages. It is situated on a broad slope and surrounded by snowy mountains. Across the valley is a great peak, Dumani, as the natives call it. A series of villages are separated by a gorge. . . . At the center is Baltit fort, which is 500 to 600 years old, and was necessary to defend against the Nagirs, the Hunzas' only enemies.

The river that cut the gorge they followed was the Hunza, which later joins the Gilgit, a major tributary of the Indus.

> The rest house, which the Mir built, is very luxurious, with many rugs, a fireplace but only one bed. In the guest book we find, among others names: Eric Shipton, Peter Fleming, someone named Milliard, and also Ted & Kermit Roosevelt. The food is excellent: stews, vegetables, and desserts. One could get fat here. We walk up to an old castle on a promontory. Perhaps it is a dream of a hunting lodge. There are also mosques, very old ones with primitive but rather nice carving. We meet an attractive young man who speaks English. He was educated at Srinagar. He arranges for a sheep for us, which costs 16 Rupees. The sheep has its last meal of leaves in the rest house garden. It is small but is plenty

> for us. We also drink wine, both white and red. It reminds us of homemade wine at home; the white is best.

It is remarkable that Bob and Vera managed to find such enticing food. Eric Shipton often did not do half so well in his travels, and Peter Fleming, in his account of his 1935 trip through the area, reported that he and his companion nearly froze and in the desert in southern Sinkiang came close to starving.

> November 8, to Nagir: Our new Hunza friend joined us. The trail was too steep for the horses. We walked down and crossed a bridge. We also forded a small river. Just before a dak there was an irrigation canal with a suspension bridge so narrow that we feared the horses could not cross. When the wind blows it is impassable. Then we went up a very narrow footpath, which the horses had to negotiate on their own. From then on it was fine except for one part where a slide had completely taken away the trail. We passed up through a series of villages, and then beneath a steep cliff with another slide. The area was once cultivated but no longer because there is no water. There are more snowy mountains surrounding this narrow valley. The fields seemed steeper.
>
> The Nagiri are much darker skinned than the Hunzas. They have clipped beards like St. Francis and wear brown chugs dyed dark with walnut bark. There are few walnuts in Hunza. We climb a very steep slope to the Mir's palace, which is perched on a long, narrow ledge. He has a charming guesthouse with good chairs, firm beds with woven, cloth supports, and a fireplace.

The accommodations were improving day by day.

We went for a nice ride, with fine views of the houses in the town, some with fall leaves on their roofs. They gather them to feed their goats. We had no lunch but met the Mir for tea and talk until into the evening. He is only 27. He was only 20 when his grandfather died. He had to interrupt his education. He has a four-year old son, who walked around being silly with his male nurse. The custom is to paint a black line around the children's eyes. We discussed the Moslem religion and purdah. He is for it.

The Mir is also the ultimate judge. There have been three murders during his reign, all justified because of adultery. Another punishment is banishment to live near the glacier where it is very cold. People marry beginning in December when there is no work to do. This period lasts two months. The Mir taxes caravans three Rupees for each horse loaded with trade goods. In Hunza there is a four Rupee tax. The Nagiris export fruit and nuts to Hunza, including apricots stuffed with almonds, and also grain. They do not drink. They are a different sect from Hunza. The Mir is religious. He prayed and we went and read a book by Larimore on the Hunza language. Larimore lived in Alibi for two years and is the only European to have studied that language.

We rode out to the Hoper Basin, which is being washed away by the glacier. The edge of the glacier seems to flare up. We could see how it was crumbling away and causing erosion. This is the largest glacier in the world outside of the Arctic circle and the South Pole. While we were there the sun disappeared from half of the valley at about 2:30 p.m. It took over an hour to ride to the glacier on horseback, while it is only a ten minute walk by a short, steep route. It is only ten miles from Nagir to Hunza. It took us four hours to ride from Hunza to Nagir and only three hours to return the next day to Baltit.

> November 10, return to Baltit: We thought today was Bob's birthday, but the Mir said that Monday was the tenth. So embarrassing. We had tea in bed and then breakfast with the Mir. The Mir brought his son for a photograph, and we also took a picture of the villagers bringing their annual tribute in firewood to the Mir. They came in a steady stream up the hill. It's still beautiful weather and quite warm. Our laundry has not only been washed but ironed. I rode our Hunza friend's Batashan horse, which is black with white dappling, so it is more like a very pale grey. It is a wonderful feeling because he goes bounding down the rocks at a very fast walk. So comfortable. I felt like a queen. Such a horse costs 500 Rupees.

By now Vera was quite a good rider, able to distinguish a good animal from the plug she had goaded for so many miles. She was also in excellent condition.

> Our friend is named Sajidullh Beg, and he is son of a Wazir named Inyat Ullh Beg. He speaks good English and rode to Nagir and back with us. He also loaned me his horse. His family should also have a Mir in it. They own the town of Misgar and receive 1,000 Rupees from the villagers each year.
>
> We sat on the porch of the guesthouse in Baltit and watched the sun go down behind the mountaintops, down to the last red glow. The glacier can be seen from the back of this dak. There is also a view of a gorge which the Hunza's cut through the mountains a long time ago using tools made from Ibex horns to divert the water. There is a swift river below. The Nagiri do not drink the water but the Hunza do. The Koran requires that they not get drunk [on alcohol], but [in Hunza] they see this as a matter of interpretation.

> November 11, to Hini: Sajidullah said that Fateh Ali [our former guide] does not know Persian and speaks poor Urdu. All he really knows is Turki. Fateh Ali told us he knew Persian and also Urdu. Apparently knowing Persian has prestige . . . . We tipped two rupees to each of the five servants at the Guest House. We also took a picture of a caravan that arrived in Baltit on its way through to Gilgit while we were in Nagir. . . . Our trail is now a lane leading through towns and orchards. This is very nice. Catcalling women run after us. We call them furies. Soon we leave the villages and are back on a true trail. . . . We select a sheep. They do not give us either the heart or the kidneys. When the men smoke a cigarette they pass it along, beginning with the head pony man and then to the headman, and so on down the row. They also smoke a hubble bubble. The Mir of Nagir does the same thing. And they pass the wine around and are quite a gay and congenial group, crouched beside one or another house. The horses are tied front to back in pairs. A little boy danced for us with great energy, and we gave him some wine. The flutist who accompanied him looked like Puck, with black hair that curls out from under his hat. He and the arbob got lots of wine.

They were the center of attention to the point that wherever they went a party could begin spontaneously.

> When it is nearly dark, we went inside the rest house. Here the party was really wild. We paid for more wine and it was distributed. The arbob danced inside, having refused to do so outside. Bob was a hit. He danced like mad. We did a pseudo jitterbug together. Dust from the floor flew. Even Arab Jon did a Turkic dance. The fire burned higher. Before he left the flutist begged for a Rupee, and we gave him one. We went to bed so early

> that Bob had a hangover during the night but was through with it before the morning.
>
> November 12, to Chalt: We handed out Rupees, seven for seven canteens of wine, one to the arbob, and one to the chukidor, and two for 21 eggs (should have been 24). An attractive old guy with clipped, white whiskers also wanted a Rupee. He contributed a few pears and is probably some sort of patriarch. We refused.

Bob and Vera, even when they had little money, most often were generous, although in this instance they had had it for the day.

> We then set off through small lanes and pastoral country. The harvest is later here. We see people cutting corn from cobs on round threshing floors, which are just hard packed dirt. Along the way are rest places for porters, which are stone ledges and sometimes trees. Men and women are climbing trees to shake down the golden leaves. Other men are plowing. Two cows pulled each plough. The ponies we saw were so small. A young man passed wearing a brocade coat and a fancy turban with a streamer. He was probably a bridegroom. We ate our chicken beside a rock-strewn stream. A caravan passed. Our horses were the only ones with heavy loads. The others had been selling stuff, reducing their packs. We have only seen eleven horses since Baltit. We had to climb several parries and cross two high wooden bridges that took us across the faces of cliffs. Chalt is nestled in a flat valley, with mountains all around it. It is lower and had little snow. There were pine trees along the ridge lines today, . . .

They had descended into well-cultivated country in the valley formed by the Gilgit River.

> In Chalt there was a store. Bob took a picture of me with Mount Dumani in the background and a precipitous trail. It is now quite warm.
>
> Chalt has another fancy resthouse, . . . There are also telephones! We called ahead to Gilgit, but only the telegraph master spoke English, and he was not available.

> November 13, to Noural: Before we left there was a fuss about Rupees. We gave the chowkidar three, two of which were for the dak and one for wood. Then the sweeper and the arbob appeared. They wanted rupees, too. So we re-distributed the amount, giving one to each. The chowkidar never would have done that. The fifteen miles were the easiest trail since we left China, and wide enough in most places for a jeep.
>
> We also had to cross a rope bridge. We first watched as two men crossed. [The bridge consisted of] three ropes strung together to walk on and side ropes for hanging on. It is hard to get started. All three sets of ropes were quite close together, the side ropes too low. We saw such a bridge near Nagir. It was removed the day we returned to Baltit. Noural is quite a normal, large and spacious village. . . . [The town] has a real bazaar with many shops filled with glass and other modern goods. There are many men here and large trees. Clear water races through canals. Bob bathed. We also ate snacks beside a fire, and a large feast of raw onions, mutton soup, rice and small tomatoes, all of which was brought to us.

They were still moving toward Kashmir.

14. GILGIT

> November 14, to Gilgit: The trail was very easy and enjoyable, and for the first time since China we galloped. The trail was . . . wide enough for a jeep. We made our way first through a narrow and windy gorge. Later the sun was very warm. We sat on some rocks and ate a chicken, which . . . proved quite tough. A caravan came the came the other way, going to Kashgar, and there were sheep and goats along the trail.

And they were about to get a surprise:

> Three miles before Gilgit the road took a sharp right. There was an airfield and scout station. A lieutenant came out to meet and escort us, with three guards walking fore and aft. At a bridge we were met by Major W.A. Brown and Captain Andrew Matheson, along with the town's headman. The Scouts give us a welcoming salute, and we were astounded by everything. It was then only a short walk to the longest suspension bridge in the area. The horses crossed in pairs.

Once again much was made of them:

> On the other side we mounted and were preceded by native drums through the bazaar . . . for another half mile clear to the Major's bungalow. The villagers turned out to watch the fun. The pony man, who looked like a movie star, undid our ponies' packs on the Major's lawn. Then we had gin with water and lime juice which tasted very good, before we were escorted to a private room with a bath. Once we had cleaned up we had a scotch and heard news from the outside world.

Bob and Vera were, at last, able to rest a little. Though they still had many miles to go, they had completed the most dangerous and difficult part of the trip.

> November 15, in Gilgit: It is cloudy and cold, so we stayed in by the fire and read. We received wires by mail from Kashgar, the first news from Whitemarsh [Vera's parents] since June 15th.
>
> Before the day is over we are worn out by the weird eating schedule of the Frontier Corps: They have tea at 8 a.m., which is fine; then breakfast at 9, lunch at 2 or 3, tea at 5, although it could be as late as 9, and then dinner, my dears, at 11. From 8:30 in the evening on we are no good and, naturally, lose our appetites. Lunch was curry. There was a young, Kashmiri guest, who was charming. The curry was so different from what we have in the States, dry rice with fried onion and pieces of chicken in it, then dishes of meat, potatoes and cabbage, all curried but not at all spicy. We had oranges grown locally for dessert, which were heavenly. We learned later that there are only a dozen or so orange trees.

Once again there was an official round of parties and introductions.

November 16, in Gilgit: Today the Pakistani representative will arrive from Peshawar. He will be flown in a two-seater. The pilot was charming. Our group was late arriving at the airfield, so the horses galloped. Only three of the delegation to greet him arrived in time. One of the party fell off and cracked his skull. Then we took pictures of the entourage as it came by but mistook the Chief of Police, who rode a white horse, for the representative.

Then we took a picture of the Pakistani Representative on the verandah of his dak giving a hello speech. The local police spend much time guarding him. We hardly see any of him. The Representative has a tremendous moustache. They say he is a very smooth operator.

November 17, in Gilgit: We somehow missed the guard raising the flag. Then the Scouts danced on the lawn. Later we took a walk through wide lanes, circling around through the town and back to the bazaar. Women hid behind the trees or sat along the roadside cowering in their clothes. We cannot photograph them. We saw a woman wearing a square paper packet on her head which a Mullah had given her to cure a headache. We also saw people flaying corncobs with a wooden flail to remove the kernels. The land is fertile, and they are doing their fall ploughing. When the corn has been picked they pull up the stocks, roots and all, and use it for firewood. There are great Chena trees, a large variety of maple, with handsome brown leaves.

> Later there was a party for the Representative, with dancing and much display of swords and rifles, as well a: a band with a drummer dressed in leopard skins.

The leopards who provided the skins were snow leopards, now nearly extinct.

> That afternoon people we had met in Sinkiang, the Chews, arrived from China. We visited them and they greeted us like old friends. We did miss China and their fine hospitality. Tea and cakes arrived at once. They, too, were amazed by the Hunzan's greed. They lost a horse when it slipped on the soft shale this side of Hini, along with most of their possessions.
>
> November 18, in Gilgit: We arrange for a loan. A Hindu trader advances us 1,000 Rupees. We will repay him in Bombay. Shipton had sent him a note. This was a favor for him because the mail stopped and he could no longer transfer money. We sent a wire to Bob's mother, 25 words for 15 Rupees. The wireless operator, a Parsee, was in Kashgar, and was the boss of Arab Jon. He is married to a Turki. He gives us a lecture on the Indian situation. He was happy with British rule. There was fighting in Kashmir with British and volunteer tribal troops. The latter do not distinguish friend from foe, so he decided to go to Chitral. In Gilgit the revolution was peaceful. 150 Indians and the Governor were taken into protective custody. Only one Scout was killed.

It was unsettled and dangerous in so remote a place.

> The pony man arrived and asked for four more days rent for the ponies even though the stages have not changed. The Major threatens him with imprisonment. The pony man wants to return through Badaksha. He would like to leave. The Lieutenant and guards go with us everywhere There are Scouts guarding the house at night. Formerly

> there were a great mob but now there are only three. The others are with the Pakistani Representative. The Lieutenant simply pushes people out of our way, especially when the Representative arrived.

Bob and Vera avoided almost entirely all the dislocation and slaughter caused by partition. The only consequence they suffered was that they were unable to proceed from Gilgit down to Kashmir. They never did go there, something that Vera now regrets. They circled instead up through Chitral and approached Peshawar from the northwest.

For the time being there remained more official activities connected with the end of British rule.

> Late in the afternoon the Mirs of Nagir and Hunza rode in with large retinues; they were not expected until tomorrow. Each maintains a bungalow near the bazaar. There would be no polo because this is the month of mourning. Bob began reading the *Seven Pillars of Wisdom.*
>
> November 19, in Gilgit: We were busy getting ready to go. We received 1,000 Rupees from Bashambar Dad, a Hindu who is the richest man in the whole area. We sent a letter to Shipton. We also had 54 loaves of bread made from our flour. The bakery charged one and a half Rupees for the labor. Then we got news that Tillman was locked up in Badashan for eight days. His Turki servant arrived and spread this news around. Our caravan had intended to take that route. Now we would not and wished to stay a few more days.

We bought a goat which weighed 20 seres or 40 pounds for 20 Rupees. We also had seven servants to tip. We gave Kohai ten Rupees and the others five. Three of them belong to Matheson. We are having no luck finding a servant for the rest of the trip, so we will take Arab Jon.

We visited the Mirs. Each has his own bungalow. The Naziri Mir is stoic and with no feeling for comfort. The Hunza Mir has a fire and a cozy place. We buy wonderful onions which may be shallots because they are in sections. They are mild, juicy and lush. We also find tidbits of Kraft cheese, which we buy for two Rupees, Nescafe from Switzerland, which is the best coffee we've ever had, for one Rupee. There was a banquet for the Pakistani Representative and the Mirs and Rajahs. Bob is a wallflower and is not invited. We chat with the Indian officers who mostly talked about how they disliked Hindus. We listened to Schumann's violin concerto in A minor and sat around drinking Scotch until midnight. The peak of Men Falk Oumani was visible, which was fine with the sunset.

November 20, to Gulupur: It was fun packing up. The suitcases were completely shot. Arab Jon was the only one who arrived on time. He is a great help and very reliable. We were very glad to see him again. We chatted until 11:00. Then the caravan arrived. We packed off with four horses. A Lieutenant accompanied us on a white charger, along with five solders, three marching in front. We trotted and they ran. They had a hard time keeping up with us. Finally it is agreed that we can go ahead. Only one stayed up with us, and he had a tough time. It was warm and pleasant and the trail wide and easy. Bob had a new horse which was very ugly but a fast walker. It trotted with little urging.

We followed a river which had beautiful water. Here and back in Gilgit was the clearest water we had ever seen. It sparkled and was blue green or even blue at times. The

> mountains were so different, low and sometimes with pines on the ridges. There was very little snow even on the highest. The sunlight was red on the tops.

They were just above the confluence of the two rivers that join to form the Indus.

> Everyone who saw it remarked that Bob's Hunza hat was "first class." Another soldier attached himself to our party. He could not go over the pass alone. That was forbidden. He hovered around. It was a great bother, I think, but Bob was getting used to servants.
>
> The caravan arrived very late, two hours behind us. It was dark when they finally arrived. We came 21 miles. More and different horses had joined, and many donkeys, along with six or eight Turkis, including a very fat one. The horses and donkeys are heavily loaded. We had cups of marmite, which tasted very good. And then we had goat pilau but it was very tough because there had not been time to cook it properly.

15. CHITRAL, DIR AND ON TO PESHAWAR

> November 21, to Gakuch: In the morning we discovered that our caravan was now huge. It seems to consist now of four caravans, including one family which is going to Medina. This family's sons race off with us. They are very charming kids.

They climbed again into rough, mountainous county.

> A Lieutenant with an escort met us at a rope bridge. During the day we saw one more rope bridge. There were towns on both sides of the river. Two women who were with the Medina group were quite careless about purdah but wore a cover over their faces while on the road. One wore a blue one, the other a long white one with two eye slits. They seem ridiculous. We must have been 24 horses and about a dozen donkeys altogether. The entire group is very colorful and there is lots of galloping. The trail is so easy, very wide with only very slight ups and downs.

They were proceeding directly away from Kashmir and encountering more local nobility who were riding in to learn more about the political situation.

Hunza had been a British protectorate since 1893, Gilgit somewhat longer, since 1877. In 1935 Gilgit was leased by the Raj from the Kashmiri government. At independence it became part of Pakistan.

> Even though they are sitting on the tops of large packs, the boys and Arab Jon could stay on their horses even at a full gallop. The scenery is not so much but the riding is perfect. The mountains were lower yet, with rounded tops and no craggy peaks. Only the tallest had a scattering of snow against the brown. In the river along the road we saw trout swimming in the pools. We ate lunch beside a torrential mill race. Near Garuch we were offered red wine, which was sour. Along the way we met a local Rajah from a nearby state who was going to Gilgit to meet the Pakistani Representative. He and his group wore pink and purple scarves. Bob dressed the Rajah's horse's wound with sulpha powder and a bandaid, and we received a present of grapes that were already raisins but fresh and juicy. It was interesting that they would keep. We left at 8:30 and arrived about four in the afternoon. We'd ridden 23 miles. At dinner, even though this time it had cooked a long time, the goat was still tough.

The next morning brought an unusual problem:

> November 22, to Gupis; In the morning we discovered that the goat's liver and kidneys had been stolen. We had left them in the bathroom and did not lock it. Damn!

They were the only decent parts of the whole . . . animal. A miserable dog had joined the caravan, ugly and fierce, barking constantly. Last evening the Lieutenant joined us. He was on the silent side. It was a nice night, with a half moon. This morning the caravan was slow in getting going because there were horses which need to be shod and other things. We nonetheless left at 8 a.m. and arrived in Gupis at 4 p.m. We traveled 23 miles, so we were getting faster. We sat by the river and ate the Kraft cheese at lunch, along with bread and onions. We lay on a rug on the sand and sunbathed. A character came and stared at us. He was wild and scary. All day we rode by the river. It was sunny from the start because the fields were open on either side. The men wore asters, chrysanthemums, marigolds, and sometimes feathers in their hair. Women scurried off the road as we approached and hid behind the brush or ran off in the other direction. Sometimes they walked into a tree trunk and seemed to merge with it. Branches from bushes with stickers are laid along the tops of stone walls to keep the animals out of the fields. Sometimes these poked the horse's noses or snagged our trousers.

The Lieutenant is the youngest son of the Rajah of Koh-I-Ghizar, who accompanied us along the way. He invited us to dinner at his father's small, octagonal bungalow and served us a delicious dinner of curry and heavenly rice. The Pakistani Representative and the Military Chief were also present, as was Arab Jon. The caravan was again very late in arriving. They started late and now their legs are very tired. There is a fine gray-white horse here and one of the men has a hand-made gun. We visit the pony men around the fire and the other Turkis who are drinking tea and eating fried square bread.

> November 23, to Pingal: It was the same color as his horse, a rich brown. The country was dreary, with drab, gray-brown mountains. Yet the fields are nice when you look down on them.
>
> Bob was itching to catch a trout. We could see so many fish. In one place there were a dozen ducks. The trail rises and falls a little, but was still easy. The climb in altitude to 8,400 feet was hardly noticeable. Gupis was only 7,100. We passed through a narrow, sunless gully. The sun did come through in one narrow place. We lunched there. The chicken is tough. Darn it, they all are. Our standbys are onions and bread. We like them best.

The fish would have been a welcome change, but Vera does not report that Bob was able to catch one.

> Three men from Teru galloped out to escort us in. The Rajah of Koh-I-Ghizar sent them. The rest house was in a rocky, sloped compound. A boy appeared at once selling bundles of wood, milk, chicken, and eggs. But there was no chowkidar. It turned out that he lived four miles away. That meant a long wait for the key.
>
> Several head pony men arrived. All rode. Then the people who were on Hadj. They piled their stuff on the wide veranda. So many new faces. The men carried packs in slings of rope or skins. Some also wrapped their possessions in their coats and tied the long sleeves around their necks. The Lieutenant sent presents from Gupis, a chicken, some ghee, butter, and ten eggs. The "Big Man" of Chitral, we think, sent us a present of a yellow watermelon. Arab Jon spurns it because it is not up to the standards of Sinkiang. We'd ridden 25 miles.
>
> We had pilau for dinner with goat chops. These were tender and the flavor fine. We could see our fellow

travelers' faces in around the fire and in the moonlight. They traded by moonlight, too. . . . Tomorrow we will climb still higher.

November 24, to Teru: More delays. The caravan was late, and our horses were still eating at 8:30. My horse also had to be shod. So Bob and I walked for three miles until the rest of them caught up with us. While walking we took a picture of women herding cows toward us along the trail. We had three men with us as escorts. Here they wear dark brown chogas which are full in the sleeves, and a rope or a scarf around their waists. The trail was not so fancy now. In fact, over the last ten miles it crumbled away to nothing. There was some nice riding, though, through pasture land, the first we've seen since leaving China. We climbed up through a valley and a steep slope and then looked back the way we came, a nice view. We had to cross a stream twice. The trail was elusive and we wondered if the pony men would find us or if we were taking some sort of short cut. We stopped beside a spring in a small village for lunch. We had chicken, the only tender one since leaving Chalt. Two of our escort went to see the village's headman, and so there was plenty of food. Later the headman then joined us and Bob offered him some onions, which he accepted but then a few minutes later gave them to one of the village men.

Part of the Hadj party finally arrived and decided to have lunch here, including two of the women with the silly covering. I took a picture of them having their lunch. One of the young men on the Hadj has very smart clothes, including a leather hat with fox ear flaps. He prays each morning.

We reached Teru just after 4 p.m. We had ridden 23 miles and we are now back over ten thousand feet. The sun was still shining on Rakaposhi.

> November 25, Laspur: As usual we are late in leaving. The Pony man wanted to stay in Teru, but his highness, the Mehtar of Chitral is expecting us. Our escort demanded a tip. We gave some Rupees around. The head guy wanted more. We refused. Then he asked for cigarettes. We were mean and said no. The horses were ready. We walked for two miles. It was sunny and warm. In fact all the days [recently] have been clear, with a deep blue sky and warm except for the occasional wind.

Although it grew colder each day, the weather held

> I put on my fur coat; both of us were wearing our felt boots, but the coat was only necessary for an hour or so. We lunched on grapes by a stream, surrounded by tall bushes. Our escort shared the course of chicken and eggs.
>
> The Hadj party stopped there and three of the head pony men arrived as we left. They asked if we would stop on top. Their horses were very tired. . . . It was only ten more miles but it took us four hours. Bob's horse was sluggish, perhaps from the altitude. It was an easy climb through an open valley and pastureland along a stream dashing over the rocks. At its top the valley was long and a mile or so wide. There was a cairn to mark the pass. On the Chitral side there was a polo field, perhaps the highest in the world and quite a big one, too. There was also a frozen lake and Arab Jon skated on it. The Hadj group caught up. The men were singing.

They were again in a region of 20,000 foot peaks.

> [There was] snow only on the left [west] of the valley, and some ice, but little. The scenery was better and better; [it was also] warm. The mountains stepped down from the pass. The descent was much steeper and quicker, [with a] long switchback. The trail was soft,

shale and stones and streams to a mud house with three adjoining rooms. There were no doors and windows. How things have changed. We had come 21 miles.

There would be no more silverware and clean sheets for some

days.

Arab Jon cooked in our room, and we chatted. He has a wife, a son, and two girls. He is only 26 years old. We had thought as much. This place was in a triangular valley surrounded by mountains and quite pretty, especially since soon after we arrive we can look back [and see] the sun on only the highest peaks and a half moon just above. Bob had to whip away dogs in the night. We gave a man a tea and salt, which he requested, in return for firewood. We also passed out Rupees, one each to our two escorts. The headman refused, our first gentleman.

November 26, to Mastuj: [We slept] shamelessly , , , in our beds [until] 8:30. It was so cold that I put my fur coat over me. Even Bob got in his sheepskin bag. Arab Jon slept on [the] disreputable bed in our room. We were the last to leave. [We] took two pictures, one of a caravan fellow who is a Turki but wears a Kirghiz hat. The scenery is absolutely dreary by the river. The water is dreary, too. There are stones and slippery shale everywhere and quite steep slides. We lunched by a stream on some rocks. It was a good lunch, a goat's neck, chicken, and raw onions. Arab Jon made some tea. The Pony men came by. We shared our tea. We loitered over lunch and discovered only later that our destination was 21 miles away, not 17. We felt guilty and tell the pony men that we can stop anywhere, but they are willing to go on. In fact all arrive at about the same time, around 5:30 or 6:00. I took a picture of a man carrying a mountain of wood, which must be 80 lbs. So many sad men and boys carrying heavy packs of wood. Their legs

> are skinny and clothes raggy. On the hillside above a group of men dug a grave.

Although this trail was off one of the trade routes from Afghanistan, Chitral was far less prosperous than Hunza or Gilgit.

> This is quite a large place, and the headquarters for the Mehtar. [But] these people look so poor, undernourished and [poorly dressed] in raggy material [which they hold] with their hands to their bodies. A boy on the roadside wants to sell two eggs for tea. [The Mehtar's] brother was the chief and has two wives here. I think he is living in Peshawar and is an army colonel. We were taken in hand by the postmaster who was educated at a Scottish mission in Punjab. Everything arrives from the fort, rugs for the floor, beds, tables and a cover, chairs and a lamp. We are urged to sit down in the chairs. I yearn to sit on the rug and furs. Hell, I can't even arrange my own things. Arab Jon made tea only to find that they have arranged it with sugar and milk.

This had been another difficult day. The trip through Chitral and on, down through the Northwest Territories to Peshawar, added well over two hundred hard, often mountainous, miles to their route.

> [Then] we were offered a bath and invited to dinner. [Eventually] they served us curry and rice in our room. I almost ask them to leave so that we can bathe. When they finally do leave they are talking about detaining the Hadj people [whom they claim] always steal and take goods for trade which should be taxed. We urge them to do the inspection quickly. They are petty chiselers [and we don't get the] hell to bed until midnight because they stayed so long. The Postmaster loves to speak English but never listens. His inanities include, "Every American has a jeep." And "Chinese just boil up rice and eat with

> fish and fish soup, nothing more." They put too much cold water in the tub. I poured in a large teapot of hot water; the bath was still cold but the fire was warming.

The Hadji made their trip a working as well as a religious one. It cost a great deal to travel from Central Asia all the way to Mecca.

> November 27, to Buni: The pony men appear to have sold a rug. The local gang comes around in the morning and is checking goods. We get the dope from the post office governor for this area: [The] Mehtar's brother, the colonel who lives in Peshawar, has a monopoly on everything sold [in this part of Chitral] He buys everything and sells to people at a profit. We saw one old man buy a small, felt hat for 7 Rupees. A soldier has forbidden any other sales. The head ponyman comes to us and says that we must go on but he will stay a day or so while the headman inspects. This is just a hold-up, forcing them to sell cheaply. Bob says no, we are all going to go and gives the signal to the Hadji who get going. Then a guy comes along and says he hasn't checked and that they must unpack. We urge them not to bother. We notice that the commander now has a new padded coat. He will be warm for a change. We give him and the governor of the post office each new fur hats. Post office buys three rugs, a small one for 15 Rupees and two long narrow ones for 125 Rupees. We think this is cheap. He is "delighted" that he is allowed to buy. We "Europeans" have lots of face. They practically fawn over us." The Commander speaks Turki. We leave, but not before we see the remainder of the caravan on its way.

After independence in Chitral there was only the Pakistani government, and very little of that, so the flat refusal required nerve.

> We forded a river and then moved along a wide trail all the way except for parts that had been washed away. Next to a dak a horse was dying. It was so thin. We got a special price for feed for our horses which is given to government officials and Europeans – ugh. Our five [animals] eat one mound for 7 Rupees and some grain for one Rupee. The pony men and Hadjis had to pay twice as much. A mound costs 5 Rupees in Gilgit and probably has good reason to . . . . For the first 15 minutes of the day we had a magnificent view of Tirich Mir, which is 25,250 feet. Its cone, which is all snow, towers over the other peaks. It is a magnificent mountain and the most distinctive we have seen so far.

The poverty of Chitral was wearing.

> The people here look feeble-minded, all in rags. Post office said that they have no work for six months of the year. They have skins wrapped around their feet, and dark and raggy, cotton clothes. Few seem even to have chogas. We did not see a well-clothed child. Goiters are common. They are worse than Sinkiang, bulbous and dangling. Many have bulging eyes. Some seem to put dark circles around their eyes. We have not seen such pitiful people since Negros [in the Philippines].
>
> We had lunch beside two large mulberry trees on a small grassy plot on hilltop. . . . Soon other people gathered around. We bought a bowl of walnuts for one Rupee from a strange man. His lower lip seemed to be missing. Then he returned with a bowl of dried mulberries. We bought two handfuls for one Anna. He wants a Rupee for the whole bowl. A guy with some good looking potatoes wants to exchange them for tea, which we did. We lunched on chicken and excellent goat, along with hard-boiled eggs. We gave seven to the Hadji, along with onions and various leftovers. We try to ask some women where we might find water but they run off screaming.

> We reached Runi late, about 6, after only 17 miles, all because we were detained so long . . . . It was a long ride through town to the resthouse, about a mile, and still further from the road. It proved to have two beds, two tables, rugs and there is already a fire burning. Two dozen eggs and two seres of milk arrive. One of the Hadji gave me bread, a kind of pancake with onions in it which is flakey and so good. Arab Jon is learning to use his English vocabulary well, including "horse's lunch," which kills us, and "eggs coming." We retired late, 10 p.m. The moon was now full.
>
> November 28, to Reshun: In the morning there was ghee for sale. Much tugging of felt numdaks [slippers] and saddle bags, trying to buy things for free. There were also some comic military characters. Many in our caravan buy numdaks for six Rupees, which seems cheap. We got two. We were lazy again and did not leave until 9:30. It was overcast and the mountaintops were obscured. We handed out three Rupees, one each to the labador, the chowkidar and sweeper. Then a duplicate chowkidar and sweeper arrive and demand their one Rupee. We told them to share but doubt if they did. These seem to us terrible people with no dignity. Those who received a Rupee giggle with glee at their fellows. The scenery is absolutely dreary.

They rode on to the next guesthouse.

> In the afternoon we crossed the most precarious bridge, worse than any of the rope bridges and a woman mounted on a horse who was covered by a white "tent."
>
> The resthouse [in Reshun] was nice, with a lawn and large trees in front. The soil here is pink. We'd made 14 miles. Two pleasant servants take care of everything.

> They are polite and do not interfere. Tea with milk and sugar and chappatis arrive on silver trays.
>
> Asa is shoeing our horses like mad. They need it. Many have only a piece of a shoe left. He must shave off part of the hoof. A very tiny blond horse lost an eye. The villagers, including an officer, gather around to watch the horses being shod. We photograph a particularly ragged boy who has pieces of skins for shoes and a fur slung across his back for a pack.
>
> This was the only easy day we'd had, the only day the caravan got in before dark. One of the Hadji boys picked the last wild rose of the season. He rode along with the stem in his mouth. Bob bathed and dressed for dinner in his suntans. One of the soldier boys is sick, leaning against the Hadji's tent. Someone asked about the boy's coat, and we inquired about him. He had the chills. His feet were cold but he had a temperature of 103. Bob took it twice. When Bob sterilizes it in boiling water the thermometer breaks. We are the joke of the medical world. We got a room for him and someone built a fire. Under a felt and Bob's fur, the boy is warm and sleeps. We make a deal for the pony men to take him on a donkey for eight Rupees. He paid two Rupees to ride a donkey for half of today. He has been sick since noon yesterday. Arab Jon inquires and learns that the Boy has only two Rupees left.
>
> The moon was full and it is clear. A Hadji sang a Turkic song in a loud voice as we fell off to sleep. Someone checked the caravan's goods far into the night.

The government officials searched them endlessly for something to tax. Only the trail provided relief.

> November 29, Kogozi: The caravan is up and off early, by 7:30. They come for our things before we are packed.

> We gave one Rupee to the two chowkidars. No one else came to beg. Amazing! Bob likes the chief who is polite, has some dignity and is probably rich. We galloped and raced all morning, which was great fun. The fall is not so far gone. Some of the trees still have leaves. There was erosion along the trail from streams flowing down into the river. Sometimes we rode a quarter or even a half-mile into the nulahs which have formed. The soil is too soft to build bridges. They were working on the trails, building them up with stones.
>
> The caravan people who walk are different. Some have bobbed their hair. We saw them cooking in the courtyard of a mosque. Some of them hang on to the horses tails to keep up on the hills. We lunched by the roadside, under the Chenar trees and took a picture of a boy in a fox fur hat just as he rode up and he gave us the most wonderful smile. It is sunny. Arab Jon throws stones at the children who hover around. They gather in lines, hunched so close together like little gnomes.
>
> The soldier boy is much better and now admits that he has five rupees. He will get three more in Chitral. A pony man is selling strong, grey felt for 15 Rupees. One man wanted it badly but the pony man would not reduce his price.
>
> We raced like mad for the rest of the day. This is the first time that I had really felt secure when the white horse galloped. My legs and knees were no longer tired, so I learned to ride just at the end.

By this time Vera had a much better horse, which made riding easier.

The routine is much as it was before, the good days marked by good accommodations and an occasional decent meal, the bad ones by poor accommodations and tough chicken or mutton. Vera then remarked:

> We cross the river on a long bridge, round a cliff and what should appear but a lorry. Tocsun is petrified. He gathers the horses in a bunch.

This is the first motor vehicle they had seen since October 13th, the first day out of Kashgar.

> A soldier waves us toward the Palace grounds. We have only come 15 miles. We are given a bungalow near the river, which is very pleasant. It has real beds, a bath, a tub and a flush toilet. The secretary, the nephew of the Mehtar lunches with us. The three courses are all good, including the pudding with peaches. The nephew adds "yes, yes" to every sentence before he gets to the verb. We walk through the bazaar, which seems quite active. There are many different wares. I find it is impossible to buy yarn. I want to darn our socks. Later we see two prisoners working on a hillside in leg irons chained to their waists. They look happy. There are also ponies with much larger loads than ours carried. We see four men, all in turbans, one in a padded coat with printed material.
>
> The Hadji and our caravan are in an adjoining stable. The local Turki's are absolutely amazed and practically jump out of their skins when they see the boy with the fox fur hat.

The Mehtar of Chitral, Muzaffir-ul-Milk, had just come through a difficult period. In 1946 he had fallen ill and his brother, believing him dead, attempted to depose his son and heir. When Muzzaffir-ul-Milk recovered, the British sent a force to serve as his bodyguard, and the brother was deported to Baluchistan. Muzziffir-ul-Milk declared accession to Pakistan in August, 1947, not long before Bob and Vera entered his kingdom. The son, whom Bob and Vera also met, Saif-ur-Rehman, succeeded to the throne on his father's death in 1948. The subsequent years were filled with plots and counter-plots to depose the new Mehtar. The Pakistani government lost patience and assumed full rule in 1972, stripping Saif-ur-Rehman of his various titles.

> We took tea at four with the Mehtar. His son was present and a minister who was a charming fellow. He wore a grey karakul hat and a long gray coat lined with fur. The tea came in on narrow tables with cakes and pistachio nuts. The Mehtar is diabetic and puts salt in his tea instead of sugar. He was a gay fellow until he became ill. He arranges for us to see Kafirs. This takes eight minutes in a jeep given to him by Pat Hurley. Then we walk six miles.

Patrick Hurley was President Roosevelt's personal representative and had visited the region toward the end of the War.

The Kafirs were from Nuristan, which is part of Afghanistan. They are a distinctly Indo-European people.

> Badakshan horses arrive at this time of years, fifty to a hundred at a time. Afghan men we saw going back by the Durof trail bring them. It takes ten days from their village. They must pay 350 Rupees to the Bey Dullah.

How this Bey fit into Chitral's feudal system is unclear, although perhaps he was just below the Mehtar.

> I kiss my horse goodbye, but he seems more interested in munching grass. We tipped the pony men 15 Rupees each. We hear that "Tillman is in awful shape. He has a beard and no clothes." He has no clothes because of his custom of taking only one shirt, etc.

Tillman was someone they had met in Kashgar. After taking leave from of their servants and the remainder of the caravan, Bob and Vera went on by jeep, taking a more southerly route.

> December 1st, to the Dumboret Valley: A jeep arrived at 9. All the Turkis gathered around in the bazaar to admire it. One young Turki honks the horn. A radio engineer will travel with us. He speaks fine English and is interested in things. At a steep climb we get out and ride some horses to the top of the hill. At noon we lunch on fried chicken and tea at one of H.H.'s daks. We then walk eight miles up a valley and cross the river numerous times on bridges made out of flattened logs. There are many logs in the streams. In the spring there is so much water that they float from Afghanistan into Pakistan. The trail is bad, over stones. We took a picture of a woman who was angry because a Kafir man never returned her goat. These people are nomads. They have cows and goats and are just wintering here. They always beg. They wear very full trousers and prefer blacks clothes, although some of their pants are dark red.

We reached the village after three and a quarter hours. The women here wear in an interesting costume, dark walnut brown gowns made of course homespun with a belt holding it in. Their headdresses are decorated with one type of seashell and have a pompon on top. They have no sleeves. They wear many necklaces. We took a picture of some young girls and then it was suggested that we give each of the three a Rupee. We ask why and are told, "Oh, they expect it." We are suckers.

The houses are solidly built, with big timbers and heavy doors. There are no windows, just a small, square hole at the top. There is a fire pit with a circle of stones. It is so smoky. They also have an overhanging porch made of thick, hand-hewn boards.

The food is good and cooked by a local man. Tea and pears, then chicken and then rice with chicken curry. It was all provided by H.H. There is also a bonfire and dancing, which is arranged on a ledge on the hillside. It's a wonder that the dancers don't fall off the edge. The Kafir headman holds a torch of pitch and goads them on. The women and girls dance by in threes, with their arms around each other's waists. They do a simple step around in a circle, the groups turning opposite ways. Young boys dance very badly. A man sometimes dances between two girls. The musicians beat on two drums, one big and one small which has two heads and is shaped like an hourglass. Woman sing the same "oh-ah" syllables on several notes. Two men dance, each with a cane whistle held between their fingers. It sounds like hillbilly stuff. When the dance is over it is suggested that we give the dancers 10 Rupees. We had already handed around 100 Rupees. The girls were greedy. Take one and then another and pass them back to their beaux.

There are bedbugs in my sleeping bag, and I scratch all night. This is the first time in all our travels.

December 2, in Dumboret: We walked up the valley two more miles to a larger village where the king of the Kafirs lived. Now they are only in three valleys. The Red Kafirs live at the far end of each. All of them are now Moslims. Sometimes the Red Kafirs raid the Black Kafirs. One said they are ashamed of their customs but carry on because of their forefathers. We saw one of their graveyards. They bury [their dead] in heavy boxes roughly made out of heavy lumber. They dress [the dead] in beautiful new clothes. They put stones on top of the box so the body cannot escape. They believe that they are evil spirits but think that [the dead] may return in some later age. A recent box oozes with a decomposing body [and] bad smell. When someone dies they have a big feast. They keep the body five days and eat all the time. If they give a rich feast, then they are entitled to erect a carved figure in the [deceased's memory]. One of these was removed by a German Hindu Kush expedition. They took many pictures and wrote five books.

An old man of the village took us to an alter in a forest on a hillside. The alter was splattered with goat's blood. [Carved] above are wooden horses' heads. These are for the gods to use when they visit this place. We took a picture of the old man by the alter. On December 21st there will be [an annual] ceremony. They will bathe in a nearby stream. Men and women stay in separate houses and have separate feasts. They then stand at the top of each house and shout at each other about the abuses [the other has commited] during the year. This lasts for a week or so. No Muslims or foreigners are allowed and the Moslums who live in the area leave.

They were going to arrange a big dance for us but nothing seems to be doing. We are not unhappy about this because we said we would not pay more than 10 Rupees; they seemed quite shocked and said that people would come from far villages. Then they told a story

> about a Hindu who gave 100 Rupees for dancing. We told them that we were quite shocked to have to pay to see primitive tribes dance. We cut down on our tips, but they were still high. [A crowd of] children started following me, singing and clapping their hands. I thought they were so cute until it was explained that they were singing, "We will not go farther with them unless they give us more money," so I shut them up.

> December 3, to Drosh: Arab Jon packed for us for the last time. We've given him a letter of recommendation, and one for Dullah, too. Arab Jon has cleaned all the black from the pots and done a fine laundry; there are even creases in the shorts. We will miss him. Every thing fits into six big and two small saddle bags. I say goodbyes to . . . the Hadjis. We are all very sad. The pony men have done a good business, but there is nothing for us to buy here. The Hadji will take 12 days to get to Peshawar.

Bob and Vera took less time.

> Two of the pony men took sheep intestines to the headman. They will leave tomorrow. Our own trip takes three hours because we must stop to adjust the spark plugs. We only went 25 miles. Bob and I walked on ahead. The sun was pleasant. We caused much consternation when we arrived. The villagers wanted to know where we were from. They were amazed at our clothing; even the captain at the fort was. We were welcomed by a Major and the Captain and his wife with much good food, drinks and good talk. We thoroughly enjoy ourselves and decide to stay another day.

> December 4, in Drosh: Cloudy, dull weather. We sit around and enjoy the comfort. Bob read *Verdict in India*, which he says was sensational. He also plays four sets of

> tennis. That evening we had a curry dinner. We all sat on the floor and balanced our plates on large napkins on our laps. It was delicious.

There would be no more camp meals cooked over dung fires. It may have been southern Chitral, but the British presence remained. The few last days on the trail would be literally down hill into the Indus Valley.

> December 5, to Zidret: Before we leave Major Faskett gives us 100 Rupees to buy nylons for his wife, and we promise to send a pair. We also ride their Badokshan horses for ten miles. Bob is very pleased and gallops. Mine has been eating bear grease and cannot race. It must be snowing in the high passes. Bob walks eight miles. We have a guard. I ride another horse up an easy grade through pines and into fog. It is like the lumber forests in Oregon. The jeep goes on to the fort at Zidret. There is a man with us who will return with the horses, but [at one point] he stands touching his whip and then walks off. I have to stop him. Bob thinks it is because of our clothing which to the man must seem unusual. Our luggage is on two mules. The saddlebags are put into rattan slings. The mules cost 15 Rupees each for the two days. The lorry driver wanted 45 Rupees for only ten miles from Drosh. Imagine! The whole day is only 18 miles. We meet mule caravans coming the other way. When they are unloaded they walk in a circle for a while.
>
> At the rest house there is a good fire, . . . but we have a hard time getting hot water. It arrived first in a frying pan, then by tea pot, [and finally] in cups. It was cold and then, [when we complained] only lukewarm. At dinner they serve us ghee with a couple of chapattis. So we each have a vitamin pill and spread some marmite on the chapattis, and then add some walnuts.

December 6th, to Dir: We are served a breakfast of greasy chappaties, which we cannot eat, and two, small cups of tea. We are used to full tea bottles. We have had hardly any food for 24 hours. During the night it snowed and we are late getting off. Just loading the two mules takes a half an hour. We stayed right there to supervise. The light snow turns heavier on Lowari pass. It is only three miles but it takes us nearly three hours. We have a guard detail with us, five scouts. The last mile is very steep, with long switchbacks. There is a shelter at the top and we are frightened by the blizzard. There is almost no visibility but the trail is clear. We were so hungry! We cracked some walnuts. Two characters straggle towards us. We think they may be dangerous. It begins to rain and the road oozes with mud and is hard going. We rest at a small fort where there is a fire and we are given tea, and then trudge on. It is getting late, and we are very weary. We pass through the first cultivated valley since Gilgit. The houses look like tenements and the rain streams down.

We did not reach Dir Fort until after dark. We are attracted by an electric light. Our host seems a villain. We dry our clothes by the fire and are able to communicate only by sign language. The bearer refuses to give us dinner for four Rupees and demands six. We are eventually served chicken, tea and ghee. The Villain explains to us that Dir and Peshawar are not at all like Chitral. He is right, they are in cahoots. We go to sleep at nine, which seems too late.

Dir is almost unknown and much smaller than Hunza, Gilgit or Chitral, set in the mountains near the Kingdom of Swat.

December 7, Chakadar Fort: It turns out that a mail lorry will leave at 6 a.m., so we rise reluctantly at 5. It comes to the fort, and we get off about 6:45. We almost left our

> overshoes behind. The Villain placed them by the fire on the debris, and after we got up had the bearer put the mattresses on top of them. Bob found them and replaced the mattresses with the wash basin. The Villain, who has such a fine sense of humor, probably laughed when he found out.
>
> We pay five Rupees each for our places on the front seat and four Rupees for two mounds of luggage. It is overcast and dark at dawn. The mountain road is dirt but relatively level and the driver is good. We are soon down to 2,500 feet. It is suddenly like the tropics and the sky clears to a tropical blue with fleecy, white clouds. There are green trees and scrubby bushes growing on the rocky hillsides. Bob says it reminds him of Santa Barbara. Soon there are sugar fields and orange trees covered with fruit. We buy a dozen oranges for a Rupee, and I eat six at once. They are wonderful. We also bought boiled eggs for one anna, which we had with chappaties for an early tea. The driver told us not to pay, which was a first sign of hospitality. In the villages through which we drive we see only men. They are swathed in blankets or grayish white sheets. Among the children, little boys and girls often are indistinguishable.
>
> At the rest house at Chakadar Fort there are no demands for tips for carrying our bags. They are so friendly. That day we drove for 75 miles. We manage an omelet and tea for dinner. We are so tired that we go to sleep at 3.

As they left the mountains there was a sense of release, followed by a simple desire to come to rest somewhere, if only for a few days.

The next day they drove down onto the plain and looked back at the mountains which end abruptly only a few miles from Peshawar.

On the hilltops stood military installations that guarded the approaches from the Khyber Pass. The British conquered India but they never fully conquered the tribes of the Northwest Territories nor had the mountain states completely under their control. Even now the main roads close once the sun drops behind the mountains because the Pakistani government cannot guarantee anyone's safety in the dark.

> December 8, to Peshawar: Most pleasant rest house of all at the fort. There is no charge for anything. Our servant refused a tip, and we did much urging. We left him a Navy flashlight on the floor by the bed. We saw them for 12 Rupees in the bazaar. [We then moved] to Dean's Hotel, which is a plushy place. We have a sitting room, bedroom and dressing room and two bathrooms for 17 Rupees each. Unfortunately the service is poor and the room dank, although it must have been pleasant at one time.

With its stucco bungalows Dean's remains a seedy remnant of the Raj. It has the air of a 1950's American motor court with a certain British style. Bob and Vera enjoyed staying there, although it was a wet and cold time.

They still worried about money.

> Liquor is expensive, as well. Whiskey is three Rupees. We visited the Club. It's very comfortable, with lots of drinking. Our host was Major Letts. The Deputy High Commissioner, who was named Charles Duke, took us to see a hunt, complete with hounds.

> The bazaar was fabulous. It was busy. We bought a copy of Arabian Nights for 15 Rupees. Then we went to Green's Hotel to eat, but we were quite late and the food was bad.
>
> We are amazed that it is so tropical that there are sugar cane and such wonderful oranges. The streets in the British cantonment are . . . wide and there are many trees and wide lawns in front of the bungalows. In the Bazaar tribal people stroll by with their rifles. You can buy a Lugar pistol for 700 Rupees.
>
> We see tribesmen crouched along the walls that line many streets, huddled in blankets. They look like a monstrous birds.

Vera later wrote, "The Khyber Pass is a sissy pass, a gentle road."

A newspaper article in *The Times of Ceylon* two months after they left Peshawar reported that they planned a book about their travels.[13]

The following year they exchanged letters with Eric Shipton about Bob's idea for a trip to Nepal. Shipton answered in a letter that has never been published:

> It is 95% certain that the only possible route to climb the mountain [Everest] is from the Tibetan side. There is perhaps a 5% chance that it will "go" . . . from the Nepal side at a valley whose upper reaches have never been seen.

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[13] "They have a Long Way to Go," *The Times of Ceylon*, February 29, 1948, 7.

> Your . . . proposition has excited me a lot, getting Dr. Grady to wangle us into Nepal. One of my greatest ambitions is to get to a place called Sola Khombu, in the northeast corner of Nepal. I've looked down into it from Everest, and it must be tremendous country. I've got dozens of Sherpa friends who live there, and they would give us a fine time. I'd give my ears to get there. I can imagine nothing better than a trip with just the four of us. Incidentally, we would have a look at that 5% valley I mentioned above. It would be wonderful if you could fix it.

The "5% valley" proved the route to the famous South Col.

Vera is now ninety-three years old; she remains alert and charming, as much "in the moment" as Eric Shipton described. Her memory of events sixty years ago is remarkable, and she has added considerable detail to this account.