



NEW ADDRESS. PLEASE DESTROY ALL OLD
ADDRESSES & USE ONLY THIS NEW ONE:

2 Bvd. Abbene Ramdane
Oran, Algeria
January 1979

Dear Friends:

STOP! Do NOT read further UNTIL you have recorded the new address. We are currently gathering in mail from three addresses! Now that we have as "permanent" an address as our situation can allow, we'd like to get everyone sending mail to us where we really are!

Thank you for so many letters, especially through the Christmas & New Year season just passed. We treasure this possibility of maintaining relationships with old friends and strengthening relationships with new ones. Now we owe you at last a sketchy report of our life since our last letter.

PENTECOST at the cathedral with Catholics from all over the Oran area plus a few of us Protestants and some members of the Coptic Church of Egypt. Many of the shorter items of the liturgy were repeated in French, English, Polish, Italian, Spanish, German and Arabic with the Lord's Prayer offered softly but simultaneously by all in their various native tongues (at least Urdu added to the list above). The congregation divided up into the seven major linguistic groups for the Bible readings and brief sermon. David was in charge of the English-language group (about 1/3 Protestant). In one of the informal afternoon interest groups, David was asked to provide two-way translations between French and English while the Catholic bishop handled the French-Arabic translations. A few may have felt we were closer to the Tower of Babel than to the experience of Pentecost, but nearly all of us felt it was a very rewarding first attempt at this kind of celebration.

OUR SPRINGTIME, OTHERWISE, meant Carol's finishing out a very trying and exhausting year in the university English Department and David's spare time going into correspondence and other arrangements for our summer furlough. The family highlight of that period was Paul's success, with honorable mention, on his 2½ day French Baccalaureate exams (end of secondary), specializing in math and physics.

OUR "SUMMER OF '78" began a bit earlier for David, John, Mark and Jimmy, who left in mid-June. Stopping in Lyon to see John's specialist (for scoliosis), we were informed he should keep wearing his Milwaukee brace through the summer but could begin removing it three hours a day in October, six hours a day in November etc., with another check-up in February. Then it was on to New York and Pennsylvania for meetings and the beginning of itineration among the Iowa churches on July 2. Carol was stuck at the university till July 5; and Paul stayed on with her, having to await the end of June for exam results in any case.

Paul, who had supplied our springtime highlight, also provided our summer low with three allergy-inspired attacks of asthma in his first month in the Midwest. Fortunately, a flying trip to Carol's folks in Colorado gave immediate relief. We were rather anxious about him as he headed back for the lowlands August 22--to Baker University in eastern Kansas. However, with his new restricted diet (multiple food allergies) and megavitamin supplements, he seems to be doing fine. He also seems very happy with the Platt family Alma Mater.

Except for a week of very thorough medicals for the whole family and 3½ weeks with Carol's folks in Colorado, most of our time was spent visiting some 50 churches all over the state of Iowa (both of us together in only 10 of them). We were delighted to renew some very old acquaintances but disappointed that our tight schedule for the whole summer made it impossible to visit many other friends, even though we were at times very

near some of them. In any case, we were happy to be able to meet and share with so many people, mostly for the first time, and remain grateful for the continued interest and prayers of a large number.

The return trip, with a hurried stop-over in Montreal, was disturbed by strikes and last-minute re-routing. We arrived ^{home} in the evening, having had only a couple hours of dozing in the previous two days. On a first trip from the airport, David deposited some luggage and the two younger boys. When David, Carol and John arrived with the rest of the luggage, the door was locked, the two younger ones now sound asleep inside--with the keys! There was no waking them; so we remained three exhausted travelers amid our bags on the stairs and 5th floor landing, waiting and listening at the door for the pitter patter of feet inside. It was nearly 5 a.m. before we sank into our own beds again.

THE NEW SCHOOL YEAR began much better than last for Carol and promises to be a reasonable year with a reasonable work load. There are far fewer students, generally more serious and better qualified for their studies. The three boys continue to do well in the French secondary school but have very heavy schedules and home assignments.

The year was just getting well under way when we learned that the move we were expecting to make in February had to begin in a few days. So as not to leave the building vacant, David and Mark slept on the floor in sleeping bags two nights before we could get beds and kitchen essentials moved and make this the main base of operations while organizing the rest. We spread the move over five weeks, using our mini-station wagon as much as possible but hiring a small pick-up truck for four loads of larger items. In the meantime we tried to re-plaster and re-paint the living room ourselves (we should have know better), and that became a very protracted affair. We are now moved in (though not fully "settled in") and are very pleased with the new situation--water day and night, a telephone, the larger chapel in the same building with our lodging, more space for the family, a downtown location. It is a United Methodist property that we rented out some 10-12 years ago after all the Spanish and French parishioners had gone and the last pastor had finally left for health reasons with no replacement personnel in sight.

THE CALENDAR YEAR ENDED with a rather dramatic situation here. The president died December 27 following some five weeks in a coma. He had been head of the country since 1965 and elected president under the new constitution in December 1976 for a term of six years (renewable). This came at a very critical time, just before the big reorganizational meeting of the one party and crucial decisions concerning national priorities, especially between the gas and oil industries and other industry on the one hand (heavily favored so far) and agriculture and housing on the other. In spite of spectacular efforts in the field of education, a new crisis seems to be looming there as well because of the incredible population explosion (about 54% of the population UNDER 18 years of age and nearly 25% UNDER 5).

THE NEW YEAR has begun and January is a busy time. We are stretching out the Week of Prayer for Unity so that David, the only Protestant pastor available to the Catholics here, can participate in special services at the Cathedral, our own new chapel, and three other Catholic churches in other cities. It is a good way to begin the new year, a good follow-up of Christmas.

We pray that 1979 for you and us (and many more) may be not only a follow-up of Christmas but a day by day renewal of the whole Christmas-Good Friday-Easter drama.

Fraternally yours,

The BUTLERS--David, Carol and boys