

REPORT ON TRAVEL ... SABBATICAL ... SPRING, 1967

Submitted by Enid McCoy Lilley

My actual travel began March 10, 1967 and was completed on July 2 when I returned to Los Angeles; although the travel as required to meet the Sabbatical requirements was completed as of June 2nd, 1967.

I returned with a strong conviction that my stated purposes: 1- To renew awareness of varied cultural and geographic backgrounds influencing children now in Los Angeles schools; and 2, to enquire into and observe regional patterns of meeting the 'Special Education' problems of children; had been generously realized.

As for contrasted 'backgrounds', I visited and talked to a tenant farmer family in West Texas, a laboring man's family in Houghton, a lawyer's family in Waco, a high-income IBM executive's family in Dallas; and a reported to be very wealthy 'old south' family in Tyler. While in Tennessee, Georgia, and the Carolinas, I observed the land and the people and talked about living conditions, school problems, the contrast between the poor and the rich. I was particularly interested in hearing older people contrast life in the whole T.V.A. area as before and after the Tennessee Valley Authority has been in operation. To my surprise, in some small and somewhat remote villages of South Carolina, electricity is still new enough to be advertised as an asset --- "Yes! We Have Electricity Here!"

Along the Appalachians, to contrast the pure air and the beauties of the Great Smokies and Virginia's Sky Line Drive with the bitter 'Trail of Tears' history of the Cherokee Indians

and the poverty and hopelessness of the little ex-coal mining villages in the mountain valleys of 'Appalachia' is pretty staggering.

In Virginia, to live awhile in the era of historic Williamsburg and the old plantations along the river -- the Potomac-- to visit Washington's home at Mt. Vernon ... and then into 1967's Washington D.C. ... the White House, the Capitol, the Smithsonian Institute (enough surely to occupy a good six weeks visit, while only seeing the things that are of particular personal interest), and back of all the facade the confused traffic, the almost non-existent parking facilities, the snarling and frustrated residents, the dirty and littered streets, the fantastically neglected and overcrowded schools is indeed contrast enough. Before that the even farther back journey in time to York and Jamestown, which more nearly correlated with Cape Cod, Plymouth, Salem and Provincetown( which I saw a little later).

After D.C., an interval at Harper's Ferry of John Brown fame; and Gettysburg, where the spirit of Lincoln broods over the now beautiful terrain where once the slaughter of battle raged; and on to peaceful appearing, prosperous appearing Lancaster of the Pennsylvania Dutch. It staggers one to think of the adjustments demanded to the Amish or Mennonite child or adult who leaves this land of silence (a religious expectation, where for the most part according to what I was told, one limits speech to necessities of communication in order to free time and thought to constant 'talking with God')

power or man power, travels to market or church in horse drawn carraiges, eats three mammoth meals each day, works from sun-up to sun-down, and goes to bed shortly after. No electric lights, or cars, or tractors, ;~~or~~ no movies or T.V., or even radio. When that child or adult moves, because of some unexplained demand or revolt, or necessity to California's San Fernando Valley! (Because they do come--- they are in our schools -- to our mutual confusion and consternation.)

Philadelphia, lying between two rivers, the Deleware and the Schuylkill, appears to be far awead of many other cities in urban renewal and integration of basic living arrangements. However the people there are very a ware that the problems are only approaching solution in the inner city ... and in the fringe areas are at a deadlock. Mostly Negro South Philadelphia aspect has little evidence that integration or other drives of the drive for equal opportunity are under way. Perhaps it is as one monor city official explained it:"all the people who couldn't face living on a people to people basis have gone---

Those who are left in the inner city are able, and know that they are willing, for the most part, to solve the problems of urban living with each other." Many may have gone, but there are plenty left. Philadelphia seems as densely populated as Manhattan... though I have no statistics on it. In any event, a visitor, or at any rate THIS visitor found in Philadelphia a warmly satisfying promise of thepossible richness of city life, where people strive to live with each other, rather than to live by keeping or pushing each other out.

It is difficult to think of any contrast one cannot find in NEW YORK.

Even the scenery varies, though no dramatically. The contrasts in wealth, culture, race, and opportunity are sharp, and widely acknowledged; though I for one had never been quite aware of the physical closeness of the luxury apartments on 5th Avenue to the dreary brown-fronts that begin and blend into the territory known as Harlem; or that one walks down a short hill from the intellectual vastness of Columbia University into the bowery, with bleary-eyed old men asleep in a patch of sunshine on the sidewalks. The subtle but distinct individualistic flavor of it's buroughs is unique. Queens is not Long Island; nor is Brooklyn the Bronx... and New Yorkers apparently never mistake another New Yorker's origin... though they lie twenty minutes apart by subway.

North from New York quite soon becomes NEW ENGLAND.... with quite a different feel. The coast -- from Cape Cod to Bar Harbor is ~~quite~~ unlike Jones Beach in N.Y., and a far cry from the Chesapeake Bay, or the beaches of So Carolina or Georgia, though indeed they are all Atlantic Ocean beaches. The land and the people of Vermont, New Hampshire, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Maine ... seem different, too. From each other also, of course, though they do seem to present some sort of unity. Looking back, I think of rocky soil, clear running streams, green forests, and a sparse population -- rural but not unsophisticated. Boston is of course an exception to everything .. rich in history, eager to tourist money, but lacking in hospitality.

From New England the trip progressed to Quebec, then on to Montreal (including Expo '67), along the North shore of Lake Ontario, through Toronto, and on to Niagara Falls, where after viewing, I returned to the U.S.A. and continued through Baltimore to Erie, Pa. It was from there, on June 2nd, that I mailed my last travel card. From there I drove through Ohio, stopped in Indianapolis a few days; back through Illinois to Chicago and Rockford, Illinois, through Iowa (with a stop at Waterloo, and Des Moines), through Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota (bad lands and the Black Hills), Montana, Wyoming, Utah, Nevada, and back to California. From the Dakotas on I was revisiting old scenes, and chiefly homeward bound.

To pick up on my second travel objective... the ways in which the special needs of special children are being met-or-neglected. In Texas, I discussed problems of educating the bright non-achieving child with an interesting variety of people. A teacher in an expensive private kindergarten in Houston explained how teachers are trained to observe and record indications of auditory and visual perception stages of development. They note the preferred eye, hand and foot, length of attention span, drive, peer relationships, etc. This information is then studied by a school psychologist who conferences with the parents of those children who appear to lag in development, or who have an apparent emotional or speech lag. Special experiences are then planned to help speed development where the need seems to be indicated. Games involving crawling were used as a beginning remedial measure, and though my teacher had no idea why this might be helpful

~~1/16~~ she was enthusiastic about the rapid progress many of the children exhibited.

In Waco I was referred to a 'Language Pathologist', with a degree in this specialty from Northwestern University, whose department planned, directed, and sometimes gave, special classes for students who evidenced marked lack of progress in speaking, reading, writing, or spelling. .... all of which they saw as related symptoms of a breakdown in a normal development of the language function of adequate communication. The school system worked on a remedial program for these pupils on as much of a One to one basis as seemed essential, while parents were conferred and referred to private or public clinics for any psychological testing or treatment. Certainly the Pathologist who spoke to me was very aware of the part psychological stress might contribute to the complicated problem, but felt their role was a developmental one. Those whose progress was lacking or extremely slow were screened for mental alertness, and transferred to a program for the M.R. if the retardation was too marked.

The Research and Psychological Services Section of the Dallas Public School reported that they have seven classes, ~~1~~ of ~~1/16~~ ten children each, for diagnosed brain damaged, under Special Education; and two classes, of from six to twelve each, for emotionally disturbed pupils. The one for adolescents is in a hospital setting. They have 22 Psychiatrists and six neurologists who will accept school referrals, under

contract with the school board, so there is very little delay (not over 2 or 3 weeks) in getting a child in for professional diagnosis and/or treatment.

York work  
~~1/11/~~ Philadelphia and New ~~Yewk~~ under somewhat the same set-up. All in all, As my trip progressed, the impression grew that the bigger the city, the poorer the service, and that the quality of service varied from one part of the city to another.... with unfortunately, less being available where the need was greatest. New York's special 21 experimental schools are the shining exception, wh ere by dint of extra help and smaller classes for all children, and enriched opportunities, and remedial classes(all of which spells money) the average achieves child in the poverty area averages to the level of the child of similar age in the suburbs. Sad to say, because parents whose children are not in one of the special schools are dissatisfied and are asking for similar opportunities for their children, the new board chairman is urging equal non-opportunities for all ghetto children by recommending the discontinuation, or at least watering -down of teaching, in the special schools. In those schools .. the experimental schools ... as in Waco, the child whose development is lagging gets the extra attention he needs without waiting for the retardation to become overwhelming.

Everywhere I went I looked for opportunities to talk not only with school officials, but with teachers and with parents who have children with special learning problems that are not a matter of simple mental retardation. I happened on to only a very few who felt that they had met with help.

or even with understanding and sympathetic attention to the problem. Over the whole country, or that part of it I visited on this trip, the anger and frustration on the part of parents who had struggled with a child with a special learning problem involving ability to get along with other children, keeping up in reading (particularly), etc; is truly staggering. In some cases the child had grown almost or entirely to adulthood before the parent found any corroboreration for his hunch, (or Hope?) that the child had any problem beyond being spoiled (parent's fault), stupid (again parent's fault) or lazy and Mean... (again probably parent's fault.) Many were unaware, or unwilling to acknowledge, the difficult behavior though many were most aware ... but over and over they expressed the view that someone in either the medical or the educational professions (both allegedly 'helping' professions) SHOULD have helped them and the child when he was still quite young .