

Tells of 25,000 Mile Trip Across U. S. to Alaskan Wilds

Following is a continuation of the round robin letters sent to friends by Mr. and Mrs. Robert W. Patton, on their 25,000 mile trailer trip to Alaska.

Skagway, the gateway of Alaska, the port to untold riches and hopes for those in '98, today the home of a few people who cater to the tourists, "at a price." This is true of S. E. Alaska where there is a sharp cleavage of business interests, tourists and fish. Quite similar only a different kind of bait is used. However when you pass Whitehouse and get to Dawson, you are in the North. The tourists are a sort of unnecessary evil and the people are living their normal lives off mining, furs, etc. You don't get the feel of the true north until then.

Anyway Skagway is interesting. It boasts a street car, one of the "Old Timers." You are an old timer if you came into this country 30-40 years ago, a sourdough if you have seen the freeze-up and the breakup and a cheechabo, if just traveling. We will be half and half as we will see the freeze-up. Martin Itjin bought a Ford chassis and built a street car body on it. With a decided musical, Swedish accent he recounts the days of '98 as he drives you from one historic spot to another ending up at the cemetery where he shows you the grave of "Soapy Smith" also a headstone over a gentleman whose body never could be found, so they just buried his head. He is very proud of his pilgrimage to Hollywood a couple of years ago where Mae West gave him quite a time. He shipped all the rolling stock of the Skagway Street Car Co., to Seattle and ran it south. He is a character, with a dry humor one can never forget.

Mother Pullen, the mother of the officer in the war of whom Gen. Pershing said "I wish I had more Pullen boys under me," is a big strong woman of 80 years. She came to Alaska 40 years ago with 3 small children and battled her way with the toughest of them. The only other item worthy of comment are the Blanchard gardens where the most gorgeous flowers are grown. Mrs. B. makes flowers a hobby and has raised plants of indescribable beauty and coloring.

We are off for the Yukon, with a side trip down Lake Tagish and West Taku Arm to Ben-My-Chree, the home of an Englishman and his wife. A beautiful spot and the wild rugged peaks and precipices of the coast range. As we go north each stop produces more dogs all bigger than "Ming" until you see the McKenzie River Huskies that top 125 lbs. a piece. They all seem friendly and show it by jumping up on you. Set your feet, brace yourself, or you will be knocked over when one hits you.

We changed steamers at Dawson for our trip down stream. Here is where you start to see the real north. The tourists are decidedly in the minority and no one pays any attention to them. Of course everybody comes down to see the boat come in, but where previously we could place a coin and it had to be the right size into an eager brown hand and take all the pictures you wanted, now the Indians objected vociferously at the sight of a camera and coins of any description were useless. I asked a couple of "chickens," Indian flappers, why the natives were so reluctant about having their pictures taken. One of the chickens, a good-looking breed of about 20, who had been actually married twice, said "well you, know it does get damn monotonous."

The upper Yukon flows through rugged wild country narrowing down between rocky bluffs to where the boat has to jack-knife through. As you cross the Arctic Circle you reach the Flats. The S. S. Co. has put up signs at the circle which every one photographs, then takes pictures wiping off the perspiration from their brows. This is true as

the thermometer was over 80 degrees when we sailed by. We got to Fort Yukon at 11 p.m. amidst a glorious sunset and were there till 1 a.m. I took pictures at midnight of the town. It is hard to realize 24 hours of daylight with about 22 hours of sun light. We were too late for the midnight sun. Our welcome to Fort Yukon was in grand style. Three huskies set to it, at the foot of the gang plank with teeth and snarls. A little rector from San Francisco and myself were right on the spot with our cameras enjoying the altercation to the fullest, while some of the more gently inclined members of the weaker were scared out of 10 years growth.

Seven days were on the Yukon from Dawson to Nenana some 1400 miles and we only went halfway down before we turned up the Tanana river to Nenana. Our boat carries lots of freight and stops to unload. In between times we stop at woodpiles to take on fuel. She burns about a cord an hour.

After leaving Dawson, I started to inquire about our camping trip and no one seemed to think our contemplated trip anything to brag about, no trouble at all. As we passed the mouth of the Kautishua, going up the Tanana, the captain took great pains to point it out to me. Our family stopped at Nenana, while everyone went on to Fairbanks and so I will wind up this letter.

Alaska is full of surprises and the outlook on life by the people is very different from ours. You can't get even a smell of what they think, as ordinary tourists, but only if you tarry awhile as we did in Nenana. Many things that shock people "outside" are just a matter of course here. Georgie Lee isn't looked down on in the least. She is just referred to as one of "The Ladies of the Town." She is quite a property owner and I imagine a good customer for the stores.

An interesting custom among the Indians is the marriage dance at Nulatto of the tribe there. I regret to say I haven't seen it, as I can imagine it would be very instructive as well as interesting. The tribe forms a large circle around the dancing bride. As the dance goes on the pure and innocent lass takes off a garment and dances, then another and another until she trips the gay fantastic in the beautiful raiment of her birth. On goes the dance and on goes new dresses and lingerie (if they wear any) piece by piece until she steps forth clad new from the top of her head to the soles of her feet. The groom's turn comes and he does the same thing. When he is newly clad they go away together to live happily ever after. When I learned of this custom I remarked that it might be of interest to the whites. I was told that outside the native circle is a circle of whites from nearby and even 25 miles distant. I believe some of the white guests may not have received invitations.

Well, the tale is told, apt to be a lot colder before long, so au revoir.

BOB. SUE, DICK.

P.S. So far the climate is much the same as at home, temperature at night about 30, sunset about 5:30, but we expect to see it 100 below before we leave.

Noted Ice Carnival an Illinois Feature

For many years Illinois skating enthusiasts looked forward to the great and gay ice carnivals held regularly on the Chicago river. For over a mile beyond the historic Rush Street bridge, great crowds gathered about bonfires and made merry far into the night.

Celebrated skaters sometimes came from distant points, according to the Illinois Writers' Project, W.P.A. One record of 1859 mentions visitors from New York State and Canada. In addition to providing an ideal course for skaters and spectators, the fine stretch of ice was ideal for horse racing.

LIBRARY

Children's Department

Many a Highland Park child will long remember Saturday, December 9, as one of the highlights in his story hour experiences, for Ruth Sawyer was in town and Ruth Sawyer's name means stories—fairies and goblins with various looks and brogues.

In a cozy atmosphere of candle-light and Christmas she gave us three Christmas stories from different parts of the world.

Ruth Sawyer is a born story teller, and she has something to give. A spiritual quality that is very rare is the foundation for her story telling. To her listeners came a fuller and richer understanding of the Christmas spirit as a universal spirit, one that is not limited by boundaries or languages, one that belongs to everybody and something to be shared in common.

Mrs. Sawyer's reputation as nationally known author was again emphasized when she was awarded

the Newberry Medal for "Roller Skates" in 1937. The Newberry Medal is the highest distinction awarded an author of American juvenile books.

Asked to introduce Lucinda in "Roller Skates," she says, among other things: "I have always known Lucinda; we actually had the same mother. But I never understood or liked her much until that tenth year.

Everybody has a year that belongs especially to her. Lucinda's tenth year—free-as-wind—belonged as completely to Lucinda as if she had been asked to make the calendar for it.

"You see, until she was ten years old, Lucinda had been managed by everybody. She lived in a household where everyone was an elder; and in a world with all the doors and windows closed and the blinds down. At least Lucinda thought so. Sometimes Johanna, her Irish nurse, smuggled her wholly out and she had a glorious whiff of what the world was really like if you got a fair chance at it. What she wanted to do was to try all the side and back doors; and see and feel and find

out things and places and people for herself."

Other books by Ruth Sawyer in the library are: This Way to Christmas. Tono Antonio. Picture Tales from Spain.

H. S. Varsity Swim Teams Tie Waukegan

Making their first local appearance of the season the Highland Park high school swimming team tied Waukegan varsity last Friday afternoon at the high school pool.

By winning a first and third place in the diving event and a first place in the medley relay the Highland Park boys were able to tie the strong Waukegan outfit. The final score was 33 to 33.

The Highland Park frosh-soph won easily from the Waukegan first and second year men by the score of 45 to 20.

Today (Thursday) the local teams travel to Des Plaines to have a practice meet with the state champions from Maine Township high school.

Mr. Kendig and Mr. Panther are the Highland Park swimming coaches.

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