

San Francisco to Georgia

At the conclusion of the American Bankers Association Convention in San Francisco on Wednesday, October 18, 1961, we (Mr. and Mrs. Sherman Drawdy, Mr. and Mrs. Frank W. Thomas of Washington, Mr. and Mrs. Russell A. Blanchard of Augusta and Nita and I) checked out of the St. Francis Hotel for our return home with a little added travel to be included along the way.

Since it had been necessary for me to remain for a meeting of the Executive Council, we had to move rapidly. Each of the couples had sent one bag home by express from the hotel with all our special clothes and our soiled ones. We were attempting to reach the San Francisco Airport for a 4:30 flight. Although we said absolutely nothing to the driver, it became pretty obvious after we settled back in the cab that the driver was either tremendously anxious to get the bankers out of town or he wanted to make another trip because the speed limit meant absolutely nothing to him. It would be an understatement to suggest that we lost no time enroute from the hotel to the airport. In fact, getting aboard Trans-World Airlines Flight 98-J to Las Vegas did not speed up our travel much.

Our flight was an uneventful but beautiful one as we soared over Death Valley with a spot plainly marked to show the lowest point in the continental United States. We arrived at the airport in Las Vegas with any number of outstretched arms awaiting us - arms, that is, of the one-armed bandit type.

Proceeding immediately to the Sands Hotel, our thoughtful friends, Mr. and Mrs. George Sancken, Jr. had already registered for us. Too, as we reached our room, they had provided a bottle of champagne plainly marked, "Congratulations to the Kimbrels". Gardenias had also been provided for all the ladies which started us well in Las Vegas. Some of the group stopped along the way long enough to see if the slot machines really worked. They did and for the house, of course.

With little formality, we quickly drove to the downtown section away from the strip where the Sands is located. As we turned onto the main street, the neon lights and electric signs were almost the equal of daylight. Fearing we might become so involved in the surroundings we would forget that important item a little later, we went for dinner at The Mint. Like all the other places, the dining room was at the extreme rear with banks of slot machines and gambling devices all across the front.

The dinner was pleasant and quite economical. In fact, everything had become economical by that time as each couple had invested the sum of \$100 in the treasury. The "unbonded" treasurer was Sherman Drawdy, who proved later to be as much a master of money on a trip as he is with it in his own bank. That, however, was probably the only good investment we made in Las Vegas.

We were destined to try practically all of the slot machines in town - a few at each location. Since our stakes were low, we tried to stick to the small machines with nearly everybody eventually winning a jackpot. The only trouble was we had filled the jackpot with our money before it emptied so most of us were right back where we started. After covering the place pretty thoroughly,

we decided to return to the Sands. Along the way, though, Russell Blanchard - up to his usual tricks - decided we should stop at the Stardust Hotel and see what was supposed to be the outstanding show in town, Lido de Paris. So the Kimbrels and the Blanchards were placed in the waiting line after a rather generous palm greasing of the *matre de*. With the reservations, we thought we were pretty well set only to find we were in line behind about 200 other people, army cue-line style, waiting to enter after the first group had cleared the dining room.

With all of this, though, the show was worth every bit of the effort. Girls, yes, but with one or two exceptions, and then in a rather subdued way, the girls were fully clothed. It is no exaggeration to say that the stage - the lighting, the color, the settings, even water falls, storms and live trees - was as beautiful as any anywhere. It was an excellent performance with most of the music in French but in no way limiting the pleasure of the entertainment. This had been preceded by a "dumb-waiter" strolling through the dining room dropping dishes, pulling ties, practically knocking people's hats off with trays and even picking up a palm plant to sweep through and excite everybody. It was a wonderful show! We felt the total charge was quite reasonable when compared to other points. They apparently still expect the money from the gamblers and not from these sources.

Early Thursday morning, October 19, we had breakfast at the Sands and promptly at 8:00, two air-conditioned Chevrolet Impala fordors were delivered. There immediately developed some question as to who was the best driver but that did not deter any of us from proceeding to Hoover Dam and Lake Meade some

40 to 50 miles away. It was a beautiful drive. Hoover Dam (some question as to the name being changed to Bolder Dam) is across the Colorado River to form Lake Meade. It is a huge and dramatic work of engineering. As we stood at the top and looked at an automobile parked near the base of the dam, it resembled a small child's car giving you some idea of the height of the dam. The lake was beautiful but not more so than Clark Hill Lake.

From this point, we drove along Route 466 to our eventual stop at Grand Canyon. The drive was through a dry area, many rocks, tumble weeds, no homes, with fences along the road of one strand of barbed wire to retain the cattle. To us, it appeared there could be very few cattle because there was little to eat. We were impressed, however, with the excellent highway and a queer red color. Evidently, this had something to do with the type soil they used in the construction because we were later to see several of these highways throughout Arizona.

The elevation along this drive was an average of about 4,000 feet but it was not noticeable because it was flat as a plateau and no mountains were obvious.

As we reached Grand Canyon, we had no time whatever to spare. Warned that the most beautiful time was as the sun was setting, there was little time before the sun went out of view. We rushed to the Canyon to see a sight only God could make. This vast Canyon hewn out of the rocks with just a mere trickle of water appearing at the very bottom although it was the Colorado River. There were a few trees growing along the side and the setting of the sun provided a kaleidoscope of color - every possible hue and color of the rainbow. An awe-

inspiring sight if I have ever seen one. Even the Atheist, if he would only view this majestic greatness, must assuredly recognize a Supreme Being.

Just at sundown, the Indians gave a dance on the rim of the Canyon which we were able to observe. Then we browsed through the curio shop and moved on to dinner in the restaurant. We spent the night there in the Bright Angel Lodge sharing the bath with the Drawdys. This was not a particularly distasteful arrangement; we had the perfect answer - none of us took a bath!

Before retiring, we went down to view some interesting pictures an old gentleman had made through the years as he and his brother had helped explore the Grand Canyon. He appeared to be about 80 years old, rather small of stature and said he probably knew more about the Grand Canyon and the Colorado River than any living individual. He had been employed by the government to direct several of the expeditions searching the Canyon.

Friday morning, October 20, we had breakfast in the Bright Angel Coffee Shop after having looked around the rim of the Canyon and taken many photographs. The weather was beautiful and as we started to leave, we switched automobiles. The first day the Kimbrels and Drawdys had ridden together and now we switched to ride with the Blanchards along Route 64. Russell was really no better driver than Mr. Drawdy. We continued to see more of the Canyon and to see far more trees than we had the previous day. They were largely pinyon and juniper.

None of us wanted to spoil the legend that tourists are the most gullible. We rounded a curve in the Painted Desert only to find three attractive Indian children sitting by the side of the road overhanging a cliff. Stopping to take

their picture - to which they were readily agreeable and learning that their names were Rena, Lena and Sara - we started to leave only to be told, "50¢, please". Being cheap-skates anyway, we just settled for a quarter. Through the Painted Desert, as the name would imply, we found no trees, a little sagebrush and elevations of five and six thousand feet - only the grandeur of the wide open country and a range of colors of red, brown and yellow.

We turned off to get gasoline at Cameron. It was shown prominently on the map and we expected to find a rather nice spot. It would compare favorably with Boneville as there was a nice service station, post office and Indian trading store. We did not investigate but across the way was a sign saying "hotel". There were no automobiles outside so any guests who had spent the night had evidently left before our arrival.

As we left Cameron, we noticed more growth and passed the highest point in Arizona some 7,488 feet on our way to Flagstaff. This is a nice community where we had lunch and visited the Lowell Observatory and drove through Arizona State College - a nice group of attractive buildings and a student body with sprinkling of Indians and Negroes.

From Flagstaff, we traveled along Route A89 through Oak Creek Valley - another of God's beautiful creations. As we approached the rim of the valley, it was obvious our decline would be rapid. We made possibly a half dozen horseshoe bends and found ourselves right at the foot of the hills in a beautiful heavily wooded area quite similar to North Carolina and North Georgia mountains. A touch of fall was evident as the leaves were a bright hue. Trees were predominately maple, aspen and ponderosa pine. As we left the valley along

Highway 79 to Phoenix, much of the drive was through wastelands, rock and saguara cacti. It was not until about 20 miles from Phoenix that irrigation became evident for the beef cattle, oranges, grapes and other crops. It was a silent tribute to the vast value and importance of water. The contrast between dry and irrigated land is striking.

In Phoenix, original plans had been made to stop at Camel Back Inn. Fortunately for us, though, these had been changed to the Hotel Valley-Ho which was an especially nice motel. It proved to be ideally located and much more satisfactory for our purpose. Actually, it was in Scottsdale, Arizona, a suburb of Phoenix which is growing fast maintaining a completely Western atmosphere. They advertise themselves as "the most Western of the Western".

Our first evening on the town was to the heart of Scottsdale and "Lula Belle". There, we enjoyed the Gay Nineties atmosphere even with the rinky-dink piano, brass rail and waitresses with frilly aprons and hearts on velvet ribbons around the neck. Nita tried the sirloin but most of the rest of us had sea food - shrimp creole or fish. It was a very delightful evening.

Scottsdale was named for the Civil War General Winifred Scott for whom Winifred, Kansas was also named.

On Saturday morning, October 21, with the weather still beautiful, we had breakfast at the Valley-Ho Cafe. By this time, I had come to realize that when you are told to meet for breakfast at eight o'clock, that had no meaning whatsoever. You were supposed to be present for breakfast at 7:30 and anyone should have known that!

By this time, the ladies were getting the upper hand and it was off to Scottsdale for a shopping spree. We ended up at Goldwater's Department Store which is regarded in the retail trade - we were told - as superior to Neiman Marcus. Goldwater's is owned, we understand, by the brother of Senator Barry Goldwater who maintains his home and residence in Phoenix. Later, we drove through Phoenix with the aid of a city map and did fairly well.

Lunch, served in the Kimbrel room at the Valley-Ho, consisted of sandwiches purchased by the Drawdys and Thomases at a downtown buffet. We lived it up with sandwiches and the champagne Buster and Ullanee had provided in Las Vegas.

Promptly at 2:00 p.m., we met the driver from Tanner Grey Line who was to drive us about the city - first to the Desert Botanical Gardens, a non-profit educational institution having the largest collection of cacti. Only about 10% of the plants are from Arizona but have been accumulated from all over the world. The garden is located in the Papago Park which is maintained by the city - some of it in its original state, to show the people just what the area was like before they were able to harness the water in the hills and bring it in to provide this paradise.

From the gardens, we drove through Phoenix, along Camel Back Mountain and Camel Back Inn. We passed the home of Elliott Roosevelt and Senator Barry Goldwater. We then went to Mountain Shadows, another beautiful hotel being enlarged by Dell E. Webb. Our driver was a native of the area and apparently quite familiar with the surroundings. Anyway, he talked a good game.

To start the night, Catherine and Nita pooled their "resources" and arranged a beautiful candlelight cocktail party on the balcony terrace outside the Valley-Ho room overlooking the pool. With all the assortment of hors d'oeuvres and fellowship, it was a good beginning for the evening and a lot of fun.

For supper, we went to Gene's Buffet. We got back to our "raising" on chili and common food - good service and delicious. This fellow Blanchard is a deceiving individual and after we had finished dinner, nothing would do him but try the night life again. So, it was across the way to the Red Dog, still in Scottsdale, and still with the western atmosphere. Here again with the rail and boasting "the largest chandelier in the world". Large, yes, but I would not suggest it is the most beautiful. There were about ten oil burning lamps wired with electricity sitting around the edges but relatively few crystals hanging. A little dancing and then back to the Valley-Ho for pleasant sleep and fresh for another day.

October 22, Sunday, was the birthday of a sweet girl, Nita. While we paid tribute to her, we were never able to get her to tell us just exactly what year she was born. With a big breakfast at the Valley-Ho Cafe as guests of the Thomas couple, we were soon on our way for another day's travel. We drove through Arizona State University where they had been celebrating Homecoming weekend and a football game with Oregon. A beautiful school with many new buildings and a rather compact campus -

Then we drove to Mesa, Arizona and the Mormon Temple. After a leisurely walk around the gardens and a look at the Temple - from the walk -

we returned to the Administration Building for a narrated showing of slides of Arizona and the Temple. Only those with special permits and business are allowed to enter the Temple. It is primarily a place for weddings, funerals and very special events. The shrubbery, the landscaping and the buildings were beautiful. We found it an interesting stop with a refreshing atmosphere for Sunday morning.

As we left Mesa, the heart of Arizona, we were proceeding to Tucson. Here was by far the best agricultural country through which we had passed with date palms, citrus and cotton in abundance. We saw many Indians and Frank saw one especially interesting Indian girl at the root beer stand. For lunch, we stopped at the public park in Florence, for a picnic lunch. We had concrete tables and a thatched roof. Here again, the Drawdys and Thomases had made the purchases even to providing a birthday cake for Nita. Birthday napkins, lighted candles, a knife for the cake and all the ceremony made this probably the most unusual birthday party Nita ever celebrated.

Leaving Florence, we passed the Tom Mix monument which marked the spot where he met his death. By this time, we had been taking so many pictures, the ladies remarked that they were more photographed than the celebrities in Hollywood.

Arriving in Tucson about mid-afternoon, we proceeded to the Holiday Inn. Not for long, though, for these people were not much on resting! They were saving that for another day. Someone suggested that we leave promptly for Nogales, Mexico about 70 miles away. The suggestion was all that was needed. Off we go along an excellent road and through the beautiful agricultural valley where cotton and grain were in abundance and irrigation again

was the premium product.

At Nogales, we simply had to drive through the gate with no difficulty from the Mexican customs who accorded us a very cordial welcome. We drove down the main street of the town appearing to be about the size of Milledgeville. As we parked the cars at the curb, a little fellow accosted us to know if we wanted someone to watch the cars. We figured it might be cheaper to pay him than it would be to encounter difficulty later. We accepted his proposition to watch them. After a brief look at the curio shops, we entered the Hotel Fray Marcos de Niza. After being told that the most popular Mexican drink was tequila, most of the people ordered tequila cocktails but I thought a fruit punch would probably serve me better.

After making several of the shops, purchasing some silver, necklaces, perfume and curios, we were directed to the best place in town to eat. The name escapes me. The people were extremely courteous and the service was splendid but a bit more cleanliness would have helped. We ordered Mexican combination chicken and beef plates. During the meal, we were serenaded by a string trio. The troubadours were probably invited by the management to pay the Americanos a visit. It was an experience in eating and while the meal was not terribly bad, the hot sauce they provided with the tortillas at the start probably would be the outstanding part. The price we understood was reasonable but there again, we were operating on the fat of the land and our great treasurer!

It was back to Tucson. We experienced no difficulty as we passed through the American customs. They simply asked us if we were citizens of the United States and of what our purchases in Mexico consisted. When we

told them, they spoke cordially and we moved along.

On Monday, October 23, we had another beautiful morning and breakfast at the Holiday Inn. Pancakes and waffles were exceedingly good at this point. Everybody was on the move again and we drove about 12 miles to Old Tucson, the site of famous movie productions of the Old West, miniature setting of barrooms, railroads, Indian villages, a mayor's office and with policeman strolling about town ready for visitors to take pictures. We were told two movies were scheduled to be shot there very shortly.

Back into town and a quick look at the University of Arizona which has an enrollment of about 14,000 students. It is a beautiful campus with a palm lined drive leading into the main administration building and the ROTC building around a circle. The buildings are modern and leave the appearance of an excellent university.

As always with a delightful trip, time was running out and it became necessary for us to rush to the airport to catch American Airlines Flight 798 at 12:00 noon. Aboard the DC-7, we were served lunch as we flew over the desert area of New Mexico and changed from Mountain Standard Time to Central Standard Time. It was at this point when we were thinking of Arizona that the famous last words of our friend, Frank Thomas, came, "I've seen it!".

Claiming our baggage at the Dallas Airport, we proceeded by cab to the Sheraton-Dallas Hotel in the Southland Life Center, an exceedingly modern hotel of 29 floors. We found the rooms beautiful and comfortable. Not to make everything move smoothly, though, our treasurer sent his suit and two pants to the "cleaners" only to realize shortly that he had left the tidy sum of \$120 in

his pocket. A call to the Assistant Manager and a little exchange with the valet though, had his money returned by the very same young man who had picked up the suit and who claimed he had not realized the money was there.

Whether our money was running low or whether the ladies were anticipating shopping the next morning, our style of eating reduced itself to the counter of the Minute Chef in the Sheraton Hotel for dinner. It was not bad, in fact, it was better than we had eaten at some of the swanky joints. Strolling through the Southland Life Building and along the streets in Dallas doing a little window shopping finished the evening.

Tuesday morning, October 24, again for breakfast in the Minute Chef which verifies we had not done too badly the night before, we shared breakfast with the Thomases and proceeded immediately to Neiman Marcus. They were celebrating the America's Jubilee and even the escalators were decorated as San Francisco cable cars. The Golden Gate Bridge hung overhead and the background music was recorded sound from the San Francisco area. It was a grand and beautiful store with prices in keeping with the style of the advertising but Mrs. Drawdy commented, "I can find what I want better at Rich's".

At twelve o'clock, we moved to the marvelous Republic National Bank for lunch with our friends, DeWitt Ray, Norman Ramsey and Gene Zorn. The bank dining room was as beautiful as the rest of the bank. Following the luncheon, we had a tour of the bank and learned they had 1,400 employees with 140 officers and no branches.

As we returned to the hotel, relaxing in the room of Russell Blanchard a little after four o'clock, we learned that an emergency message had been left for us from Thomson, Georgia. As we were returning the call, we learned with

sadness the news from Bill Leverett. Through the efforts of Mr. Drawdy to Ken Navarre and our urgent prayers to the Good Lord, we were on a Delta Flight at 6:00 p.m., Eastern Standard Time, to Atlanta aboard a Convair 880. We were in Atlanta at 7:30 where our car was waiting and sped to Thomson by about 10:45 p.m.

While this delightful trip had ended rather sadly and abruptly, it had been fraught with wonderful experiences and marvelous traveling companions. Our blessings have been multiplied many-fold by the friendship of such splendid people and we shall not soon forget the many pleasant hours we spent.